

LITERATURE AND CULTURAL PLURALISM

EAST INDIANS IN THE CARIBBEAN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL I

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Abstract

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The East Indians in The Caribbean.

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This study explores the position of imaginative literature in the ethnically plural societies of Trinidad and Guyana in the Caribbean. It examines the extent to which the production of imaginative literature has been marked by the same ethnic divisions which have bedevilled the political, social and cultural life of these societies. For reasons explained in Chapter One, the study focuses mainly on the literature by writers from and about the Indian section of the population.

However, the study is concerned not only with the way that the context of ethnic and cultural fragmentation has affected a good deal of the writing produced in these societies, but also with the smaller number of works, mainly of fiction, which contribute to a much-needed understanding of these societies by bringing the lives of both major groups into a common focus. I argue that it is not enough to describe the differences between the two types of writing merely in terms of the presence or absence of ethnocentric biases, and discuss both the conceptual frameworks within which works of fiction may be felt to give 'truthful' knowledge and the conventions of representation which most effectively communicate that knowledge to the reader.

The thesis is divided into four sections. The first develops the argument that in much of the fiction examined there has been a connexion between ethnocentric biases, an empiricist epistemology and conventions of representation which are defined later as naturalistic. Parts Two and Three present a detailed examination of this proposition by analysing the works of Indian and non-Indian authors. The fourth part discusses those novels which go beyond the presentation of ethnically fragmented images by constructing fictive worlds which attempt to encompass the social whole. Such novels are shown to have a self-awareness of their epistemological and cultural assumptions, and in some cases an awareness that the real but hidden structures of society may only be incompletely or falsely experienced by the novel's characters. I show that such concerns with attempting to portray the real social whole, frequently intersect with an intense involvement, on the part of the author, with the aesthetic structuring and verbal texture of the novel.

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Chapter One : Introduction.

This study attempts to document and interpret the relationships between imaginative writings, social consciousness and reality in the ethnically and culturally plural societies of the Caribbean area, principally Trinidad and Guyana. What most distinguishes these two societies is the high proportion of people of Indian descent in their populations - respectively 40.11% and 50.2%. In both countries the proportion is likely to grow since the Indian birthrate has been generally higher than that of other ethnic groups. There are also Indians established in Suriname, where they will probably become the largest ethnic group, and smaller groups in Guadeloupe and Martinique, Jamaica, Grenada, St. Vincent and St. Lucia. In all there are probably nearly one million persons of Indian descent now living in the Caribbean. Elsewhere, the result of the same world-wide export of Indian labour which succeeded the slave-trade, large numbers of Indians now exist alongside, and in some cases outnumber, the indigenous populations of Fiji, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania and, before they were expelled, Uganda. In Mauritius and Reunion, as in the Caribbean, the populations are wholly immigrant, mainly comprising the descendants of African slaves and Indian indentured labourers. Most of these societies are now politically independent and in a few the struggles of the local population have begun to force Western neo-imperialism to withdraw. But all inherited the common legacy of ethnic segmentation, and the problems of trying to weld together a coherent national unit. The effects of the arrival in the Caribbean of over half a million indentured Indian labourers between 1838-1917 - three-quarters of that number to Trinidad and Guyana - continue to reverberate through the life of those societies.

A sizeable number of studies has focused on the political, social and cultural manifestations of ethnic cleavage in the Caribbean; a growing number of monographs has concentrated on one or other of the main ethno-cultural groups and several distinct models have

been advanced to account for the social-structural significance of ethnic diversity. As my footnotes will show, I have drawn heavily upon such studies, guided by the experience of my own too brief stays in Trinidad and Guyana. However, to the best of my knowledge, what no study has yet done is to follow up a question posed by the Barbadian poet and historian, Edward Brathwaite, when he asked: 'How does the artist work and function within a plurally fragmented world?'² My study sets out to answer this question and its inversion: what has the artist to offer to the understanding of such a world?

All my research has tended to confirm what is assumed in Brathwaite's question, that the writer in such ethnically segmented societies is confronted by a social reality whose daunting complexity, whilst recognised in the social and political sciences, has not been adequately considered in the critical study of Caribbean literature. In the second chapter there is a more detailed account of the cultural heterogeneity of Trinidad and Guyana, and I argue that as a member of one ethnic group a writer is unlikely to have had more than a superficial experience of the lives lived by members of the other community. Leading writers of both African and Indian origin have admitted to or been accused of this limitation. George Lamming speaks of the scarcity of books which 'Take us on the inside of Indian life in Trinidad or Guyana' and suggests his own sense of exclusion when he writes, 'We guess and assume and project; but the real substance of that life we are only now beginning to glimpse.'³ V.S. Naipaul accuses non-Indians in the Caribbean of knowing little about the Indians, 'except that they live in the country, work on the land, are rich, fond of litigation and violence.'⁴ and specifically berates Black writers for being too exclusively involved in their quarrel with the white world, and too little with the ethnic complexities of their own societies. I argue too that the writer works in an environment where each ethnic group may appear to have contrary social and cultural goals, and where the writer can assume no core of shared values

in the Caribbean reading public he or she ought to be reaching.

Dennis Williams, the Guyanese painter and novelist, has expressed in extreme terms (pseudo-scientific and pseudo-biological as I shall argue later) an oppressive sense of this division. Comparing the heterogeneity of the Caribbean, and Guyana in particular, to what he sees as the relative homogeneity of the Old World, Williams asserts:

We might go so far as to say that the only thing which is new in our New World societies is this lack of a sense of witness in the blood and regard of the Other...since the blood of the Other, the blood of the national brother, will bear intimations of psychic impulses or racial predilections that are not individually our own.

By existing each racial group qualifies, and diminishes, the self-image of the other. 5

Williams is also extremely pessimistic about the effects that racial identification will have on 'literary activity in general and the development of creative literature in particular'. Indeed, of another ethnically segmented plantation society, Sri Lanka, the novelist and critic James Goonewardene has stated:

There is at present no dialogue between writers in English and Tamil on the one hand and the writer in Sinhala on the other. They function antagonistically, actively encouraged by politicians for private ends. 6

The possibility of such a breakdown of literature into the service of competing ethnic groups cannot be discounted in the Caribbean.

Gordon Rohlehr, lecturing on the St. Augustine campus of the U.W.I. in Trinidad, has reported:

For years teaching West Indian literature I have seen students group round writers in terms of race - Indians black [sic] Brathwaite, Africans show a preference for Brathwaite on the grounds that he's talking black people's business. The whites, who are normally not very many, quite often flock around Jean Rhys - the idea of the alienated white in the society. People inbetween flock around Walcott and Wilson Harris because these two writers seem to be talking about the mulatto. 7

In this study then, I set out to discover to what extent creative writers have either capitulated to the fragmentary nature of social reality and competing racial ends, or have provided their society with images suggesting the possibility of transcending such divisions.

Although my over-all concern is with the relation of creative literature to the problematic social whole, this study focuses dis-

proportionately on the Indian presence in Trinidad and Guyana. There are both methodological and practical reasons for adopting this focus.

However, at the same time as explaining the reasons for this focus, I wish to meet the possible objection that though ethnic differences do exist, they are by no means such urgent problems as those of social and economic underdevelopment and, particularly in Guyana, the lack of political democracy. It is true that in Trinidad and Guyana the poorest classes, both Indian and Black, are without the basic material securities of adequate housing, food and medical care, have limited access to secondary education and little control over their own destiny. Guyana is virtually bankrupt; the last vestiges of representative democracy (killed by the cynical use of electoral fraud) appear to be on the point of burial; the ruling regime has taken over the state machine and militarised it and the Prime Minister has shown an increasing tendency towards personal dictatorship. Basic civil rights are abused by the police; the courts have come under political pressure and in some instances have succumbed; the opposition press has been muzzled and the radical leader of the one multi-ethnic opposition political grouping murdered by a Government agent. Guyana looks as if it will become a neighbour of Suriname (under a military dictatorship which has murdered many of the country's civilian political leaders) in rather more than geography.⁸

In my view, such states of affairs have a great deal to do with ethnic division and, particularly in Trinidad and Guyana, with the inability of the dominant Creole elites to accommodate the Indian presence. The Indians entered societies which were already in the process of social and cultural formation, the products of the unequal but dynamic relationship between European and African. No place in this amalgam has as yet been found for the Indians. Indeed, in both countries the attempts to create a national culture have been in themselves racially divisive since, to date, they have taken the form

of the cultural assertion of the politically dominant Afro-Creole group.

In Trinidad, the bulk of the Indian population sees itself as an economically, socially and politically underprivileged minority. Indian political behaviour has consistently expressed an alienation from the 'national' goals supported by the Afro-Creole majority. Although 40% of the population, many Indians feel that their community is condemned to cultural invisibility. Their popular forms of artistic expression, for instance, appear only as minority slots in the programming of the national broadcasting institutions.

In Guyana, the activities of politicians of both major parties, by playing on African and Indian fears of each other, have done much to create the political stalemate in which Burnham's bankrupt party dictatorship established itself. The fears are real. In 1964 at least 176 lives were lost in interracial violence. The causes were complex, but at their root was the attempt of the Indian majority to establish a political and social position commensurate with their numbers and the fear of the Afro-Guyanese about what the effects of this competition would be. Since then, as a mainly Indian party, the opposition People's Progressive Party has been hamstrung. It has watched itself robbed of its share of national power, but dare not organise directly against the ruling People's National Congress because it knows that the P.N.C. would cry race and be guaranteed to win back the support of the many Afro-Guyanese who are dissatisfied with the Government's economic record. The P.P.P. also knows that the Government has put the army under party control, created the Guyana National Service as a wing of the party and set up and armed a People's Militia of loyal Afro-Guyanese party supporters. No real change can occur unless a leadership emerges which unites the Afro-Guyanese and Indian working classes. The possibility that Dr. Walter Rodney was creating that kind of unity was no doubt the reason for his murder. My point is that ethnic division is not merely one of a list of problems, but the

central one around which others are structured. The specific issue is the exclusion of the Indian population from political power, the continuing economic inequalities suffered by rural Indians and the failure to recognise that national culture cannot be based solely on Creole or Afro-Caribbean elements. So far Indian discontents have been mainly verbal in expression; they may not always remain so. Yet even if one dismisses as alarmist the prospect that Trinidad and Guyana might not survive as unitary societies unless Indian demands are met, it seems self-evident that if real social development is to take place or a genuine political democracy exist, then the Indians must feel that they have an equal stake in their society and are accepted as cultural equals within an openly pluralistic national culture.

In some ways critical discussion of Caribbean literature has reflected the invisibility of the Indian population. With the exception of the burgeoning criticism of V.S. Naipaul's work, there has been to my knowledge no thorough study of wider aspects of Indian imaginative writings in the Caribbean. This neglect is in marked contrast to the emphasis on the African dimension in critical studies of the imaginative literature of the area.¹⁰ Thus, one objective of the study is to remedy that neglect by providing an account of Indo-Caribbean writing and the concerns it expresses. It looks at how Indian writers have responded to internal change within the community, particularly to the increasing divergence between the folk-culture of the masses and the Indo-Saxon culture of the elite. It attempts to identify what is of particular value in Indo-Caribbean writing in giving Indians in the Caribbean truthful images of themselves and giving Caribbean society as a whole insights into an aspect of its diversity which has generally been ignored. It looks at how Indo-Caribbean writers have portrayed the Creole world, and in particular at the image of the black West Indian in Indo-Caribbean writing. I argue that such portrayals give valuable insights into why Indians in the Caribbean have been reluctant to merge themselves within the

Afro-Creole community. Finally, there are discussions of those few novels by Indian authors who go beyond the portrayal of their own community to pursue a vision of the social whole.

However, to have focused exclusively on Indian writing would have been yet another instance of one-sidedness. It would have ignored not only the fact that, whatever their degree of separation, Africans and Indians, as Dennis Williams testifies, exist strongly in each other's minds, but also the common phenomenon that a group's self-image is formed in interaction with its awareness of how it is regarded by those outside it. An empirical study, J.B. Landis's, 'The Racial Attitudes of Africans and Indians in Guyana'¹², appears to support this approach in that it shows significant degrees of consensus amongst both African and Indian respondents on the nature both of the stereotypes each group holds about the other and self-held stereotypes. Moreover, when Seepersad Naipaul, and later Selvon and V.S. Naipaul began writing about their community they did not do so in a literary vacuum, for there were already in existence portrayals of the Indian world by non-Indian authors, particularly from European backgrounds. So, in addition to Indian writing, the study also examines non-Indian imaginative writings about Indians. By comparing Euro-Creole, Afro-Creole and Indian portrayals of the Indian presence, a more detailed exploration of the way ethnocentric biases enter the fiction of writers of different backgrounds is permitted. Again, because non-Indian writing about Indians dates from the nineteenth century, exploring it gives the study an additional historical dimension and shows that the relationships between ethnicity, social consciousness and imaginative writing is not a static one.

The thesis does not deal with the large quantity of imaginative writing from Trinidad and Guyana which is silent about the Indian presence. Whilst dealing with this body of work might have given the study a greater sense of architectural completeness, it would not have materially affected the essential argument or its proof, would have resulted in an even greater bulkiness and would have involved going

over ground which has already been explored. In any case, much of the writing about the Indian presence by non-Indian authors reveals more about the social and cultural orientation of the writer than about the Indian community, and these preoccupations are related to the internal tensions of race and class within Creole culture. However, as within Indian writing, there are a few novels by non-Indian writers which go beyond naturalistic portrayals of the Indian presence as simply part of the observable world, and attempt to create fictive worlds which embrace the presence of both groups within an interactive whole. Such novels, whether by Indian, Euro-Creole or Afro-Creole authors, do not always escape from an ethnocentric point of view, but their distinction, apart from their drive towards wholeness, is that they make the processes which produce ethnically biased ways of seeing part of their subject rather than their unscrutinised determinant.

A study which devotes nearly as much space to social phenomena as to the analysis of literary texts owes some explanation both to the reader who is predominantly interested in literature and is disturbed by the quantity of non-literary information, and to the social scientist who may well question what contribution the discussion of literary texts could make to the problems of finding adequate ways of describing and accounting for the nature of social reality. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to a preliminary discussion of the methods I have used for bringing literature and other social practices into a common focus, and a statement of the assumptions and values which underly those methods.

In the first place, the study attempts rather more than the simple placing of the literary text against a 'social background', where the text is seen as autonomous and the background as interesting, additive and inessential.¹³ My case is that it is only in its relationship to its context that a text's meaning can be adequately constructed. The argument for the first kind of text-context relationship can be seen in E.D. Hirsh's¹⁴ distinction between meaning and significance.

By meaning Hirsch refers to the 'intrinsic' meaning of the text as produced by its verbal structure, whereas 'significance' refers to the relationship of the text to what lies beyond it- the reader's interpretation, for instance, or its historical context. 'Meaning' is supposedly determinate and stable,¹⁵ whereas significance can change according to the multiple ways in which a text relates to values and concerns beyond itself. Such an approach clearly licences the bringing together of text and context, but only as discrete primary and secondary phenomena. In making this distinction between fixed intrinsic meaning and unstable, extrinsic significance, Hirsch uses a faulty account of the process of perceptual recognition which polarises the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction rather than seeing the two terms in an interactive relationship. He makes use of Piaget's account of the way a child must learn to distinguish a content from a context (e.g. recognising that though the same volume of liquid looks different in different shaped containers, the volume remains the same). He comments: 'If we could not distinguish a content of consciousness from its context we could not know any object at all in the world'.¹⁶ This is clearly true, but taken as a definition of the process of interpretation it is incomplete. I would argue that recognition involves both the process of discrimination and abstraction (identifying the 'sameness' of a content) and of contextualisation. The well known visual illusion, the Necker cube, illustrates the point. When context is removed (i.e. the viewer does not know what perspective the cube stands in) interpretation becomes unstable and ambiguous. The double process of abstraction and contextualisation in interpretation is very clearly formulated in the work of the Marxist philosopher of language, V.N. Volosinov, who shows that comprehending an utterance involves the interaction of the abstractive processes of decoding it in terms of the phonemic, syntactic and semantic rules which create meaning potential in language, at the same time as constructing its meaning

in terms of its concrete context. In Volosinov's words, 'meaning belongs to a word in its position between speakers',¹⁷

Hirsch clearly recognises this when, for instance, he indicates his assent to the definition of meaning as language in use, and he makes use of the notion of illocutionary force. But this very obviously undermines the idea that meaning as created by the rules of the language system is the same as author's meaning, which must clearly involve the context in which the utterance is made. Hirsch's awareness of this leads him into several confusions such as the unnecessary distinction between author's meaning and significance for the author. However, at one point Hirsch does shift the idea of 'meaning' away from author's determinate meaning towards the idea that meaning equals the semantic possibilities of the linguistic symbols used. In other words, one can propose the text as a stable abstraction whose specific linguistic form is one determiner of its meaning. As Hirsch writes, 'meaning cannot exceed the semantic possibilities of the symbols used',¹⁸ and clearly any argument against total relativism of interpretation depends on accepting that those semantic possibilities license some and only some readings of the text. However, the concrete meaning of a literary text (whether the author's original meaning or the reader's contemporary meaning) can only be known when the text is related to its context. Indeed, there is a further important distinction to be made between 'writer's meaning' and meaning as semantic potential. It must at least exist as a possibility that what a writer intends his or her words to mean might well be at variance with what is sanctioned by the semantic rules of the language system; in other words one cannot assume that authors always say what they mean any more than the rest of us. The existence of unconscious irony (when, for instance, writers are so embedded in a particular ideological framework that they appear unaware of the implications of what they are saying) is another case in point. Examples of this kind of unawareness are discussed in Chapter Four.

This is not, though, assuming a priori that works of fiction are necessarily either ideologically unaware or wholly self-conscious.

The second kind of error contained in Hirsch's distinction is that it seems to assume that there can be a distinction between reading for meaning and reading for significance. He clearly recognises that the second kind of reading is historically and socially situated, but not the first. In reality, of course, the 'intrinsic' text can only be seen as an abstraction. The minute an actual reader begins reading it, it becomes actualised as the text-for-the-reader. This is the raw material the reader-critic works on, and unless he or she makes the positivistic error of confusing text-as-read with text-as-potentiality or the text-as-it-meant-to-the writer, this raw material must be seen as bearing the impress of the reader's own way of seeing. Indeed, the more a critic imagines that meaning can be gathered solely from the text itself, the more likely he or she is to impose a meaning on the text which is constructed out of the critic's own unexamined and unargued interests. What I argue then is that the meaning of a text has to be constructed in two interacting ways: by working on the semantic potential of the text-as-read and at the same time by relating this text-as-read to its context. This is equally true of attempts to construct the writer's original meaning or of attempts to say what the text might mean to different readers. The other important step in the process of interpretation is for the reader-critic to focus clearly on the assumptions and values he or she brings to the process of reading.

It is not difficult to understand how the tendency towards intrinsic criticism comes about. Novels, plays and poems are utterances, but of a specific kind in that not only do they tend towards complexity, but also carry their own context with them. It is this last feature, taken at face value, which leads some readers and critics to the supposition that the meaning of any literary text is to be found solely within its intrinsic verbal structure. It is, for instance, part of the potential power of the novel that by having its own apparent con-

text, it can create the illusion of self-contained wholeness. It is part of the novel's rhetorical effect, and it is surely part of any critical response to inquire what kind of picture of the world the reader might be persuaded to accept. In reality the text has been created by its author out of a language system, sets of representational conventions and existing social knowledge (e.g. assumptions about personality, motivation and causation) which are social creations existing prior to and outside of the novel. Again, the illusion of self-containedness also depends upon the reader's capacity to interpret the literary work in terms of an assumption of possessing the same set of codes and social knowledge as the author. It is, moreover, only possible to determine whether a literary text is genuinely original in language, mode of representation or aesthetic convention and in providing new frameworks for social knowledge when it is related to what exists in the extra-textual world beyond it.

In Chapter Sixteen, I argue that the 'truth' content of imaginative literary works is related to the nature of their implicit or explicit constructs of being, of knowing, of the nature of the person, society and history. However, I also believe that since imaginative literature has as one of its premises the quality of fictionality or 'as-ifness', and since it manifestly deals not only with attempts to construct images of objective reality, but the manifold subjective ways in which people experience it, criticism should welcome a plurality of ways of seeing and a diversity of aesthetic forms. In other words, criticism should be able to value the later work of V.S. Naipaul for making us see things as they appear to be in all their grimness; value the work of George Lamming for helping us see how things have become and how they could become; and appreciate Wilson Harris for forcing us to question the very constructs we use to 'know' the world, constructs we take for granted.

Such is the counsel of perfection, for it would be dishonest for any critic to pretend not to make judgements in terms of an implicit

or explicit cognitive framework, social commitments and aesthetic preferences. In Chapter Sixteen, I have, for instance, outlined what I regard as adequate frameworks for describing personality. I argue that implicit theories of the person underlie fictional portrayals of character. Most readers would probably agree on the inadequacy of the ethnic stereotype as a form of characterisation; such a judgement is clearly made on the assumption that more adequate frameworks for characterisation exist. I feel it useful for the sake of both honesty and clarity to indicate on what basis one approach to the person is to be regarded as more adequate than another.

I have attempted to locate my own critical practice within the framework of epistemological realism. By this is meant an approach which is characterised by the following assumptions and procedures:

1. That the text has an existence independent of the process of knowing it, and that the text as an object of knowledge cannot be taken as its given appearances, but as an object which has to be constructed by explicit critical procedures out of the text as an object - of - experience.
2. That since the act of reading or criticism is part of the construction of the text as an object of knowledge, the procedures involved in exploring it and the standpoint from which it is interpreted need to be made wholly explicit.
3. That the aim of criticism is not simply to represent the text apparently in its own terms, but to explain it.
4. Explaining a text involves theorising about it in ways which are not given in the immediate experience of reading, since the text is an object with underlying, and sometimes hidden, relations to its process of production and to ideological constructions of reality as they are embedded in the language system, conventions of representation or social knowledge.
5. That the text's relationship to external reality cannot be known solely by intrinsic methods but in terms of its relationship to independently constructed accounts of that reality.
6. That no a priori assumptions are made about any 'essential' nature of the literary text. 19

None of what is argued above is intended to deny that some readers may derive pleasure and instruction from a purely intrinsic or purely aesthetic reading of a novel, or that formalist critics have not added much to the understanding and appreciation of literary texts. Clearly many non-Caribbean readers of, say, the fiction of V.S. Naipaul or Wilson Harris may get such satisfactions without knowing anything about the relationship of text to context. I hope that such a reader

might, even if unpersuaded by my argument, still gain something from the specific literary analyses which form part of this study. However, I must part company at this point on ethical grounds from the aesthetic reader, for in the end I believe that such an approach devalues the revelatory and communicative capacity of the text to the status of a mere commodity to be consumed in an act of solitary intellectual pleasure. It is my view that in a world where distorted and confusing appearances abound, the literary text should be valued in terms of its truth content and its capacity to instruct the reader in ways which may bring about a keener awareness of reality. In this I merely echo three of the Caribbean's most distinguished novelists who, though speaking from sharply distinguished political, epistemological and aesthetic standpoints, agree on the ultimate social relevance of imaginative literature. V.S. Naipaul has argued that the foremost responsibility of the Caribbean writer is to tell the West Indian 'who he is and where he stands'.²⁰ George Lamming argues that 'it is the function of the writer to return a society to itself'²¹ and Wilson Harris that the literary tradition 'participates [in] the ground of living necessity by questioning and evaluating all the assumptions of character and conceptions of place or destiny.'²²

Indeed, if one goes back through the history of literary criticism and examines the criteria advanced for the evaluation of literature, one finds that the only evaluative criteria which are thoroughly intrinsic produce judgements which are tautologous, trivial and sometimes absurd. Moreover, most of the criteria advanced as 'literary' turn out in the end to be based on non-literary judgements. Hirsch shows, for instance that the kind of generic criteria advanced by Aristotle - that tragedy must be judged according to the laws of tragedy - are based both on the critic's external judgement of what constitutes tragedy and on what produces catharsis in the audience, the former of which is self-evidently an ethical criterion, and the latter a psychological one. Moreover, such 'genre' criticism can lead to the

folly of eighteenth century neo-classicist criticisms of Shakespeare's failure to obey the dramatic unities. Hirsch also shows how other 'literary' modes of evaluation - for instance, the use of the criteria of 'seriousness', 'irony' or 'complexity' are in reality extrinsic, depending on the critic's moral, religious or aesthetic point of view. Caribbean literary criticism, like any other, shows many examples of evaluations which appear to be made on aesthetic criteria, but which are in reality motivated by political or ethnocentric judgements.²³ Hirsch quite rightly sees that the only kind of criticism which can be genuinely 'intrinsic', is one which treats all works as sui generis and draws the criteria for judging the work from the work itself. The notion of a work's adequacy to its own goals is clearly an important one for criticism, since many literary works manifestly fail to achieve what they attempt (because of the absence of technical skill, for instance) whilst others may fail because they contain incompatible aims. However, advanced as the main or only criterion, adequacy to intentions permits only judgements which are ultimately tautologous or trivial, logically leading to the kind of judgement where a novel by Agatha Christie or Micky Spillane must be regarded as achieving literary perfection whilst the majority of George Eliot's novels must be seen as interesting failures. Ultimately, value can only reside in the relation of something to something else, and the the only criteria we have for evaluating the 'intent' which intrinsic sui generis criticism throws us back on must be extrinsic: ethical, political or aesthetic criteria which must be argued for on their own merits.²⁴

If this argument appears to drive towards the logical separation of 'literary' criteria of excellence and the extrinsic reasons for which a work of literary imagination may be valued, then this is intentional. However, the separation is only logical and not experiential. Good ethical aims can no more be achieved by defective literary skills than vicious aims are redeemed by them. The two must always be seen as interactive in the work. It is manifestly the case that technical or formal excellence may have, in relation to any of the criteria outlined above,

enlightening, indifferent or corrupting effects. Equally, what is potentially instructive or ethically praiseworthy may have good, bad or indifferent formal treatments. For instance, few would dispute that in his command of language, capacity to handle form and power of literary persuasion, V.S. Naipaul is the artistic superior to, for instance, the Trinidadian novelist R.A.C. de Boissière. Yet one can also argue that de Boissière's Crown Jewel (1952) reveals much more about the processes of Caribbean history than Naipaul's The Mimic Men (1967) which can, in that respect, be legitimately criticised as deterministic. This is not to argue that Crown Jewel should be preferred to The Mimic Men (except as a work which reveals social process). Truths about human experience may take manifestly different forms. What I am arguing is that it is just as partial a form of criticism to evaluate Crown Jewel purely in terms of its literary-aesthetic deficiencies as it is to evaluate The Mimic Men without reference to the morbidity of V.S. Naipaul's social vision.

It follows from what is argued above that I regard fiction as a specialised but not autonomous form of communicative discourse. It is clearly specialised in the sense that it frequently, though not always, uses imagined characters and events, employs particular though varied methods of representation and often, though not necessarily, brings to the foreground the aesthetic dimensions of its use of language and its formal structure. However, what all fictions contain, by virtue of using language, from the 'least aware' popular text to the most 'self-aware' modernist text, is a referential, cognitive dimension of greater or lesser proportions which may depict some aspect of external reality (which could include the modernist theme of how fictions are constructed) in truthful, distorted or wholly mendacious ways or, in the case of science fiction, fantasy or other romance genres, may invent a 'reality' which has never yet existed, but which inevitably stands in a

signifying and significant relationship to contemporary reality. The cognitive dimension of works of imaginative literature may well be very complex and ambiguous and may resist, in differing degrees, reduction to any generalisable theme or message. However, it is, in my view, the interaction of this cognitive dimension with the writer's capacity through imagination and rhetorical skill to re/create his meanings as 'experience' for the reader, which gives literature its ultimate value. This view is, of course, in sharp distinction to those modernist or conventionalist critical views of the novel which insist that novels are ultimately only about themselves. It is true that there are indeed modernist novels in the tradition of Tristram Shandy which are about the process of creating fictions, but it seems to me quite unwarrantable to expand this to being the function of all criticism. There are indeed novels which are self-reflective for quite different purposes; for instance, V.S. Naipaul's The Mimic Men (1967) stresses the fact of its being written and its material shaped in order to make it clear that the novel's model of the world comes from a particular socially and culturally constructed way of seeing it. Clearly, different kinds of novels invite different kinds of responses. Some writers invite the reader to view their work as autotelic structures, others subordinate (or seem to do so) form to a content which stands in a much more metonymic and referential relationship to the world. Yet both kinds of novels involve the reader in a double process: decoding the text as an apparently autonomous structure and reflecting on the insights, or the lack of them, that the novel gives into the world of the reader's experience or knowledge.

Many readers of literature may accept the arguments above on the referential dimension of the novel and its social relevance but still feel that some damage is being done to the special character of the literary text by the stress I have placed on its relationships to other forms of social knowledge and social practice. Yet it is precisely

this kind of view, which grants for literature values beyond itself but insists on its independence from extrinsic factors, which often ends up by most thoroughly confusing fiction and social reality. Much of the metropolitan criticism of V.S. Naipaul is of this kind.²⁵ What typifies it is the tendency to draw the context for discussing the work from the text itself and, implicit in the first move, to assume that the picture of the world given in the text is identical with the real world. It is very easy given such an approach to talk glibly about V.S. Naipaul's acute analyses of society when the critic's only notions of Caribbean societies come from Naipaul's novels themselves. As Wellek and Warren point out, 'We have to have a knowledge independent of literature in order to know what the relation of a specific work to "life" may be.'²⁶ Moreover, putting the novel, for instance, into a contiguous relationship with other discursive forms permits a more accurate estimation of just what qualities are specific to fictional form.

At this point it is worth anticipating four possible objections to my intention to treat the novel as a form of knowledge. Firstly, it can be argued that to treat the novel as a form of knowledge which requires validation from other independent sources of knowledge is to be in danger of relegating literature to a secondary role as an inferior kind of sociology or as a kind of sugared pill which, in proportion to the aesthetic pleasures it gives, makes the transmission of knowledge all the less painful. Secondly, that since works of fiction and drama are not literally true they cannot be judged by the same truth criteria as say works of history or sociology. Thirdly, that art is primarily concerned with aesthetic pleasure and lastly, that art is not so much concerned with the external world as with the expression of unconscious psychological figures (e.g. desire, repression, wish-fulfilment.)

The first objection, that judging imaginative texts on cognitive grounds reduces their status to the secondary, is one which is made in Terry Lovell's Pictures of Reality (1980). For although Lovell argues

for the orthodox Marxist distinction between knowledge and ideology, and accepts that the distinction is equally applicable to the imaginative text, she also argues:

But knowledge production and validation (as opposed to its transmission) is the proper task of science rather than art. Art may express true ideas, and may produce knowledge in the sense that some people may learn these truths through art rather than through historical or sociological analysis. Art may also produce conviction. But the status of its truths as valid knowledge is determined elsewhere than in art, in the univocal language of science and history rather than in the polysemic language of art.

It follows I think that the cognitive functions of art must be secondary to it. The languages of art and science are very different, as are the ways in which each generates meaning. If the goal of developing knowledge of the external world is what is at stake, then it can hardly be doubted that the methods and the conceptual language of science and history are better adapted to that goal; at the very least that they have so successfully staked out their knowledge-claims that any rival claimants necessarily reserve for themselves second class status, to the extent that they cannot use the methods and signifying practices of science.²⁷

Lovell's argument appears logical, but it seems to me to be based on two false assumptions. Firstly, that science and history are superior to art as producers of knowledge on the basis of their methodology and the univocal nature of the language they use. As I will argue, the methods of the non-positivist human sciences are not as dissimilar to the methods of, say, the novel as Lovell supposes. It is indeed curious that someone arguing for a realist epistemology should make such a positivistic distinction between art and science. It is significant in my view that, for instance, the realist social psychology of Rom Harré or the phenomenologist sociology of Erving Goffman should both have adopted methods - such as episode analysis, biography and autobiographical constructions of life histories, and a dramaturgical model of social action - which have very close relationships to the methods of the novel. Secondly, Lovell's conception of the difference between the languages of art and science seems equally positivistic. For one thing it is evident that the claims to 'univocality' have been one of the ideological smokescreens of positivistic science, a claim to neutrality and non-subjectivity which analysis of the position of the scientist, particularly in the human sciences, has frequently been

revealed as illusory. The history of psychological work on human intelligence is almost too obvious a case to mention. Moreover, if one accepts that the reality of societies and cultures and of human experience in the world is highly complex, contradictory and problematic, then, even if one accepts the distinction between univocal and polysemic language, it is perfectly logical to argue that the polysemic language of art may be a more flexible instrument to represent the nature of that reality. As I will argue in Chapter Seventeen, whilst it is true that fiction may give us direct kinds of information about society, the cognitive value of literature is not primarily concerned with 'documentary' information, but rather with the realising of conceptual models of reality in the experiential textures of narrative or dramatic scene. Indeed, it is the attempt to split the conceptual and the literary which inevitably results in a diluted form of sociology and a sterile formalism. A thesis on V.S. Naipaul illustrates the point. In the first part of the thesis the historical and social background of the fiction is established in some detail. The second part establishes Naipaul's social relevance by showing how he writes about that background, though his particular way of seeing is never pinned down. The final part of the thesis establishes Naipaul's literary excellence by measuring his fiction against such abstract formal yardsticks as 'unity', 'structure' and 'style'. There was no real relationship between each section. As I argue below, an author's grasp of reality and his or her capacity to present that reality through the aesthetic structuring of the novel are logically distinct, but it makes no sense to discuss fictional structure without reference to its appropriateness to what is being represented.

The second objection, that I might appear to be overlooking the basic fact that whilst the social sciences deal with the objectively real, fiction deals with the imaginary, appears on the surface to be a major one. It is clearly true that we are right to judge fiction and factual reportage by different truth criteria, though we ought not decide on an a priori basis which is likely to give a 'truer' port-

rayal of some human episode. If however, one considers the relationship between fiction and social science, the objection can be seen to be based on a naively positivistic conception of social science, such as, for instance, stresses the testability of 'facts', statistical reliability and empirical evidence as the sole determiners of truth. Yet if one compares the novel with a non-positivistic social science one finds many points of contact. Weberian social science, for instance, makes extensive use of 'ideal types', hypothetically constructed entities used in developing theoretical explanations of the real world; and both realist and conventionalist human sciences make use of theoretical models which represent processes and structures which are not accessible to direct empirical observation. If one rejects the notion of reality as 'observable facts' then there is no reason on that score why fiction, which above all else creates models of the world, should not be judged by similar truth criteria as for instance are used to judge the validity of a theoretical model in the social sciences. I stress 'similar' rather than 'the same' because whereas fiction is primarily concerned with the experiential persuasiveness of its model, works of social science are conventionally bound to explain the methodological processes whereby the model was constructed and the empirical evidence which supports the theory construction. However, I take these differences to be mainly concerned with pragmatics and aesthetics (in the way that they tend to be addressed to different communities of readers) rather than their having any essential difference in their semantic relationship to reality. A parallel objection might be that whereas 'factual' discourses aim at objectivity, fiction is above all subjective. Again, this objection depends on the mistaken assumption that the empirical human sciences are, simply by 'keeping to the facts', objective. It is a view which fails to recognise that facts can only be described in language which has been socially constructed and used by subjects who are situated in history and have social interests. However, I would stress that works of fiction can be judged by the same criteria used to evaluate theoretical models in the social sciences

(adequate complexity, consistency, comprehensiveness and self-awareness) rather than must be, because novels can clearly be produced for a variety of ends. The point is, I think, not to make prejudgements.

Thirdly, the objection that art is primarily concerned with pleasure is clearly as unwarrantable an assumption as to suppose that all art is primarily concerned with giving knowledge. The objection also seems to suppose that knowledge and pleasure are antithetical. The problem arises from defining both terms too narrowly. Novels such as The Mimic Men, Of Age and Innocence and The Far Journey of Oudin express complex and considered ways of looking at the world; they demand as much if not more intellectual effort to grasp what they have to say as most historical or social scientific texts. Grasping the complex model each presents is in my view an intellectual pleasure which cannot really be distinguished from the 'aesthetic' pleasures of one's involvement with their narration, characterisation or texture of language. It is my contention then that there is no contradiction between recognising the aesthetic/pleasurable character of imaginative literary texts and their status as representations or misrepresentations of the world of human experience. Indeed, it is sometimes those texts which pretend only to entertain which present the most carefully disguised ideological messages.

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The fourth argument, which is indeed advanced by Lovell, is that whereas scientific knowledge is about the 'external, public social world', art is concerned with the workings of the unconscious. This seems both a divisive and narrow view of what knowledge is about and slipping back into the position, which Lovell has earlier rejected, that all art is ideological. Clearly some art is concerned with the play of the unconscious; as I argued earlier much of the stereotyped portrayal of Indian characters described in Chapter Six can be seen as the expression of unconscious fears. As I will argue in Chapter seventeen, however, the novel has the potential for bringing together in one model both a truthful picture of the external, public social

world, and insights into how people experience it.

In short, then, I start from the hypothesis that 'imaginative literature', as a notional body, cannot be given any a priori status of pre-eminence or inadequacy in relation to any other approaches to social knowledge.³⁰ This is to reject equally those views which assume the superiority of literature as a repository of human values, superior in its concern with the particular and the 'flux' of life to the remote and falsifying abstractions of the social sciences³¹ and those approaches which ascribe to all works of literary imagination merely the status of being a form of ideology as opposed to true knowledge or science.³² Clearly some works of literature are wittingly or unwittingly ideological productions, operating in the service of sectional interests, and thus distorted and incomplete. Literature may help us towards a vision of the world beyond our own subjective limitations, but is also the rhetorical power of fictional form which can naturalize and make more plausible false or even vicious world views. As Terry Eagleton argues:

...literature is a vital instrument for the insertion of individuals into the perceptual and symbolic forms of the dominant ideological formation, able to accomplish this function with a 'naturalness', spontaneity and experiential immediacy possible to no other ideological practice.³³

Conversely, it is my view that, though employing different methods from the human sciences, works of literary imagination can, under certain conditions, attain and effectively communicate a knowledge of reality, and that they are not necessarily ideological as Eagleton and other Althusserian Marxists have assumed.

My distinction between ideology and knowledge is based on the classical Marxist definition of ideology as those forms of representation which are motivated by the sectional interests of, usually, the dominant social class, representations, which though partial and distorted, are transmitted as if they were complete, natural and self-evident ways of seeing the world. As such the power of ideological forms is in their capacity to become embedded in everyday, habitual modes of

perception and reflection. For instance, stereotypes which carry the norms of sectional groups are clearly powerful ideological signifiers. Although classical Marxism has tended to attach the concept of ideology to the world-view of the ruling class, it has also referred to the counter-forms of, say, trade-union consciousness as ideological to the extent that such consciousness remains partial, 'non-scientific' and continues to assume that the world constructed under capitalism is a fixed reality. This sub-use of the concept of ideology can usefully be applied to the sectional world-views of ethnic groups in ethnically plural societies.

For example, the ways in which a majority of European writers portrayed the Indian experience of indenture are very clearly ideological in the sense that their portrayals both serve and express the interests of the European ruling class. Sometimes those interests are very nakedly revealed as when stereotypes of the Indians are used to justify the workings of the system, sometimes more subtly as when descriptions fail to take into account the position of the observer and the historical processes through which both he and the Indians were going. Yet there are also tentative approaches towards genuine description and understanding which can only be accounted for in terms of adequacy to an objective reality and to the self-awareness on the observer's part of the assumptions he brought to the act of observation. As I will argue in Chapter Seventeen, it is on the basis of such assumptions that discourses, whether sociological or fictional, begin to escape from ideology.

My third main starting point is to recognise both the logical distinction between an imaginative literary work's cognitive structure and the conventions of, say, fictional representation which communicate them, and the experiential impossibility of distinguishing between them. For instance, despite the powerful relationship between say Empiricism and the conventions of literary naturalism or between the anti-mimetic aesthetics of modernism and conventionalist epistemologies, the

two levels must be seen as distinct. For instance, though many of the novels discussed in this study are positivist in their implicit epistemologies (in the sense of being concerned with reality as observable appearances, for instance in the conception of character as observable regularities of behaviour) and employ the conventions of nineteenth century naturalism, there are also other novels which employ naturalist conventions which are realist in epistemology. In this matter my readings confirm the position Brecht took against Lukacs's insistence that epistemological realism entailed employing the conventions of the great nineteenth century realist novelists such as Balzac. Brecht for his part argued that to be 'realistic' was to be primarily concerned with content:

Realistic means: discovering the causal complexes of society / unmasking the prevailing view of things as the view of those who are in power / writing from the standpoint of the class which offers the broadest solutions for the pressing difficulties in which human society is caught up / emphasizing the element of development / making possible the concrete, and making possible abstraction from it.

Clearly for Brecht the conventions of representation are distinct, even secondary, and most concerned with the question of communicating such discoveries and unmaskings to a popular audience. Form guarantees nothing: there are 'realistic' works which employ anti-mimetic devices and 'unrealistic' works which employ realist conventions. There is much that is attractive and clarifying in Brecht's position, particularly in its opposition to the philistinism of social realist attacks on literary experimentation, yet he seems to imply that the literary work exists as a pre-formed cognitive construct in the mind of the writer which is then given representational form. This returns us to a view of literary organisation as a simple doubling of other forms of discourse or the sugared coating that makes the pill of instruction the easier to swallow. Such a view of the function of literature has, of course, very respectable historical antecedents. However, there are good grounds for rejecting this view. Brecht himself implies a closer relationship between conventions of representation

and epistemological adequacy when he writes:

Even the realistic mode of writing, of which literature provides many very different examples, bears the stamp of the way it was employed, when and by which class, down to its smallest details....

Reality changes; in order to represent it, modes of representation must also change. 36

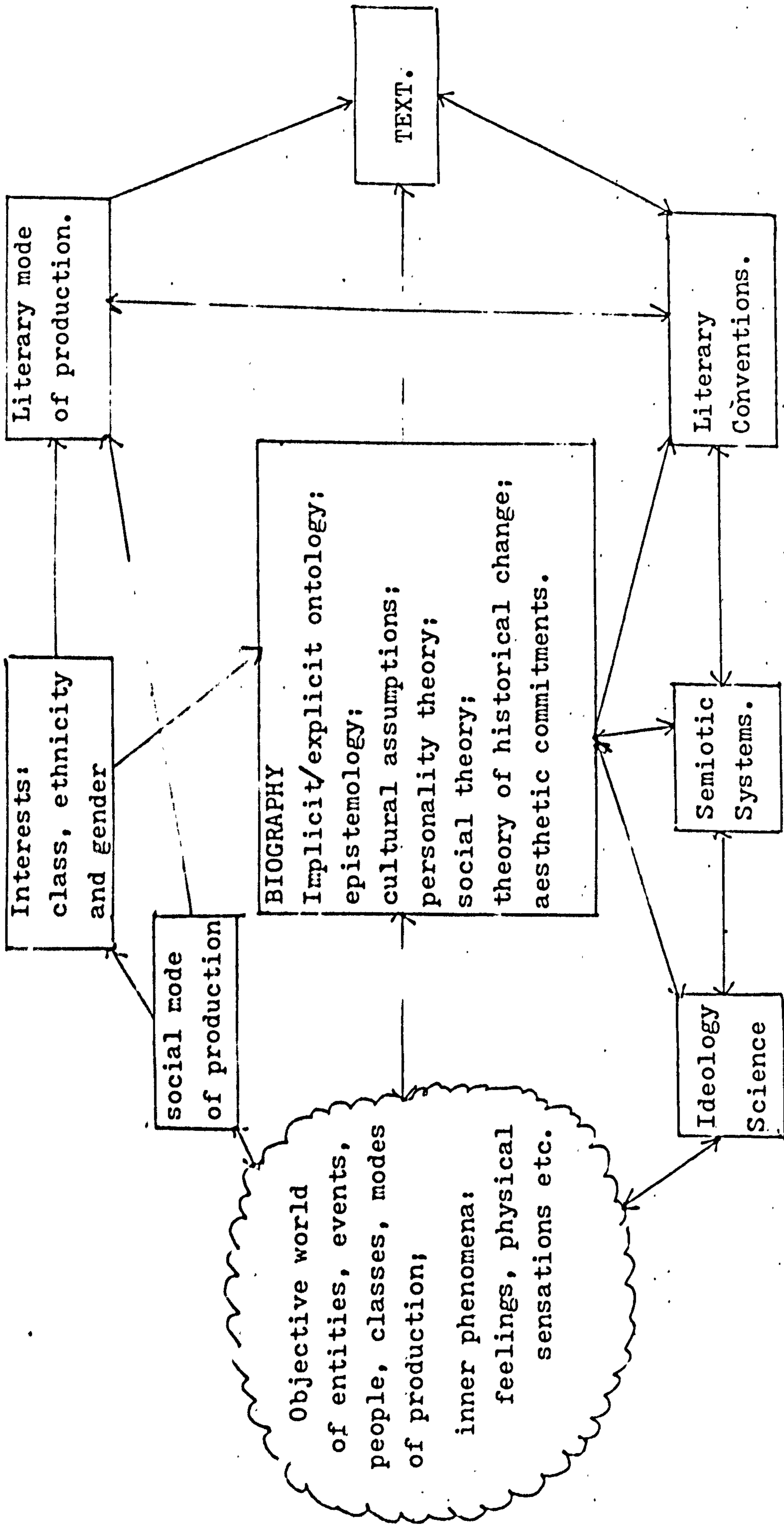
The problem and apparent contradiction in Brecht's position derives I think from the way in which he conceptualises the relationship between epistemology and modes of representation. They are in truth logically distinct but in seeing them as two reified entities Brecht seems to lose sight of their indissoluble nature. Further, in defining different conventions of representation as if they were wholly discrete, Brecht appears to overlook the empirical evidence that most literary works, novels in particular, are frequently heterogeneous in the representative devices they use. Thus, it seems to me unhelpful to insist on a distinction between mimetic and antimimetic texts, particularly since no 'mimetic' text is ever more than a representation and no 'anti-mimetic' one can ever escape entirely from being referential.

The contradiction in Brecht's position can, I think, be solved by redefining the relationship between conceptual structure and modes of representation in terms of the functional linguistics model of M.A.K. Halliday³⁷ in which all language elements, whether structural or systemic, whether at phonemic, lexical or grammatical levels, are seen to perform simultaneously three semantic functions. Halliday defines these as an Ideational function, which he splits into an experiential (referential) function concerned with entities and a logical function, concerned with the relationships between those entities; an Interpersonal function which includes both the means whereby the speaker encodes his relationship to the ideational referent and the means whereby the speaker encodes the relationship of the utterance to the intended listener; and thirdly, Halliday describes all units of the language system performing a Textual function, which

is concerned both with the speaker's structuring of the information content of the utterance and with the cohesion of the whole discourse. Every utterance, then, performs three simultaneous functions, and in that simultaneity and the possibility of logical discrimination between functions I believe one can solve the ambivalences of Brecht's Position. It is possible to argue that the same kind of functional model can be applied to larger textual units such as narrative. If one makes an inventory of the different functions of narration within the novel it is possible to distinguish logically between functions which carry the conceptual structure and functions which are more specifically concerned with the communicative and aesthetic aspects of the text. In reality, of course, the different functions are encoded in the same narrative structure and are experientially inseparable. For instance one can see that:

1. the narrative episode both marks a meaningful unit of action and punctuates the surface of the text;
2. the overall narrative structure both conveys the writer's world-view and is the aesthetic architecture of the novel's form;
3. the role of sequence in narration both enables the author to control the unfolding of meaning and the sequence of narration is the textual 'hook' which keeps the reader involved in the process of reading.

I have placed great stress on the cognitive dimension of works of imaginative literature, but it is obvious that the sophistication of the writer's conceptual structure is no more a guarantee of the capacity of the work to reward the reader with pleasure or enhanced awareness of reality than it follows that novels written within a naive empiricist epistemology and employing naturalistic devices are necessarily worthless. To assume otherwise would be suppose that novels were always coherent wholes, that they expressed consistent ways of seeing and that the individual talents of the writer were summed up either by



A MODEL OF LITERARY PRODUCTION

their conceptual frameworks or their literary skills. This leads to my fourth starting point which is to see the writer as a producer and the text as a product created within a specific material reality.

It is a model which neither assigns to the writer a passive, unknowing role as the bearer of social ideologies, nor a god-like role severed from any relationship to current forms of ideology and knowledge.

It does not assume the text to be deterministically shaped by the prevailing means of literary production, but it recognises that works of imagination only appear through involvement in the material processes of writing, publication, distribution, division of rewards and forms of reception. The model, borrowed and adapted from that outlined in Terry Eagleton's Criticism and Ideology (1976) is set out in graphic form in figure one. However, I wish to draw attention to several elements in the model which diverge from Eagleton.

Firstly, it emphasises that the writer's relationship to objective reality is inevitably mediated through socially constructed systems of knowledge, which may be ideological or scientific, and that the writer can be seen to have a biographical relationship to these systems of knowledge. Biography is seen both in terms of the writer's relationship to or membership of class, ethnic and gender groups (this context of writing is discussed in Chapter Three) and in terms of the writer's unique system of personal constructs and its relationship to dominant social theories. Here the author is conceived of according to George Kelly's³⁸ theory of personal constructs as an active elaborator of a system of interpretations of the world of experience. This aspect of 'biography' is elaborated in Chapter Seventeen.

In this outline I hope to have begun to answer the objections of both imaginary sceptical readers. The literary reader is, I hope, persuaded that my concern with the social relevance of the literary work is grounded in an involvement with its form; and, it is to be hoped, the social scientist will accept my case that whilst no a priori truth-qualities can be assigned to works of literary imagination in general,

logical criteria will be advanced to evaluate the individual work's contribution to the depiction and understanding of reality.

Two major weaknesses in this study must be admitted. Firstly, it lacks any empirical testing of the ways in which the texts discussed may relate to any conceivable reading public, and in particular the Trinidadian and Guyanese reading publics, and enter into the community's interpretations of social reality. Even so, I have felt little embarrassment in advancing from time to time hypotheses about the ways a particular work might be read by particular readers in terms, say, of their ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, the fact that until very recently the Caribbean novel has been primarily an export product sold mainly on the metropolitan market has been advanced on occasions as an explanation of some of the features to be found in the West Indian novel.

The second inadequacy is in the treatment of gender. Although I have devoted Chapter Thirteen to a discussion of the portrayal of Indian women in fiction and to the position and concerns of the Indo-Caribbean woman writer, it represents a belated effort to remedy a deficiency in the basic concept and the research I carried out rather than a consistent concern with the specificity of women's experience within the general experience of Indians in the Caribbean.

The Trinidadian poet and critic, Clifford Sealy, a tireless promoter and seller of books, told me in 1976³⁹ that he thought existing Caribbean literature belonged to a pre-history. Much of what I describe in this study belongs to such a category, and I hope in respect of such works that this study shows how easily imaginative literature can fall victim to the prejudices which afflict social life in general. In the following chapter I have reviewed some of the evidence of the ethnic and cultural diversity which makes the social totality of soc-

ieties such as Trinidad and Guyana so hard to grasp for the writer brought up within the confines of one ethnic group or another. However, there are works of imaginative literature, already existing, which in their approach to the reality of their societies' racial and cultural divisions are likely to remain pertinent for some considerable time. This study attempts to analyse the basis on which they are able to claim such pertinency.

Chapter Two: The Evidence of Difference.

This chapter attempts to substantiate the assertion that in the ethnically plural societies of the Caribbean the writer faces peculiarly acute problems of social knowledge. All heterogeneous societies with complex divisions of labour and class stratification pose problems for writers who wish to portray areas of life outside their individual experience, but my case is that in Trinidad and Guyana these problems are both different and more difficult. In other situations when a writer sets out to portray societies other than his or her own, there are frequently compensating factors. For instance, the writer may be granted the status of favoured stranger with the benefits of hospitality and frank disclosure or, in the case of the historical novelist, can rely on research and the confidence that acts of imaginative projection can only be tested against other projections. For the writer of Indian or African origin in Trinidad or Guyana there is much less likelihood of being able to enjoy the status of favoured stranger in the other's community. There is also likely to be the awareness that any projections made about the lives of the ethnic other are likely to be closely scrutinized by the other for signs of ignorance, patronization or hostility. This is not to accept the solipsistic pessimism of T.S. Eliot's lines:

We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison.

For instance, in the United Kingdom, the long history of English drama and fiction, and more recently of film and television, has contributed to a collective storehouse of social knowledge well beyond individual experience. The validity of some of this knowledge (the idea, for example, of common British values) is questionable, but in Trinidad and Guyana the lack of even an illusory consensus inevitably creates uncertainty in the writer. Indeed, any attempt to assert a cultural norm in these societies is likely to be ethnically divisive.

The popularity of the novel of reportage in the United Kingdom and the United States testifies to the belief of millions of readers that, even in an electronic age, fiction still provides a rewarding means of

reaching out beyond the self into the unknown areas of others' experience. Fiction could play such a role in ethnically plural societies such as Trinidad and Guyana. However, like other 'broker'² institutions which bring ethnic groups into contact, it could also function as a promoter of ethnic interests and exacerbate divisions.

This chapter outlines, with as much empirical evidence as possible, such salient differences between Indo-Creole and Afro-Creole lives as might be perceived by direct observation. In particular it considers those differences which might lead the citizens of these societies to view their world from an ethnic perspective, or to conclude pessimistically that their world is irretrievably fragmented. Thus the chapter looks at how residential separation may result in mutual ignorance and how occupational specialisation may lead to real differences of material interest. It examines the interplay between ethnic interests and broker institutions such as the educational system, trade unionism and national politics. It considers what actual cultural differences exist, and raises the possibility that such differences may be taken as evidence that each group possesses its own contrary value system.

The method of presentation is deliberately contrastive and static, and treats Indians and Afro-Creoles as if they were two monolithic groups, which of course they are not. My reasons for this mode of presentation are twofold. Firstly, I want to stress what is directly observable and as such may feed the consciousness of each group of the other's difference. Secondly, there is evidence that there is indeed a tendency for each group to see the other in monolithic terms and, where intra-group differences are recognised, to describe them in terms of the 'core' concept by which the group as a whole is defined.³ In Chapters Three and Twelve there is an attempt to show the inadequacy of the epistemological framework which moves directly from observable phenomena to conclusions about the nature of society and the ethnic other. At this point the aim is to highlight the striking character of the observable itself.

The first pertinent fact is that comparatively few Indians and Afro-Creoles either live or work together. Only 10.48% of the population of Port of Spain is Indian compared to 81.3% for the Afro-Trinidadian and the Coloured population combined. Even in San Fernando in the Indian south of Trinidad, only 28.15% of the inhabitants are Indians. The proportion of Indians to Creoles in the rural areas is almost the inverse.⁴ This urban and rural distribution of population is much the same in Guyana where Indians, the largest ethnic group, comprise only 13.4% of the inhabitants of Georgetown and New Amsterdam combined.⁵ Even within the cities, population, though not segregated, is highly polarised. For instance, in the two areas of Indian concentration in San Fernando, blacks comprised less than 13% and 23% respectively of the inhabitants.⁶ Similarly the St. James' district of Port of Spain (the location of Mr Biswas' final house on Nepaul, alias 'Sikkim' Street) has for long been a predominantly Indian quarter, whereas Laventille and East Dry River are almost wholly Black areas. In Georgetown, the Indian population is concentrated in the suburb of Subbryanville. There are exceptions to these patterns to be found in such areas as Barataria (the setting of Selvon's A Brighter Sun) a chaotic urban sprawl on the outskirts of Port of Spain, where the population is far more mixed, and in Albouystown, the oldest slum area in Georgetown where over one third of the inhabitants are Indians.

In their geographical distribution of population, Trinidad and Guyana are somewhat different. In Trinidad the Indian population is concentrated in the lowland sugar growing areas of the central and southern parts of the island. Semi-urbanised villages in the south like Debe, Penal and Siparia are almost wholly Indian.⁷ Indeed, so distinctive are the geographical and human features of the landscape of this part of Trinidad that driving through it in Creole company, I had the distinct impression that I was not the only curious outsider. The flat and at times swampy land, the small areas of rice cultivation and huge acreages of sugar, the distinctive Indian houses on their tall stilts, the mud-

caked buffaloes and the occasional garishly painted Hindu temple all produce the feeling that one has crossed a boundary. In Guyana, the geographic distribution of population is ethnically more even, but even before the racial strife of the 1962-64 period brought about increased separation, most of the villages along the coast were either predominantly Afro-Guyanese or Indian. There are villages with over 90% of the population Indian, like Annandale, Cane Grove, Bush Lot and Crabwood Creek; and villages like Buxton, Mahaicony, Hopetown and Wismar with over 75% of the population Black.⁸ A fairly typical example of geographic proximity and racial segregation can be seen in the neighbouring villages of Annandale and Buxton. What Indian population Buxton still has - most fled in 1964 - is concentrated on the border with Annandale. There are no Blacks living in Annadale North (on the sea side of the coastal road) and the few Blacks who live in Annandale South live in the part which merges into Buxton where the settlements peter out into the cane-fields. Blacks attend the open air Annandale market, particularly to buy the fish brought in by the Indian fishermen, but scarcely ever visit Indian houses and are rarely invited to the frequent weddings. There is one Indian shop in Buxton, others were burned down during the disturbances: there are still vacant house lots on the Buxton side where Indians abandoned their homes. There is little friction now between the inhabitants of the two villages,⁹ but it is only in recent years that Indians have felt it safe to walk in Buxton, and few would venture there after dark.

The result of such separation is that Indians and Afro-Creoles tend to know little about one another from direct experience and are thus more likely to depend on racial stereotypes for their notions of the other. Even where the population is more evenly mixed there is often an absence of close inter-racial relationships.

However, because it is the dominant system, Indians tend to be much more knowledgeable about the Creole cultural system than Creoles about Indian culture. My research suggests that this generalisation holds

good for Indian and Creole authors.

These patterns of residential separation derive both from occupational differences and the desire of each group to live with its own. In Trinidad, urban industrial workers are predominantly Negro. Although no figures exist, the civil and public services are only gradually ceasing to be Negro preserves.¹⁰ Most agricultural activity is carried out by Indians. Even within the plantation sector there has been role difference in that jobs in the sugar factory tended to be performed by Blacks, though this is changing under Indian pressure. There are, as V.S. Naipaul notes, some even more minute areas of specialisation, such as Indian coconut sellers and Negro 'sno-cone' operators.¹¹ In the past the division of labour was a major reason for the absence of racial conflict. There are several reasons why this should no longer be the case. There is quite conclusive evidence that Indian sectors of employment are far worse paid than those which Negroes dominate.¹² A survey carried out in 1971-72 found, for instance, that the median income in the oil and asphalt industries was T&T \$405 per month against \$176 in the sugar industry.¹³ In agricultural production in general the median income was even lower, \$138 per month. As a consequence there has been increasing Indian pressure for a more equitable distribution of income and a greater share of jobs in the better paid sectors of employment. However, it must be pointed out that the differences in wage levels are relative. Neither Blacks nor Indians participate in any substantial number in large scale property and business ownership,¹⁴ though there are a few highly visible examples of Indian success in such areas as haulage and construction.

In Guyana, the relationship between race and employment is potentially even more divisive. At present many Indians believe that the P.N.C. Government, by means of state control, is attempting to put all areas of the economy under African control, including those where Indians dominated in the past. The basic division of labour is similar to that in Trinidad. At the last survey 80% of the labour force in the sugar ind-

istry was Indian, with most African workers employed in the factories and estate offices. Since the nationalisation of Bookers, expatriate staff have mainly been replaced by Afro-Guyanese nominees of the P.N.C. This was deeply resented by Indian workers, and a lengthy strike on the Albion Estate spread to become a national stoppage in 1976 to demand Indian and Negro parity of jobs in the supervisory grades.¹⁵ In late 1977 racial tensions worsened when the Government recruited strike-breakers, many from the criminally penetrated black-chauvinist Sons of David group, to replace striking Indian sugar workers.¹⁶ In the dominant public sector the existing racial imbalance (caused by the earlier access of urbanised Afro-Guyanese to education) has been accentuated by the virtual congruence of the P.N.C. Party and the state machine. Even before the P.N.C. came to power, Indians comprised less than 20% of the security forces, only 33% of the civil service (an even lower percentage at higher grades) and 27% of positions in Government agencies. Indian suspicions of discrimination in the public sector in the past were probably behind their keenness to enter the independent professions. In 1965 Indians comprised 52% of registered medical practitioners to 8% Negroes; and 50% of the practising barristers and solicitors were Indian against 25% Negro.¹⁷ As in Trinidad, wages are higher in Afro-Guyanese sectors of employment, particularly in the bauxite industry. Linden, the bauxite town, is almost wholly Black in population.¹⁸ A former sector of Indian affluence, the rice industry, which was nurtured by loans for mechanisation by the Jagan Governments between 1957-64, has been much depressed by P.N.C. Government policies. Formerly marketing favoured the producer, but the Government dominated Guyana Rice Corporation has tilted the advantage from the producer towards the provision of cheap rice for export and local consumption. Emigration has been one index of integration into the national economy. In the 1950's and 1960's a majority of emigrants were Black. Recently there has been a very substantial rise of Indian emigration to Canada and the U.S.A.¹⁹

Institutions such as the education system and trade unions have the potential to bring ethnic sub-groups together in shared national

objectives. What has happened has frequently been the reverse. Thus though, as Rubin and Zavalloni's book, We Wish To Be Looked Upon (1969) has shown, Negro and Indian children in Trinidad share much the same hopes, they often do so in separate schools. The Maurice Report (1960) noted that even in ethnically mixed areas as many as 97% of children in some schools came from the same ethnic group.²⁰ This was in part the heritage of the denominational system in which different Christian denominations provided education on a racially segregated basis. For instance, the intake of the Presbyterian Canadian Mission schools was, and continues to be, almost wholly Indian.²¹ Later, during the 1950's Hindu and Muslim groups, most notably the Maha Sabha, began building schools for children of their own faith. Even so, many Indians still resent the fact that Indian children still have to attend Christian denominational schools.

In Guyana, the attempt of the Jagan Government of 1957-64 to secularise education and bring it under public control further illustrates the involvement of education with ethnic interests. Up to 1958 virtually all schools were controlled by the Christian denominations. The aim of the P.P.P. was to promote a national system of education, remove long standing discrimination against non-Christian teachers and integrate 'young Guianese ... preventing the threatened disintegration of our society.' However, the P.N.C. and U.F. opposition strenuously opposed the ending of dual (effectively Church) control. Ethnic pressures lay behind both positions. The P.P.P. was pressured by its Hindu supporters who felt, justifiably, that they were discriminated against. On the other side Afro-Guyanese teachers, an important section of the P.N.C.'s organisation, feared that a secular state system would jeopardise their relatively privileged position. Because of the racial violence during its last years in office the P.P.P. was never able to carry out its programme.²² Ironically, it was the P.N.C. who finally ended the denominational system in 1976. Then opposition came not only from some of the churches but also from Indians who feared that their children would be subjected

to P.N.C. indoctrination, their culture further threatened, and that teaching posts and promotions would be determined chiefly by party affiliation.¹³

Similarly, because trade unions have largely been based on the occupational specialisation of each group, they have as often contributed to ethnic division as brought the working class together. In Trinidad, although there has been an alliance between the leaderships of the mainly Black Oil field Workers and the mainly Indian Sugar Workers unions, their members have continued to vote nationally along ethnic rather than class lines. In Guyana, trade unionism has been even more divided. Urban Black trade unions, lead by Burnham, played a leading role in the violent protests against the Jagan Government in 1960-61, while the Indian sugar workers union has been in constant conflict with the P.N.C. Government.

These historically determined divisions in Trinidadian and Guyanese societies pose immense political problems. As yet political action has largely fed off these divisions. The details of the changing political relationships of Indians and Blacks, and the way these have paralleled changes in the nature of fictional representations, are discussed in later chapters. It is sufficient at this stage to recall that in both countries, political parties have largely derived their support from a single ethnic group.

Political identification is clearly bound up with the wider question of social and ethnic consciousness. Any discussion of how that consciousness is formed has to focus not only on differences of material interest but also on the significance of cultural differences. One indication of the importance of the latter is to be found in the frequent claims by Creole politicians that Indian cultural survivals buttress Indian separateness and thwart the creation of national unity. The following letter which appeared in the Trinidadian paper The Express (27 February 1975) states very frankly what politicians have tended to say more guardedly:

...To my mind the Indians are the major cause of this, [the lack of national unity] since they insist on carrying on Indian culture, language, songs, dances and all the rest. They do not really consider themselves Trinidadian because they do not take part in real Trinidadian culture, that is the steelband, calypso, carnival and so on.

...It is the Indians who have cut themselves off by their clinging to Indian culture and their reluctance to intermarry with the negro population.

...Steps must be taken to restrict or cut off the flow of Indian records, books and films into the country.

...We cannot force people to intermarry against their will. But at least we can advise [sic] means to throw the Indian and Negro youth together so that marriage comes naturally.

If the letter is taken as a true reflection of opinion, then it suggests that Indians and Creoles have fundamentally opposed models of national culture. The Indian view requires a national culture which is openly pluralistic; the Creole view is to demand assimilation to the dominant Euro-Afro-Creole cultural norm.

However, even when Indians and Blacks share the same cultural activity it can still be used to express a group's sense of its cultural alienation. An example of this was the response of large numbers of Indo-Trinidadians to the presence and victory of the Indian cricket team in Trinidad in 1971. As on previous tours there was a very high Indian attendance at the Test match, including many who were not usually interested in cricket. The public stand was dubbed ALL INDIA and decorated with banners and placards supporting the Indian team. Successful Indian players were mobbed and garlanded.

Inevitably, perhaps, kinship structures have been given most attention in studies of cultural difference. They can be viewed in several ways: in terms of actual differences between Indian and Black patterns; in terms of what is regarded by each group as typical both of the other and of itself (and in the latter case this may involve the way the actual relates to the ideal); and, not only in terms of function, but in terms of the meaning of difference to each group. Both Indian and Afro-creole patterns take a variety of forms from the highly structured 'traditional' Hindu joint family to the casual and impermanent visiting union. However, there are marked differences in the proportions of each ethnic group likely to be found in each type of union.

A study dating from the early 1960's shows that in Trinidad, by the age of twenty-five, 90% of Indian women in the sample were married against only 31% of non-Indian women; and that few Indians were found in the dominant Afro-creole forms of the 'visiting' and common-law union.²⁵ Again, there are different ideals within each group. The creole ideal is the Euro-Christian norm of legal marriage and the separate nuclear household. However, substantial numbers of Afro-Creole unions diverge from that norm. Typically these can be described as non-legal, not necessarily permanent, frequently with a female head of household and the male only loosely attached, and characterised by competitive equality between male and female.²⁶ By contrast the Hindu ideal has been the patrilocally extended family with a hierarchical and formal structure of relationships, male dominance and the subordination of individual interests to the corporate good. Though only a minority of Indians now live in the kind of joint family portrayed in A House For Mr. Biswas, many still live in three generational families and maintain a high degree of family cohesion.

Differences between these types of union are also marked by the style of wedding. The 'tek-up' consensual union is rarely marked by any public ritual, whereas Indian marriages, even when not arranged, as few now are, are frequently still accompanied by an expensive and elaborate three day wedding ceremony even in the poorest villages.²⁷ However, Western styles of weddings have become popular amongst urban Indians, who have exchanged weddings in traditional dress at home for a ceremony in long white wedding dresses and lounge suits at the Hindu temple.

Differences in family organisation have obvious consequences for the novelist or dramatist, since the family is the microcosm within which the individual and the social meet. But for the Trinidadian or Guyanese writer there is the problem that the inner workings of the family of the ethnic other is precisely that area of their life most closed to him. This recognition is an important theme in V.S. Naipaul's The Mimic Men.²⁸ In the absence of intimate knowledge, differences rapid-

ly become stereotypes. Indians are frequently critical of the weakness of Negro family ties, picturing Negro men fecklessly fathering children with a variety of women. They consider themselves to be strongly motivated by family values. The creole stereotype of the Indian family comprises an arranged marriage, authoritarian wife-beating husbands and economic ties rather than mutual affection. This stereotype is dismally familiar in the fiction of non-Indian authors.²⁹

But the most significant kinship difference between Indians and Blacks is in whom each will marry. Although Hindu caste endogamy was substantially destroyed during the indenture period, some vestiges remain. There are still high caste Hindus who have not forgotten their caste, and disapproval of marriages made below caste can still arise. However, caste endogamy has largely been replaced by racial endogamy. Marriage to Europeans may be tolerated in more 'liberal' families, but the majority of Indians abhor the idea of marriage to Blacks.³⁰ On the other hand, Afro-Caribbeans, with the exception of racially conscious groups, have been far less reluctant to marry outside their group. According to Iris Sukdeo's sampling of attitudes to intermarriage in Guyana during the late 1960's, 90% of Negroes sampled believed that Negroes were not opposed to intermarriage, against 82% of Indians who believed Indians were opposed.³¹ Indeed, there is some evidence that Indian women are particularly attractive to a substantial proportion of Negro men, presumably because of their lighter skin and straighter hair. The fact that (as I was told by both Indians and Creoles) the majority of prostitutes in the brothels of Port of Spain and Georgetown are Indians, seems to say as much about the racial and sexual predilections of at least some black males as about the pressures on Indian country girls. In Sukdeo's survey, 46% of Negro men selected Indian women as the most attractive race and only 15% chose Negro women.

Such attitudes to marriage and sexual partners are part of a wider set of dissimilarities between Afro-Creole and Indian racial attitudes.

On the surface, black racial consciousness often appears ambivalent, whereas Indian attitudes to their racial identity often appear to be monumentally secure. Yet there are tensions within both positions which can only be explained historically. Numerous studies have shown that throughout the Caribbean the ideal somatic norm has been in the direction of fair skin, straight hair and European features.³² Indeed, the historian Elsa Goveia has argued that it was the consensus that these were the unarguable criteria for the possession of power which provided colonial society with its main integrative mechanism.³³ Thus whilst there were undoubtedly pockets of black racial and cultural pride before that period, it was not really until the 1930's, in either Trinidad or Guyana, that organised and articulated campaigns for black self-esteem came into existence. Given the uncertainty towards their racial identity of at least some Afro-Creoles, and the fact that real economic power has remained either with local whites or the multi-national companies, it is not surprising that such movements have expressed their pride in their blackness in the most assertive terms. The Indian response to the upsurge of black racial consciousness in the 1960's and 1970's is discussed more fully in Chapter Fourteen.

By contrast Indians have always appeared to have a strong sense of pride in their race, culture and ancestry. Yet Indians emigrated from a society which had its own correlations between skin-colour and esteem, with the high caste, comparatively light-skinned, European-featured Aryans at the pinnacle of the society and dark-skinned tribal peoples as out-castes at its base.³⁴ When Indians entered the Caribbean it appears that their own racial values were simply realigned with the colour-stratification system of the Caribbean. It is evident that many Indians rapidly categorised the Blacks as an out-caste group to whom they were racially superior. One old Indian chauvinist addressed me confidentially as a fellow Aryan who was bound to share his racist views of the Blacks. Yet how is one to interpret the fact that, secure as they seem, many Indians in the Caribbean appear to be under very

strong inner pressures to maintain their racial purity, and exhibit an almost paranoic horror of miscegenation? Although the number of Negro-Indian unions is small, chauvinist Indian groups have made considerable play with the threat of racial extinction. Even a radical Indian paper, actively engaged in promoting Afro-Indian working class unity, felt it necessary to warn that integration was not to be confused with miscegenation, which they accused the ruling Trinidadian elite of encouraging as a substitute for political integration and power-sharing. ³⁵ The very different attitudes of Indians and Afro-Creoles to the 'dougla' group (persons of mixed Negro-Indian parentage) is discussed more fully in Chapter Thirteen.

In other more purely expressive and group-defining cultural elements such as language, bodily communication, religion, food, dress, music and entertainment, there are equally clearcut examples of separate Indian and Afro-Creole forms.

Since both Afro-Creoles and Indo-Creoles share a common use of a language continuum from standard English to local forms of creolese, it would seem that language should function as an integrative medium. This is substantially true but not the whole story. For instance, one researcher, P. Dukhedin-Lalla, has suggested that there are in fact three Indo-Trinidadian language groups: a very small minority of Hindi monolinguals, a rather larger minority of bilinguals and a majority of creole monolinguals who retain only lexical items of Hindi. ³⁶ The three groups relate roughly to generation divisions. However, Dukhedin-Lalla and another researcher, M.A. Durbin, suggest that the division between the second and third groups is blurred, and that there is a group, larger than is generally recognised, of Indians who have a passive understanding of Hindi but do not use it. ³⁷ At present Hindi has little general prestige since it is not the language of politics, technology or commerce; the Governments of both Trinidad and Guyana have so far been unremittingly hostile to the idea of teaching Hindi in the state schools; Indian intellectuals are by no means united on the desirabil-

ity of a revival and, as yet, enthusiasm is not as widespread amongst young Indians as some supporters of Hindi would like to think. However, these inhibiting factors may not always remain. Many Indo-Guyanese look with admiration and envy towards the Indian community in Suriname who have maintained Hindi, as bilinguals, and have a radio station which broadcasts wholly in that language.

Nevertheless, differences of language use can still serve as ethnic markers. Even to the inexperienced ear the speech of rural Indians and urban Afro-Creoles sounds different. Dukhedin-Lalla, indeed, hypothesises the existence of two distinct creoles, one starting from the African contact with English, the other from Hindi contact with Afro-creole and English. Other linguists have, however, rejected the hypothesis.³⁸ The difference of view seems to depend on how central lexis or syntax is to the linguist's argument. Nevertheless, as William Labov has shown, dialect differences which have the function of marking ethnic identity tend to remain distinctive.³⁹ The continued use by many Indians of Hindi lexical items, particularly referring to food, domestic equipment and family relationships, not only marks referents for which there is no English term, but also serves as a sign of Indianness. Hindi terms are sometimes put to rather more negative use when Indians use curse words to insult Negroes, in their presence, but with the expectation of not being understood. The chauvinist Indian journal Mukdar made free use of such abusive terms, as a deliberate show of 'private/public' usage on the same principles as Afro-American radicals popularised such ghetto terms as 'honkie'.⁴⁰

Again, though no studies exist, there are observable differences between Indian and Afro-Creole styles of non-verbal bodily communication. These include differences in tactile, proxemic and eye-contact behaviour. For instance, Indians seem to me to be much more frequent touchers and favour greater personal closeness than Creoles. Styles of walking can also be ethnically marked; Indians are quite frequently amused by the exaggerated dance-like gait favoured by some young

urban Blacks.

There are two choices the imaginative writer has to make in relation to ethnic differences in language use. As yet no Indian writers in Trinidad or Guyana, with the exception of authors of devotional tracts, have made the more fundamental choice of using Hindi as the language of creative literature. However, in Suriname the Indian poet, Shrinivasi (M.H. Lutchman) writes in Hindi, Negerengels and Dutch,⁴¹ while in Trinidad the protest literature of some of the writers connected with the Mukdar group has been very consciously laced with Hindi lexical items. The other choice relates to the kind of linguistic variation that R.B. Le Page discusses in his article, ⁶Dialect in West Indian Literature.¹ He argues that:

Neutrality is no good for the novelist. But if he accurately catches on the printed page the West Indian tone of voice, he has to reckon with the fact that what may sound insulting or ingratiating in one dialect may signal something quite different to speakers of another dialect. ⁴²

Le Page refers to inter-island differences, but his argument also holds good for the dialects spoken by peoples of African and Indian origin. To capture the speech patterns of older rural Indians, for instance, would demand of the non-Indian writer (and reader) an acute linguistic capacity. There are, not surprisingly, few successful attempts.

For others, Hindi is largely bound up with religion, perhaps the most obvious cultural difference between Indians and Creoles. Although Christian missionaries made determined efforts at conversion, fewer than 12% of Indians in Guyana are Christian, and in Trinidad about 20%. The link between ethnicity and religion is also shown in the membership of the Christian denominations. In Trinidad 88% of Presbyterians are Indians and 90% of Methodists are Afro-Trinidadians. About 15% of the Indian population is Muslim, a ratio which has remained stable since the beginning of immigration.⁴³ In both ethnic groups religion can serve as a focus of ethnic solidarity. For instance, some pundits use the Hindu scriptures to interpret contemporary politics in ethnic terms. I have listened to the story of Krishna's struggle to overcome the evil monarch, Kamsa, used as a metaphor for the current political opp-

ression of Indians in Guyana, which only the dedication and the purity of a Krishna could end. The idea of the present as the Kali-jug, the Black Age, was given distinct racial overtones. Similar racial identifications are sometimes made in the traditional Ram Lila drama which enacts the triumph of the Hindu divinity, Ram, over the demon Ravanna (or Rawan), the Prince of Darkness. Although some Hindu religious leaders have refuted the belief, several observers have reported that for many Indians Ravanna is the king of the Negroes, and at some performances of the drama, the part was actually played by a Negro.⁴⁴

However, in general Hindus have shown more tolerance towards Christianity than Christians to Hinduism. Whereas Hindus can often relate Christian beliefs to similar ones in their own religion, few non-Indians have more than a hazy knowledge of Hinduism. The past actions of colonial governments in refusing to recognise Hindu and Muslim marriages and the hostile preaching of missionaries did much to encourage the view that Hinduism was a primitive, idolatrous paganism, a prejudice which the school system has only recently begun to discourage by providing accurate information for children.

Similarly, some Afro-Christian sects have interpreted the Bible, particularly the Book of Exodus to prove that Black people are the chosen people. The rise to power of a black man is seen as both a compensation for past sufferings and as the fulfilment of a Biblical promise. A brochure published by the Universal African Religious Temple of Georgetown proclaims that God 'has given the Guyanese Africans this Land ... Let us not force Him to take back the land and give it to someone else.'⁴⁵

Even when the folk religions of the masses share an underlying similarity of process and purpose, they can also serve to reinforce ethnic identity by invoking Gods who are specifically Indian or African. Both the Afro-Guyanese Cumfa ceremony and the Madras, Indo-Guyanese Kali Mai Puja involve ritual possession and healing. One Cumfa night which I witnessed illustrates their ambivalence between universal

and ethnic motivations. Visitors, including some Indians, were warmly and hospitably welcomed. The 'shepherd' explained that Cumfa excluded no-one; anyone could become the host of the spirit, though only those who possessed the higher knowledge of the cult could induce the Gods to be present. One of the visitors was an Indian drummer, known to and welcomed by the Cumfa drummers. It was not long before he was playing with them. However, during the evening it was evident that something was blighting the proceedings, judging from some sour faces and tension between the leader and his followers. I learned later that some of the participants had objected to the presence of the Indian drummer, whose rhythms were, they felt, inimical to the African spirits.

Africans sometimes participate in the Kali-Mai-Puja in the belief that the powerful forces invoked can cure sicknesses. Yet for the inner players, all Indians and usually of Madras origin, the ritual serves as a focus for reaffirming cultural and ethnic identity. For the duration of the puja the inner players become vessels for the Indian Goddess Kali, in whose possession they lose their everyday identity and come in closer touch with their ancestral culture.⁴⁶

Some observers have argued that not only does religion reinforce ethnic identification, but that there are intrinsic differences between Christianity and Hinduism which predispose their followers to conflicting frameworks for action. For instance T. Roopchand claims that Hindu religious observance:

tends to divide the Guyanese society... in that it reinforces values that are incompatible with those of the rest of society, especially those of the ruling class who now espouse socialism.... the dissemination of Hindu religious values - very traditional - would limit the degree of modernisation in Guyana. 47

Similarly, Singer and Araneta characterise a Hindu as a person who is accustomed to seek solutions to his problems in the Gods and in supernatural powers, and is thus socially passive. By contrast Christian Creoles are described as motivated by 'western rationalism, natural rights and progress.'⁴⁸ Although such views are held by a good many Creoles and some orthodox Indian Marxists, the argument is highly

questionable. It seemed to me that most Hindus make the same neat divide between their religious beliefs and their day to day actions as the majority of western Christians. Most Hindus in the Caribbean no more behave as if the world were an illusion than Christians live like 'lilies of the field'. As one shop-keeper pundit told me: you have your material bank balance of dollars and cents and your spiritual balance of good deeds and good thoughts.

It might be thought that the different ways ethnic groups use their leisure time is less significant than some 'core' aspect of the cultural system such as family structure. However, the importance of leisure time in the self-definition of the various youth sub-cultures of the West ought to warn that it is dangerous to regard some aspects of a group's culture as either more central or more peripheral than others.

In both Trinidad and Guyana, this observation holds good for the markedly different choices of entertainment enjoyed by Indo-Creoles and Afro-Creoles. The differences everywhere confront the ear and eye. Indian taxis, more so in Guyana than in Trinidad, invariably play taped Bombay film music, whereas Creole taxis are tuned in to the local radio stations with their diet of North American soul music, slightly out-of-date British pop music, local imitations, reggae (imported from Jamaica) and calypsoes in Trinidad. Indian record shops tend to sell only Indian records, whereas Creole record stores sell anything but Indian music. In adjacent corner bars in Georgetown the predominantly Black clientele of one will have a jukebox playing Western pop; across the street the customers of the other, wholly Indian, will listen to a jukebox playing only Indian discs, perhaps the popular Dropati from Suriname. However, many younger Indians are more catholic in their tastes than either their elders or the majority of Creoles. At wedding nights, when the young men sport with the groom, the discs on the sound system (which sadly has largely replaced the traditional mowj band) will comprise a mixture of western pop and Indian film

music. It is, however, Indian music which is played the more often as the evening grows wilder.

The views below of a Guyanese commentator on pop music are fairly typical of Creole attitudes to Indian music. He refers to the playing, for a short period each morning, of Indian music on local radio:

Looking a little closer at this music bit all of it is foreign music. The instruments are foreign, and my friend, the language moreso! So the thing is all alien to the vast majority of Indo-Guyanese. The Indian bands play nothing but Indian music, which is often a monotonous bag; the singers cram the Hindi, and that's it. There is no future for an Indian singer in any country, except India. But no-one comes out and asks the East Indian, 'What are you after, India or Guyana?'

This perception of what is foreign by an organiser of a radio station which still largely plays American and British music, is very revealing. Somewhat similar in prejudice is the ignorant claim of a Guyanese folk music 'expert' that 'The East Indian has not created any Guyanese folk songs'.⁵⁰ This expert had evidently never entered an Indian village or heard such songs as 'Sunday Morning Cock a Crow' or 'Bhowgee Gal' or such singers as Mannie Haniff or Daisy Panchu.⁵¹

Similar differences of taste exist in the cinema. Creoles watch mainly American and to a lesser extent British films; the violent movies made for the Afro-American market and films featuring the 'martial arts' are particularly popular. Indians are keen supporters of the Bombay film industry, though Indians tend to be more catholic in taste than Creoles. Probably the first Indian film most Creoles will have seen in Trinidad was broadcast on television in 1976, sponsored by a local Indian business company. Television has existed in Trinidad since 1962, but this was the first time an Indian film had been broadcast. The responses of the Creoles with whom I watched the film were enlightening. It was long, in stretches boring and rather amateurish in camera work. However, for most Trinidadians television is still sufficiently novel not to be switched off whatever the provocation and the film was suffered through. Finally it finished only to be succeeded by a brief educational film on Indian festivals. It

was too much. Liberal and aware of the disadvantages suffered by Indian culture in Trinidadian society, my hosts exploded:

I can' stan' any more of this Indian thing...What will happen when the Chinese start wanting Chinese films, the Syrians Syrian films...?

It would seem, however, that interculturalisation has taken place as far as food is concerned. Curry and rotis are undoubtedly part of the national food of Trinidad, but the borrowing cannot be said to carry cultural integration very far. Indeed, there remain real differences between creolised food such as roti, which has gone through the same process of adaptation as, for instance, Chinese food in the U.K., and the food consumed by rural Indians. Certainly, only a minority of Indians have adopted creole foods, mainly because of taboos against beef and pork. Pig-keeping has always been associated with out-caste groups by Hindus, and the same prejudices transferred to Afro-creoles for whom pork is a staple part of their diet. Other aspects of food use can also be culturally significant. When, for instance, the Guyanese Government, for quite rational economic reasons banned the importation of a whole range of foodstuffs and tried to encourage a grow-and consume-local produce campaign, they acted with great insensitivity by banning the staple foodstuffs of Indian diets such as potatoes, wheat flour and sardines. Many Indians interpreted this action as being motivated by sheer racial malevolence.

It is not my purpose at this point to argue whether such cultural differences are simply stylistic alternatives within societies with a consensus of values, or whether they are indications that Afro-Creoles and Indo-Creoles have distinct, and in some cases opposed, value systems. What is significant is that supposedly objective academics have constructed descriptions of value differences on the basis of observable behaviour. It is therefore not surprising that similar conclusions should be drawn by those involved in the day-to-day experience of these societies.

The problem for the novelist is firstly in discriminating between such actual differences in values as may exist, and ideologically motivated stereotypes of those differences. Secondly, if the writer is going to be able to write about the lives of characters from ethnic groups other than his or her own, then the capacity to inhabit a value system sharply differing with his or her own may well be demanded. Certainly, as is demonstrated in Chapters Four to Fifteen, real or imagined differences in values not only provide much of the subject matter but also determine the character of the treatment of the ethnic other in much of the fiction and drama of Trinidad and Guyana.

Claims that a significant proportion of Indians and a significant proportion of Blacks possess different and competing value systems have been made by researchers working in a variety of disciplines ranging from social psychology to structuralist anthropology. H.B. Green, working within the positivistic traditions of American social psychology has argued that differences in the socialisation of Indian and Negro children in Trinidad revealed underlying differences in the value system of each group and have quantifiable social consequences.⁵³ Green identified three key differences in socialisation: that Indian children were generally brought up within the restrictions of the family circle, whereas Negro children were earlier accustomed to a wider range of social reference; that Negro socialisation stresses independence and intra-family equality whereas the upbringing of Indian children stressed respect for paternal authority, dependence on the family and responsibilities to it; and that Indian parents put far greater emphasis on inculcating self-control than did Negro parents. Green concluded that Negro children tended to be more sociable, more adventurous and less self-controlled than Indian children, and

supports this claim with reference to social data of unspecified authenticity. She reports that twice as many Indians as Negroes commit suicide, but that Negroes in Trinidad commit three times as many crimes, chiefly of an unplanned kind, including twice as many rape offences. Indian suicides are taken as evidence of conflict between the individual and a highly ordered set of social values, whereas Afro-Creole criminality is taken as evidence of the looseness of the creole value system. The interpretation is highly arguable, but the move from observable data to a conclusion about value differences has the same (specious) plausibility which leads every-day commonsense observations towards ethnic stereotyping. Another approach to the relationship between cultural values and behaviour is based on the observation that although there is no evidence that Indians drink significantly more than Blacks, there is evidence that the liability to alcoholism is significantly higher amongst Indians. C.D. Yawney⁵⁴ argues that one of the causes of alcoholism is a guilt-ridden attitude towards drinking, and she argues that the difference between Indians and Afro-Creoles in this respect lies in the cultural context of drinking and the values involved. Indians, Yawney argues, are highly ambivalent towards the use of alcohol. This arises from a conflict between religious prohibitions and actual behaviour, between parental admonitions and the actual drinking habits of the adult generation. One practical consequence is that Indian children are not socialised into the moderate use of alcohol, since to drink with one's father or his friends in the same rumshop would be a sign of disrespect. On the other hand there are strong pressures on young men to prove their manhood by drinking. Machismo and guilt fight out an inner battle. By contrast, Yawney states, Negro drinking is uncomplicated since it is accompanied by consistent parental socialisation, permissive attitudes towards moderate drunkenness and the context of a culture with convivial goals. Certainly, there is a good deal more attention devoted to the problems of excessive drinking in novels and stories by Indian authors than there is

by Creoles.

It was my own 'commonsense' impression that there is a far greater tension between the ideal and the actual in Indian culture than there is in Creole culture, where there seems a greater harmony between expressed values and the way people actually live. This is a hypothesis about cultures conceived of as highly generalised antithetical types, but one at least worthy of investigation. I believe that one possible reason for the Indian assertion of the moral superiority of their values over those of the creole cultural system is the unwilling awareness of a gulf between the actual and the ideal. If family life and monogamy is the ideal, outside women are not unknown; if saving is the ideal, a good deal of Indian money disappears into the rumshop. What irks, one feels, is the Creole tolerance of the actual. Creole moral infirmities then become a convenient scape-goat. However, it should be pointed out that there are very substantial numbers of Indians who live comfortably within the most demanding Hindu or Muslim moral codes, and equally large numbers of Afro-Creoles who repudiate what is permissive and cynical in creole values.

What has been presented in this chapter is a series of snap-shots of those aspects of the socio-material position, cultural activities, values and ideology of each group which may reinforce each group's sense of the other's difference. It may begin to explain the ethnocentricity of much of the creative writing produced in these societies. I have also tried to suggest how such differences pose problems of knowledge and problems of relationship for the writer who wishes to communicate to a broad national audience. What I have not yet done is to question the limitations of the observable as a full picture of reality; that awaits discussion in Chapters Three and Sixteen.

Context and Text.

This chapter reviews the extent to which much of the imaginative literature discussed in this study shows the shaping effects of its material and ideological environment. It is not an attempt to write a complete sociology of literary production in the ethnically plural societies of Trinidad and Guyana; certain features are emphasised to the exclusion of others. It looks in particular at two things: at the limitations imposed on literary production by the economic environment of the Caribbean, and to the extent to which particular ethnic orientations have entered the structure of texts and the treatment of their content.

Chapters Three and Sixteen are closely related. In this chapter the focus is on the extent to which the literature of Trinidad and Guyana remains symptomatic of the kind of ethnic divisions outlined in Chapter Two. Chapter Sixteen explores the reasons why it does and on what conceptual basis imaginative literature transcends those divisions. Implicit in this chapter, but not argued in it, is the assumption that there is a causal connection between works which remain ethnocentric and 'common-sense' approaches to epistemology, the person and society. In Chapter Sixteen that argument is elaborated. Further, Chapter Sixteen outlines the possible conceptual bases on which imaginative literary works may escape from such common-sense, ethnocentric biases. The reader is offered the option of reading Chapters Three and Sixteen consecutively, and reading Chapters Four to Fifteen and Seventeen to Nineteen as their joint elaboration, or of reading Chapters Four to Fifteen as the development of Chapter Three, and Chapter Sixteen as a review of those chapters and as a preface to Chapters Seventeen to Nineteen, in which those novels which attempt a portrayal of the social and ethnic whole from a conceptually conscious standpoint are discussed.

Although both Trinidad and Guyana would appear to have increased

their level of national economic control by putting the major sectors under state ownership, the reality is that both remain in a state of economic dependence on the world capitalist system.

Historically both are import societies which imported their populations, their technologies and their cultural products. Both have gone through the pattern of being sugar monocultures, then extractors of raw materials required by the industrial world. As a consequence of falling world demand for sugar and the persistent neglect of the local food-producing sector, both have a depressed agricultural base, incapable of supplying local demand. The mineral extractive sectors are more buoyant. In particular the boom in world oil prices during the 1970's brought affluence of an unequally distributed kind to Trinidad. Even so this sector remains dependent on world demand. There is also a small local manufacturing sector, more developed in Trinidad than Guyana, an expanding service sector in Trinidad and, in both, an increasingly large administrative bureaucracy. Both Trinidad and Guyana have broadly similar social formations, except that the already smaller Guyanese 'middle class' has been much attenuated by emigration over the last twenty years. Formerly this comprised a small expatriate and local European group which owned and managed the main economic sectors, (most of the economy was owned by multinationals), a slightly larger mainly light-skinned and brown professional, commercial and administrative elite, a larger group of lower level civil servants, teachers and office workers which was mainly Coloured and Black, and a large, mainly unskilled class of agricultural, industrial and service workers. Although the ethnic composition of the upper groups has changed since independence, the relationships of the groups remain the same. Consequently, until the time of independence, the colonial education system was geared to producing only a very small number of persons educated beyond secondary level. Even at present, the percentage of the adult population in Trinidad with secondary education remains low. In 1970 only 14%

of males and 13.2% of females had received any secondary education, and only 3.5% of males and 3.3% of females over fifteen years had either five 'O' levels or 1 'A' level. Only 1% of males and 0.3% of females had degrees. In Guyana the proportions are almost certainly lower. Even so, until the oil boom of the 1970's the Trinidadian economy was unable to provide more than a very narrow range of employment for those with higher education. In Guyana the position in the pre-independence period was even more acute given the greater dominance of expatriates in the economy. Subsequently, even though the state, or rather the ruling party, has taken over almost 80% of official economic activity, the collapse of the Guyanese economy and the party domination of white-collar employment has pushed large sections of the educated and skilled into emigration.

The consequences for the writer as an economic member of such societies have been almost wholly negative. Firstly, because these are small societies with small middle-classes and an even smaller reading public, there is no way a writer could live on the income generated by a domestic publishing industry. Secondly, there is still very limited access to the kind of employment which might permit anything approaching full time creative writing; neither the U.W.I. at St. Augustine or the University of Guyana are large enough to employ more than a small proportion of the qualified academics that the Caribbean produces. Inevitably then, the pattern of literary production has followed that of the general mode. Although the folk cultures of both Africans and Indians survive in attenuated and transmuted forms, the dominant forms of cultural production have been metropolitan in origin. The Caribbean has exported its raw materials - the talents of its writers - and imported the products of first British and then North American and Japanese consumer capitalism.

Without a local audience of any size, there has been no development of the kinds of free-market independent publishing houses which have

dominated metropolitan literary production since the nineteenth century. In Trinidad a number of small commercial publishing houses have appeared such as Inprint, Scope and Key Caribbean, but with the exception of Inprint which is tied to a newspaper, none has produced more than a handful of books. Inprint has an expanding list, but its marketing strategy is geared very much towards the pale-skinned elite. It has published no serious fiction or poetry, but mainly political memoirs and memoirs of the white upper-class. The University's Extra-Mural Department has published playscripts. Otherwise, publication in Trinidad has either meant self-publication using the services of the local printeries, publication via the handful of dedicated 'amateur' publishers such as Anson Gonzalez (whose journal The New Voices has maintained continuity for twelve years) for whom the promotion of local writing is a charitable loss-making project. There has been publication abroad. In Guyana, the situation up to 1970 was broadly similar. Most publishing was self-publishing and only one journal, A.J. Seymour's Kyk-Over-Al, 1945-1960, and now happily revived in 1984, has had any longevity. Since c. 1970, the state and ruling party has taken some role in publishing, not always beneficial for the independence and integrity of writers. However, since the collapse of the economy the state's involvement in literary publication has ceased. The only surviving, occasional, independent publisher in Guyana is Release Publishers, who have produced a journal which includes imaginative writing, several academic monographs and a collection of Martin Carter's poetry. Publication in Guyana has also taken on the additional burden of a repressive state apparatus. Although no works of fiction or poetry have been officially banned, physical intimidation has been sufficient to make writers tread very warily. Martin Carter, the nation's most distinguished poet has had his ribs broken by Government thugs and a younger Indian poet has had his poems unofficially confiscated and destroyed and suffered detention and severe beating at police hands.

In both Trinidad and Guyana, self-publication is very costly, invariably loss-making, dealing in small numbers (500 would be a very sizeable print), very variable in the printing quality available (more suited to slim volumes of poetry or short stories than the novel) and of low prestige in comparison to the metropolitan product. In Guyana, the situation is worsened by the economic crisis which has meant that imported paper has become scarce and extremely expensive (\$120 G. or £25 per ream) and printing ink equally difficult to obtain. The low prestige of local products is the result both of the persistence of colonial attitudes to the metropolitan centres as the source of all that is superior, and of the promiscuous quality of the self-publishing system, ranging from the excellent to the barely literate.

Metropolitan publication has several consequences. There are inevitable pressures to shape the texture of the imaginative work to the needs of the metropolitan audience, including, for instance, weighting a text with explanatory asides and moderating the use of dialect. The pressures can go further. Samuel Selvon, for instance, has told me that he would very much like to write an historical novel which deals with the Indian experience of Trinidad but that he was 'not affluent enough as a writer to chose [his] subject matter all the time'³. I have also argued in Chapter Fourteen that some of Shiva Naipaul's recent non-fictional work seems very much the product of a shrewd sense of what will sell on the British and North American markets. Secondly, there are inevitable economic dangers in a dependence on metropolitan publishing. Just as a fall in demand for sugar and bauxite illustrates how little real control Caribbean societies have over their economic destinies, so in cultural production. The days when at least eighteen British publishers had at least one, if not two, Caribbean writers on their books are long gone.⁴ Deutch continues to publish V.S. Naipaul, Anthony, and

Lovelace; Faber still publishes Wilson Harris, John Hearne and now Derek Walcott, and the new house of Allison and Busby publishes Roy Heath. Beyond this there is little. Heinemann will drop their Caribbean Writers Series in 1985. It is really only expatriate Caribbean publishing concerns such as New Beacon Books and Bogle L'Ouverture Publications who have remained committed to new Caribbean writing, and they are limited by their lack of economic capacity. Some publication of Caribbean imaginative writing has shifted to the U.S.A. and Canada, but it is clear that in the future the development must come from within the whole Caribbean area.

The chief result of metropolitan publication has been that nearly every writer of talent has emigrated from Trinidad and Guyana. In 1932 C.L.R. James left Trinidad with the manuscript of Minty Alley. He has been followed by R.A.C. de Boissière, John La Rose, Sam Selvon, Ismith Khan, V.S. and Shiva Naipaul, Jagdip Maraj, Harold Ladoo, Clyde Hosein, Faustin Charles, and Frank Hercules amongst others. From Guyana the list is even longer: Mittelholzer, Wilson Harris, Milton Williams, Ivan Van Sertima, Ken Taharally, E.R. Braithwaite, O.R. Dathorne, Jan Carew, Roy Heath, Slade Hopkinson, Christopher Nicole, John Agard, Cyril Dabydeen, Arnold Itwaru, David Dabydeen, Mahadai Das, Wordsworth McAndrew, Beatrice Archer and Sheik Sadeek. Some have stayed or returned; in Trinidad, Michael Anthony, Earl Lovelace and Derek Walcott; in Guyana, A.J. Seymour, Martin Carter and Dennis Williams, though the latter has published no fiction since 1968.

Whilst it is impossible to calculate the consequences of this exodus on the intrinsic character of a specific writer's work, some tentative observations can be made.

Although exile may have given many of the writers the distance to

see their own societies more clearly and the material security necessary as a basis for a commitment to the labour of literary production, inevitably, in time, they have lost that intimate connection with the society which has provided them with their raw material. A very high proportion of the Trinidadian and Guyanese novels published by writers in exile during the 1960's and 1970's were set in the writer's past. In the mean time Caribbean societies have been changing very rapidly. For instance, all V.S. Naipaul's first four novels are set in the period prior to his departure from Trinidad in 1950. It is not an illusion, I think, to feel that the sections of The Mimic Men (1967) which deal with Kripalsingh's childhood and adolescence are much richer in social texture than the section of the novel which deals with Kripalsingh's political career in the immediate pre-independence period. Similarly, Samuel Selvon's Trinidadian novels display a decreasing involvement with the interaction of his characters in the social and political life of Trinidad from that shown in A Brighter Sun (1952). There is an almost inevitable tendency for the society of the exile's novel to become increasingly a society of the mind, sometimes an increasingly simplified construct in which the writer's thematic obsessions become ever more apparent. What goes is the interaction with a changing social world. One can see attempts to evade some of the negative consequences of exile by making that experience the subject of the writer's work as Selvon and Lamming most notably have done. Others have turned to historical subjects, to the invention of fictitious societies or to increasingly personal concerns. None of this is to argue that the experience of exile in itself makes writers produce better or worse novels, poems or plays (though they will clearly be different) or that novels should necessarily deal with contemporary social change. What is evident, though, is that because of their writers' exile, both Trinidad and Guyana have been deprived of their most talented interpreters. It is no accident that the novel which has most valuably and

richly dramatised the issues facing Trinidad in the 1970's and 1980's is Earl Lovelace's The Dragon Can't Dance (1979), the work of a novelist who has, apart from a period of study in the United States, remained resident in Trinidad.

The general economic environment and the specific literary means of production in Trinidad and Guyana very clearly frustrate the production of imaginative literature. It is possible indeed to argue that one consequence of that situation, the emigration of so many writers, has more directly affected the nature of the individual work. However, there can be no disputing that both the ethnic divisions of these societies and the writer's own ethnic identity enter imaginative works directly both as content and as treatment.

European and North American critical analysis of ideological positions in literary texts has tended to focus on class and, in recent years, gender. Both are clearly relevant to Trinidad and Guyana, as to any society where groups have different relationships to the ownership and control of the means of production and where men and women have unequal access to economic, institutional and domestic power. However, it is my thesis that in Trinidad and Guyana, ethnicity is as important as class and gender. It is true that class interests are expressed in the way that novelists of European ancestry have portrayed the Indian presence. For instance, Chapter Four shows how European stereotypes of Indians arose from the need to justify the indenture system on which European wealth was based. Similarly, A.H. Mendes's novel Pitch Lake (1934) can be seen to dramatise the unstable class position of the Portuguese in Trinidadian society. However, such treatments of the Indian presence are also definably Eurocentric in their cultural biases, so that Pitch Lake stresses even more strongly Mendes's anxieties about the threat to European cultural values and ethnic identity by the temptation of the Portuguese to become sexually absorbed into the Afro-Indian pitch lake. In the imaginative writing by Blacks and Indians in Trinidad and Guyana, ethnicity is invariably more salient than class, particularly in

the portrayal of inter-group relations.

The evidence for the salience of ethnicity in politics and social relations has been reviewed in Chapter Two and, as this chapter will show, the role of ethnicity in the human sciences, literary criticism and the content of imaginative literature itself has been scarcely less marked. In historiography, for instance, Gertrude Carmichael's The History of the West Indian Islands of Trinidad and Tobago (1961), presents a white Trinidadian view, emphasising the role of successive colonial governors; Dr. Eric Williams's The Negro in The Caribbean (1942), Capitalism and Slavery (1944), History of The People of Trinidad and Tobago (1962), British Historians and the West Indies (1964) and From Columbus To Castro (1970), all present an interpretation of the past which is largely focused on the European and African interaction. The one chapter in the History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago which is devoted to the Indian presence, 'The Contribution of The Indians', is largely devoted to proving that Indian immigration was unnecessary and that Trinidad could have imported free (black) West Indian labour instead. By contrast the pioneer historians of the Indian presence such as Dwarka Nath (A History of the Indians of Guyana, 1950, 1970) and H.P. Singh (articles published in The Observer, c 1960-1964) both make free use of negrophobic accounts of the post-emancipation negro abandonment of the estates (with their pictures of negro idleness and retreat to semi-savagery) , to present the view that the Indians were the saviours of their respective colonies. Nath, for instance, writes of the freed slaves that their 'notion of freedom was to be like their masters, with, as they thought, nothing to do but eat and drink and enjoy themselves'. Williams, on the other hand, made heavy and uncritical use of the politically interested evidence of black and coloured petit-bourgeois groups such as the Trinidad Working Men's Association to mount his case against the need for Indian immigration. It remains true that, even if such blatant ethnic biases have ceased to exist in contemporary Caribbean historiography, virtually all the research

on, for instance, the Indian experience in the Caribbean has been carried out by scholars of Indian origin.⁶ With the exception of overseas academics and a handful of non-Indian scholars consciously committed to a multi-cultural perspective, the participants at all three conferences on East Indians in the Caribbean have been over eighty percent Indian. Political science is obviously even more open to ethnic bias, and even where no such bias is present, biases are likely to be perceived by readers of ethnic groups different from the writer's. For instance, Selwyn Ryan's Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago (1972) which is in fact highly critical of the cultural assumptions of creole nationalism, was frequently dismissed as a pro-Negro book by many of the politically interested Indians I spoke to in 1976. However, it is true that the only adequate analysis of the Indian community's role in Trinidadian politics (and an unflattering one) is by an Indian.⁷ Even a commitment to a 'non-ethnic' perspective in political science can lead to its own form of bias. For instance, a study such as From Calcutta To Caroni (1974), presented with all the appearance of academic objectivity, in fact represents the point of view of people who were involved in middle class political parties (the Democratic Action Congress and Tapia) whose platform was Afro-Indian unity.⁸ There is a marked tendency, with a couple of exceptions, to overstress the extent to which such unity had been achieved in the past and minimize the extent to which Indians felt they had a cultural identity still excluded from the national cultural matrix. In his eagerness to find examples of Indians who had supported the Black Power movement, one contributor even quoted a satirical piece of Indian black power baiting as if it had been written in support.⁹

Literary politics have been no less enmeshed in inter-ethnic quarrels.¹⁰ For instance, a 'debate' between Sylvia Wynter and Kenneth Ramchand had as its literary basis a difference between Ramchand's defence of a Leavisite position (that 'literature matters as literature, not as

a substitute for something else') and Wynter's argument for a literature and criticism committed to the process of the cultural decolonization of the Caribbean. However, the debate soon became equally a matter of ethnic position-taking. In his The West Indian Novel and Its Background (1970), Ramchand had written:

Some writers seek ancestral inspiration in 'African traits' or an 'African personality'. Others, notably Michael Anthony ... ignore such imaginary but unimaginative props.¹²

In his article 'Concern For Criticism', Ramchand had similarly attacked what he called the 'neo-African' approach to Caribbean literary criticism, for instance in Edward Brathwaite's 'Jazz and the West Indian Novel' :

...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.¹³

Sylvia Wynter seized on passages such as these as evidence that the 'rancour' of Ramchand's criticism was motivated by 'his attempt, as a Trinidadian Indian to claim his full place in the Caribbean context...'. As such, Ramchand's mission was, according to Wynter, to 'negate, destroy, diminish, disguise the African centrality in the cultural dynamic of the Caribbean peoples'. As an Indian, Ramchand is presumed to be motivated by racial contempt for the African heritage:

...once the latecomers, the East Indian immigrants, began to enter the educational system, to take their place in the Creole class, they not only claimed their full share in Western 'culture', but also pointed to the 'high' culture of India to give themselves one more point in the game of one-upmanship between themselves and the blacks. Yet the real counter in the game was, and is, the ability to 'acquire' Western 'culture'. The high culture of India was comparable to Western culture; the Indian nose and hair were 'Aryan', Africa, in the Creole consciousness, black, brown, white, East Indian, Chinese, remained vague, a place which Western culture designated as a land of savages, the heart of darkness.¹⁴

Wynter's claim, as Chapter Fourteen shows, that some Indian perceptions of Africa are limitingly ethnocentric, has some substance; but she herself is no less ethnocentric in asserting that 'It is the African heritage which has been the crucible of the cultural deposits of the immigrant people's transforming borrowed elements of culture into something indigenously Caribbean.'¹⁵

Such ethnic-literary quarrels have even found their way into fictional expression. There has been the curious matter of the 'vendetta' between two of the Caribbean's most distinguished novelists, George Lamming and V.S. Naipaul. It began in Naipaul's days as editor and presenter of the Caribbean Voices programme when he broadcast his view, in 1956, that 'writers are so boring when they are only being black'¹⁶. Although he did not mention Lamming's In The Castle of My Skin (1953), he did not except it from his strictures. Lamming's reply came in The Pleasures of Exile (1960) where he attacks Naipaul for drawing a distinction between Selvon as 'an Indian' and himself as 'a Barbadian Negro' a distinction which he described as a 'fallacy which has threatened to ruin the political life of Trinidad', and charges that Naipaul's books 'can't move beyond castrated satire'¹⁷. Naipaul's riposte came in The Middle Passage (1961), where he asserted that the 'involvement of the Negro with the white world is one of the limitations of West Indian writing'¹⁸; it was a pointed remark since Lamming's The Pleasures of Exile is organised around the archetypal relationship of Prospero and Caliban. Indeed, in Naipaul's short novel, 'A Flag On The Island' (1965) the incompetent novelist H.J. Blackwhite refers to himself as Caliban.¹⁹ Lamming, not to be outdone, invented the character of Roger Capildeo (Naipaul's mother's family name) in Water With Berries (1971). Capildeo is an unmistakably Naipaulian figure of brahminical fastidiousness who escapes from the 'tribal irritations' of his Hindu family and from the fictitious island of San Christobal:

Roger could never recognise any links between himself and San Christobal. It seemed that history had amputated his root from some other human soil, and deposited him, by chance, in a region of time which was called an island. He had never really experienced the island as place, a society of people.

A Naipaulian echo is also suggested in Roger's motives for leaving:

He had grown afraid of the landscapes; afraid of the sudden, early descent of the nights; the quality of darkness which seemed to be secreted in the heart of daylight. Everyone around him seemed to take a mad delight in celebrating the impure: so he had inherited this horror of impurity. He had always wanted to get away; to be gone from the chaos of his childhood. 20

Such personal literary-ethnic quarrels are but small tokens of the much broader and intrinsic role of ethnic consciousness in the imaginative writing of Trinidad and Guyana. Quantitative content analysis is an admittedly crude measure which tells little about the quality of a writer's concerns, but the following breakdown of the milieu and dramatis personae of novels, short stories and plays written by Trinidadian and Guyanese authors in the period after 1940, more than confirms that in quantitative terms imaginative writing has projected similar ethnic divisions as are to be found in other areas of social behaviour. No objective statistical reliability is claimed, though the samples are as large and as representative as possible, since in the end the allocation of texts to categories is a matter of subjective judgement. The discrepancies between the numbers of texts referred to in the tables below and the number of titles listed in the bibliography is the result of excluding material for which I had no reliable record.

1. <u>Indo-Caribbean</u>				
a) Novels: total in sample 57.				
Wholly Indian Characters	Mainly Indian (minor Creole roles)	Mixed Indian/Creole	Creole/ non-Indian.	
13 22%	15 26%	19 33%	10 18%	
b) Plays: total in sample 86.				
Wholly Indian	Mainly Indian	Mixed Indian/Creole	Creole/ non-Indian.	
11 13%	8 9%	5 6%	62 72%	
c) Short Stories: total in sample 343.				
Indian themes	Creole life	Afro-Indian	Neutral ¹¹ Carib.	Non-Caribbean.
142 41%	111 32%	8 2%	76 22%	6 2%

2. Afro-Caribbean

a) Novels: total 77

	Afro-Creole Characters	Aboriginal	Minor Indian characters.	Major Indian characters.	Indian.
dad	30		4	2	0
uy.	25	6	6	3	1
	<u>55</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>
	71%	8%	13%	6%	1%

b) Plays : total 140

	Afro-Creole Characters	Exile/U.K.	Minor Indian characters	Major Indian characters	Indian
dad	58		1	1	1
uy.	67	11	1		
	<u>125</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	89%	7%	1.4%	.7%	.7%

c) Short Stories : total 340

	Afro-Creole	Exile	Neutral	Minor Indian characters	Major Indian characters	Indian
dad	220				3	31
uy.	<u>51</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>15</u>		<u>5</u>	<u>10</u>
	271	11	15		8	41
	78%	3%	4.4%		2%	12%

3. Euro-Creole

a) Novels : total 35.

	Euro-Creole Characters	Europeans in U.K.	Aboriginal	European/African	European/Indian	Indian
dad	4			4	3	
uy.		8	2	10	3	1
	<u>4</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>
	11%	23%	6%	40%	18%	3%

There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn. The imaginative writing of all groups is to some extent ethno-centric in its focus, though this is scarcely surprising or necessarily lamentable. However, the different frequencies with which Indo-Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean

writing in Trinidad and Guyana contains portrayals of the ethnic other is revealing. It suggests the extent to which Indo-Caribbean writers are conscious of being part of a wider society at the same time as recording the distinctiveness of the Indian experience in the Caribbean. Although I have not thought it worthwhile to correlate in any detail the relationship between intra-ethnic differences and focus on character and milieu, my impression is that the bulk of the Indo-Caribbean fiction which deals either exclusively or mainly with the Indian community is by writers of Hindu or Muslim background, and that a high proportion of the stories on Creole themes are by writers of Christian Indian background such as Samuel Selvon, Daniel Samaroo Joseph and Basil Balgobin. There are two reasons for the very high proportion of Indo-Caribbean drama which deals with Creole themes. Twenty-one of the plays were written by Freddie Kissoon, a Christian of mixed Indian-Creole background, and fifteen by Samuel Selvon, also of a Christian and mixed Euro-Indian background. A high proportion of Selvon's plays have British settings. In addition, the fact that most theatres are in the city and theatre audiences have been mainly Creole has very probably had a significant influence on the Indo-Caribbean dramatist's choice of setting and theme.

By contrast, the very small proportion of Afro-Creole imaginative works which deal seriously with the Indian presence would seem to echo a more general social ignorance and failure of witness. The fact that it is only in the form of the short story that one finds a significant number of treatments suggests that few writers feel that they have enough social knowledge to write full length novels. The very low percentage of imaginative works by writers of either ethnic group, which deal with Afro-Indian relations is almost certainly indicative of the social sensitivity of the theme. The one group which has shown a greater willingness to explore the theme of inter-ethnic relations is the Euro-Creole group. This is no doubt closely related to the fact that the position of the Europeans in the Caribbean has always dep-

ended on the suffrance of the majority groups.

These quantitative breakdowns are no more than crudely suggestive of the role of ethnicity in Trinidadian and Guyanese imaginative literature. Only more detailed analyses of the way writers have portrayed their own community, the community of the ethnic other and the nature of the social whole will show the precise ways in which ethnic ideologies enter the content of imaginative writing. However, there are several other introductory generalisations which can be made.

For instance, the most obvious indication of the way that ethnocentric attitudes have entered the content of novels and plays is in the prevalence of unflattering stereotypes of the ethnic other. In Chapter Six, for example, I have discussed the images of the Indian presence which appear in Afro-Caribbean writing. A survey of the forty-six novels, plays and short stories reviewed shows certain stereotypes recurring with some regularity.

Stereotyped Characters		Social Themes	
Orientation to life	Passive/sycophantic	5	
	Cowardly	1	
	Jealous	5	
	Revengeful	3	
	Suicidal	5	
Economic orientation	Devious/cunning	12	
	Hardworking	5	
	Mean/miserly	5	
	Economistic treatment of family	6	
Racial orientation	Prejudiced against Blacks	5	
	Fearful of Blacks	1	
	Women sexually attracted to Blacks	5	
		Meaninglessness of Indian culture	4
		Restrictiveness of Indian culture	5
		Naturalistic observations of rural poverty	6
		Awareness of Creole ethnic and cultural prejudices.	5

The ethnocentricity of such images can be seen very clearly by comparing Afro-Creole writing about the Indian presence with Indo-Caribbean portrayals of the Indian community. The former tends towards

a uniform image whereas Indian writing deals with the increasing heterogeneity of the group and the tensions within it. As I have suggested in Chapter Two, and elsewhere in the study, such uniform stereotypes, even where they can be seen to have some basis in observable behaviour, can really only be understood in the context of the interests and values of the perceiving group. Thus those features of the ethnic other's behaviour, imagined or real, which either deviate from the observing group's implicit norms or which can be used to illustrate negative poles in the group's value dimensions, take on an exaggerated significance and are assumed to define the characteristics of the whole group.

Ethnocentrism can also be seen in the structural position and the roles ethnically identified characters play in novels. For instance, of the seventeen novels by Afro- and Euro-Creole writers which deal with the Indian presence, only three make the Indian character's role or point of view in any way central to the narrative. In nearly all the Euro-Creole novels discussed in Chapter Five, the white male character is either presented through first person narration or as the central consciousness whose thoughts and motivations the reader is always privy to. By contrast, the ubiquitous Indian woman with whom the central character becomes involved is invariably both structurally marginal and portrayed in an external way, frequently as a stereotype of Oriental allure. Significantly, of these seventeen novels, twelve either employ a first person Creole narrator or a single Creole character who is the novel's 'lucid reflector' and only two have a genuinely multiple focus which includes an Indian point of view.

Of course, in some novels the portrayal of characters as central or peripheral is less a value judgement than a conscious naturalistic observation. For instance, in V.S. Naipaul's A House For Mr. Biswas (1961) the invisibility of Black characters, particularly in the early parts of the novel, simply represent the enclosed nature of the Tulsi household.

Again, a high proportion of the novels and short stories discussed in Parts Two and Three can be seen to dramatise conflicts of values which have been identified with one ethnic group or the other. For instance, in Chapter Six, there is a discussion of three Afro-Guyanese novels²³ which deal with the theme of sexual relationships between Black males and Indian females. Each dramatises the conflict between a black desire to break down sexual barriers between Blacks and Indians and the Indian urge to preserve racial endogamy in marriage. Significantly, in each instance the creole value triumphs, though in two of the novels the victory is Pyrrhic since one or both of the mixed partnership is killed by a jealous Indian. By contrast, Shiva Naipaul's novel, Fireflies (1970) portrays the involvement of an Indian girl with a Creole male as an aspect of her cultural confusion and moral breakdown, and as a malicious piece of boundary-breaking by the male, delighted with his racial conquest.²⁴ Chapter Ten, in particular, is devoted to exploring how, in a number of Indo-Caribbean novels and short stories, one finds the development of an interlinked set of contrastive relationships between images of the Indian and Creole worlds and the construct of order and energy. The pole of order, or its negative expression, restriction, is associated with the Indian world, whilst the pole of energy, or its negative, disorder, is associated with the black creole world. One conclusion reached in this chapter is that in an ethnically plural society it becomes impossible for writers of one ethnic group to define their own group's identity except in relationship to a construct of the character of the ethnic other.

However, though a significant number of Indian writers make the same Indian/Creole contrast linked to the Order/Energy construct, there are wide differences in the way the theme is handled. For instance, some see Indian culture as ordered and Creole culture as disordered, whereas others see Indian culture as restrictive and Creole culture as open and dynamic. Such variations indicate the very obvious

point that the relationship between ethnicity and imaginative writing is not a simple one. In the rest of the chapter and in Chapter Sixteen the discussion of the relationship will be elaborated in several ways. In Chapter Sixteen, as I have indicated, I will argue both that ethnocentric ways of seeing, as they are expressed in imaginative writing, depend on 'common sense' epistemological assumptions and psychological theories and that a genuine 'escape' from ethnocentrism occurs on the basis of the novel's conceptual framework.

My conceptualisation of the relationship between literature and ethnicity has nothing to do either with a racial theory of literature or with the application of primordial theories of ethnicity. I take it as my starting point that ethnic identities are constructed and that in the last resort such identities are freely made. It is true that someone born of Indian parentage does not cease to be racially Indian by simply saying so, but racial identity and consciousness of common ancestry are only elements in the whole complex of attitudes and values and accepted norms of behaviour which go to form an ethnic identity. It is only too evident from empirical observation of, say, Indian lives in Trinidad, that there are persons of Indian racial origin whose life-style may be European, Afro-Creole, traditionalist Hindu and all the possible variations in between. In other words, it is quite inadequate to talk of ethnicity as simply an Afro-Creole and Indian contrast, though ethnocentric literature has frequently seen it as such.

A very useful starting point in describing the actual diversity of perspectives is to be found in Edward Brathwaite's seminal paper, Contradictory Omens (1974), where he uses the term 'cultural orientation' to describe a complex set of attitudes towards race, religion, language, cultural practices and social values. Brathwaite's framework correctly recognises both the givenness of socio-cultural backgrounds and the idea of individual choice implicit in the term 'orient-

ation:

We cannot begin to understand statements about 'West Indian culture' since it is so diverse and has so many subtly different orientations and interpretations, unless we know something about the speaker/writer's own socio-cultural background and orientation.¹⁶

Although such orientations can only be realistically described in their ongoing historical specificity, I feel that it is still useful to outline what I take to be the chief cultural orientations in Trinidadian and Guyanese societies as a framework for identifying more precisely the perspectives of particular works of imaginative literature. My outline is an elaboration of Brathwaite's model and attempts to remedy his self-acknowledged Barbadian/Jamaican bias towards Europe and Africa as the major dimensions with Indians as peripheral late-comers.

As Chapters Six, Fifteen and Sixteen show, the degree of ethnic identification felt by individuals and groups is not fixed and shifts according to such factors as perceived threats to economic interests and political mobilization. Even the relationship between race and ethnic identity is by no means absolute. I met a few young Indians in Guyana in 1976 whose cultural orientation was towards Afro-American stylings: permed Afro-hair, the wearing of 'tams' and the favouring of Black American music. Clyde Hosein's story, 'Morris, Bhaiya' is about a Negro who identifies wholly with Indian culture until he is driven away by Indian racial chauvinism. Although it is possible to overstress the extent of racial mixing, particularly between Indians and other groups, the fact that there is a section of the population whose ancestry is mixed, does mean that the relationship between race and ethnicity can never be stable. Similarly, the interaction of ethnic identification and class consciousness varies widely according to situations. For instance, black Trinidadian oil workers who had been mobilised in the 1975 United Labour Front as trade unionists in class unity with Indian sugar workers, in 1976 almost certainly voted ethnically in large numbers for the ruling Creole party, the People's National

Movement. Again, there are strong connections between ethnicity, class and religious affiliation, but they are not necessary connections. For instance, membership of the Spiritual Baptist church in Trinidad has traditionally been concentrated amongst the black working class. However, according to Stephen Glazier's Marchin' The Pilgrim's Home (1983) not only have increasing numbers of middle and upper-middle class Afro-Trinidadians joined the Church in recent years, but also a significant number of Indian members, some of whom have obtained prominent positions in the church hierarchy, though this has been resented by some of the Black rank-and-file who regard it as an African church.

Cultural orientations also vary in terms of the relationship to external and internal cultural influences. By the former I mean the vast range of influences which reach Trinidad and Guyana in the forms of, for instance, the cultural and technological products of Europe, North America and the Far East; the escapist films from the Bombay dream-factory; traditionalist and modernising missionaries from India, Pakistan and Libya; North American evangelical sects; and the secular currents of Marxism and Black Power ideology. To speak of an internal cultural dimension is, in a sense, paradoxical, since with the exception of the Amerindians of Guyana, all cultures in Trinidad and Guyana are by origin external. However, there are clearly cultural forms which are specifically Caribbean mutations, which have resulted from cross-fertilisation and adapted themselves to the local environment. As will be shown in later chapters, writers of imaginative literature have varied widely in their approach to what is 'external' or what is 'internal' in Caribbean culture. For instance, whereas for writers such as George Lamming and Wilson Harris, such 'native' traditions bear witness to the region's cultural creativity, for others such as Edgar Mittelholzer and V.S. Naipaul creolised forms tend to be seen as having degenerated from some purer external form.

Within the co-ordinates indicated above, I have outlined below a

series of ideal type positions constructed from a far from discrete continuum. Although I have suggested examples of novels which express in some measure the perspective of a particular orientation, it is obvious that the relationship is rarely exact.

1. European:

Expatriate group disappearing from the Caribbean; cultural loyalties still to Britain. Ian McDonald's The Hummingbird Tree portrays the movement between this position and 2. Christopher Nicole's White Boy describes the movement back.

2. Euro-Creole:

White/light-skinned group, mostly but not all part of the local elite. There are tensions within the group between West Indian identification and the attraction of Europe and North America. Novels such as A.H. Mendes's Pitch Lake and Albert Gomes's autobiography, In A Maze of Colour, explore these contradictions. R.A.C. de Boissière's Crown Jewel dramatises the possibilities of Euro-Creole political commitment and the acknowledgement of a modicum of African ancestry.

3. Afro-Saxon:

Description of the Black middle class who are concerned with Negro advancement but in terms of a modernizing, Euro-centred Caribbean which either suppresses or sanitizes Afro-Creole or Indian cultural elements. Merle Hodge's Crick-Crack Monkey dramatises the tensions between the Afro-Saxon and Afro-Creole positions. Many of the novels and stories discussed in Chapter Six merely express an Afro-Saxon consciousness.

4. West Indian:

A mainly middle-class cultural/political orientation which crosses ethnic groups, though in reality individuals who identify themselves as such tend to be West Indians with ethnic flavourings. It is an orientation which represents a tentative movement away from Afro- and Indo-Saxonism towards the Afro-Creole and Indian worlds. It seems to me that Ismith Khan's The Obeah Man, and much of Selvon's, Roy Heath's and Michael Anthony's fiction express this perspective and its inner conflicts.

5. Marxist/Socialist

As the above, an attempt to forge a working-class identity which overrides separate ethnic identities. In practice even amongst the most class conscious of sections of the working class, Caribbean marxism has been found to interact with various cultural orientations. For instance, George Lamming's fiction both explores the tensions between ethnic and class identity and its own class perspective is embedded in an Afro-Creole way of seeing.

6. Cosmopolitan:

The movement away from any kind of ethnic, national or even regional identification. In its positive, idealist form it

is expressed in Wilson Harris's work as a search for deeper cultural and spiritual universals. In its negative form it is expressed as a sense of non-identity, of belonging nowhere. Shiva Naipaul's work in particular expresses this sense of void; V.S. Naipaul's work has sometimes been seen to articulate the same sense of placelessness. This is true to some extent, but, as Chapter Twelve, in particular, shows, V.S. Naipaul's fiction and descriptive writing also has a strong, if negative, relationship to a brahminical Hindu orientation.

7. Afro-Creole:

One describes here an orientation on a continuum between the Afro-Saxon orientation of the Black middle class and 'respectable' working class and the Creole innovations of 'jamette' creolism and the Afro-folk survivals of, mainly, rural Trinidad and Guyana.

8. Jamette Creole:

Description of the inner-city culture of the yards, particularly in Trinidad, from 'diametre' or 'the other half'. An expressive, rebellious and urban cultural orientation with submerged African elements. In Trinidad, the source of steelband, carnival and kaiso. An orientation described anthropologically in Michael Lieber's Street Scenes (1981) and fictively in Earl Lovelace's The Dragon Can't Dance (1979).

9. Afro-Folk:

Describes the orientation of that section of the rural Black population still in contact with African derived folk-ways in food, dress, musical styles, religion, community organisation. For instance, sou-sou, cumfa and queh-queh. George Lamming writes out of this background, but in the awareness that it must become integrated into a new West Indian orientation which includes other cultural elements. A variation of the Afro-Folk orientation might be described as a Neo-African one, which includes consciously revivalistic movements, often urban and petit-bourgeois in character, such as N.J.A.C. in Trinidad and the attempts to create a New World African aesthetic such as has been argued by Sylvia Wynter, Edward Brathwaite and Marina Maxwell.

10. Brahminical Hindu village culture :

The cultural orientation of rural Indian communities in Southern Trinidad and the Essequibo coast of Guyana. Orthodox forms of North Indian hinduism with survivals of village organisation in family relations, food, music and acceptance of vestigial caste elements. A cultural orientation in the process of rapid change, but its demise has been much exaggerated. V.S. Naipaul writes out of a semi-urbanised variant of this orientation. Because of its associations with caste, rural backwardness and atrophied ritual there have been variant, mainly middle class, approaches to an Indian identity. In the past it was via such organisations as the Arya Samaj, and in the present through 'new' modernistic forms of Hinduism such as the Sai Baba cult and the transcendental meditation of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

11. Indo-Creole:

The cultural orientation of the former estate and non-brahminical village communities, particularly in Guyana. Marked

by an egalitarian philosophy, a working-class consciousness and an orientation to time and consumption which is on a continuum between the values of the brahminical village and the present-time orientation of, say, 'jamette' creolism. Survivals of both disapproved 'low-caste' forms of Hinduism (e.g. animal sacrifice) and South Indian (Madrassi) elements. The work of M.R. Monar, discussed in Chapter Eleven, explores this background with sympathy and understanding.

12. Indo-Muslim:

Muslims in both Trinidad and Guyana have lived in consciousness of having a distinctive religious heritage, but of sharing a common Indic village origin with Hindus. As a religious minority within the Indian ethnic group, Muslims have tended towards seeking a greater degree of political and cultural accommodation with the Afro-Saxon ruling elites, but as with Hindus, Muslims are internally divided between traditionalists and reformists. Ismith Khan writes from a Muslim background, but not an Indo-Muslim orientation.

13. Indo-Saxon:

A section of the Indian middle-class, mainly Christian (Presbyterian) but not exclusively so; proud to be Indian but in relationship to the idea of its civilisation, and not to village India and popular Hinduism. Essentially oriented to European and Euro-Creole values. See Dennis Mahabir's novel The Cutlass Is Not For Killing (1971).

Clearly such a typology, though inevitably suggesting an unreal, static discreteness, can be used to identify more precisely the different ethnic perspectives that writers bring to their work. But the implication of the cultural orientations model is of a whole set of conflicting subjective and partial perspectives, none of which is capable of seeing the society whole. This certainly seems to be Brathwaite's position in Contradictory Omens. His main thrust is the incontrovertible charge that many critical judgements which stem from the partiality of an individual's socio-cultural orientation are passed off as 'objective':

It is dishonest, I think, to try to hold that it is possible to be an impartial critic in cases where one's historical and historically received image of oneself is under discussion.²⁶

The implication is that individuals can never achieve a detached awareness of how their socio-cultural experiences shape their perceptions, and that all representations of the complex social reality of the Caribbean are condemned to be irretrievably relativistic. There is a great deal of evidence, as Parts Two and Three of this study show, for Brath-

waite's view. Brathwaite offers some sensitive moral guidance on ways of getting out of this impasse, but even this rests on the assumption of fragmented subjectivities which can only be bridged by tact:

To quarrel over each other's 'position' therefore, is meaningless and futile; it will merely lead to distortion of effort and hardening of arterial position. What we have to move towards is an understanding of the reason for the differences: intercreolization.²⁹

The 'answer' to all this seems to inhere in recognition of the contradictions: the plural/ whole, the cripple god, creative deprivation. But recognition, leading to 'solution' cannot be an act of will (the sea-anemone shrinking from the hurting hand), but a miracle of tact and selfless grace...³⁰

However, Contradictory Omens is one of those fertile texts which expresses both its own contradictions and hints at a position beyond what it explicitly argues. For instance, at one point Brathwaite refers to differences between the way novelists and social scientists have portrayed Caribbean social reality:

It is not simply a question of differences of discipline: social science as opposed to creative expression, although significant differences do disclose themselves. The differences, I maintain, result essentially from a subjective apprehension of 'reality' based upon the particular individual's socio-cultural orientation.³¹

The argument is not entirely clear, and although Brathwaite hints at a 'social science' view as an alternative to the subjectivity of creative expression, he never clarifies what those differences are. I don't think that Brathwaite would really wish to pursue an argument which separates the social sciences from, say, fiction on the basis that the former are objective and the latter subjective. As I have suggested earlier in the chapter, the social sciences are no more likely to 'escape' from ethnocentricity than imaginative literature. Nor does Brathwaite, in practice, regard all 'subjective' views as equally valid. For instance, he comments on a particular critical conclusion that it is:

...hopeful and optimistic, but totally lacking in recognition of the realities of the situation.³²

However, although the quotation marks around 'realities' have gone, Brathwaite still qualifies this by adding that the comment derives from 'my (black West Indian) point of view'. Thus though Brathwaite

very justly argues that partialities, and divergencies of points of view in Caribbean societies can be explained in terms of ethno-cultural orientation, and though he hints at the desirability of the goal of an objective recognition of the 'realities of the situation', his argument as a whole remains trapped in a subjective relativism. As I asserted in Chapter One, and will argue in Chapter Sixteen, I believe it is possible to escape from the subjective, the ethnocentric and the ideologically partial. This escape is never complete or perfect, but on the basis of developing conceptual frameworks tested against objective reality, an approach towards truth adequacy can be achieved.

The limitation, then, of the cultural orientations model is that it ultimately reduces all ways of seeing to the dimension of socio-cultural interests. My divergence from the model is to argue that ways of seeing cannot be explained solely in those terms, that they are also structured by some implicit or explicit ontology, epistemology, theories of the person, society and history. It is my thesis that much of the writing discussed in Parts Two and Three operates at what I have described as an unexamined 'common sense' level which permits what are in fact partial ways of seeing to appear as if they were complete, self-evident and natural. Yet there are also a small number of novels which go beyond the ethnocentric, and they do so, as I will argue in Chapter Sixteen, on the basis of their conceptual frameworks. It is at this point that the cultural-orientations model proves inadequate, though, since no writer escapes from history, society and culture, it is never irrelevant.

Attitudes, Character and Fiction in the Period of Indian Indentured Labour: (1838-1917)

This chapter deals with European representations of the Indian presence during the period of indentured immigration. It explores the relationship between the fictional form and the social content of those representations. Wilson Harris has argued that bourgeois realist fiction assumes the 'self-sufficient individual' who always has the potential for choice. Indenture was a form of servitude and the social system it created meets most definitions of the totalitarian. To the extent that Indians were seen as mere replaceable machines for sugar production, fiction with indentured labourers as individual, self-determining characters must seem paradoxical.

The links between social experience and fiction are traced in two directions. The chapter shows, for instance, how contradictory images of a supposed Indian personality type are related to actual contradictions between the real social relations of European and Indian and the conceptions of Indian character required by justifications of the system. The chapter also examines how such pragmatic purposes as defending or exposing the system, or raising money for missionary work, affect the formal nature of the 'fictional' representation.

In the other direction, from fiction back to social reality, the chapter shows how different kinds of fiction permit or encourage particular ways of representing the world of indenture. It is argued that in one case the commitment to a realist fictional form liberates insights into Indian experience which are quite lacking in documentary reportage by the same author.

The chapter discusses fictional forms in both a continuous and a contrastive relationship to other forms of discourse, and interprets the notion of fiction widely to include a variety of quasi-fictional forms. A second organising focus of this chapter is

the character stereotype, since its conceptual structure and social origin is the same whether it is found in social discourse, rhetorical justifications of the system or fictional portrayals.

Finally, to show more clearly the relationship between specific interests and representations of the Indian presence, the chapter examines in turn the writings produced by three groups of people: the planters and officials materially involved in the indenture system, missionaries and British visitors to the colonies.

It is tempting to see indenture as slavery under a new name, and to simply look for confirmation of the findings of Edward Brathwaite's excellent study, 'Creative Literature of the British West Indies during the Period of Slavery',² that there was a predictable inability to treat the African slave seriously in fiction since, in the ideology of slavery, the slave had to be seen as merely a beast of burden and incompletely human.

Indenture, however, had its own peculiar, contradictory reality. Joseph Beaumont, Chief Justice of British Guiana (1865-69) argued that indenture was a new form of slavery, 'grown in its stale soil, emulating its worst abuses, and only the more dangerous because it presents itself under false colours.'³ Apologists for the system claimed that it permitted a movement of free labour within the empire, even more voluntary, and spontaneous than the contemporary migrations of such other famine pressed peoples as the Irish,⁴ and that the contract was broadly comparable to that between apprentice and master in the metropolis. One absentee proprietor told the Sanderson Commissioners in 1909 that 'I look upon the indenturing of the coolie very much as in this country we should, sending a boy to Eton...'⁵

Such opposing views were the product not merely of partisanship, but of contradictions within the system itself.⁶ Indenture was an attempt to resolve the conflict of interests between the metropolitan government and the sugar producers of those countries most affected by labour shortages. Plantation managers required labour which was

cheap, obedient and always available. Yet, as the years after emancipation showed, no free workers would voluntarily subject themselves to the harshly regimented labour of the estate, and no respectable metropolitan government could permit a revival of slavery.⁷ The indenture system ingeniously gave both parties what they wanted. The planters had a contracted labour force as effectively disciplined and tied to the estate by labour ordinances as slaves had been by the whip, though the illegal use of physical punishments during indenture was not uncommon. For its part the metropolitan government could point to the limitation of contract length, safeguards on recruitment, the guarantee of a return passage and the financial opportunities the arrangement afforded the industrious immigrant.

From the start, though, the planting interests were determined that there would be no real changes from the economic and social arrangements which had existed under slavery. Proposals for the mechanisation of field work,⁸ the switching to a system of metayage,^{*} diversification from sugar and the enlightened reform of labour relations all came to nothing.⁹ Even the moderate proposal that Indian immigrants should come as free settlers, at liberty to choose their own masters and bargain for wage rates,¹⁰ was always a dead letter. At the heart of this resistance to change was a slave-owning mentality which saw labour as an ever replaceable commodity and the coloured races as genetically equipped only for physical labour, but willing to work only when compelled by harsh discipline.

Because the owners were not prepared to change the way the estates were run, the blacks, except in those islands where pressure of population and shortage of land made escape impossible, moved off the estates into free villages, illegal squatters' encampments and the towns in large numbers. Those who remained within the sugar economy knew their value. The managers were evidently galled at having to haggle over wages or be told by their ex-slaves that they didn't care to work that day. Trinidad and Guyana were the British West Indian colonies most seriously affected by labour shortages.¹¹

share-cropping.

Contracted immigration was intended either to reduce the bargaining power of black workers or replace them entirely as an agricultural labour force. As early as 1814, a prominent Trinidadian planter, William Burnley, stated he was 'fully convinced that from Asia alone was to be derived the population we require. He believed that Asian immigration would provide a 'docile class of labourers', preferable to rebellious Africans.¹² In 1836 the first attempts to acquire Indian immigrants were made. Until that time the planters had tried a variety of sources of additional labour - West Indian blacks from the most overcrowded islands, liberated Africans and Madeirans - but none of these proved sufficiently numerous or prepared to stay on the estates.

In 1836, John Gladstone, father of the future British Prime Minister, wrote to an Indian shipping agent requesting a hundred coolies for five to seven years, whom he promised would, 'Pass the time agreeably and happily.' However, Gillanders & Arbuthnot & Co. reassured him that the natives were 'perfectly ignorant of the place they go or the length of voyage they are undertaking.'¹³ Meanwhile the Guyanese planters had persuaded the British Government to abandon the Stephen's code of 1838, which limited labour contracts to one year, and accept their demand for five year contracts. Thus began a system whose history proved only too well John Scoble's warning in 1839 that, just as during slavery, 'a race was then begun between abuses and legislation, in which legislation was always found to be in the rear. And so it will be with the Cooley [sic] Trade.'¹⁴

The 'indenture system' is, of course, merely a convenient phrase for systems of regulation which varied across time and space. The system in 1850 was by no means the same as it had become in 1910 and indenture in Trinidad in the late 1860s appears less harsh than in Guyana at the same time. One important change was in the ownership of estates. During the 19th century there were hundreds of collapses, sales and mergers. Estates became much larger and the old class of

resident proprietors were almost wholly taken over by metropolitan based capitalist companies. By the end of the indenture period in Guyana, sugar production was dominated by just two firms: Booker McConnell and Sandbach Parker. In the process the local class steeped in the traditions of slavery was joined by a new class of expatriate managers who favoured a more paternalistic style. However, the old sugar interests remained dominant in the British Guiana Combined Courts and the new managers could be as ruthless as the old order in handling labour unrest.¹⁵

There were changes too in the machinery of indenture: those parts which the metropolitan government controlled, such as recruitment and the sea passage from India, tended to improve; labour regulations tended to become harsher, since these were framed locally. In theory the differing constitutions of Trinidad and Guyana ought to have affected the extent to which the planters' interests were restrained by crown officials or given free rein. In reality both forms of government faithfully served the interests of the white business and sugar producing elite.¹⁶ Even so there is evidence that the planters in Guyana imposed their will even more effectively than their colleagues in the Crown Colony of Trinidad, on several occasions getting rid of state officials who had shown some sympathy for the Indians, and holding on to re-indenture long after it was abandoned in Trinidad.¹⁷

There were other differences between indentured life in Trinidad and Guyana. Besides the absence of official restraints, physical labour was harsher in Guyana, estate residence persisted longer and it was probably true that the culture of slavery had deeper roots. The severest consequence was the greater frequency and seriousness of labour revolts in Guyana. Otherwise these differences had more effect on the diverging characters of the two Indian communities than on European attitudes.¹⁸

One change through time which should have affected attitudes was the shift in the proportions of indentured and free labourers. By

1891 only 15.4% of the Indian population in Guyana was under indenture and in Trinidad by 1907 it was just over 11%. Even so, as one Guyanese planter admitted, 'No immigrant is really a free man, and while there is indenture in Guiana, it will be impossible to allow perfect freedom to immigrants.' Free Indians were regularly harassed by the police under the vagrancy laws which were designed to keep indentured labourers captive on their master's estate. Not surprisingly all Indians continued to be seen as bondsmen. Significantly, A.R.F. Webber's novel, Those That Be in Bondage²⁰, subtitled 'a tale of East Indian indenture', was published in 1917 when less than 10% of the Indian population were still under indenture. In general, one must conclude that what was common to the workings of the system was greater in effect than any variations of time or place.

When one looks at what the planters and their allies wrote about the system it is often hard to recognise the same harsh world which can be reconstructed from official papers, reports on disturbances, medical statistics and the various commissions of enquiry. It is in the planters' feelings about recruitment, the organisation of labour, the housing offered on the estates, the frequent use of discipline and the social structure of estate life that one must look for the truest indication of how they saw the Indians.

The only aspect of recruitment which concerned them was the physical suitability of the labourers. They complained frequently that they were sent the sick, the crippled and the mentally defective. Yet despite such evidence of inadequate supervision by the Emigration Agents, there was no parallel concern about the voluntariness of labour contracts, despite some well supported allegations of deception and even kidnappings. Another example of the cynical indifference of planters and officials to the human needs of the Indians was their complaisance over the sexual imbalance of recruits. Not until 1868 was any agreement²¹ reached between the Government of India and the Colonial Office on a minimum ratio of 40 women to 100 men. Even so

the actual proportions frequently fell short of that low target, but no action was ever taken, such was the pressure for labour. It was only when the inevitable consequences of this imbalance (wife murders, feuds and heavy drinking) disrupted the order of the estates that any concern was expressed.²² It is all too clear that to the planters the Indians were simply a commodity in the equation of sugar production, not people with individual and social lives.

Although sugar factories in Guyana in the nineteenth century were among the most advanced in the world,²³ field operations remained the same as those performed by slaves in previous centuries. Only one estate in Guyana ever made effective use of the steam plow (available from the 1860's) and many estates reverted to manual methods of drainage when immigration brought a plentiful supply of labour, even where the steam pump had formerly been used.²⁴ Workers were used as beasts of burden; on one estate the attempt to replace human labour with horses for ploughing had to be abandoned so short was the horses' life span.²⁵ At least until the costs of financing immigration became prohibitive during the sugar slump of the 1880-1900 period, it is probable that indenture was even more physically exploitative than slavery. On the efficient plantation the slave was capital equipment whose working life it paid to prolong. Slaves were carefully 'seasoned' for up to three years before they were considered capable of performing the most strenuous work. By contrast the indentured labourer was only contracted for five years, with a further five years of industrial residence, before becoming eligible for a return passage. Labour contracts stipulated the performance of a fixed number of tasks a week. The unseasoned immigrant might either have to work double the length of time that a seasoned man might take to complete the task or, in failing to complete the task, starve or fall into debt to stay alive.²⁶ Not surprisingly the mortality rate for labourers in the first year of indenture was often scandalously high.²⁷ In the words of an anonymous critic, the planters 'contemplated the grinding of sugar out

of the bones and sinews of their labourers...and as they wear out, to supply their place by fresh importation.²⁹

The truth of this polemic is supported by the reports of various Immigration Agents General on the health of indentured labourers. They suffered from conditions in the field, from chigoes, hookworm, ulcers and lung diseases caused by cane dust. Insanitary housing, poor diet and the lack of preventative medicine all facilitated the endemic incidence of such debilitating diseases as anaemia, dysentery, malaria and parasitic infections. Even though the employers complained that they lost an average of four weeks labour a year from each worker through sickness,²⁹ as long as fresh imports could be had there was little active concern with the immigrants' health. In the first period of indenture in Guyana, of the 396 Indians who landed at least 100 died between 1838-1843. Even though from 1866 estates were obliged to set up hospitals, in the earlier years of indenture the title 'hospital' was often a misnomer since they were merely the 'hot houses'³⁰ of slavery where supposed malingerers were punished. In 1870 the Commissioners' general verdict on estate hospitals was 'filthy holes', and the missionary, H.V.P. Bronkhurst, noted that 'The ancient stocks of Klein Pouderoyen were apparently not more rigorous than those...found in use in some state hospitals for the correction of insubordinate coolies.'³¹

The real extent of Indian suffering will probably never be known; many deaths of ex-indentured workers simply went unreported, but the population figures for the indenture period in Guyana tell the story. Between 1838 and 1917, 239,149 Indians entered the colony and 66,903 returned to India. In 1921 the Indian population was only 124,938, although sex-ratios had almost equalised through natural increase and Indians had the highest birthrate in the colony. It was a repetition of the demographic pattern of slavery.³²

Another index of suffering was the suicide rate. In Madras this averaged 46 per million, and 54 per million in the United Provinces.

In Guyana it was 100 per million for indentured labourers , in Trini-³³dad the rate was 400 per million a year, averaged between 1911-1921.

The cornerstone of the moral case for the system was that indentured labourers were free and potentially prosperous wage earners. The truth for the vast majority was quite the opposite. Wages were theoretically fixed at a rate which permitted careful labourers to make savings, but there is ample evidence that wage levels fluctuated sharply and that minimums were regularly flouted by employers.³⁴ Between 1880-1900 it is estimated that wages fell by 30-40%, so that except for those with skilled or supervisory jobs, or the most vigorous on prosperous estates in times of good sugar prices, wages for the vast majority barely covered basic necessities and the meagre consolations of cheap rum. Although it was flatly against the original metropolitan concept, many immigrants were forced to re-indenture themselves at the end of the five year period for a bounty of \$50, a small sum to the planter but tempting for the impoverished labourer. In Guyana, the Commissioners of 1870 found Indians in their fourth,³⁵ fifth and even sixth period of re-indenture. It was only when there was a labour surplus in the last decades of the century that the planters dropped their objections to the ending of re-indenture; up till then they had wanted the Indians to remain in a servile state of dependence.

What above all mocked the claim that indenture was a system of free labour was the absolute legal inequality between employer and labourer. At the beginning of the period, whippings and beatings were so prevalent that the British Government was forced to suspend immigration to Guyana. Rose, a labourer on one of Gladstone's estates testified that '...they appeared to me as severely punished as my 'matties' were during apprenticeship; when flogged they were with a cat, the same as was formerly in use....'³⁶ In later years the penal code largely replaced the lash, though physical punishments evidently remained a part of estate life. Mostly the managers had no need for such measures

since they had at their disposal draconian labour laws, a sympathetic magistracy and a heavily armed police force. Though indenture was supposedly a civil contract, the labourer was liable to fines and/or imprisonment for desertion, absence from work, refusal to obey orders, neglect of duties, vagrancy, malingering, persuading immigrants to stop work, idling and refusing to begin or finish work. The manager defined what constituted a day's labour and was entitled to make deductions from wages for incomplete tasks. The labourer had no negotiating rights; any dissenting action the labourer took was invariably illegal. Sir Joseph Beaumont cites the case of a labourer who had gone to Georgetown to testify, on subpoena, against his employer, but had been refused a pass by the employer to leave the estate. Without a pass the man was arrested as a vagrant and imprisoned.³⁷ Immigrants themselves were virtually powerless to start proceedings since their only remedy was the complex and expensive process of the civil courts. Criminal actions on the labourer's behalf had to be taken by the Immigration-Agent. A few were exceptional, like James Crosby who tried to see that justice was done, but most yielded to the pressures put on them by the managers. One long serving Protector of Immigrants in Trinidad told the Sanderson Commission, that when Indians complained:

I take down their complaint...and tell them plainly that I do not believe them...if a man makes what I consider a frivolous complaint...then I give the manager a certificate to that effect so that he can prosecute him. 38

The role of the law in labour discipline can be seen from the number of prosecutions made. Between 1865-70 in Guyana there were 32,876 charges brought under the immigration ordinances;³⁹ an average of nearly one in five indentured workers. In the same period the Commissioners could find only twenty cases brought against employers. In court the magistrate was more than likely to be a neighbouring planter. Even when this was not so, magistrates depended so entirely on the hospitality of the managers that few can have been genuinely impartial. Add to this the Indian's difficulties with the language of the

courts, and it is evident that the planters were in a position of almost unchecked power. Of those convicted, 80% were imprisoned with hard labour, often performed on an estate adjacent to the district reformatory. Even at the end of the indenture period, in Guyana between 1907-8, there were 2019 convictions under the labour code at a time when there were only 9,784 adults still under indenture.⁴⁰

Right up to 1917 when indenture was banned by the Colonial Office,⁴¹ the planters were convinced that bond labour was the only possible way to run the sugar industry. Yet the estates survived in virtually identical form long after the ending of indenture. This was largely because the manager's power extended well beyond the control of work. Estates, often geographically isolated, were 'total' institutions with a rigidly authoritarian social structure in which the manager and overseers controlled many aspects of the labourers' lives. They controlled the labourer's freedom of movement, housing and all rewards and punishments. Although the Indians preferred to live in detached cottages built of whatever materials were at hand, the managers made them live in long barracks which provided only one room for each family with wholly inadequate privacy. The purpose of housing the labourers in the old 'nigger yards' was to enable the drivers to turn out the labourers quickly for work each morning. Having provided such demeaning accommodation, managers often then concluded that the Indians were only animal in their wants.

In the later years of indenture, when managers wanted to keep a pool of free labour tied to the estate, workers were offered the chance to gather wood, graze cattle or rents plots for rice or provisions, growing. Enlightened managers would also attend Indian festivals and distribute largesse. 'Slavery' had become feudalism, but what did not change was the hierarchy of skin and power, the structure which served to reinforce the European's sense of his racial and cultural superiority.

Real social contacts were minimal. However, there was one area of

contact which was much resented by the Indians: this was the sexual exploitation of Indian women by managers and overseers which, as the Commissioners of 1870 reported, resulted in the 'worst possible consequence to good order and harmony.'⁴² Despite an ordinance prohibiting such liaisons, the missionary H.V.P. Bronkhurst noted that there was an increasing number of Eurasian children to be found on almost every sugar estate.⁴³ Predictably some planter writings presented the issue quite differently; warning innocent young overseers against seduction by promiscuous Indian women. There were no doubt some genuine relationships. The only fictional treatments of this issue portray such relationships as tragic and impossible.

In examining how the indenture system affected the way Europeans thought about the Indians, it is worth considering the point made by Henry Alcazar in 1897, that though the finite nature of the indentured contract made the system less harmful to the Indians than slavery had been to the Africans, the continuity of the system had kept the 'educated classes at the moral level of the slave owners.'⁴⁴ There were indeed still those who looked backwards wistfully like the leader writer of the Guyanese planter paper The Argosy who in 1888 suggested that slavery was not 'half so black or so bad as it is painted' and supposed that some of the 'old time' people looked back with 'hankering regret...when, like other beasts of burden, they were well-fed, well-housed.'⁴⁵ Seaforth Bellairs, a Guyanese planter, saw the continuity between slavery and indenture very clearly. 'Slavery, stripped...of its worst features, was in fact the first attempt at immigration, and was for many years very successful.'⁴⁶ Another writer had clearly forgotten that indenture was meant to be a system of free labour when, arguing that Indians should be discouraged from moving off the estates he asserted that, 'Even liberals are sufficiently conservative to endeavour to keep that for which they have paid, resisting efforts of others to alienate their property.'⁴⁷

Elsa Goveia, among others, has shown how the racism which grew

out of the relations of slavery became its theoretical support. Slavery came to be justified in terms of the supposed character of the African slave: brutes without reason or moral feeling and intractable in their passions, therefore requiring harsh restraint. Similarly most defences of indenture ultimately rested on a conception of the Indian character. The planter R.G. Duncan noted:

The owners of the soil, when they observed the negro labour ruined, naturally turned their attention to the inhabitants of those countries, situated in the tropics, who were best suited by nature and habits, to prosper in such a colony as this. 49

However, while the stereotypes of the Negro produced to defend slavery were remarkably consistent, stereotypes of the Indians were far more complex and contradictory.

Firstly, such stereotypes had to relate to the actual contradiction in the legal and social status of the indentured labourer, half-slave, half-free; secondly, to the opposing tasks of justifying it as a free, benevolent system but also justifying the harsh system of labour control; and thirdly, to the widely varying ways the Indians responded to the system. There were some healthy and energetic labourers who did succeed in saving money, and by the end of the nineteenth century there was already a small middle-class who had distanced themselves from estate labour. But there were also labourers who became trapped into re-indentures and were dependent on the regimented social organisation of the estate. There were periods of industrial peace when the Europeans could feel confident that the Indians were docile and contented, and periods of hysteria about the possibility of an uncontrollable labour rebellion. Finally, there was sometimes an awareness of the historical background of the immigrants, as representatives of what was regarded by the Europeans as a fallen, morally corrupt civilisation.

But of all the factors which shaped the stereotype, justifying the system was most important. There were two main ways in which apologists could seek consonance between the 'Indian' personality and the system. One was to deny any faults in the system, which gave the Indians 'plenty of work and plenty of food, with perfect liberty

and equality in law.⁵⁰ According to this version, thrifty and industrious Indians spent their time amassing small fortunes. Any destitutes were, as Henry Kirke, a magistrate, asserted:

...nine times out of ten, the victims of their own vices or sloth, who have reduced themselves to such a condition in spite of all the Government and public can do to prevent them. ⁵¹

Sometimes such apologists were unable to get their story straight. 'West Indian' rebuts the charge that labourers were kept in bondage on the estates by boasting that they were allowed to go 'without question, two miles from the estate.⁵² Again, having asserted that the greatest care is taken with recruiting in India, a page later he defends low wages on the grounds that estates were too often sent workers who were physically incapable. The other approach was to admit that to the uninformed eye some aspects of the system might shock, but then explain that such phenomena were unavoidable given the deficiencies of the Indian character.

Inevitably there were contradictions between the character traits most commonly cited in planter writings:⁵³ docility or revengefulness, industriousness or idleness, thrift or base and filthy habits, sturdy independence or child-like incapacity and deceitfulness. The durability of such stereotypes would suggest some, even if slight, basis in observable behaviour. There were no doubt instances of Indians behaving stoically in adversity, displaying passionate anger or punishing themselves in the attempt to take a few dollars back to India. Kirke observed, for instance, that Indians regularly perjured themselves in the courts. He realised that they were unfamiliar with the seriousness with which British justice regarded that offence and that for many witnesses family or group loyalty was more important than an abstract idea of truth.⁵⁴ However, in most other writers, 'lying' becomes either a genetic or a cultural characteristic of Indians in general,⁵⁵ and a useful means of discounting Indian complaints as fanciful and explaining why the conviction rates in the courts were so high. Even Des Voeux, who finally revolted over the injustices to

the Indians, saw lying as a racial trait:

...lying, which in the case of the Indian coolie indicated such a fertility of imagination and invention of pictorial detail as almost to amount to a fine art. 56

In general, stereotypes tended to become autonomous rhetorical devices for justifying or rationalising the system. It is this which explains why nearly every trait has its contradiction, quite often found together in the same piece of writing. The trait of docility was, for instance, part of the argument that the Indians made particularly good material for indenture: 'A mild and timid race, obsequious, wanting in firmness and perseverance, more prudent and wily than energetic.'⁵⁷ On the other hand the draconian labour ordinances and the periodic slaughter of rioting labourers could not have seemed consonant with that stereotype, so a 'second one appeared which ingeniously contained both ideas:

The mild Hindoo is generally worthy of his epithet, but when his passions are aroused he becomes violently excited and is then a dangerous person. 58

This was Kirke's rationalisation of a series of violent crimes against Indian women which he heard in court. Another reason for the revision of the stereotype of docility was the Indian mutiny of 1857.⁵⁹ In Guyana the effect was to convert the occasional Indian assault on an overseer into the prelude of a new mutiny. This and the belief that 'The coolie is the easiest man to manage in the world...but once rouse a coolie he would murder you',⁶⁰ was used to justify the apparatus of repression.

Sometimes the same stereotype had currency in a number of arguments. The stereotype that Indians were energetic and industrious was not only part of the defence for importing the Indians, but used as an ideological weapon to beat the black creoles with.⁶¹ The latter were improvident and idle and the introduction of the provident coolie would teach them a moral lesson. However, this was hardly consistent with the planters' constant pressure for ever harsher labour ordinances,⁶² such as corporal punishment for the 'ill-conducted'. Leniency was 'not a real kindness to them' since it discouraged imm-

-igrants from earning good wages.⁶³ There was a similar contradiction between the image of the Indian as sturdily independent ('England herself cannot show a more independent and prosperous labourer'⁶⁴) and as a wayward child ('...like children and have to be treated like children'⁶⁵). Indeed the Guyanese manager who had boasted of the independent and prosperous labourer, makes a plea in the same essay for the retention of re-indenture which evokes a quite contrary image:

The East Indian, not trained up in early life to endure the hardships of toil, not accustomed to rely upon his own individual exertions, or to work his path through life by his own self-reliance and self-denial, is quite unsuited to be cast on his own resources and left to take care of himself ...⁶⁶

But even for this contradiction there was a neat solution. It was that the Indian was child-like and cringing when he arrived in the colony, and therefore it was necessary to have vagrancy laws⁶⁷ to protect him from himself, but then the labourer became sturdily independent through the effects of indenture itself. It was a solution which satisfied two nineteenth-century shibboleths: regular labour as a moralising agent and the white man's burden in civilising the humbler races. Kirke gives a fairly typical version:

Let anyone compare the immigrant when he first lands in Demerara with the same man a year or two afterwards. At first he is a poor cringing creature, bowing to the earth before every white man he meets; apologetic for his very existence. You meet the same man in two years' time, strong, clean, erect, passing with an indifferent stare...⁶⁸

It is probable that the traumatised voyager and the agricultural proletarian did behave differently; that some immigrants in escaping from land-lordism and caste restrictions did become more self-confident; and that, as part of a class clearly feared at times by the Europeans, many Indians became more assertive. However, what may have been an observable truth in turn becomes yet another rhetorical device.

One notes too how the same social phenomena were described in different, sharply connoted ways to suit different arguments. Take, for instance, the cluster of 'thrifty', 'miserly' and 'debased in living habits'. Indians were thrifty when they were being used to teach

the creoles a lesson, 'miserly' when it was necessary to rationalise the fact that labourers frequently had to punish themselves in order to save and 'debased in living habits' when it was necessary to explain the squalor of many estates.

There was little interest in the regional origin, caste or religious affiliation of the Indians: they were all 'coolies'. Three groups, however, sometimes attracted special attention and their own sub-stereotype. Immigrants from Madras were vilified as 'prone on occasion ... to give way to drinking and quarreling... pilfering and stealing', as idle, liable to break their contracts and desert. Some Madrassis were also alleged to be untouchable carrion eaters. One strange aspect of this Caribbean prejudice was that the planters in Mauritius preferred recruits from Madras. Again, the terms 'hindoo' and 'coolie' were used synonymously though at least fifteen percent of immigrants were Muslims. When the latter were distinguished they seem to have been regarded as better educated, but for that reason potential trouble makers. For example Bellairs claimed:

Mussulmans are not such bad labourers, but they often prove most dangerous men; at the bottom of nearly every disturbance and discontent will generally be found a Mussulman, who is himself living on the produce of cows, and who employs his leisure time in watching law business and discontent... 73

Brahmins had a similar image as a 'pernicious and baneful influence' who 'invariably give trouble and incite others to do the same'. The Brahmin was also invariably depicted as a low caste imposter who cynically preyed upon the superstitions of his compatriots.

The power of all such stereotypes was to be found in the simplicity of their conceptual structure, the metonymic fallacy of taking an externally determined or historically specific pattern of behaviour to stand for the whole person, or to take what were effects on behaviour as their causes. For instance, the relationship between the imbalance of the sexes, the lack of privacy of estate housing, and the upsetting of established sexual role relations and the consequent spate of wife-murders becomes recategorised as: Indians murder their

wives in disproportionate numbers; they do this because it is a characteristic of Indians to do so. Indians are revengeful and jealous wife-murderers. Such a sleight of mind was a useful ideological ploy.

The other kind of structure one finds in the stereotypes is binary opposition: Blacks are feckless, Indians mean; Blacks are lazy, Indians industrious, etcetera. Southern Indian emigrants were contrasted with Indians from the Central Provinces in a similar fashion. Such thinking was closely related to the actual social practice of divide and rule: Indians to reduce the bargaining power of black creoles; black creole policemen to act as the rank and file of the para-military forces used to crush Indian strikes. Similarly, managers quite frequently recruited Madrassis as drivers over 'Calcutta Coolies' since the two groups were felt to share few sympathies.

The power of such stereotypes also derived from their extensive circulation. Inevitably they were, as the travelogues of Trollope and Froude indicate, part of the planter's table-talk, effectively re-inforced by the local press. In Trinidad, the Port of Spain Gazette regularly regaled their readers with details of all the Indian chopping offences and murders under such typical headlines as 'The Cutlass Again'⁷⁶. Often the tone of reporting was offensively jocular:

...the driver of cab no. 34 ...drove over an elderly male coolie who was either too lazy to get out of the way or else was desirous of a speedy journey to Calcutta.⁷⁷

Other articles ridiculed the 'oriental barbarism' of suicidal Indians who 'look upon a railway train as the best local substitute for the car of Juggernaut.' The paper also expressed fears that Indian immigration would change the character of the island:

Are we to continue to be a West Indian Island or is the whirligig of time with its strange revenges to people the island with the East Indian population Columbus thought the Caribs were.⁷⁸

Thus far this chapter has shown how specific character traits tended to be enmeshed in defences of particular aspects of the indenture system. There were, though, some attempts to portray a coherent character type; these appeared in various contexts, from instruction manuals to essays whose purpose was supposedly aesthetic.

The most basic kind of characterisations were to be found in such works as The Overseer's Manual, published in 1887 to give practical advice to the young men who came out to Guyana to work as overseers and book-keepers. Much of the manual deals with technical aspects of planting, but one chapter is devoted to giving the new overseer a picture of the 'moral character' and customs of his new charges. As Henry Kirke asserted, 'To make a man of any class or nation contented with his lot, one must study his individuality and predilections.'⁷⁹

The chapter presents a series of contrasts to inform the novice which race is suited to which kind of work: creoles to heavy work, Calcutta coolies to patient continuous work and Madrassis unsuited to agricultural labour at all. Other traits are described in order to advise the overseer how to behave and control. Creole Africans are 'intemperate, improvident, lazy, rude' and the advice is 'Keep Quashie in his place.' The Calcutta coolie is 'stupid to a degree when he first arrives in the colony', but with careful instruction 'Sammy' soon⁸⁰ 'acquires a fair knowledge of his work...' The overseer is also warned about the immorality of the scantily clad Madrassee women who 'too easily acquire an influence', and reminded that he joins a superior class with standards to uphold:

Judged from an European point of view, the coolie is of the lower standard, morally. He has no regard for truth; and bribery and subornation are commonly practised.⁸¹

The form of the manual is parodied in the Rev. J. G. Pearson's The New Overseer's Manual or The Reason Why of Julius Jugler (1890), the pretended manuscript of a garrulous old timer who tiresomely gives the benefits of his fifty years in the colony, 'the esoteric mysteries ... of this honorable avocation.'⁸² It would be tempting to think of the work as one of detached irony, but since Pearson's other writings show him to have been a reactionary racist this is very unlikely.⁸³ Only in the earlier part of the book where 'Jugler' writes about the tribulations of the overseer is there satire on the genre; elsewhere when the book deals with the labouring classes the persona simply

becomes a vehicle for Pearson's own prejudices. Here the material is distinguishable from the genuine manual only by the orotund facetiousness of its style. For instance, new coolies are difficult to handle because they are:

undergoing their initial disillusionment and are querulous accordingly. Not one of them left India with the idea of finding this country other than an El Dorado. Plenty was to await their landing... (p27)

The Indian is pictured as a moody child who requires constant, firm supervision and Jugler complains frequently that the penal laws are too lenient: 'The Government's tenderness towards these Eastern immigrants is very touching to contemplate.'^(p43) It is, indeed, a sign of how embedded in the ideology of the planters Pearson was that he appears unaware of the unconscious irony of such statements.

However, the quasi-fictional nature of The New Overseer's Manual does encourage Pearson to write a series of 'characters' in the manner of the seventeenth century English 'character' writers such as Hall, Overbury or Earle, which anatomise the vices and virtues of a variety of Indian personality types. But though Pearson recognises that one single character will not suffice, the rhetorical purpose of his sketches works to the detriment of naturalistic observation, still more of psychological insight. Their function is to contrast the ideal coolie with a gallery of rogues.

'Ramlal is a type of common-place industrious coolie', a coolie Stephen Blackpool⁸⁴ whose individualistic independence makes him unwilling to combine with the other labourers over their grievances. He is an excellent advertisement for the system in that although he knows his place he is not too servile, characteristics which camouflage the real inequalities of his position:

Years ago he came here abject, cringing... now he respects his overseer and his overseer respects him. If the price of work does not pay, it does not occur to him to strike, but he is by no means afraid to grumble when the manager comes round... (p52)

In other respects Ramlal is an exemplary Victorian: a steady labourer, a determined saver and self-improver.

Interestingly for a clergyman of the time, Pearson's attitude to Ramlal's religious beliefs is detached and respectful, though this perhaps reflected his Anglicanism and the comparative lack of interest of that denomination in Indian proselytization:

Like that of his fellow countrymen his mind is cast in a philosophic mould, and proverbial philosophy is the real ground work of his theory of life and duty. (p53)

In all, Pearson greatly admires Ramlal, but the consequence is writing which is patronisingly sentimental:

Ramlal is a happy man and as kindly night lets down her curtain of darkness, he lays down certain that the sweet angel will speedily wait upon him to wave her wand of gentle and peaceful oblivion over him. If perchance he dreams, 'tis of fresh tasks, just employers and increased stock upon which he may live in comfort the declining days of his prosperous life. (p53)

What Pearson's stress on Ramlal's independence fails to disguise is that he has been integrated into and made dependent on the indenture system. He has remained on one estate, of which he thinks himself 'part and parcel'. This is made clearer when Ramlal's career is contrasted with those of the villains of Pearson's coolieology.

In their case what escapes from the exasperated ill-humour of Pearson's tone is the unwelcome admission that there were those who bucked the system and refused to know their place. For instance, Abdool-Khan, the Mohammedan priest is:

... tall and cultivates a profound contempt for anybody but himself. His walk is pride, dignity and arrogance in motion... and haughtiness and servility when it will serve. When he does cringe, his perfect effacement of all the elements of humility, lowliness and submission, or anything else usually thought necessary to that performance, is worth seeing. (p49)

Unlike Ramlal, Khan's pride 'is to incite the coolies successfully to strike...' The idea of a competing non-European figure of authority clearly irritates Pearson. Happy to justify the exploitation of the Indians by the sugar companies, he is quick to show his indignation that Khan's 'fellow countrymen are heavily mulcted to supply him with all his needs, though as a rule he is more dainty than greedy.'

The sketch of the rascally Bola-Singh neatly demonstrates how in Pearson's eyes such virtues as independence and enterprise become vices when possessed by those not supposed to have them. Unlike

Ramlal, Bola-Singh and his type ,

...often leaves the estate as soon as his indenture time is up and settles down with his two or more wives in a near village where he probably keeps a small shop, and dabbles in the sale of opium. (p58)

Clearly, by independence Pearson does not mean that the labourer should earn so much as to enable him to leave the estate and set up in business or roam around the country freely, passing on information from one estate to another, as Bola-Singh does. Even his desire for betterment is equated with mischief:

As his sons grow up they will be sent to school, and ten to one, turn out sharp scholars and as great rascals as their father. (p58)

Enterprise is seen only in the form of dishonesty; 'plotting mischief, frauds, and counter-fraud; writing bogus receipts and trading is his forte.' The resemblance of this to anti-semitic stereotypes is clear.

Pearson's abusive caricature of the Hindu 'parson' speaks only of racial and cultural contempt. Ram-Killaloo Singh has resisted all attempts to integrate him into the system; he is an enemy of all the Victorian virtues of hard-work, cleanliness and decency:

...he wears clothing, if he thinks of it, and then it is a long piece of calico...thick with coconut oil and dirt according to the time he has had it....He is spare, not to say meagre, but he is as much alive as an old cheese. He is seldom seen without a brass vessel from which he alone must drink. This walking museum of entomological tribes, this offensive upright column of stench, will not deign to drink from another person's cup. (p51)

In reality, very few self-neglecting Sadhus ever emigrated. On the contrary, most Hindu pandits appear to have been men of some substance

There is a further revealing difference between the portrait of Ramlal and those of the other characters. Ramlal's character is seen longitudinally. Thus Pearson notes his changing attitudes to caste and to India and, because he wants to praise the positive effects of indenture, also notes how Ramlal's wife Muchliah (was the pun intentional?) becomes 'somebody in her own estimation.' Those not moulded by indenture in ways of which Pearson approves are seen in static terms, their behaviour determined by innate ethnic deficiencies.

This intersection between form and ideology is made still clearer

in the way Pearson uses another quasi-fictional form: the 'life-history'. A number of 'life histories' had already appeared in Timehri, the journal of the Royal Agricultural Society,⁸⁵ before Pearson wrote his 'The Life History of an East Indian in British Guiana'.⁸⁶ As a form the life history has more intrinsic possibilities than the character. Firstly, whilst character tends to be seen as static, the form of the life history leads Pearson to look at the experience of the Guyanese born 'Creole coolie' as dynamic. Secondly, unlike the 'character' which tends to reduce the motives for action to a fixed predisposition, the life history implies an interaction between the person and his environment. Pearson, indeed, becomes far more agnostic about the dominance of genetics. He muses:

What conflicting evidences he affords us of hereditary influences, indeed of the doctrine of heredity itself, and of the potency of the environment!... For a while in everything, environment has it; instance after instance confirms one's pet theories, and then in the most unexpected places and at the most critical times up comes heredity... 87

What is lacking though is any awareness that Indians consciously adapted to the new environment, and because Pearson idealises the conditions of indentured labour, his discussion of the interplay between Indian cultural patterns and the new environment lacks real material focus. Thirdly, whilst the character study depends on the emphasis of distinctive features, which in the Guyanese context become racial features, the life history tends to direct the writer towards the underlying universal. Thus while Pearson still recounts many familiar stereotypes, there are qualifications:

It is said that the Hindoos fear 'Gods many and Lords many, and possibly this is so, but the real God they serve differs but little from the universal object of other men's care and thought, viz., mammon. 88

Again, the deep structure of human life and its common rites of passage encourage Pearson to stress his character's common humanity. This is expressed sentimentally in the anglicising of names (Lutchman is 'hubby' and the birth is attended by a 'neighbourly granny midwife.') and through the pathos of death. There is in Rampersaud's dying consciousness:

...that unquestionably divine hope of life and beauty, of cities and gardens and rivers of water unpolluted by the corruptions of earth. Babbling more or less of these things he quietly passes away. 89

It is not hard to see why Pearson made the subject of his life-history so admirable in comparison to some of the villains of The New Overseer's Manual. Had he extended the portrayal of any of them into life histories, with the inevitable pathos of death as their conclusion, he would have faced two unappealing choices. To have portrayed a successful rascal would have been dissonant with the ethos of industry, obedience and reward; to have portrayed failure would either have seemed critical of the system or harsh in lacking the pity due to a miscarried individual life.

Again, whilst the 'character' assumes its typicality, there is more onus on the life history to prove its representative realism. Pearson, indeed, admits the difficulty of producing 'any picture that shall be true' in respect of more than one section of the community.

Such potentialities of form depend upon the purpose of their use, the acuteness of observation and the extent to which the writer achieves an imaginative identification with the subject. In Pearson's life history one notes a persuasive motive, a tentative ethnological interest and the slight promptings of a fictive engagement with character. The first motive is by far the strongest. As noted above, embryo life histories of an attenuated impersonal type had long been part of the propaganda for the system. In Kirke's Twenty-Five Years in British Guiana, the history is just such a rhetorical device beginning with a picture of the peasant in hopeless debt to a rapacious Indian moneylender and ending with a portrait of a soberly industrious immigrant in a land where 'many coolies...are now wealthy men.'⁹⁰ Similarly Pearson's portrayal of Rampersaud, the creole coolie, is intended to illustrate the benefits of western contact. Stronger and better developed than his father, he no longer whines or cringes: he has now caught the habit of growling, which is a wonderfully flattering imitation of the Englishman's growl.

Rampersaud's children are 'Anglicised', 'manly stalwart fellows' and

Rampersaud is described as the link between two orders: 'the old and effete and the new, the vigorous, manly, free and self reliant.'⁹¹ Pearson even wonders whether the Indians will become the future rulers of the colony, though it is obvious that he considers this likely only in so far as they become mimic Englishmen.

As ethnography the study is severely restricted by its ideological assumptions. Pearson is not sufficiently interested in the Indian presence as a phenomenon either to give a detailed naturalistic description of their social and cultural life or to attempt to understand the meaning of that culture on its own terms. And if there is a prompting to fiction in the naming, the invention of incidents and the shaping form of the life passage, it goes no further than a prompting. There is sentiment and admiration, but always a huge distance between writer and subject created by Pearson's sense of racial and cultural superiority.

A similar prompting to fiction and a similar limitation can be found in Henry Kirke's Twenty-Five Years in British Guiana. The reports of the court cases he presided over display something of the novelist's interest in narration, circumstantial detail, irony and authorial stage-management. However, it was an interest aroused only in so far as the anecdote provided a dramatic confirmation of one or other of the familiar Indian stereotypes, and Kirke's curiosity about Indian social life tends to be confined to those occasions when they came into conflict with the law. Within the context of the system Kirke was a reformer, but his attitudes towards the Indians manifestly prevent him from taking their dramas very seriously. In recounting the murder of an errant child-bride, Kirke's tone alternates between smug humour and the heartless melodrama of the penny-dreadful:

At first everything went smoothly; the little bride settled down to her wifely duties. Her husband was generally kind to her, although he sometimes gave her a good wack with his stick when he came home from work and found she had been making mud-pies in the road instead of cooking his rice for dinner...

...But ere she had made six strides from her place her husband was after her, and seized her by the right hand with

his left. She shrieked aloud as the dreaded cutlass descended with two sharp chops upon her pretty rounded arm, severing it completely from her body just below the elbow. Seecheram flung the bleeding limb into her face as she fled from him, shouting out, 'Harlot, adulteress, take that.' 92

What is striking about all these quasi-fictional treatments of the Indian presence is the absence of any impression of the interaction between European and Indian. The two scarcely appear within the same frame of reference. Some of the stories in West Indian Yarns by 'X. Beke' (G. Hawtayne) are set on a Guyanese estate, but they deal only with the world of the overseers. The only brief appearance of an entirely peripheral labourer is to permit the ridicule of the contortions of coolie-English.⁹³

Even in the more personal form of verse there is an absence of emotional involvement. In the following anonymous poem there is an amusing switch from the apparently romantic apostrophe of the first verse to a familiar economic response to the Indian presence: admiration for industry, frustration with the persistence of Indian culture and comparisons invidious to other racial groups. Yet despite the falsifying pastoral tone, the penultimate stanza neatly expresses a genuine note of admiring debt, with its apt borrowing from Swift.

Oh cooly girl with eyes of wonder!
With thoughtful brow and lips compressed!
I know not where your thoughts do wonder
I know not where your heart doth rest.

Is it far away by rolling Indus?
Or down by Ganges' sacred wave?
Or where the lonesome Indian ocean
The shores of Malabar doth lave?

Ah no! Those lands you never saw
This western world can claim your birth...

Then why so foreign? Why so strange
In looks and manner, style and dress-
Religion, too, and social ways?
Thy mystery I cannot guess.

.....
Thy father is a landlord now
With herds of cattle, flocks of sheep,
A veritable lady thou,
Thy father's flocks and herds doth keep.

This land is yours, go up, possess!
'Tis here for you to cultivate....

The Carib, Negro, Portuguese,
The Chinamen (not he of delf)

They all have tried their hands, and now
They leave it mostly to yourself.

'Out of the running' all of them,
Mere loiterers on the world's highway;
They are all 'going, going, gone,'
The cooly man has come to stay.

You open up the country when
You dig a space around your door
And cause two blades of grass to grow
Where only one was seen before.

Ah! cooly girl with eyes of wonder!
With thoughtful brow and lips compressed!
I know not where your thoughts may wander,
But here at length your heart will rest. 94

Another oblique approach to the Indian presence is found in the dialect verses and narratives of Michael McTurk, like Kirke a district magistrate. In his Essays and Fables in Prose and Verse (1877), McTurk creates the persona of the creolese-speaking Afro-Guyanese 'Quow' and his listener 'Buddy Jimmis'. A few verses by Quow have as their subject not so much the Indian presence itself, but Quow's response to that presence. At times it is difficult to tell whether the point of view is McTurk's or a genuine reflection of black creole attitudes. Perhaps the ambiguity was deliberate. For instance, in 'Brigah tory' Quow puzzles why Des Voeux has apparently broken ranks with his fellow whites to criticise indenture:

Dem say dack no nyam he matty dack, a blebe das bery true,
But wa fo' say fo' Bacra-man dem call am Miss De Woo?

And Quow refutes Des Voeux's claim that magistrates were partial:

But dem tarrah one lib a Mangah-house, dem all is low-baan
villan;

An' wa ebbah sang de Plantah gib a da dem got fo' sing,
But he nebbah bin do such-like to dat... 96

In 'Quow to Marabunta' Des Voeux is charged with stirring up the Indians to riot, but Quow threatens that he will be ready for them:

So Buddy hear wa' you matty say-trouble no deh far,
Jus' now you a go yerry say Demeradah Coolie war
Is broke out in de Conoly...

So cut one hakkia-'tick a bush, rub you cutlish 'pon grin'
'tone,

An' if De Woo bring he Coolie come awe sa dull am 'pon dem
bone;

If me boy Quow get one piece a gun -don' ca' he fire wid frink
A sa' loose one loose 'pon dem Coolie so jus' now dem da go 'tink
A sa make dem wife wear mo'ning so till black-clat no deh a
'tore. 97

It is evident then that amongst those materially involved with indenture there was some prompting towards an imaginative literary

portrayal of the Indian presence, but no commitment which ever threatened to be subversive of those ways of seeing which provided ideological support for the system. It was not that the European elite in either Trinidad or Guyana was a wholly philistine class. On the contrary, there is ample evidence of interest in history, ethnology, literature and the performing arts, and a good deal of publishing activity. There was, though, very little locally written imaginative literature on any theme or in any form. There was none in Trinidad published during the indenture period; in Guyana there was some. There were a few volumes of verse, the most interesting being those by 'Leo', a coloured creole called Egbert Martin. There were only two novels written by long-term residents in the colony, James Rodway's In Guiana Wilds (1899) and A.R.F. Webber's Those That Be in Bondage (1917) which is discussed later in the chapter. It is notable though that though In Guiana Wilds deals with the relationship of European and non-European, it focusses on the then marginal Amerindian group. The novel tells how Allan Gordon, a Scottish emigrant, marries Chloe, a 'bovian-⁹⁸der' woman, who away from the wilds of Etaroonie is stifled by the city and revolts from Gordon's attempts to make a lady of her. The marriage breaks up and Gordon runs away to join a tribe of Macusi Indians, learns the life of 'the natural man', is accepted into the tribe and marries a pure-blooded Amerindian girl. Rodway was interested in the question of race and environment and his preoccupation with 'blood' is curiously Mittelholzerian in tone. Although the novel can be seen as a pioneering attempt to explore the theme of the aboriginal heartland, it can also be seen as a means of evading the far more vexed question of European relationships with the Afro- and Indo-Guyanese majority. That focus would not have permitted so easily the romantic escapism which marks Rodway's novel.

Any attempt to explain why there was so little genuinely fictional treatment of the Indian presence must come back to the actual social relationship between Europeans and Indians, and the stereotypes held

by the former of the latter. Both were severe disincentives to fictional treatment. Again, if one considers that in 1891 there were only 4,558 persons of British descent in Guyana (1.52% of the population), then it becomes clear that the relationship between any European writer and a local audience was necessarily intimate. Within such a framework the stereotype worked as a shared code, a currency which in its circulation bound that class together. Again, the actual content of the stereotypes precluded fictional involvement at other than trivial levels. The mind which saw the Indians as child-like would not be likely to consider such a person worthy of fictional treatment, except perhaps as a comic target. On the other hand, the view that the indentured Indian was sturdily independent, enjoying a life of perfect freedom and plenty, would seem to permit only the fairy-tale, or its nineteenth-century equivalent, the missionary tract, but not realist fiction.

Yet if the planter's interest in the Indians was excessively external, the missionary at least could be expected to have a concern with the inner person. This was indeed the case, sometimes to the exclusion of any concern with the material conditions of the Indians. If those involved with the Indians as workers in the cane could not imagine what feelings, thoughts and motivations passed through their minds, the missionary, particularly of the evangelical kind, tended to see the Indians in an attenuated moral perspective, quite divorced from any social context. Both tendencies were equally inimical to fiction. The one existing example of fictional writing by a missionary is equally one dimensional in its characterisation.

The missionary indifference to the injustices of indenture had several causes. One was the evangelical Christian emphasis on inner salvation, whatever social structure existed and however unjust. Missionaries also tended to share the belief in the moral virtue of work and the idea that indenture was one form of the necessary tutelege of an inferior culture to a superior. Indenture was seen as a means

of simultaneously removing the workless (and hence morally degenerate) Indian from the baneful influence of Hindu idolatry and saving him through the combination of honest labour and the Christian gospel. A more material reason for the general missionary support for indenture was their dependence on the manager for access to the Indians and often for financial support. The missionaries, particularly the Presbyterians, were welcomed by the managers because they counselled the labourers in duty and passivity. The education they gave, as one planter clearly saw, could serve a repressive role. Referring to the unruly behaviour of Indian children he argues that 'Schools should endeavour as much as possible to eradicate that spirit.'

The rather narrow concern with things of the spirit is perhaps one reason why most missionary writings are thin in social detail, disappointingly so since the missionaries had the most intimate contact with the Indians of any members of the European elite. With the exception of H.V.P. Bronkhorst, discussed below, missionaries tended only to be interested in those aspects of Indian culture which either facilitated proselytisation or made it difficult. There is observation of how caste was breaking down since it was seen as an obstacle to conversion, a bond which tied the individual to the beliefs of the community. However, in the matter of caste the missionaries were sometimes guilty of double standards. They were hostile to practising Brahmins, but there is some evidence that they tended to value Brahmin converts more highly than those of lower caste, and favoured them for training as catechists and teachers because they would command greater influence with other Indians than lower caste Christians. There was also some interest in Hindu and Muslim beliefs, not for their own sake, but either to ridicule them or, in the case of those missionaries with more respect for Indian intellectual capacities, to find points of convergence between Christian and Hindu scriptures in order to explain points of doctrine.

However, if in general missionaries were less inclined to see the

Indians in terms of genetically fixed stereotypes, their attitude to Indian culture was if any thing more hostile than that of the estate manager who was inclined to adopt a more laissez-faire tolerance. Their general attitude to Hinduism was that it was degenerate, idolatrous and morally degraded, and that taint was attached to the Indian character. Some missionaries believed that to convert also meant to anglicise and the educational policies of the Canadian Missions were based on the belief that access to Western education and culture would undermine Hinduism. Converts were not only encouraged to denounce the 'loathsome' gods of the Hindu pantheon, but were in some cases encouraged to mimic European patterns of dress, domestic habits, social customs and family relationships.

The racial attitudes of missionaries to the Indians were complex. Undoubtedly some laboured under a 'sahib complex', believing that in their work they were fulfilling the white man's burden of elevating the backward races, though to a position which was always somewhat to the rear of the European's. Morton, for instance, was hostile to the setting up of a training college for Indian preachers since it would '...puff up some of the young men till they will be above the kind of work we require to get done.' Yet Morton also refers to 'These East Indian people of our own Aryan race' and elsewhere as 'Anglo-Saxons toasted in the Indian sun.' By contrast missionary references to the blacks tend to reiterate the tired cliches about idlers loafing under the breadfruit tree.

In contrast to planter stereotypes which tend to relate to matters of economic and social concern, missionary character stereotypes tend to be more concerned with the Indian's moral and intellectual qualities. Morton's 'Character of the People' comprised the following: that Indians were intellectually acute and ready, that they learned quickly and were of a philosophic frame of mind. Morally, Morton believed, the Indian was unprincipled, untruthful, revengeful and litigious, unfaithful in matrimony, avaricious and over inclined to 'follow the

custom.' They did have such redeeming features as fondness for children, independence of mind and willingness to labour if it promised to be profitable.¹⁰⁹ K.G. Grant, also from the Canadian Missions, made similar observations. Indians were a 'profoundly intellectual race, who have to be reached through the reason as well as through the emotions to be convinced of Christian truth.'¹¹⁰ The one 'novel' written by a missionary, the Rev. J.D. McKay's Under the Southern Cross (1904) reveals a similar conception of indenture, of Indian culture and of the Indian character to those outlined above.

Before discussing this work of fiction, it is worth drawing attention to the writings of the Wesleyan missionary, H.V.P. Bronkhurst, one of the richest sources of information about the cultural lives of the Indians. Bronkhurst's secular writings, The Colony Of British Guiana and Its Labouring Population (1883), The Ancestry or Origin of Our East Indian Immigrants (1886) and Among the Hindus and Creoles of British Guyana (1888) reveal the complexity of his racial and ideological attitudes. At times Bronkhurst is outspokenly hostile to all forms of racialism and is a perceptive observer of the Indian experience, yet on other occasions he is intemperately racist and intolerant towards Indian culture. These contradictions only make sense when Bronkhurst's background is known. He was an Eurasian, born in Ceylon and trained as a missionary at VEDIAPURAM College in Southern India. He came to Guyana in 1861 and died there in 1895.¹¹¹ As a missionary Bronkhurst appears to have been notably unsuccessful. After thirty years in the colony, the Wesleyans had only forty-five converts. The tone of some of his writing amply confirms his contemporary reputation for narrow zeal.

Bronkhurst's judgements of indenture are discrepant. In one book he defends the system energetically for the usual missionary reasons, and dismisses Indian grievances as imaginary. In the last of his books, however, he criticises the resemblance of indenture to slavery, noting the way that language differences were used to divide and rule the

labourers,¹¹² the use of stocks in estate hospitals and the sexual abuse of Indian women.¹¹⁴ He was also sensitive to the differences between peasant husbandry in India, where he believed agriculture was revered, and the degrading nature of plantation labour in Guyana. He hoped that the Indians would become an independent peasantry involved in stock-rearing and rice farming.¹¹⁵

Although like other missionaries Bronkhurst saw Hinduism as a species of blind and vicious paganism, unlike them he was curious about many aspects of Indian culture: language habits, religious practices, rituals of birth, marriage and death, domestic life, entertainments and contact with the Creoles. From the descriptions in his books the Indians become visible not merely as down-trodden helots but as a group with a rich, though changing, social and cultural life. Curiosity and prejudice sometimes collide, for instance in his description of the Tadhah festival. He is enraged that 'Christian' Creoles had been involved and proposes that this should be stopped on pain of a catting; and yet Bronkhurst also provides a rare, detailed account of the ritual.¹¹⁶ Sometimes, however, indignation destroys reliability. He claimed, for instance, that there was nearly one wife-murder a week, that 'the cutlass is never idle'. In fact, between 1884 and 1905, the highest annual number of such murders was eight and the average only three or four. And though Bronkhurst knew what pressures led to such violence, he too assumed that wife-murder was a flaw in the Indian character which could only be controlled by such savage punishments as mutilation, life imprisonment with an annual public catting or public decapitation.¹¹⁷

Bronkhurst also differed from many other missionaries by displaying no racial favouritism in his writings. He expresses his confidence in the intellectual capacity of the Afro-creoles, a 'race rising', and even more rarely for his time refers to the 'spendours of the negro past'.¹¹⁸ Although he records the hostilities between Indian and Afro-Guyanese, and attempts to explain them,¹¹⁹ he is also confident that

'Guyana sic is destined to become an amalgamated nationality', ruled by Indians and Creoles, despite the 'swaggering talk about the prerogative or inferiority of race' of the colony's white minority.¹²⁰

His attitudes to his own Indian ancestry and to Indian culture are predictably contradictory. He records his pride in the millenia of Indian civilisation and shows a familiarity with the work of Indologists such as Max Müller. But he writes as an European when he reminds his readers that:

Among the immigrants there are a great many persons who are highly educated, and who have a civilisation of their own to point back to, long antecedent to the days when our ancestors were savages covered with skins of beasts. ¹²¹

In another passage, however, he perceptibly speaks as an Indian looking forward to the day when Indians would rule themselves again:

There can be no denying the fact that the present lords and masters in India are altogether powerless, and entirely dependent every moment of their lives on the people. ¹²²

Yet elsewhere he welcomes the British presence as a means of saving India from heathen degeneracy, and in his first book describes the

Indians in Guyana in the most contemptuously racist terms. Indians are:

...cunning...some of them are very vicious....On the whole, avaricious of dollars and cents... always liars...remarkably cold of heart...They will spend their last cent at law rather than fail to ruin their victims...the coolies are easily provoked...quarrelsome in their disposition...addicted to licentiousness...of dissolute and immoral habits...Jealousy prevails extensively among the coolies... ¹²³

But later in the same book Bronkhurst also praises the hospitality and gratitude of this 'polite and courteous people'.¹²⁴ And in his later book the stereotypes are almost all positive; indeed, he asserts that there is no foundation whatsoever for the stereotype of Indian deceit.¹²⁵

What is one to make of this? No doubt, in part, Bronkhurst's views were affected by the failure of his missionary efforts, but they speak ultimately of a man 'divided to the vein'. His efforts to assuage the hurt are to be found in a work of curious pathos, The Ancestry or Origin of Our East Indian Immigrants. In it he writes of India's ancient civilisation and its bright future, but his chief purpose is to prove that Britains and Indians are racially the same:

Whatever names the modern natives of Europe and the isle of Great Britain may call themselves, there is no denying the fact that they are, as a nation, become European in Education and training, and Asiatic in origin and descent; hence they may with propriety be called Eur-Asiatics, ANGLO-INDIANS, HINDO-BRITONS, or EUR-ASIANS. ¹²⁶

One hears the pain of a man who could neither identify wholly with the Indian immigrants whom he saw with European eyes, nor with the European planters whose arrogance, as an Eurasian, he so obviously resented.

No such complex sensibility troubled the Rev. J. D. MacKay, author of Under the Southern Cross: A Story of East Indian Indenture in British Guiana.¹²⁷ As a work of fiction it was foredoomed from its inception as an orthodox evangelical tract, published in twelve episodes in the Canadian Presbyterian Witness to raise money for missionary work. It was necessarily a success story and an idealisation both of the triumph of Christian enlightenment and of the indenture system. In its evangelical preoccupation with individual salvation it is thin in social texture and its main character, Jugmohun, exists only as a moral example. Another possible reason for the paucity of detail was the shortness of MacKay's stay in Guyana; he arrived in 1903 and met his death by drowning in 1905.

Jugmohun is a brahmin and MacKay's description of him has the ambivalence to high caste noted above. He is vilified as a social parasite, but MacKay also implies that by virtue of his caste he has a special potential. Jugmohun is described as graceful with light brown skin, a long narrow face and refined features, bearing the spirit of a distinguished ancestry. His decision to indent comes not only from the pressures of hunger but also from his questioning of his traditional beliefs. There is a sanitised account of Jugmohun's progress through the recruitment system and the voyage to Guyana. The officers of the ship are paragons of kindness and only one boy 'with a delicate constitution' dies of dysentery. (On one actual voyage in 1905 there were 69 deaths, a quarter of those who embarked.) The death provokes a crisis in Jugmohun's spiritual life. Traditional Hindu

teaching about death seems to him 'pitifully mocking', but he remains in his pagan darkness. Jugmohun is given an intense inner life, but the most significant social aspects of the voyage, the traumatic breakdown of caste restraints or the formation of jehagi (shipmate) bonds are given only cursory attention.

Once in Guyana, Jugmohun's perceptions are made to coincide with the typical missionary stance. The European ('Sahib tog') is seen as 'self-contained, active, assertive... the masters in the new world as they had been in the old.' The Afro-Guyanese, the 'kaffir-tog' with 'thick lips, flat noses and curly hair', he sees as his rivals 'in the struggle for employment... but not formidable ones, for the black man was evidently lazy, careless and good natured.'^(p16) On his way to the estate Jugmohun sees the 'lordly East Indian' and the 'lubberly black men'. But if the Indian is shown to feel superior to the Creoles, he is shown as equally quick to learn his place beneath the European. When he looks at the comparative luxury of the manager's quarters, Jugmohun draws a lesson which leads him to dismiss the criteria of caste for the competitive individualist ethic of western capitalism:

The Brahmin regarded the 'sahib tog' as low caste... was this boast of superior birth a foolish conceit, born of pride and ignorance? Was not the 'sahib tog' after all his superior? ... It was indeed the planters' enterprise and energy that was the mainstay of the wealth and industry of British Guiana.^(p21)

But when he describes Jugmohun's reflection on this when he returns to his own bare room, MacKay paradoxically combines the idea of a divinely approved social order with the teaching of the irrelevance of its material consequences:

But were they, the Indians, not more content in such surroundings, than they would be in yonder mansion? After all these things are but outward...^(p22)

Labour in the fields is harsh but 'still serves its divinely appointed purpose.' Once Jugmohun is accustomed to it 'the very routine of duty made it not only possible but pleasant.' And though MacKay admits the restrictive character of indenture he balances this with a grossly exaggerated view of the positive role of Government officials. Jugmohun realises that he is a 'bound man in the hands of others'

but is reassured by the sight of the British flag, 'honoured by all his countrymen as the pledge of justice and right.'^(p16) When Jugmohun blacklegs on a strike, his reward is to be congratulated by the manager and MacKay comments: 'He was indeed learning the lessons of honest toil under the burning sun'.^(p25) Later he is promoted. The penalty for not knowing one's place is made equally clear: six of the strikers are shot dead by the police. Mackay also makes moral virtue and the interests of the system coincide when Jugmohun decides to re-indent.

By contrast his fellow Brahmin, Taitai, an enemy of honest toil, quits the estate to set up as a maharaj and live off the people.

The rest of the novel is chiefly concerned with Jugmohun's conversion. It begins with his disquiet over the 'frightfully lax' morals on the estate, and MacKay comments that 'The Hindu found in the example of his gods the warrant for craft and licentiousness.' Jugmohun passes through an intermediate syncretic stage, adding Christ to his pantheon, and becoming attracted to the temperance, truthfulness and zeal of the Muslims. He feels that in comparison Hinduism is 'low and debasing'. However, the Christian light is withheld from Jugmohun by the absence of missionary work and by the bad example set by the black Christians around him who have perverted Christianity into something 'gross and sensual'. Later, after he has been converted, he is demoted from his job in the boiling factory because he refuses to work on a Sunday. This is MacKay's only severe complaint about conditions on the estates.

However, the power of the Christian word is such that even without missionary intervention 'even imperfect contact' with Christian thought tended to emancipate his mind from the bondage of error and superstition.^(p29) His true conversion comes when, recovering from an illness, he is visited by an Indian catechist who mocks the Hindu narrative he is reading and supplies him with prayer books and bible. Jugmohun now feels contempt for his native religion, feeling that 'the story of Krishna was coarse and frivolous'. Later he is baptised. The fairy tale

is completed when Jugmohun's long separated child-wife herself indents, they are re-united, he buys her out of the contract, she is converted, they take up the offer of a land grant, have children and 'through thrift, industry and economy' they prosper. At the end of the story a European missionary finally arrives and in a gesture, whose irony MacKay obviously did not perceive, Jugmohun physically abases himself before him 'in a beautiful token of homage.' (p 54)

In Pearson's The New Overseer's Manual, the young trainee is told:

You will be shocked at the way white men speak of black men, your mind will be full of 'man and brother' sentiment. Very well! that is good, nourish it as long as you can... 128

The irony is double-edged. Pearson's irony is that such liberal sentiments flourish only in the absence of true knowledge. The latent irony is that the relationships of the indenture system were such that the European -planter, official or missionary - could not for long retain his full humanity or see the black or brown man as men or brothers.

What then of those who saw the society from the outside, untainted by such relationships? Three of the European visitors to nineteenth century Trinidad and Guyana, who witnessed the operation of indenture and published their observations, were novelists. Anthony Trollope visited Trinidad and Guyana in 1859 and had published in the same year The West Indies and The Spanish Main. Charles Kingsley visited Trinidad in 1869 and had published At Last: A Christmas in the West Indies in 1871. Lastly there was Edward Jenkins, whose visit to Guyana in 1871 produced three publications: The Coolie, His Rights and Wrongs (1871), Notes of a Journey through British Guiana (1871) and the novel, Lutchmee and Dilloo (1877). The very different products of each of these visits suggest not only the kinds of attitudes and purposes which may underlie the possibility of fiction, but also show how a commitment to realist fiction can begin to liberate insights and identifications absent from other forms.

Trollope, the amiably acute observer of the follies of the worlds

of church and state, was sent by the British Government to make a survey of colonial postal services. The by-product of the visit was the writing of one of the most unpleasantly negrophobic tracts since Thomas Carlyle's Occasional Discourse On the Nigger Question (1849). Although he pays lip service to the rightness of abolishing slavery, Trollope bitterly resents what he saw as its consequences: financial ruin and lazy blacks returning to the state of savagery from which slavery had allegedly rescued them:

He lies under the mango-tree...he sends his black urchin up ¹²⁹ for a breadfruit...Yes Sambo has learned to have his own way. ...These people are a servile race, fitted by nature for the hardest physical work, and apparently at present for little else.....I do not deny their family attachments; but it is the attachment of a dog. ¹³⁰

More would be ad nauseam. Not surprisingly, Trollope was a fervent admirer of the indenture system. 'Give me my heart's desire in coolies, and I will make you a million of hogsheads of sugar,' ¹³¹ Trollope quotes -or invents - a planter with applause. As far as the Indians were concerned, Trollope's assertion would have made most planters blush:

It appears to me that these men could not be treated with more tenderness, unless they were put separately, each under his own glass case, with a piece of velvet on which to lie, ¹³²

Of their lives Trollope has little to say other than that they have an 'aptitude for putting money together'. They are a well ordered commodity in a world where 'sugar and labour are almost synonymous; at any rate, they are convertible substances.' As people the Indians are invisible, and one feels that Trollope could no more have made an Indian labourer an important character in a novel than a hogshead of sugar.

Charles Kingsley visited Trinidad in 1869 as the guest of his friend Governor Gordon. Unlike Trollope, who saw with the eye of a real-estate valuer, Kingsley came with the eye of one who has dreamed for forty years of seeing for himself the natural phenomena, the 'romances and tragedies' which had been his life-time's study. There are few other books which display such a sensuous delight in the flora and fauna of Trinidad as At Last: A Christmas in the West Indies.

However, the attitudes that Kingsley brought with him to the Caribbean were heterogeneous to say the least. He was the author of two novels (Alton Locke (1849) and Yeast (1851)) which expose the harshness of British working class life and the rapacity of capitalist production. He was wholly unambiguous about the moral enormity of slavery and the evils of the plantation system.¹³³ He was a longtime advocate of programmes of social and educational reform in the Caribbean, particularly of 'petite culture' which he saw as the only system of agriculture capable of nurturing a class of 'intelligent and civilised peasant proprietors.'¹³⁴ But Kingsley was also the author of Westward Ho (1855) a novel glorifying the beginnings of Empire through the might of Elizabethan sea-power, which he had dedicated to Raja James Brooke, the bloody 'pacifier' of the natives of Borneo. He had also been for a time an enthusiastic supporter of the ex-Governor Eyre Defence Aid Committee; Eyre was the butcher of the black Jamaican peasantry following the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865.¹³⁵ These inconsistencies also found expression in Kingsley's creed of Christian Socialism, a romantic but reactionary and anti-democratic revolt against the atomistic and materialistic social consequences of capitalism. While Kingsley was appalled by the sufferings of the poor, he was also unremittingly hostile to all forms of independent working class action. He was committed to a view of society in which the masses were always led by their betters, a virtuous, happily toiling working class who knew their place.

Kingsley also remained a staunch believer in the racial superiority of whites over blacks. At times he has to persuade himself of his belief in the essential equality of all men before God. Watching the coal-porters in the docks of St. Thomas he is shocked by the brutality of the scene, a brutality 'still more in the eyes of those who try to believe that all God's human children may be ... reformed into his likeness.'¹³⁶ Yet at other times Kingsley writes about individuals of whatever race in an wholly unprejudiced way.

In theory, Kingsley ought to have opposed indenture as perpetuating the evils of the plantation system. Yet he calls it this 'admirable system for satisfying the great need of the West Indies, free labourers.' Though he is characteristically enthusiastic about schemes for settling time-expired labourers on their own land, he also notes with pleasure that such lands are generally adjacent to estates so that the labourers can continue to sell their time for wages. He failed to see that the continuing dependence of such villages on estate labour made the creation of an independent peasantry virtually impossible.

Not surprisingly Kingsley makes the familiar contrasts between industrious Indians and idle blacks. The Indians are made to fit neatly into his ideal of contented, unassertive toil. But though Kingsley positively gushes over the Indians, whose

...every attitude, gesture, tone, was full of grace; of ease, courtesy, self-restraint, dignity... (p124)

his picture of them is ultimately insulting in its implications of obedient child-like passivity. He writes a paen to a well-run paternalistic estate where the Indians are 'well fed, well cared for, well taught... prosperous and happy.' Within this anodyne view of indenture, Indians become simply part of the fauna of the island, caught in descriptions which are invariably visual, external and exotic:

There comes a bright eyed young lady... hung all over with bangles, in a white muslin petticoat, crimson cotton velvet jacket, and green gauze veil, with her naked brown baby astride her hip; a clever smiling delicate little woman, who is quite aware of the brightness of her own eyes. (p89)

By contrast, Kingsley's comments on the blacks suggest that his contact with them set off a far deeper kind of response. He quotes at length an account of the 'tragic' revolt of Daaga and comments, 'Ah, stupid savages. Yes: but also - ah! stupid civilised people.' But then later in the book he refers to Daaga as one of those 'sports of nature', individuals of a higher type by whose activities a whole race is raised. At times, predictably, he suggests that the idle blacks need firm control, but he also shows an understanding of why the 'new assertion and independence manifests itself somewhat of self-assert-

ion and rudeness', and he makes an unexpectedly sympathetic comment on the existential hedonism of creole life-styles:

The perpetual Saturnalia...will surely give physical strength and health to the body, and something of cheerfulness, self-help, independence to the spirit. (p247)

One feels that Kingsley as a younger man might have been drawn to the portrayal of a black Alton Locke; the story of Daaga clearly catches his imagination. Kingsley sees the Negro as a fallen man, in revolt from his condition, and the conflict of feelings about that revolt seems the very stuff out of which novels are made. By contrast the Indians still live in an Eden, albeit blemished by such self-inflicted problems as early marriage, wife-murder and money-lending, but their lives are essentially free from conflict and revolt. It is a picture which might draw the writer to pastoral celebration, but scarcely to fiction.

Unlike Trollope and Kingsley, John Edward Jenkins came to the Caribbean specifically to observe the conditions of the indentured labourers. He spent several months in Guyana in 1870 to observe, for the Aborigines Protection Society, the proceedings of the Royal Commission set up to investigate Des Voeux's criticisms of indenture.

Jenkins was born in 1838 in Bangalore, Southern India, the son of a Wesleyan missionary. The family moved to Canada where Jenkins was educated. Later he attended both McGill and Pennsylvania Universities. This colonial and American background no doubt influenced his critical interest in British colonial policy. He came to Britain in the 1860's, combining activities as a barrister and radical politician with writing no fewer than eleven novels, mainly on political or social themes. The most popular was Ginx's Baby, His Birth and other Misfortunes (1870), a satire on sectarian religious education which went into at least thirty-six editions and was thought to have had some influence on the Education Act of 1870. Little Hodge (1872) exposed the harsh lot of agricultural workers in England, and supported the agitation on their behalf led by Joseph Arch. Later in his life Jenkins joined

the Conservatives and campaigned for an Imperial Federation somewhat along the lines of a more politically integrated Commonwealth. He died in 1910.¹³⁷

The evidence about Jenkins's reception in Guyana is contradictory. He writes that he was blacklisted by the planter-dominated European elite, but Des Voeux asserts that when Jenkins first arrived in the colony he was 'much feasted by the planters' and 'appeared to have been somewhat biased towards their side of the question'.¹³⁸ According to Des Voeux, Jenkins changed his mind after listening to the complaints of the labourers who besieged Des Voeux's lodgings before the hearings began. Whatever the truth, Jenkins drew from his experience a hearty contempt for the planting fraternity and a first hand knowledge of what the Indians had to say for themselves.

Jenkins's report, The Coolie, His Rights and Wrongs (1872), combined a critical review of the Commission's findings with a more personal account of what he had seen. It is one of the more readable reports in an area otherwise bogged down in the statistics of hogsheads and the dryness of labour ordinances. It marries the lively crusading style of the crusading politician with the barrister's concern for evidence. However, its subject is the system and its Indian victims remain faceless, and Jenkins was aware that he had not interested, still less influenced public opinion.¹³⁹ Lutchmee and Dilloo was an attempt to remedy that failure by making the anonymous human casualties into characters with whom the reader could sympathise.

However, Jenkins felt obliged to explain that his subject was 'a new one for fiction' with the intrinsic difficulty that it dealt with the circumscribed life of the Indian labourer, 'an existence passed amidst the relations of bond service'.¹⁴⁰ But Jenkins's anxiety stems not merely from his perception that such lives scarcely fitted the expectations most readers had of character in the realist novel (most crucially that characters are individuals with the capacity of choice) but also from his own racist assumptions about the char-

acter of the coloured races.

That Jenkins was no less a racist than Trollope or Froude is most evident in his treatment of the few black characters who appear in the novel. There is a crude subplot of 'comic' negro life which repeats all the familiar stereotypes. There is, for instance a character called Sarcophagus who is portrayed as a stage nigger from the most odious of coon shows:

'Dis yer pail,' he said, 'am gwine to Massa-Massa -Massa? -Bress me; Sahcoffincus am de on'y name dis nigger discommem-ber.... Dere ain't one word ob de ammunition dat hang about de corners ob dis yer cocoa-nut.' (v.2 p13)

And there is Simon Pety, a hypocritical womanising Methodist preacher, described as a 'creole African of perfect type', 'a strange being-
(vol2 p 123)
half-man, half animal.' Elsewhere Jenkins writes of the Afro-creoles as 'these stunted mental and moral natures... seeming to stand half-way between the Adamite ideal and the pure, unspiritual brutism of lower
(vol2 p 113)
animals' and 'these poor Negroes are only distended babies in brown
(vol2 p 15)
skins.' Jenkins's view of the Indian character was little more complimentary, referring to them as 'childlike natures, so crude in idea, so straightened in thought... so little removed from lively and sagacious
(vol3 p 57)
beasts.' Had this been Jenkins's whole view he could scarcely have written a novel with Indians as its main characters. However, Jenkins also needed to create characters who would win sympathy and function within the context of the realist novel. Accordingly, he prefaces the novel with the reminder that:

The sorrows of Dilloo or Lutchmee are the sorrows of humanity, differing only in their conditions and their relations from the tragedies of our own homes. (vol 1 p x)

And by virtue of the fact that, up to a point, Jenkins does apply to Lutchmee and Dilloo the conventions of characterisation of the contemporary realist novel, he is frequently drawn away from seeing their actions as the product of a stereotyped personality and drawn into seeing that their predicament stems from the conflict between their desire for choice and the repressive nature of the indenture system.

One aspect of the novel's realism which leads to such an insight is Jenkins's treatment of the Indians' language. He shows them using

two distinct modes of speech, one for their internal relationships, the other when they are forced to speak the language of the master. The first, signified by a dignified 'translated' Hindi, though too stilted to be wholly artistically successful, is nevertheless an adult language which reveals that the Indians have their real authentic lives outside the servile situations in which they are seen by their masters. Fairly typical of the 'Hindi-English' style are Dilloo's words when he is reunited with Lutchmee:

'Lutchmee,' said he, 'I rejoice to see you here, my lily, and clasp you once more in my arms. But this is not the kind of place I had hoped to find when I listened to that cursed recruiter.'

Sometimes Jenkins has Dilloo's speech, at moments of stress, rise to the intensity of poetic metaphor. When Dilloo discovers that their child has miscarried, for instance:

'Lutchmee! My life, my sweet, my soul! Thy heart and mine are broken with disappointment, as the eggs of birds within a nest where lay the precious hopes of coming life! O Lutchmee, Lutchmee!'

In representing the other speech of the Indians, the broken 'childishness' of Coolie-English, Jenkins drew on his experience of taking down statements from the labourers who petitioned Des Voeux. In The Coolie, His Rights and Wrongs he records such examples as:

'O massa, plees, massa, help coolie. Manaha too bad, massa, starve um, beat um, chuckum, so. Massa stopum wagee, take um wife... O massa, no good go mahitee. Mahitee know manahee- go manahee's house- eat um breakfas -come court.' 141

In the novel Jenkins replicates such speech, using almost unchanged some of the complaints he had heard:

'Mahittee friend manahee. Eat um breakfas', ride um buggy. Drink um rum.' (vol 2 p 155)

While Jenkins has no great ear for dialogue, the contrasts he sets up between these two varieties of speech neatly reveal the conflict of the Indians' situation.

Again, following the conventions of the realistic novel, Jenkins tries to make the experiences of his central characters both representative and particular. Dilloo emigrates for the common reasons that 'fields are small, wages are low, everywhere the land is crowded with people-too many mouths and too little money. But there is also the fact, essential to the action, that he wishes to extricate himself from a

feud with Hunoomaun, the novel's villain, who suffers an unrequited passion for Lutchmee, Dilloo's wife. Dilloo is also influenced by the recruiting agent who spoke with 'extreme hyperbolism even for an Asiatic' in promising a land of plenty. However, Dilloo is intended to be more than a typical emigrant. For him emigration is also shown to be a positive act, appealing to his sense of independence and adventure. In making Dilloo exceptional a number of conflicting motivations are at work: racial, ideological and formal. Clearly, to be a character worthy of prominence Dilloo had to be set apart from the average 'child-like Asiatic'. Thus we find that in the novel skin colour and intellectual and moral capacity are closely linked. Both Lutchmee and Dilloo are described as light-skinned Indians whose features are unmistakably European, whereas the villain Hunoomaun is introduced with a reference to 'the extreme darkness of his skin'. But it is by giving Dilloo the Victorian virtues of independence and adventure that Jenkins simultaneously makes his fate tragic and exposes the oppressive structure of the indenture system. It is the desirable qualities that lead Dilloo to emigrate that also bring him into conflict with a system that demands only 'absolute subservience and narrow intelligence.' There is, indeed, a good deal of resemblance between Dilloo and George Eliot's noble working class hero in Felix Holt The Radical, published ten years earlier. Like Felix Holt, Dilloo feels a patronising 'superiority over his compatriots' whom he regards as the 'scum of India'. However, Dilloo rejects the usual escape routes for the more able of behaving :

...in the ordinary Indian manner, to curry favour with the master and advance himself, he rather employed it [his ability] in organising and aiding the coolies, against any wrong on the part of their superiors. (vol 1 p 93)

He is indeed demoted for helping his 'matties' in a dispute, for as he explains to Lutchmee, 'These are Indians after all, you know, and we have far more dangerous enemies in the English.' Like Holt, Dilloo is also high-minded. This is revealed most strongly in a scene where he rescues the hated manager from a fracas. The origin of the violence,

the arrest of a Chinese opium dealer, Dilloo feels is too unworthy to advance his cause.

However, Jenkins shows that the indenture system corrupts all who are involved with it, though the corruption affects European and Indian very differently. Drummond, the manager of the estate, is described as:

...naturally a kind-hearted man. The hardness that had grown in him towards the dark races by whom his wealth was made for him had sprung out of the nature of his relations to them... it was based on justice to himself, for he had succeeded in convincing his conscience that their interests and his were rarely compatible, and that when there was a collision they ought to give way. (vol 1 p 94)

And Marston, the magistrate, knows, but cannot quite admit to himself, the extent to which his sense of justice has been tainted. Taxed by his daughter about his partiality to the planters he prevaricates:

'B—, if it were not impossible for you and me to live in this dreadful hole without someone to talk to, I would break with every one of them, and do my duty straight through!'

'But, papa, ... don't you do your duty straight through?'

'I do try to do my duty; but nevertheless, there is a sense of restraint which I don't like, and which - and which, you know, seems to affect my - my - I mean, interferes with the facility of - my -'

'You really mean, papa, that it warps your judgement?' (vol 2 p 122-4)

But however critically Jenkins portrays Drummond and Marston he shows that it is only in relation to the Indians that their moral sensibilities are impaired; their fundamental humanity remains untouched.

But the injustices which drive Dilloo to revolt lead inexorably to his total moral degradation. In part Jenkins is showing that the rulers of the colony, by denying the Indians any rights of negotiation or dissent, drive them to become furtive plotters, but his treatment of Dilloo's corruption also becomes entangled in racial and ideological considerations.

Dilloo's decline begins as soon as his wife rejoins him in Guyana. In India their marriage has had the idyllic innocence of 'open dispositions and simple hearts'. In the colony Dilloo becomes anxious for his wife's virtue. Women are scarce and competed for and, as an overseer comments, 'Virtue is not an Indian woman's best reward in these regions.' In Dilloo's lack of trust lies an intimation of his future degeneration. This is suggested imaginatively when he makes an oath to

protect Lutchmee's honour, his manner no longer that of 'the frank lionhood of his former days' but now 'the sullen savagery of a tiger',^(vol 1 p 161) an image which is picked up again later in the novel. His decline hastens as he becomes involved in an underground plot to organise the workers. It leads to his estrangement from Lutchmee, for when she becomes the object of the sympathies of Craig, a well-meaning overseer, and Isabella Marston, the magistrate's daughter, Dilloo suspects, his mind 'diseased with the sense of wrong', that his wife is having an affair with Craig and is betraying the underground organisation to Isabella. Finally, 'all love is driven out' when Lutchmee helps Craig prevent Dilloo from killing Marston (who unknown to Dilloo is attempting to remedy his former partiality). Dilloo regrets that he has not killed his wife.

Initially the revolt is shown to involve rational co-ordination and skilful planning. Akaloo, Dilloo's chief lieutenant, a money-lender who is, unusually, quite sympathetically drawn, tries to form a colony-wide league. Dilloo tells Lutchmee, 'At first we are going to act peaceably and demand justice from the great Sahib, the Governor.' Not until all possibility of redress has been exhausted do Dilloo and his allies turn to violence. However, when the revolt threatens the plantocracy and state officials with violent overthrow, the novel turns away from the issue of how the Indians are to win justice for themselves, and becomes increasingly concerned with the poisoning of Dilloo's humanity. It is not simply that Jenkins sees, like Yeats, that:

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.

It is because Jenkins, as a political reformist, has no concept of the just revolt. He can identify with Dilloo the sufferer, but not Dilloo the underground leader. By his thoroughly realistic portrayal of the indenture system, and by making Dilloo independent and free-spirited, Jenkins has, indeed, established the logic of Dilloo's revolt against his own political better judgement. But that judgement is re-asserted and Jenkins portrays Dilloo as tainted with evil precisely because

he revolts.

In The Coolie, His Rights and Wrongs, Jenkins had argued that though there was a need to remedy defects, there was no need to end indenture itself. In his introduction to the novel Jenkins had also apparently not seen any contradiction between his assertion that 'coolie immigration under imperial safeguards could be of incalculable benefit to the Asiatics' and his recognition that the merchants and planters for whose benefit the system was really organised were 'organised, astute and powerful' in the defence of their interests.

That reformist voice criss-crosses Lutchmee and Dilloo in authorial asides, but it is in the narrative itself that the contradictions in Jenkins's position are most acute. He tries to show that the problem is that the wrong kind of Europeans have power in the colony. For instance, in his portrayal of the relationship between Craig and Lutchmee, Jenkins seems to be suggesting that had all Europeans behaved as decently as Craig, then all would have been well with the system. The episode itself shows a collision between narrative realism and Jenkins's ideological purpose.

The contact begins when Lutchmee becomes Craig's nurse following a wound he receives. He is a kindly young man and it is not surprising that Lutchmee becomes fond of him in the intimacy of their situation. Jenkins also explores with some delicacy how Craig, though grateful for her attention, feels at first 'the repugnance of race' which prevents any warmer feelings. But as Lutchmee's qualities become more apparent to him, he experiences a dangerous moment of revelation (in the context of the society he has to survive in) 'when the antipathy of race finally died within him.' The description of the experience - which remains chaste - from Lutchmee's point of view also rings true:

It brought into her life fresh human elements, feelings she had never experienced before: ideas - novel, sweet, piquant...
(vol 2 p 70)

But then Jenkins passes from realism into imperial ideology when he describes the Indian woman's feelings for Craig as more 'a strange half god-worship, than like any mere mortal affection. It suggests that
(vol 2 p 71)

Jenkins felt that if all the emissaries of European civilisation had been as upright as Craig, then idolatry would have been the humble Indian's response. It never occurs to Jenkins that emigration might involve a damaging cultural loss for the Indians. Yet it is with acerbic honesty that he describes the actual relationships between the immigrants and their European civilisers, showing very convincingly that it is precisely the material interests and actual labour relationships of plantation production which corrupt all decent human impulses. As a manager, the logic of the novel suggests, Craig could well become another Drummond. Indeed, well before the climax of the novel, Craig has already decided to leave the colony because he cannot square his conscience with the role demanded of him. Jenkins has shown that the hysterical cruelty of the white elite stems not from any particular quirk of character but from the situation they are in. For instance, there is a scene when a planter viciously assaults Gonzales, whom the planters suspect of aiding the Indians:

A fierce, wicked cut went across the smooth face of the Portuguese, and left its mark in a red and blue pattern, a mark that the resentful skin would never lose. Hard again and cruel was the second blow that came down over the now uncovered head. Heavy and cruel yet upon the sinking form, the rain of blows which began to draw their bloody lines through the thin white clothes... And all this while that group of manly Britons in the club with clenched teeth, and a general aspect of men who thought a wholesome thing for the state was being done, looked on without an effort to interfere. (Vol 2 p 222)

The logic is that both the indenture system and the ruling class who maintain it must go if the Indians are to have justice. But Jenkins's underlying conservatism and contempt for the Black and Indian masses prevent him from coming to any such conclusion. Indeed, in The Coolie, His Rights and Wrongs he had argued for a limited addition of the wealthier Coloureds and Portuguese to the electorate as a 'compact body of conservative defence against any tendencies to outbreak among the labouring classes.'

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At the very point where Jenkins turns away from the radical implications of the narrative, he also turns away from the conventions of the realist novel. The form he falls back on is the Jacobean Revenge

Tragedy-tinged with Victorian melodrama. To have pursued the psychology of the realist novel would have meant seeing that Dilloo, like Marston and Drummond, could have been cold and pitiless in his specific purpose without losing his fundamental humanity and generosity towards his loved ones. Wars have always shown that good men may perform actions they would never dream of in civil society and yet return to their former decency when the conflict ends. The psychology of the Revenge Tragedy was to see that the action of the revenger stemmed from a flawed moral character. The form expressed a historical juncture in which the belief in a divinely ordained social order was still stronger than the idea that there were times when it was just for an individual or group to rebel against that order. Thus though there was often a strong recognition in such plays that rulers were unjust and circumstances intolerable, the revenger was portrayed as a person with the intrinsic propensity to rankling dissatisfaction, whose inability to respond with patient suffering leads him to bloody action, moral corruption and a deserved though pitied death.¹⁴³ The parallels with 19th century colonial society are fairly obvious. Jenkins's view of Guyanese society was that whatever their faults, the Europeans were its pre-ordained rulers. Even more alarming than any injustices that that class might perpetrate was the threat of 'outbreak among the labouring classes.' If the Indians plotted it was because they had the intrinsic tendency to jealousy, revenge and cold-heartedness.

Thus Jenkins shows Dilloo, in despair at the still-birth of his child (lost through the cruelty of a vindictive overseer), declaiming in the heroic bombast of the revenger:

I will live only to revenge myself on those who have done us wrong, on the cursed tyrants who here enslave and torment us... I, Dilloo, will give myself to work only for their destruction, worry and death. (vol 3, p 54)

Thereafter the narrative takes on that genre's rapid path towards confusion and inevitable death. The role of the fatal masque is provided by the febrile ritual and colour of the Tadjia festival, under cover of which Dilloo plans to kill Hunoomaun, his rival, whom the

rebels have discovered is acting as a management spy. In the Tadjia procession, Dilloo and Hunoomaun are both dressed as tigers, an image intended to recall Dilloo's change from 'the frank lionhood of his former days' to 'the sullen savagery of the tiger':

They crouched, and leaped, now on all fours, now on their legs... imitating the stealthy and catlike movements... (vol 3 p 254)

The imagery of dehumanisation continues in the description of their fight to the death, which looks like 'one single monster, all arms and legs and having the velocity of a machine.' The revenger succeeds in his strategem of killing his rival with a secretly weighted hakkia stick, but not before he himself is mortally wounded. It is an exemplary fate.

In the ending of the novel the radical logic of the narrative and the reformist tones of the authorial comment intertwine. After the fatal combat Dilloo is carried to the dark, snake-ridden grove of the Obe (local obeah man) in a vain attempt to save his life. Far from finding prosperity under the light of Christian Empire, Dilloo finds only pagan gloom. His whereabouts are discovered and Lutchmee is brought by Craig and Telfer, a well-intentioned parson, to find him. Lutchmee and Dilloo are reconciled, but when Dilloo is offered a death-bed conversion his rejection is vehement:

'No!' cried the dying Coolie, loudly, almost fiercely, and with unconscious but terribly pointed satire, as he half raised his body. 'No! No! Jesu Kriss Massa Drummond's God-Massa Marston's God -all Inglees God. No God for Coolie!'
And turning his face away from the Christian, the Coolie breathed out his soul into the bosom of the unknown God. (vol 3 p 356)

To be true to the logic of his narrative, Jenkins can do no other than have Dilloo reject the lies about opportunity, imperial justice and civilised values. Within this framework his dying words proclaim an undefeated liberty of spirit. However, Jenkins inserts the phrase, 'with unconscious but terribly pointed satire'. Now the Dilloo whom he has portrayed throughout the novel would know perfectly well why he rejects the Englishman's God. There could be nothing unconscious about it. But Jenkins wants the end to mean something else. He implies that Dilloo's rejection is a blind though understandable response to what has

gone before, that Dilloo does not understand the implications of his attitude, but that seen from the omniscient view of the author, his rejection becomes a devastating critique of the failure of the Europeans to fulfil the civilising mission entrusted them. Jenkins can no more sanction the fact that Dilloo can make a rational analysis of the system which oppresses him than he can countenance him taking forceful action against that system. Firstly, the revolt becomes the product of warped revengeful minds and then an individualised moral issue detached from its roots in material social conflict. What social conflict there is is shifted from being the clash of interests of European master and Indian labourer to the moral conflict between virtuous Europeans and corrupted ones. The only kind of change which Jenkins could envisage would be that brought about by a change of European heart.

Yet when one considers the limitations of his perspective, Jenkins's real achievements in this novel seem all the more remarkable. There is dross such as the desultory account of a tepid love affair between Craig and Isabella and there is the thoroughly unedifying treatment of the black characters. There are also rather too frequent lapses from narrative into commentary, when Jenkins sermonises about such matters as the hard lot of overseers or the corruption of the legal system rather than revealing them through action. One chapter is accurately titled, 'Didactic'. But Jenkins does make the leap into seeing the Indians as worthy subjects for fiction. His motives are no less extra-literary than those of the missionary writer, J.D. McKay. The difference is that because McKay needed to show that indenture was part of the salvation of the Indians, his tract becomes a fairy-tale. Fictional form permits Jenkins to write with far greater asperity and probable truth about the spineless mediocrities of the colonial administration than the laws of libel would have permitted in a

work of reportage. It enabled him, moreover, to penetrate into the fearful psyches of the planters, half-knowing that the wrongs they had done the workers might at any time rebound on them. Above all, fictional realism encouraged Jenkins to portray the Indians as people with inner lives and a desire for freedom and justice. Ultimately, Jenkins's racial and political attitudes undermine the radical implications of his narrative, but in Lutchmee and Dilloo he does articulate a voice not previously heard. It stands as a solitary endeavour within the indenture period and indeed for some considerable time afterwards.

A.R.F. Webber's Those That Be In Bondage published in 1917 is, indeed, in some respects, little more than a footnote to Jenkins's novel. Webber, a coloured Creole, was at the time of his novel's publication employed as an advertising agent for Booker Bros & McConnell & Co. Ltd. who monopolised sugar production in Guyana. He was born in 1879 in Tobago and had come to Guyana in 1899 looking for employment. The full title of his only novel, Those That Be In Bondage: A Tale of Indian Indenture and Sunlit Western Waters suggests something of its lack of focus, and Webber was not being unduly modest when he wrote in his preface of having 'rough hewn the timbers of the book'. It is a thoroughly ramshackle affair which pursues the theme of Indian indenture for barely one third of its length. At that point all the main characters are peremptorily disposed of and the remainder of the novel deals with the moral and theological struggles of the son of a peripheral character against the bondage of the Catholic Church.

The earlier part of the novel is focussed on Edwin Hamilton, the near-white brother-in-law of a planting attorney, who rebels against social convention by falling in love with and marrying an Indian girl, the daughter of one of his brother-in-law's labourers. However, the lives of the Indians under indenture are only incidental to Webber's true theme, which is the racial disadvantages suffered by coloured Creoles in the sugar industry. Webber's biographer, P.H. Daly, describes him as being during this period 'always somebody's servant...never

his own master',¹⁴⁵ and the novel expresses the complaints of a person in just such a position.

For the real bondage of the Indian labourers Webber's sympathy has limits. He shows how subject they were to the arbitrary power of the estate manager, in the scene, for instance, when Big Jim Walton, the attorney has Edwin's Indian girl and her father removed from the estate. He stresses the loss this involved, of kitchen garden, rice-bed and shipmates. Webber also uses details from recent major confrontations on estates as raw material for his novel, and writes scathingly of 'Lee-Enfield methods', remarking that in the conflicts between the immigrants and the authorities '...always had the former only paid the sacrifices of life.'¹⁴⁶ Yet in his description of the disturbance which follows the attempted removal of Abdullah and his daughter from the estate, Webber's style and treatment conflict sharply with the apparent sympathy which the quotations above suggest. Firstly he describes the riot in a style more fitting some jingoistic 'Boy's Own' publication. It is full of phrases like 'plucky officers', 'laid low the unlucky policeman' and 'a man strong of will and withers' (p46) and its elephantine mock-heroic style thoroughly fuzzes the fact that there is suffering involved. Even more explicitly, Webber pictures the Indians as dangerous children who have been incited into 'truculent' rage by the machinations of the agitator, Karim. As a devious Hindu villain, he is very much a replica of Jenkins's Hunoomaun. He is 'hot headed and educated above his station' and indulges in 'some of the fantasies of advanced Indian socialism.' But not only is Karim a subversive, but one who exhibits all the 'native chicanery of his race' (p.29). His motive for organising the revolt is pure self-interest: he wishes to push his suit to Bibi (Edwin's wife-to-be). When she rejects him, Karim resorts to more direct methods, since, as Webber explains, 'these primitive natures exhibit none of the chivalry which is usually found in more developed minds.'^(p26) No less than the planters described earlier in this study, Webber saw Indian behaviour as the product of a stereo-

typed personality. He regularly button-holes his reader with such asides as:

Those who know the East Indian character will readily realize how prone they are to romance around every conceivable subject. Indeed, it may be said that 'to lie' is the East Indian immigrants' vital breath. (p18)

Only rarely does he attempt to place such apparently stereotyped behaviour into an explanatory social context. There are frequent references to the hoary stereotype of jealousy, but when Webber finally suggests that Karim's bitter hatred of Edwin might have something to do with the scarcity of women on the estates, the context in which he does so (the defence made of Karim by his Indian barrister at his trial) seems very much an afterthought.

The central theme of the first section of the novel, Edwin's decision to flout racialist conventions, appears at first to be a bold critique of European prejudice and hypocrisy. None of Walton's circle would have disapproved if Edwin had merely seduced the girl. His crime is in actually marrying her. Walton, the manager, has in fact two unacknowledged Eurasian children. What provokes a sense of reservation about Webber's treatment of the theme is the cloying tone of self-congratulation in which Webber describes Edwin's 'stupendous leap in yielding his heart to the attractions of Afridi's [alias Abdullah Singh] daughter'.^(p35) Even so the liberalism is not carried too far. Webber portrays Bibi as nearly white and 'strongly caucasian' in features. Her marvellous aptitude for Western ideas is linked to the fact that 'the soft clear tint of her skin proclaimed her parentage to be far beyond that of the average East Indian immigrant.'^(p21) Far from rejecting European racial values, Webber continues to stress the desirability of whiteness. Symptomatically, he portrays Edwin as having noble ancestry which he can trace through a bar sinister back to Napoleon.

As indicated above, Webber abruptly tires of his tale of Indian indenture. Edwin is shot dead in a struggle with Karim whom he surprises trying to molest Bibi. She, wilting rapidly from the shock 'was

gathered to the garden of her forefathers'. Karim is sentenced to life imprisonment. Most incredibly of all, Walton, who has already become a befuddled invalid following an apoplectic collapse on hearing of Edwin's marriage, finally dies from shock just when he has recovered enough to accidentally read an old newspaper which contains an account of his brother-in-law's fate.

In almost every way Webber's novel is much inferior to that of Edward Jenkins. Despite his employment with Bookers, Webber seems to have had little knowledge of Indian life-styles, motivations or attitudes. Where Jenkins deals perceptively with the language situation of the Indians, Webber's attempt to suggest the dignity of the patriarchal Abdullah is merely embarrassingly pseudo-oriental:

She is the jewel of my eye and the apple of my heart. She is the moon of my delight and the star of my morning...yet with all this my heart is heavy within me, for I have heard evil of the new estate. (p33)

Webber has a posthumous reputation as a radical nationalist, but what Those That Be In Bondage reveals is the fear felt by those of Webber's colour and class that the social and economic progress of the Indians was a threat to their relatively privileged position. Men of Webber's class and colour dominated the electorate for the Guyanese Legislature; there was still only a very small number of Indian voters but Indian professionals and businessmen were beginning to make their mark on Georgetown life. Even more the petit-bourgeoisie feared the masses, but if they were to challenge either the power of the planting elite or of the colonial officials they had to make common cause with them. In its ambivalences Webber's novel parallels that political contradiction. There is the symbolic and very tentative assertion of involvement with the lives of the Indians which is portrayed in Edwin's marriage to Bibi Singh, but there is an equal readiness to see the Indians as a social and political threat, as personified in the barbarous socialist agitator, Karim. Ultimately, though, Whiteness and European culture remain what is desired.

Those That Be In Bondage is interesting on the one hand because it takes over many of the racist assumptions and the character stereotypes of nineteenth-century Europeans, and on the other because it looks forward to those later creole novels which attempt an imaginative absorption of the Indian presence into the creole mental universe. ¹⁴⁷ Indeed, to Edgar Mittelholzer's Corentyne Thunder (1941) Webber's novel shows some interesting resemblances of characterisation and theme. Webber's Big Jim Walton and Mittelholzer's Big Man Weldon are both self-assured patriarchs with chauvinist attitudes to women, children and 'coolies'. Both have children by Indian women. The difference between them is a measure of social change: Walton's children are unacknowledged whilst Weldon contemplates legitimising his long and public cohabitation. Webber's Edwin Hamilton and Mittelholzer's Geoffrey Weldon are also fictionally related. The former is a rough sketch of a Mittelholzerian protagonist, 'a little bookish by heart, he had dabbled in socialism, flirted with Darwin and Mendel and was captivated by Eugenics.' ^(p6) Both are restlessly conscious of social restrictions, and both attempt escape by making relationships outside their racial and social group. Hamilton is attracted to Bibi's innocent and unpolished charm as a contrast to the artificiality and worldliness of white Georgetown womanhood; Geoffrey Weldon toys with the idea of living with his peasant Indian aunt:

...living in perfect content with somebody like yourself in a mud-house...just fishing and minding cows, walking in the sunlight or the rain, or the moonlight or under the stars. ¹⁴⁸

There are, though, sharp contrasts between the ways Webber and Mittelholzer deal with the meeting of the European culture of the male and the Indian culture of the woman. Webber avoids examining the social and personal consequences of Edwin's marriage by killing the couple off, whilst Mittelholzer, perhaps because the relationship was so much more socially conceivable, explores its tensions with acid honesty.

This chapter illustrates a number of points which look forward to the conclusions of later chapters. It shows how readily character stereotypes which were the product of the specific relationship between

European planter or missionary and Indian labourer, and the need to defend the indenture system, came to serve, as Webber's novel illustrates, the different social perspective of the creole middle class. It also suggests something about both the potential and the limitations of realist fiction. It argues that the very act of treating the Indians as worthy of fictional portrayal required a break with the characteristic attitudes of those involved with the indenture system. It has been possible to identify a hierarchy of modes of characterisation which at each higher level brings the real experience of the Indians into clearer view. It begins with isolated citations of character traits in support of arguments; to more coherent listings of sets of traits which are static and wholly generalised; to the invention of a typical life-history in which character and life paths are linked; to the emblematic character of the missionary tract with an inner moral life but no individuality or social context; and finally to the character whose typicality is confined to the common experiences of a shared environment, but whose inner life has an individual psychological reality. Yet though realist fiction has this kind of potential, the chapter also shows that it is not immune to racist assumptions and stereotyping. Such assumptions still bedevil the political and social life of the ethnically plural societies of the Caribbean. They also limit the potential of the novel for portraying these societies as they are or may become. The chapter shows how such a poison, the product of European colonialism and a labour system of quasi-servitude, entered the Caribbean bloodstream.

Chapter FiveReflective Foils: White Creole Fiction and the Indian Presence in the Post-Indenture Period.

The recurrence of certain themes and an underlying consistency of attitude in the novels of white creole authors in the period 1917-1984 amply justifies my thesis that ethnicity has had a shaping influence on the ways Trinidadian and Guyanese writers have portrayed the plural natures of their societies. I argue in this chapter that because of their particular history and ethnic status, white creole authors have been disposed to a concern with a broad spectrum of their societies. By contrast most early Afro and Indo-Caribbean writing has tended to a narrower focus on its own community. However, there is a fundamental limitation to the nature of the white creole concern. In most of the novels discussed below the involvement with the Indian presence is secondary to a concern with the problematic role of the white person in the twentieth-century Caribbean. Structurally, most of these novels have a white character at their centre, with the Indian or Black Creole world existing as a kind of mirror to give back a reflection of the white creole's difference, or as a foil to set off the meaning of being in a white minority in an Afro-Indian world.

It is possible to see the contact of the white character in fiction with the Afro-Indian world as symbolic of the desire for a rapprochement with that world which was scarcely occurring in real life. Even in fiction the meeting is tentative. It tends to be with one ethnic group but not both, and the main form the contact takes is of a sexual relationship between a white man and an Indian woman. This ubiquitous focus, when not evading what was historically exploitative in the relationship, frequently sidesteps the implications of the wider social and political relat-

ionship between Indians and Europeans. The hesitancy of the approach is made even more explicit on those occasions when the fairness of the woman's skin and her caucasian features are emphasized. However, because of their privileged access to education, the white creole group produced writers of fiction earlier and in relatively greater numbers than any other ethnic group, and it is in the work of such writers that one finds the first wholly fictive attempts to map the Indian presence as part of the region's human complexity.

At this point, it is necessary to say what is meant by 'white' in this chapter. It is a description of ethnic identification, but one with a complex Caribbean significance. Thus the chapter discusses the work of writers like H.G. De Lisser or Edgar Mittelholzer who in the United States would have been classed as negro, but who in the Caribbean identified themselves, and were recognised as, racially and culturally European. The term 'white' also has a clear cultural significance, co-terminous with the socio-cultural orientation that Edward Brathwaite identifies as Euro-creole.¹ (It is also true that such a cultural perspective could be shared by persons of pure African or Indian descent.) Further, to identify the writers discussed below as white creoles is to make a fundamental distinction between them and European expatriates temporarily resident in the Caribbean. As early as 1802 Lady Nugent noted how influenced by black speech and manners some whites had become,² and a later Governor's wife, newly arrived in Trinidad in 1940, had this to say about the local whites:

Local white creoles have no conception of manners, loyalty or any other civilised virtue...as strange and remote morally as the Africans and low caste Indians.³

Again, if one is to speak of a white creole group it is necessary to bear in mind two further distinctions. Firstly, particularly in Trinidad, white creoles had different origins: Britain, France, Portugal and, though scarcely any longer a separate group, Spain. Secondly, there were basic class divisions between those who were

owners of large estates or owners of large-scale commercial concerns and those who were salaried employees. However, whilst there were certainly whites who were poor, there were few, if any, who were to be found amongst the unskilled working class or the rural proletariat. Nevertheless, though whiteness was the most crucial determinant of social position and outlook, the distinctions outlined above were important. For instance, whilst French creoles had been economically the most powerful group in Trinidad up to at least the mid-nineteenth century, by its end they had lost their control of the sugar industry, and their social position had been assailed by the British administration, its officials and other British expatriates⁴. During the early decades of the twentieth century the French creole aristocracy received a further economic blow when a cocoa tree disease ruined many family fortunes⁵. It was not uncommon to find that there was often considerable hostility felt towards the British ruling class by this group. It was thus no accident that amongst those white creoles who identified with the trade union and anti-colonial movement, French creoles like Captain Cipriani and the novelist Ralph de Boissiere were prominent.

The position of the Portuguese among the white elite was even more marginal. Indeed, until well into the twentieth century persons of Portuguese origin were not included as Europeans in the census. They had emigrated, mainly from Madeira, as indentured labourers to work on the sugar estates, and though they rapidly established themselves as a shop-keeping, mercantile group⁶, the stigma of their indentured origin remained. Even by the 1930's the class position of the group was still diverse. In his autobiography, Through A Maze of Colour, Albert Gomes states that though some Portuguese had become wealthy and were identified with the white elite, many still lived among Blacks and Indians in the poorer urban areas or in the villages. Excluded from absolute whiteness it is not surprising that class consciousness amongst the Portuguese petit-bourg-

oisie was often more acute than race consciousness. Indeed, Gomes asserts that the Portuguese were the least racially exclusive of the Europeans, and that though the Portuguese elite maintained a rigid colour bar in the Portuguese Club in Port of Spain, male Portuguese 'locked their colour prejudices in their minds so that their loins might be unaffected by them,' and that 'the sexual predilection of the Portuguese male seems notoriously negrophilic.'

Again, the white overseer, perhaps of working class British background, or the middle grade civil servant could scarcely be considered as one of the local aristocracy, and perhaps for this group the badge of skin was supremely important since it was the most reliable guarantee of success in an increasingly competitive world. Edgar Mittelholzer describes very movingly in his autobiography, A Swarthy Boy (1963) the stigma he suffered as the one child of his family whose appearance betrayed the presence of African genes in his ancestry.

Such distinctions of origin and class lay behind the variations in attitude towards Indians and Blacks on the part of whites. There were also some differences between the composition and character of the white groups in Trinidad and Guyana, which have affected the nature of relationships and attitudes. Besides the French creole presence in Trinidad and the much greater number of Portuguese who migrated to British Guiana, the main differences have been those of size and rootedness. Although only a small percentage of the population in either country, the white group in Trinidad has always been significantly larger and more permanent. In British Guiana in 1891 there were only 4,558 'British' Europeans (1.63% of the population) and 12166 Portuguese (4.37%); by 1921 the percentage of 'British' Europeans was 1.11%, by 1931 only 0.68% and by 1965 Only 0.25% of the population. The percentage of Portuguese fell in a similar way from 3.08% in 1921, to 2.77% in 1931 and by 1965 to 0.92%. In present-

day Guyana there is scarcely a white face to be seen. Many members of the Portuguese business community and those whites who worked for multi-national concerns Guyanised after independence, have left the country. In Trinidad, although a similar percentage decline occurred, there is still an economically powerful and culturally influential white group.

Nevertheless, whatever the intra-caste distinctions, there was one inescapable fact which underlies all the writing discussed in this chapter. As early as the Franchise Commission of 1897, it must have been plain to all but the most obtuse of the whites that their privileged social and political role was under threat. During the first two decades of the twentieth century white creoles witnessed the formation of middle-class African and Indian political associations and the beginnings of working-class trade unionism. They were alarmed by the growth of an assertive racial consciousness amongst Blacks and Indians and shaken out of any complacency they may have had by the wave of strikes and riots which swept through the Caribbean during the 1930s. From that time on, delayed only by the war, universal adult suffrage was inevitable, with the spectre of some form of representative government imminent. Europeans in the Caribbean were forced to recognise that they were a permanent minority group. George Lamming has described the position of the white West Indian very acutely:

He is our own true minority-man. Instinctively we think of him as a man of privilege. This was, and still remains true. But it is a very dubious privilege; for he knows, no less than those from down below, that the dice are dangerously loaded against the role which history assigned him. He is like a man at the top of the ladder. He can climb no further, and he dare not descend without the emotional permission of those below. 9

Different sections of the white elite responded in different ways to the challenge from below. Some maintained an ostrich-like hostility to the idea of any increased representation for the working classes; others saw gradual reform as a necessity if further explosions of popular feeling were to be prevented; and a very few white

creoles consciously identified with the aspirations of the masses and in fewer cases still worked for their realisation. There are fictional correlates for all these positions. Indeed, in some cases one senses that fiction was being used as a surrogate means of coming to terms with the Afro-Indian majority.

Although the main emphasis is on the treatment of the Indian presence, I have sometimes felt it relevant to compare white creole writers' portrayals of Black and Indian life. Beyond the portrayal of differences intrinsic to the life style of each group, it seems appropriate to ask whether there are any marked differences of fictional treatment which result from socially and culturally determined ways of seeing. For instance, in the previous chapter, attention was drawn to the tendency of European writers to favour Blacks or Indians according to where the Europeans' economic or spiritual interests lay. In the twentieth century similar biases can be found. For instance, some white conservatives, particularly those with rural backgrounds, have tended to favour Indians as a stabilising political influence rather than the Blacks, who were seen as politically more assertive. On the other hand, radical urban white creoles have tended to be exclusively involved with black urban culture and regarded the Indians as politically backward and culturally alien.

However, there may well be other reasons for such biases which have deeper roots. The effects of culturally formed aesthetic preferences have been suggested by at least one black writer. For instance, in George Lamming's novel ,Of Age and Innocence (1960) the English woman, Penelope, is described as feeling that the face of the African boy, Bob, was "irregular, problematic and unfinished", making him "stranger and less accessible" than his friends Rowley and Singh, white and Indian respectively.

Again, for some writers there may well have been personal complications in their capacity to deal evenly with the themes of

White-Indian or White-African relationships. Certainly, Edgar Mittelholzer's novel, Corentyne Thunder (1943), with its focus on Indian lives, strikes me as the novel in which Mittelholzer exercises the tightest control over his private obsessions. By contrast, the Kaywana Trilogy,¹¹ dealing with slavery and its aftermath, is overburdened with an oppressive concern with racial pollution.

The rest of this chapter is divided into three historical periods: first, from the end of indenture (1917) to c. 1945 (the latest period in which whites enjoyed electoral privileges); second, from the beginnings of universal adult suffrage until formal independence (1946-1962 in Trinidad, 1952-1966 in Guyana); third, from formal independence to the present.

1917-1945

Although there are no statistics to show the correlation between economic power and race in this period, it would be no exaggeration to say that whites controlled and dominated all sections of the economy with the exception of self-sufficient peasant production. The managers of sugar plantations, the leading producers of cocoa and citrus fruits, the managers and directors of the oil industry in Trinidad and the Bauxite industry in British Guiana were white.¹² So too were the owners of the main import-export businesses, and though a few Indian and Chinese businessmen were joining the business elite, most concerns owned by non-Europeans were modest in scope. The very top level of salaried posts in businesses, banks and the civil service were also white dominated. It was really only the independent professions of law and medicine that offered unimpeded access to those Blacks and Indians who had surmounted the educational barriers.

This monopoly of economic power was matched by a similarly favoured constitutional position. Although by 1891 in British Guiana

and 1925 in Trinidad, there were constitutions which gave a small measure of electoral representation to the Afro-creole and Indian middle classes, real power rested firmly with the Governor, expatriate white officials and those local whites who were invited to join the executive council, itself only advisory. There were also the influential pressure groups like the Chamber of Commerce and, especially in British Guiana, the Sugar Producers' Association, for whom the Governor and his officials invariably had a sympathetic ear. Although Trinidad had a Crown Colony constitution which was ostensibly intended to protect the interests of all from those with the monopoly of economic power, it was always evident that the interests of metropolitan and local white capital were seen as synonymous with those of the whole colony. In British Guiana the paramountcy of white political interests was even more clearly revealed. Unlike Trinidad, British Guiana had a constitution which, up to 1928, gave a real measure of power to elected members. The constitutional changes of 1891 had meant that by 1915 the electorate was dominated by the Coloured and Afro-Guyanese middle classes. Most elected members tended to be hostile to the sugar oligarchy and the Colonial Secretary reported that unless some change was made, 'the position of the inhabitants of British race in this colony will become intolerable.'¹³ British Guiana was duly changed to a crown colony system in 1928 with a reduction in direct representation and greater power for the Governor to nominate whom he wanted to the Council. In 1928 all five nominated unofficials were whites, two of them - planters.¹⁴

However, if this 'white-power complex' was regarded by most Europeans as the inevitable and legitimate protection of their interests, it did not seem so to the radical nationalist middle class or the working class. Without political representation, the pressure the workers put on the colonial system was invariably violent in character. From 1919 onwards, in both Trinidad and British Guiana, in the cities and towns and on the estates, resentment against the ruling class took on increasingly a racial dimension.¹⁵

Strikes in Port of Spain in 1919 were markedly anti-white. There were violent disorders in British Guiana in 1924 which ended with the killing of thirteen workers on Plantation Ruimvelt, most of whom were Indians. However, the main outbreak of popular discontent occurred in the period from 1935-1937, sweeping across the whole of the British West Indies, but involving Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados most seriously. In all 39 persons were killed in these strikes and demonstrations.¹⁶

The response of the whites to the challenge was by no means uniform. There were reactionaries who resisted any kind of social change like the sugar planter who even in the 1920s, after indenture had ended, vehemently opposed education for Indian children:

This is an agricultural country. Unless you put the children on to working in the fields when they are young, you will never get them to do so later.¹⁷

Or those, like the Sugar Producer's Association in British Guiana, who wanted the sternest repression of sugar workers who were seeking the right to unionise; they petitioned the Governor in 1940:

With their thousands of labourers of an alien race of little or no education and a special aptitude for conspiracy, the estates' need for police protection is a pressing one at this time, when labour has been taught to flout all authority, and is becoming more and more turbulent and insolently aggressive.¹⁸

The racial arrogance of the slave owner was by no means dead. Even the official report on the disturbances in Trinidad in 1937 made it quite clear that the blame for the riots lay in entrenched white attitudes,¹⁹ and in the absence of any regard for the welfare of employees. Even so there were members of the white upper class who remained hostile to any of the ameliorative measures proposed in the aftermath of the riots (the granting of adult suffrage for instance) and advocated increased repressive force.²⁰

However, within the white groups of both Trinidad and British Guiana there were small numbers of people who long before the violence of 1937 had recognised the justice and the necessity of meeting the

demands of the discontented. In Trinidad, it was a white creole of Corsican origin, Captain A.A. Cipriani,²¹ who, more than any other individual was responsible for making a link between the anti-colonial middle class and the economic discontents of the working and unemployed classes. Initially his whiteness and personal wealth were advantages. His wealth permitted him to stand for the Legislative Council, whilst a Trinidadian political historian suggests that in the immediate post-war period the Black masses were flattered by having a white man championing their cause. However, by the 1930's, Cipriani's whiteness was a political handicap. Until that time, though, Cipriani played a crucial role in stimulating popular political consciousness. However, from the very start there were aspects of Cipriani's political role which led to his ultimate rejection. He was a crusader on behalf of the masses, but was never keen on building the kind of political or trade union organisations which would have encouraged mass working-class activity. His conception of the cultural character of West Indian nationalism soon put him at variance with the rise of black cultural pride. According to Cipriani, West Indians had 'the same aspirations as the white man.'²² As Cipriani was a staunch Catholic with a European conception of Caribbean culture, the gap between him and the Indian population was even greater. Indeed, in 1943, Cipriani was one of those who voted to exclude non-English speaking Indians from the franchise.²³

By 1937 the Black working class had grown impatient of his constitutionalist politics and regarded his brand of leadership as patronising. The former hero of 'the barefoot man' was derided as a class enemy.

Lamming's phrase about the problems of descending the ladder aptly describes the experience of the second generation of white creole radicals in Trinidad. Although younger men like Gomes and Quintin O'Connor worked hard at discrediting Cipriani, went further in identifying with black culture and adopted a more modest role in their relationship to working class militants, they too were to be

rejected by the people. It was a mutual separation. As he got older Gomes's radicalism cooled and he felt increasingly unwelcome amongst the black radicals. It is also clear that groups like the Negro Welfare and Cultural Association were right to suspect that men like Gomes were using their contact with the black working class to build their own political careers.²⁴

In his autobiography, Albert Gomes has dissected the problem, as seen by a white creole, with considerable insight.²⁵ On the one hand Gomes was a generous and enthusiastic supporter of various manifestations of Afro-Trinidadian culture, yet the basis of his support was romanticised, patronising and racist in implication. He evidently enjoyed moving in the world of the yards, in the 'warm feral life of the island',²⁶ and favourably endorses the stereotype of the yard-dweller as hedonistic, irresponsible and devil-may-care. But he was always able to return to the order and security of his own home, complete with servant. By 1937, the gulf between the two worlds had become for Gomes almost unbridgeable. He could understand all too well the black resentment, but could not share in it, and although he felt confident that he could not be dragooned into white racist attitudes, he feared that he might learn to hate anyone who, 'threatened my life or security long enough.' That was the nub of the matter, for though Gomes could say that 'in the flesh I would be in one camp and in spirit in another...'²⁷ not unnaturally he was not prepared to give up the privileges of being white. That recognised, Gomes also had to admit that there were attractions to be found in 'the social tidiness of the Anglo-Saxon world...'²⁸ The story is Gomes's own, but it reappears frequently as a theme in the white creole fiction shortly to be discussed. It is also evident from Gomes's story that the Indian world had never attracted him in the same way as the world of the black yards had once done.

For a time though, earlier in the 1930s, it must have seemed to white creoles like Gomes that they were part of a creative, rad-

ical explosion of activity which brought them into a dynamic relationship with the masses. The first sign of this activity was the publication of a literary magazine called Trinidad, jointly edited by C.L.R. James and Alfred (A.H.) Mendes. What most distinguished Trinidad was its publication of realistic stories of barrack life such as C.L.R. James's 'Triumph' or Mendes's story, 'Her Chinaman's Way.'²⁹ Behind the publication of Trinidad in 1929 was a small informal literary group that Mendes had drawn around him. Although the group contained blacks like James and Ernest Carr, a majority of its members were white creoles. Mendes, for instance, came from a wealthy Portuguese family, had been educated in England, and fought in France in the 1914-1918 war until he was gassed in 1917. It was not until 1922 that he returned to Trinidad, radicalised by his war experiences and inspired by the Soviet revolution.³⁰ In 1924 he had met James, and later with others like Ralph de Boissiere, another white creole, the author of Crown Jewel (1952) and Rum and Coca Cola (1956), had formed the literary group.³¹ Gomes appears to have taken over the group on his return from America in 1930, and revived its publishing activity by producing a very lively and combative journal, The Beacon, which had an unbroken run of twenty-eight monthly issues between 1931-1933.³²

It was in the pages of The Beacon that white creoles were able to make a literary identification with the black working class world that politically they would come to be shut out of. Yet even within the group the divisions of race were present, if not apparent. C.L.R. James, looking back on the period, writes with a mixture of affection and sharpness about the way the 'white boys' in the group seemed unaware of their privileges:

There were some of us who were not black men... We went one way; these white boys all went the other way. We were black and the only way we could do anything along the lines we were interested in was by going abroad....
 ...Albert Gomes told me the other day: "You know the difference between all of you and me? You all went away; I stayed." I didn't tell him what I could have told him: "You stayed not only because your parents had money but because your skin was white; there was a chance for you, but for us there wasn't.."³³

Gomes himself recognised that for many of the white creoles in the group, the chief impulse was a 'self-flattering aestheticism.'³⁴ For some the literary identification with the black world was chiefly a stylistic revolt, a means of attacking the prudery and hypocrisy of the white elite, in particular the moral repressiveness of the Catholic church. Yet attraction to the sexual libertarianism of the masses³⁵ did not prevent white creoles from holding racist views.

Mendes, for instance, supposedly attacking the views of a Dr. Harland, a racialist geneticist, who had published a paper in Trinidad arguing the biological inferiority of the Negro, though admitting that he had met blacks who were as intelligent as any whites, nevertheless made it clear that he believed in the cultural and intellectual superiority of the 'brisk, inventive Nordic' over the 'indolent, self-satisfied Negro':

We have only to remember what the Nordic race has contributed to science and Art for the fact of his superiority to become axiomatic... And out of Africa has come no literature, no music.³⁶

If the response of some of the white creoles in the Beacon group to black culture was ambivalent, it still contained an element of attraction which contrasts with the apparent marked lack of interest in the Indian community. One avowed aim of The Beacon was the desire to build bridges between the different communities in Trinidad, but what attempts were made, in respect of the Indians, occurred at a very remote level. The Beacon gave space to a couple of general articles on Indian religions by local community leaders, and reprinted extracts from Gandhi's nationalist paper Young India. There was not, however, either any coverage of the culture or affairs of the local Indian community or any investigation of the impoverished lives of the rural Indian population, the most depressed group in the whole society. There are correspondingly in The Beacon very few stories which deal with Indian characters or life styles. The two stories which do, do so because their theme is the moral degenerat-

ion of Europeans in the tropics, and the plantation with its Indian workforce was the place where whites came into most intimate contact with the temptations of exotic sex.

37

In the story, "The Tare", by W.R.H. Trowbridge, a white West Indian from Barbados, the focus is on the plight of the expatriate overseers whom the estate imported "in the same manner as it imported coolies, machinery and every other essential necessity." The fate of the overseers is a degraded life of "cards, cocktails and coolie women." The story chronicles the moral collapse of one clean, unsophisticated young Englishman, Danvers, and his unsuccessful attempt to prevent the same fate befalling another young arrival. However, the temptations of drink and the "coolie-girls with eyes like gazelles" who hang wantonly around the overseers are too great. In the end Danvers is left with a "sense of pollution, of degradation", which poisons the idea in him of returning to England.

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A.H. Mendes's story, "Boodhoo", also published in The Beacon, has a similar milieu and deals with the same theme of racial pollution. However, where Trowbridge's story is a simple moral tract which portrays the whites as victims and the Indians as part of the problem, Mendes's treatment of the theme is immeasurably more complex. The story is undoubtedly, in the first place, an assault on white racial and sexual hypocrisy, on the attempt to present a cultivated, polite facade behind which lurk strong and dishonourable passions. The heart of the story concerns the discovery by Minnie Lawrence, newly arrived in Trinidad as the wife of a planter almost twice her age, that the ever present general factotum, a half-caste youth, Boodhoo, is in fact her husband Henry's son by an Indian woman. However, the belatedness of Minnie's discovery serves to put her earlier feelings into a sharply ironic focus. When she had been told by her husband that Boodhoo has "a drop of European blood", she has been "surprised and in a subtle way hurt.... It was unimaginable to her that white men, men of her blood, should be so filthy as to take to themselves these Indian women. And to have children by them.

The thought nauseated her.' Clearly Minnie is excited by the idea of sexual contact with Indians, and particularly by the idea of having a child by one. Of course, by the time she finds out Henry's guilty secret, she herself has succumbed to the passions of Boodhoo.

This theme of the hidden reality underlying the polite exterior has already been introduced in the first scene of the story, which shows Minnie giving a starchy 'at-home' to a party of visiting wives, "daintily sipping their tea from exquisitely patterned china cups". The decorum is abruptly shattered when a cockroach invades the table causing one faint soul to smash her china cup, and another, hardier soul, to squash the insect, "spilling its abdominal contents over a large area of the table cloth." This incident is linked in time to a conversation, mysterious at that stage to Minnie, about the "provocation" some unfortunate woman has succumbed to. When Minnie asks for enlightenment she is given an equally riddling answer about the bad effects of the tropics on husbands. What Minnie does not understand, but the reader does, is that the ladies are talking euphemistically of their menfolks' sexual indiscretions with Indian women, and in the case of the unfortunate woman the reverse. This is the first aspect of what strikes me as ambiguous about the story. The cockroach and Minnie's discovery of Henry's secret and her own seduction are clearly Mendes's revenge on white hypocrisy, but it is, in my view, not clear whether the relationship between white and Indian is to be equated with the sordid spectacle of the black cockroach spread over the white table cloth. One wonders to what extent Mendes also sees the involvement as a pollution, albeit a deserved one.

The meaning of the story is further complicated by Mendes's involvement with the contrast between the sexually repressed European and the sensuous and liberated Indian. Before long Minnie finds herself, against her will, sexually attracted to Boodhoo.

When Mendes compares Henry and Boodhoo, Henry is described as affectionate, boyish, hearty and antiseptic in his sexual behaviour. Henry frequently arrives home so tired that "He would fall asleep as soon as he rested his head on the pillow." In the one scene when Henry is clearly not too tired, (he is in the middle of shaving) the note of jollity in the preliminaries is heavily undercut by the way that Mendes inserts the words 'cold', 'bleak' and 'melancholy':

...He put his arms around her and attempted to kiss her.
 "Oo!" she cried, throwing her head back; "the soap!"
 He forced her head to his and kissed her mouth, her eyes, her ears. Blotches of lather were left wherever he had kissed her.

"I told you not to do it!" she cried petulantly, and went to the mirror. She could not help laughing at the reflection of her face. He approached to hold her again, switching the light off as he did so, and she eluded his grasp, but he ran after her. She flung herself on the bed and he held her there. She felt his hands cold and in the darkness his eyes gleamed. She surrendered with a passionate embrace, and the wind rose in the bleak night to a melancholy sighing. (p158)

By contrast Boodhoo appears as elemental in his passions, his eyes seem to Minnie "like two pieces of red-hot coal". Whilst Henry's embrace is soapily domestic, the beginning of the relationship between Minnie and Boodhoo takes place to the accompaniment of thunder and lightening and the sexually charged incident when Boodhoo saves her from a scorpion which is crawling up her leg. Again when Henry's decision to send Boodhoo away (because his mother has been visiting the compound and Henry fears that she will expose his secret) provokes the outbreak of the previously submerged passion between Minnie and Boodhoo, the description emphasises the elemental:

"Do you want to go?"

"No."

"Then why go?"

For answer he put his arms about her, fiercely, rudely. She sobbed in his embrace, sobbed for the joy of it, sobbed with the despair of it. There was no tenderness in his touch, only a primitive harshness and her nature responded. (p161)

However, when the agreed meeting with Boodhoo happens, not surprisingly Minnie's civilised conscience reasserts itself:

In a few minutes they lay on the earth, with never a word passing between them, until, with the ultimate embrace, her eternity fell around her in ruins. And then she rose quickly. A great shame, like a bird of prey, clawed at her spirit. Her dress was bundled up above her bare tremulous knees...

Again, I don't think it is entirely clear whether Mendes wants us to see Minnie's shame as the result of her racial prejudices, poisoning what otherwise could have been a life-enhancing experience, or whether Minnie's is simply a case of that disease of the tropics hinted at by the wives at the tea party, the loss of discretion which is punished by the suggestion of humiliation in the last line of the quotation above .

In the last part of the story Mendes returns to savaging white sexual hypocrisy. When Minnie discovers that she is pregnant she believes that the child is Boodhoo's and collapses in a faint. With heavy irony about the way that Henry has treated Boodhoo's mother, Mendes has the husband whispering sentimentally in her ear, "Dear, dear little mother." Finally, Minnie dies in childbirth, still unable to confess her secret; her death, as the doctor tells Henry, the result of mental distress. The final dramatic irony is that the baby has blue eyes, pink skin and fair hair.

'Boodhoo' is both a disquieting and sometimes silly story. Not only is it at times absurdly melodramatic, but there is something unresolved and contradictory in its motivation. One cannot be certain whether Henry's crime is the abandonment of the Indian woman and the attempt to conceal the relationship, or his having had a relationship with an Indian woman in the first place. Again the relationship that Minnie has with Boodhoo seems on one level to be a criticism of the absence of sensuality in European sexual behaviour, yet in no way could Minnie's affair be described as life enhancing. It is perhaps that there are two contrary impulses at work. On the one hand Mendes is out to shock the Trinidadian white bourgeoisie: to portray white men involved with Indian women was one thing, but to show a white woman seduced by an Indian was quite another, as the outraged cries of bad taste from the editor of the reactionary white journal, The Planter, were to show. On the other hand it is far from clear that Mendes intends us to see

the contact between white and Indian as in any way desirable, at least within the kind of context described in the story.⁴⁰

An honest awareness of the power of racial difference to poison contacts between people is even more clearly the focus of Mendes's novel, Pitch Lake (1934). In this novel a young Portuguese, Joe Da Costa, is torn between the competing attractions of the pitch lake of the Afro-Indian world, and the refined society of the upper-class Portuguese. He leaves his father's rumshop in San Fernando to escape from what he feels is a coarse, vulgar world to join his socially aspiring relatives in Port of Spain. However, when Joe goes to live with his brother he cannot stop himself becoming attracted to the family's Indian servant, Stella. This infatuation continues even after Joe has been introduced to Cora, who matches precisely all his rumshop dreams of what would be socially desirable in white womanhood. With rather heavy irony Mendes has made Joe despise his father for having an Indian mistress.

Mendes attempts to make Joe's contradictory behaviour credible by presenting Stella, in the first half of the book, as natural, straightforward and sympathetic, whereas Cora, the civilised European, is portrayed as devious and artificial. Joe sums up the contrast for himself after a society dance during which Cora has behaved as a heartless sexual tease, whereas Stella has accepted his advances:

Cora had made a fool of him because of her insincerity; and Stella, because of her sincerity, was willing to give him everything. 41

However, Joe's doubts about his relationship to Stella turn to anguish in the second part of the novel. The relationship turns sour. It had been made in a mood of emotional escapism, and this turns to bitter cynicism when Joe recognises that the world of white opinion will not go away:

If only he could fly away with her....to a small deserted island, where there would be no-one to point a finger at him for taking to himself one not of his own colour. (p 94)

Then Joe begins to wonder whether Stella can be "different from the girls of her class who give themselves to men superior to themselves in colour and social standing for what they can get." On the other hand Cora rises sharply in Joe's estimation. And whilst Mendes's portrayal of the way racial consciousness poisons Joe's feelings about Stella is very credible, it seems to me that Mendes shies away from the full implications of Joe's shift of feeling in a way which is both artistically weak and ideologically revealing. Stella does not change; rather Joe's perceptions of her do. Cora does change, indeed Mendes quite abruptly makes her, in the second half of the novel, much more sympathetic. The change in the treatment of the two women is shown most sharply in the episodes where, on the one hand Cora captivates Joe by the quality of her piano playing, an index of an emotional depth and cultural richness, which up to that point has been wholly absent from her characterisation, and on the other, where Stella, cleaning Joe's room, becomes racially and culturally repugnant to him:

Commonplace, vulgar, bending down and exposing her thighs...
Her dark face was somehow or other unpleasant... Cora
was up there with her music in the clouds, Stella was in
his room, dusting. (p254)

It is noticeable that Stella has been markedly darkened from the earlier description of her as : 'light brown, almost olive... there was something about her features that was European.' (p.77)

When Joe's engagement to Cora takes place, his affair with Stella becomes a timebomb beneath his hopes of acceptance into the world of the elite. And when Stella duly becomes pregnant he has to decide whether to abandon her and lean his emotional weaknesses on Cora's suddenly revealed strength (their relationship is perceived by Cora as that of mother and child) or whether he should break off the engagement and out of responsibility, if not love, stand by Stella. The choice has an obvious analogy to the political alternatives facing the white creoles: comfortable tutelage to the dominance of metropolitan control or the risks and discomforts involved in joining the masses in their struggle for social justice and colonial

freedom. In the end, Joe is not prepared to take a mature responsibility for his actions. Unable to obtain an abortion for Stella, he feels that his world has collapsed and his self-control vanishes. He murders Stella, and is last seen rushing out into the night.

The position of Stella as merely a 'reflective foil' to the focus on the white creole's dilemma is revealed in the way that her characterisation in the novel remains wholly undeveloped. Not only does she play a passive role in her relationship with Joe, but, as an orphan raised in institutions, she is carefully divorced from her Indian background. Yet if Mendes shows little engagement with Stella as a character, or with her Indianess as a possible dimension of her behaviour,⁴² her race and its meaning in the young whiteman's eyes is bleakly evident in the final words of hate that Joe screams at her, "Coolie bitch, Coolie bitch."

The rather different ways in which Mendes changes the respective characteristics of Stella and Cora seem to me to arise from an unacknowledged conflict in his intentions. In part his narration is shaped to focus on the way racism clouds and distorts perception, but there is also the shaping influence of the desire to tell the cautionary tale of a white man who dabbles his toes in the pitch lake of the Afro-Indian world and is sucked in.

Mendes' portrayal of the relationship between white and Indian is pessimistic in tone and tragic in outcome, but this is not the case in Ralph de Boissière's novel Crown Jewel. Although not published until 1952, this novel is very much a product of the Beacon period. Set at the time of the working class uprising of 1937, Crown Jewel was written in draft during the early years of the war, but only published in Australia four years after de Boissière had emigrated there in 1948. de Boissière, and C.L.R. James, were the two exceptions that Gomes made to his charge that dilettantism and a "comfortable armchair aestheticism" were characteristic of many in the Beacon

circle. Indeed, de Boissière has himself reported that he had left Trinidad because he was being victimised for his political activities.⁴³ That political commitment is the shaping force evident in every page of Crown Jewel.

At one level Crown Jewel is a powerful historical work of documentary fiction which gives a panoramic account of the involvement of a variety of characters in the events of 1937. There is Le Maitre, a black trade union leader who plays a role in the novel akin to that of Uriah Butler, the Grenadan who lead the popular revolt; Boisson, a Cipriani figure who attempts to hold back the workers' militancy; Joe Elias, formerly a radical, who has an uncanny resemblance to Albert Gomes; and Andre de Coudray, who, like de Boissière himself, rejects his privileged background from one of the oldest French creole families in Trinidad, and commits himself to the working class movement. The main events in the novel also follow the pattern of historical actuality. For instance, the killing of the hated black detective, Charlie King, is paralleled in the novel by the death of the character, Duke, in identical circumstances.⁴⁴

But Crown Jewel is also concerned with the individual consciousness. Like most of the novels discussed in this chapter it has a young, privileged white male as its main character. Unlike them, de Boissière's novel does not treat others' characters simply as reflectors or backgrounds to Andre de Coudray's moral drama. In this novel the struggle of the white character of humane conscience to find himself and his role in a changing society is seen as part of the much wider theme of a people's struggle for justice, self-determination and pride in their submerged cultural values.

However, though Crown Jewel aims at a panoramic view of Trinidadian society, there are very marked inequalities between de Boissière's treatments of the Afro-Trinidadian and Indian worlds. The former is central to the novel and portrayed with both sympathy and intimate and realistic detail; the Indian world is virtually

absent. When Indian characters do appear in the novel, they tend to appear either in marginal roles or presented without any reference to their own community. They are beggars, higglers and urban shopkeepers who remain on the side lines. During one of the marches an Indian is observed calmly cutting grass for his donkey:

The calmness of that scene, the indifference of the Indian to their demands, irritated the impatient crowd.

"...What he care?" said another. "Dem so would live on grass like donkey if you give dem a chance." 45

On another occasion de Boissière describes a scene where Indians are gaily celebrating a wedding whilst the black trade unionists are grimly going about their business of co-ordinating the strike. It is a pointed juxtaposition of the separateness of the worlds. What de Boissière does show in the early parts of the novel are the prejudices held by the blacks towards the Indians, and the stereotypes which readily rise to the surface. For instance, when Le Maitre calls for struggle he says, "To submit is to die like some Baboolal or other in the square." Later when an Indian shopkeeper is reluctant to give food to the marchers on their way to the city, another potent image surfaces:

"Give the people food, you stingy coolie! ..."

"This time he must have so much money hidden in he matrass, he back hurt him when day come..." (pp 297-298)

The contempt has its material and psychological roots. Even for the poorest blacks there is the satisfaction of having another class beneath them, like the "barefooted old Indian in the kapra" who carries Cassie's suitcases on his head for twelve cents. Again, de Boissière deals frankly with the divisive effects of black chauvinism on the working class movement. Winchester, a veteran trade unionist addresses a strike meeting both as 'my people' and 'we Negroes' despite the presence of Indians in the meeting. As the black heroine points out, one of the movement's weaknesses is that there are those who 'believe Indian and nigger kean't help one another to make life good for all of us.' (p. 261)

However, when de Boissière first mentions the activities of the Indian sugar workers quite late in the novel, it is noticeable that while the tone is sympathetic, it is also distanced, without the kind of individualisation or wealth of realistic detail which brings to life the portrayal of the black working class community:

On the sugar estates, where there was no organisation, workers were restive, truculent. To an Indian mother, married at thirteen, a gang of seven weeders might be born in six years. At eight years old they were weeding the canefields. At twentyfive the mother looked like forty; at forty she might die "an old Indian woman". Doctors often found their bodies full of hookworm..." (p.365)

What is absent is any attempt to get inside the feelings or perceptions of the Indians, or even to account for what kept them separate from the black workers' struggle or what in the end brought about their involvement. There is no attempt to portray the conflicts between the traditional religious leadership, the urban intellectuals or the wealthy, more integrated, middle class, or the small number of politicised workers for influence within the community. Thus when Indians do enter the strife, their motives are seen in terms of the familiar stereotype of vengefulness. An Indian boy has been shot by the police:

Canefield and other agricultural workers went out not only on strike but seeking militant leadership and causing senseless acts of violence when they could find no organised outlet for their desire for vengeance. (p390)

And when a figure like the "slim young Indian with the freshly sharpened cutlass" puts himself at the front of an insurrectionary crowd... the boldest and most resolute amongst them, he appears as if from nowhere, without roots in any portrayed social world. This is very different from the way the transformation of Cassie, the black servant girl, who changes from good-natured but timid youth to the pitilessly angry woman who pours petrol on the hated detective Duke, is very credibly portrayed. What is interesting in the portrayal of the Indian striker is the way that de Boissière pre-dates George Lamming's treatment of the character of Singh in Of Age and Innocence, in suggesting a special Indian revolutionary potential. Unlike some of the blacks who turn the march into 'mas',

"singing calypsoes, dancing in the carnival 'leggo' style, drinking, abusing the whites..." , the Indians are portrayed as deadly serious. When a young negro jumps up carnival style beside the Indian with the cutlass he is sternly reproved:

"Done with that shit", cried the Indian, raising his cutlass threateningly. "This ain't ca'nival, this is war!" (P.395).

Clearly Crown Jewel must primarily be judged in terms of what it sets out to do. Despite some occasional woodenness of characterisation and a tendency to an over-solemn tone, few novels succeed better in giving a picture of people making history. It also has the merit of attempting to portray Trinidadian society in all its plural complexity. Such attempts are rare. If the creation of a fictional world which images both the discontinuities and the totality of such a society was beyond de Boissière, it is impossible to think of any Caribbean novel which has wholly succeeded in that exacting task. The failure to portray the Indians adequately as part of the social totality has several causes.

Firstly, the novel is biassed in the emphasis it gives to the Afro-Creole world by its concern with de Coudray's attempt to come to terms with the unacknowledged black blood in his veins, a theme treated with great honesty and a wholly unneurotic balance. Secondly, as an urban radical, de Boissière tends to underplay the actual role of Indians in the events of 1937; there is no analogue in the novel for the roles played by such Indian leaders as Rienzi and Timothy Roodal in real life. Moreover, as the careful documentary research of Sahadeo Basdeo has shown, Indian workers were much more militant and better organised than de Boissière seems to have known. The failure can also be seen as illustrative of the limitations of the kind of documentary realism de Boissière employs. He does indeed go some way towards presenting an image of the discontinuities of society through the provision of multiple and competing points of view, held together by the mode of omniscient narration.

However, he remains tied to the conventions of superficial plausibility by ensuring that all characters are linked by some kind of social relationship. Since there were in reality few such links between the city and the sugar estate, it is inevitable that the Indians are relegated to a marginal role. One suspects though that even if de Boissiere had been more adventurous in his use of fictional modes, he lacked the intimate knowledge to give an adequate portrayal of Indian lives.

The final instalment of the fictional response of white creole members of the Beacon group to the events of the 1930's came from Albert Gomes himself in his short novel, All Papa's Children (1978). It is very readable but it adds little to the insights of Through A Maze of Colour, and in fact is far less honest in its treatment of the reasons for the separation which occurred between Gomes and the black radicals. However, in a largely autobiographical treatment the novel does speak movingly of commitments unfulfilled in life. Unlike Gomes who left Trinidad in political disgrace in 1962, the hero of the novel, Morales, refuses to emigrate:

" I try to make myself as comfortable as I can on a narrowing ledge." (p112)

What must also be noted is that despite a number of references to Trinidad as an Afro-Asian society, no Indian characters appear in the novel at all.

From Mendes in 1931 to Gomes, belatedly, in 1978, the writings of these white creoles, all once involved with The Beacon group, bears witness to an attempt to come to terms with the need for a new social order. This commitment, whatever its inadequacies, particularly in the fictional portrayal of the Indian presence, stands out all the more clearly in comparison with a novel, The Cup and The Lip, by the Jamaican author, H.G. De Lisser, also set and probably written in the 1930's, though not published until 1956.

H.G.De Lisser was born in 1878 of Portuguese-Jewish ancestry with "a modicum of African blood". His father was the proprietor of a paper which folded when he affronted planting interests by opposing the importation of East Indian labour. H.G.De Lisser began work as a clerk but by the age of twenty-six had become the editor of The Gleaner , which he made into the colony's principal paper. In 1913 he had published one of the first genuinely West Indian novels, Jane: A Story of Jamaica , which was followed by a further ten novels, several published posthumously. In his editorship of The Gleaner , De Lisser became steadily more reactionary and wholly identified with the plantocracy, wholly opposed to the emergence of the nationalist parties ("There will never be such a political party here. The people are not interested, and if the thing threatened to come up I would prevent it."..... "From complete self-Govern-⁴⁸ment for Jamaica, Good Lord, deliver us", he wrote.) He died in 1944.

The Cup and the Lip reveals a sad falling away from an early novel like Jane's Career, both in the quality of the writing and in the coarsened attitudes the later novel reveals. Jane's Career is a genuinely sympathetic portrait of a country girl come to town; The Cup and the Lip demonstrates just how racist and reactionary De Lisser had become. For instance, one finds the term 'coolie' by then used only as an insulting epithet not merely used naturalistically in the dialogue but also in the author's narrative.

Superficially, the plot resembles that of Alfred Mendes's Pitch Lake as it recounts the fluctuating attractions for its white 'hero' of bed with his East Indian housekeeper, Marie Ramsingh, or marriage to a socially desirable white lady, Gladys Ludford. But whereas Mendes's seriousness almost creates a sense of genuine tragedy, De Lisser's novel rises to no more than anaemic satire on the pretensions of the local passing-for-white socialites and descends to a truly odious level of racist stereotyping. When, for instance,

Arthur Norris, the complacent and repulsive hero of this saga, becomes alarmed that Marie Ramsingh's husband may have found out his wife's infidelity, his first thought is to bribe the husband to keep quiet and not jeopardise his prospective marriage to Gladys. Arthur is confident of success because, "Ramsingh was too true an East Indian not to love money..." "It was a great passion of his life."⁴⁹ Besides, Ramsingh can be expected to grovel because, "to the East Indian Arthur was a sort of God." However, Arthur has misjudged his stereotypes, and Ramsingh proves disloyal to Mammon and true to that other East Indian vice of murderous jealousy. Already of "a sour, brooding disposition" Ramsingh, becoming suspicious, begins to smoke ganga as a stimulus to his revenge. When the truth is out, Ramsingh "who had reverted to the savage instincts of this type"⁵⁰ virtually beheads Marie with his cutlass and hacks at her body "as though he would reduce it to mincemeat!" All this is evidently regarded as a regrettable but unavoidable East Indian characteristic by Arthur's doctor who reassures him of his own lack of responsibility since, "Marie was doomed to be killed and Ramsingh fated to be her killer."⁵¹

The other side of this crudely insulting stereotype of the male⁵² is, as usual, racist nonsense about the sexually exotic qualities of the female. It is the lustful, sensuous Marie who seduces Norris: to whom it appeared that "she had kinship with the tigress of her ancestral Indian jungle."⁵³ Even so, De Lisser follows earlier novelists like Webber and Mendes in Europeanising the Indian woman, qualifying her exoticism by making her sufficiently westernised to appeal to Norris. Thus Marie Ramsingh is educated, Christian, does not have her nose pierced, and even wears shoes and stockings. De Lisser's novel shows, in the absence of the kind of political and social commitments which involved some of the white Trinidadian writers discussed above, just how tenaciously nineteenth century racist stereotypes could persist.

However, the presence of political or cultural ferment, or the writer's involvement in it, is by no means a necessary precondition for the writing of fiction which breaks new ground. In the case of Edgar Mittelholzer, the Guyanese author of the novel, Corentyne Thunder (1941) the political and social environment of his formative years was devoid of the kind of upheavals which so stimulated artistic life in Trinidad in the 1930s.

Both in the creation of a radical political tradition (as opposed to labour militancy on the sugar estates) and the development of a radical cultural elite, British Guiana lagged some way behind Trinidad. In British Guiana there were no equivalent developments (until after 1947 at least) to the growth of political organisations like the Trinidad Labour Party or the Butlerite movement, or literary movements like the Beacon group. The sole comparable political grouping in British Guiana was the Popular Party which was an organisation only in name, a very loose coalition of middle-class politicians ("political hybrids and adventurers"⁵⁴) under the leadership of a white creole called Nelson Cannon, who was periodically in and out of Government favour and patronage. The Popular Party was 'radical' in so far as it campaigned for improvements in public utilities and for full representative Government, though not, in so far as I have been able to discover, for universal adult suffrage. Principally, the Party represented the interests of whites, near whites and coloureds of the salaried employee class.

In the absence of significant political activity, it is not surprising that though a novel like Corentyne Thunder displays an acute sensitivity to distinctions of social class, it lacks the political dimension common to the Trinidadian novels discussed above.

The only evidence of literary or artistic cultural activity in the 1930s in British Guiana is to be found in the activities of

middle-class ethnic groups like the British Guiana Dramatic Society⁵⁵ (Indian) or the Georgetown Dramatic Club (Negro and Coloured). The only literary publications were the Daily Chronicle Christmas Annual and Christmas Tide. It is not surprising then that when Edgar Mittelholzer began writing his efforts were turned wholly to seeking publication and approval in London. However, what Mittelholzer had, unlike any of the writers so far discussed, was an intimate contact with both middle class and peasant Indian life.

As he relates in his autobiography, A Swarthy Boy (1963) the Mittelholzer family had, during his boyhood, lived next door to the Luckhoo family⁵⁶ in New Amsterdam. It was an ambivalent relationship, for though the Luckhoo's lived in a distinctly superior style to the penurious Mittelholzers, the former were Indians only recently "emerged from the plantation swarm of coolies", whereas the Mittelholzers, although poor, were very nearly white. The young Mittelholzers were discouraged from playing with the young Luckhoos, and the elders of the family justified the prohibition with such comments as:

"After all they're not really our sort..."

"These are people you can't trust. They're so secretive and cunning. Coolies! H'm! "57

Such are also the kinds of white attitudes that Mittelholzer records faithfully in several of his novels and short stories in which East Indians are concerned. To what extent Mittelholzer himself shared such attitudes, even unconsciously, will be examined later.⁵⁸

Despite the injunctions, a considerable social intercourse existed between the two families, an intercourse which grew as the Luckhoo prestige mounted. With the Luckhoo children, Edward and Lionel, the Mittelholzer children learned to play Indian games and eat real Indian foods. But the high point of the friendship consisted of the day trips Mittelholzer spent with the Luckhoos visiting their friends and relatives on the Corentyne coast. Mittelholzer writes:

...but for these trips to the flat, savannah lands of the Corentyne Coast...I would probably never have been able to write my first published novel. 59

However, the gaze that Mittelholzer casts back on this world is a cold, unsentimental one. In his introduction to the Caribbean Writers Series edition of the novel, Louis James writes that in it, the East Indians express "the society's vitality", and that Mittelholzer reveals "the richness" of the peasant world. This seems to me a basic misreading of the novel, though consistent with James's mistaken judgement that "the core of the book is the peasant experience." For though the peasants portrayed in the novel are free from the bondage of estate life, and though there are moments of liveliness, what stands out in Mittelholzer's portrayal of peasant life is its precariousness, monotony and physical deprivation. Indeed, no previous West Indian writer of fiction had described in quite such graphic fashion the physical realities of the lives of the wretched of the Caribbean earth. The squalor of the old cow-minder's, Ramgollal's, hut; the damp, cold nights when his daughter, Beena, fears that she too will catch the same lung disease as her mother and "get bony and ugly as the weeks passed, and one day she would cough and cough until blood trickled from her mouth and she would die"; and the monotonous physical exhaustion of the daily milk round: all are recorded with an objectivity which contrasts sharply with the romanticising tendencies of several of the novels discussed in this chapter.

It is quite possible that it was Mittelholzer's intention that the novel should be a tale of peasant life: Ramgollal's tale. Initially it seems as if it is the old cow-minder who is the centre of interest, the action radiating outwards from his mud hut to the grander house of Big Man Weldon, the white creole planting manager, with whom Ramgollal's daughter, Sosee, is cohabiting. It is also possible that the brief affair between Weldon's son, Geoffry, and his aunt Kattree (she is of the same age) may have originally been intended as one minor sub-plot interwoven into the main story of Jannee's murder of Boorharry, the theft of Ramgollal's savings

by Beena to pay for Jannee's defence and the old man's death from shock when he discovers that his money is missing. Indeed, the affair between the two seems at first principally an ironic comment on Ramgollal's satisfaction with his daughter's arrangement with Weldon, since it is always predictable that Weldon's son will abandon Kattree pregnant. In the first quarter of the novel Ramgollal is made the centre, not perhaps of perspective, but of structure.

However, the affair seems to me to have effected a displacement of focus, so that the core of the novel is not so much the peasant experience as the battle between the competing sides of Geoffrey Weldon's divided racial ancestry, and, implicitly perhaps, the way Mittelholzer saw the relationship between European and Indian and their cultures in Guyanese society. It would be an overstatement, though, to imply that Geoffrey Weldon is, in the phrase from Derek Walcott's poem, 'divided to the vein' in any equal sense. Though 'poisoned with the blood of both',⁶² it is only from the Indian side that the poison is felt. This is both the view of the character and, I think, the perspective of the novel. To the Indian blood Mittelholzer appears to attribute, for instance, Geoffrey's hypersexuality and the temptation he suffers to regress to a simple mud hut existence with Kattree. On the other hand his European side acts as his conscience, making him feel "just an animal",^(p.59) despising himself for his involvement with Kattree. It is from his European side that Geoffrey's ambitions and his need for cultural stimulation come: "I'd just go mad unless I could satisfy my hunger for music",^(p.186-7) he says. However, there is a price to be paid for the dominance of the European side of his personality. He feels, "futile and distraught", wanting to identify with the land and its people but feeling locked out by his 'European' fastidiousness.⁶³ He is unable to hold together these competing feelings and, as in fact Mittelholzer was himself to do, tells Kattree that, "One day, I'm going to commit suicide."^(p.189) No other char-

acter is drawn with as great intensity and inwardness as Geoffrey, and it is clear that in the portrayal of this character Mittelholzer deals with what was most personal to his interests.

Yet it is not merely that Geoffrey Weldon is an interestingly drawn character that makes him the focus of attention within the novel. It is also because there are a number of serious limitations in Mittelholzer's portrayal of the Indian peasant characters. The limitations begin, I believe, in the character of the author's response to the nature of the peasant world.

As have a good many other Caribbean authors, Mittelholzer appears to want to record both the material squalor and the survival of spiritual vitality in the lives of the rural poor. In a novel like Roger Mais's The Hills Were Joyful Together (1953) these contraries exist as complementary presences, both invested with the same imaginative force. However, in Corentyne Thunder, whereas the recording of the ugliness of peasant life is graphic, objective and convincing, the attempt to suggest a richness of life is romanticised, unpersuasive and 'literary' in a pejorative sense. For instance, Mittelholzer is severely anti-romantic when he records that "there were many lice in the smooth black tresses of Beena and Kattree",^(p.16) but his description of Beena at the curry-feast is forced, exotic and coyly literary in tone:

Tum, tum, went the tom-tom, and Beena bettay swayed her slim body, and wailed a sweet tale to the stars. (p.13)

Again, Mittelholzer has to tell us the Beena and Jannee's conversation is about "little things but great in worth," and as though aware that he sounds unconvincing, attempts to clothe the comment in inflated truisms: 'for though the light of the moon is bigger than the light of a star, how many times bigger is not a star than the moon.' (p.31)

Similarly, although Geoffrey's friend Stymphy tells him that he likes Sosee "in spite of her crudeness... she's so absolutely

carefree and unaffected," this attempted corrective bears little weight beside the descriptions of Sosee, which are marked with an almost pathological physical disgust:

She was barefooted. Her hair hung greasily behind her in a loosely plaited pigtail.... she wore no corsets and her fleshy belly protruded in a rather ungainly way..... she went hurrying out, her bare feet making plump, slapping thumps on the floor. Unpretty sounds. (p31-32)

The most serious aspect of Mittelholzer's lack of imaginative sympathy with the peasant world, is in the inability to develop any inner life for his Indian peasant characters. The characterisation of Ramgollal is limited to a few familiar stereotypes: miserliness, avariciousness⁶⁴ and contentment to live in squalor. Although Mittelholzer must have been wholly aware of the perennial insecurity which would drive a man in Ramgollal's situation into the habits of self-denial and saving, what we are given is a caricature complete with some pseudo-Freudian analysis of Ramgollal's obsession couched in pretentious sexual metaphors. He keeps his days milk-round takings "stuffed away safely amidst the folds of his loin cloth", and we are told that his greatest pleasure is to finger his coins:

...he stroked the topmost bundles, and a quiver of happiness went through him.....all his florins and shillings and pennies, tinkling and glittering between his fingers! It was a long time since he had been able to give himself that delight. (p220)

This recourse to stereotypes⁶⁵ is part of Mittelholzer's almost wholly externalised approach to characters like Ramgollal. Mittelholzer is certainly aware of the kind of experience that a man like Ramgollal is likely to have had, but the experiences remain as a list concentrated in one single paragraph, without ever becoming a dynamic part of the old man's consciousness or behaviour:⁶⁶

To him at that moment it seemed as though his whole life lay stored away in that canister: his youth, the immigrant ship that had brought him from Calcutta - the canister had contained all the valuables he had possessed at the time - the five years of his indentured labour on the estate and the many years of voluntary labour that had followed. In it laid stored away all the troubles and pleasures that life had brought him: kicks and angry words from the overseers, his first marriage - the drums and the feasting and the gifts of money and jewellery - the labourers in riot

and the shooting by the police, Pagwah festivals, the death of his first wife and that dark day when his eldest son got killed in a dray-cart accident, his second marriage, Sosee getting of age and Big Man coming to take her out, and the birth of Kattree and Beena, Baijan and his provision shop; all these things, and more, lay hidden in the gloom within his faithful canister. (p193)

There is, however, an interesting inconsistency between Mittelholzer's outward, stereotypic characterisation of Ramgollal and his infrequent attempts to convey his inner thoughts. Mittelholzer treats Ramgollal's inarticulacy in English with naturalistic exactness, but uses a form of poeticised 'Oriental' English to convey the content of his reveries. Nowhere though does Mittelholzer suggest that Ramgollal is a speaker of Hindi. At the level of plausibility it is possible to conclude that there is an inconsistency between the elevated thoughts Ramgollal has in his reverie and the miserliness of his daily behaviour. I think, however, that the inconsistency is deliberate and, as in the case of the description of Kattree, a tentative recognition of the presence of a richer personality hidden under the impoverished surface:

Ah! Honour, indeed, had come to him in the ebb of his life... The Lord of Life had been good to him. Were he to die tonight he should die feeling that he had not lived in vain.... He had seen the flowering and the ripening of his seed and his seed's seed. He had done what the Lord of Life had sent him to do and his content was great. Let the wind blow chilly now or the sun scorch him. Let the rain beat him. Nothing mattered.... He could sigh now and feel at peace when the twilight of death began to gather about him. (p66)

In other character portrayals there is a conflict between stereotyping and observation. In outline the character of Jannee bears the same stamp as that which De Lisser had employed in creating the character of Ramsingh in The Cup and the Lip: the jealous, revengeful Indian. Yet there is in the portrayal of Jannee a degree of perceptive observation which is perhaps most evident in Mittelholzer's description of the rituals of violent rejection, grudging mollification and morose re-acceptance that Jannee goes through when he suspects that his wife, Sukru, has too great a friendship with Boorharry. Even so, Mittelholzer remains exterior to such a

character; there is no perception of a possible tension between the expected social role of Jannee as a proprietorial Indian husband and an individual sensibility such as one finds, for instance, in Samuel Selvon's 'Tiger' novels.⁶⁷ This is a deficiency in Mittelholzer's portrayal of Jannee which is exposed rather than masked by the portentous backcloth of thunder and lightening and the prophetic dreams with which the action is enveloped.⁶⁸

Yet there are also moments when Mittelholzer writes with great imagination, in a manner which suggests his links with Wilson Harris.⁶⁹ For instance, in an early description of Kattree, the images suggest an internal sensibility marked by the impoverishment of her life, but also indicate her intimate interaction with the landscape, and, in the words, 'grace' and 'serene', hint at an area of unviolated potentiality within her. The last sentence of the extract brilliantly compresses all three ideas:

Walking with grace in her dirty clothes, she looked like a figure created by the magic of the savannah and the sunlight. She looked aloof from the good and evil of the earth, and yet a chattel of both. She looked serene like the far-reaching plain of stunted grass and earth. (p28)

However, from that point on, although Kattree rises to a display of determination in defence of Jannee, the commentary falls back on a repetitive formula. She is always "calm and secret filled", or filled with "gleaming secrets" or an "air of dreaming".

Nevertheless, whilst Mittelholzer's treatment of the most detailed Indian figures suffers from the limitations outlined above, there can be no questioning the sharpness with which he explores the relationships between the different parts of the Weldon and Ramgollal families. It is an exploration largely carried out through the juxtaposition of acutely recorded variations of speech, through which Mittelholzer establishes the relative social status and the personal histories of his characters. It is astonishing to think that Mittelholzer intended to eliminate the use of dialect speech should he ever have republished Corentyne Thunder.⁷⁰ For the benefit

of the metropolitan reader he would have destroyed much of the authenticity and vivacity of the novel. It is a world of social extremes, from the upper class expatriate slang of Geoffry and Stymphy to the restricted poverty of Ramgollal's speech. The old cow-minder's inarticulate groping for meaning reflects the accumulated barrenness of his emotional life. He lacks the sustenance of his ancestral tongue without having gained the freedom of his adopted one. His speech suggests his pitiful inconsequentiality, his marginality and incapacity to have any impact on his world. When Beena collapses faint with hunger on the savannah, Ramgollal can only feebly repeat:

"Beena bettay, wha' wrong?
 ...You' belly a-hurt you, bettay?
 ...Ow! Bettay, you na go dead, Eh? Bettay?
 Talk, na is wha' wrong, bettay?" (p10-11.)

It is not surprising then that those about him, even his daughters, seem to ignore Ramgollal, as one held incommunicado.

By comparison the speech of Beena and Kattree is relatively complex and adequate to their situation, except when Kattree becomes involved with Geoffry. Mittelholzer's careful gradation of speech patterns is shown when Ramgollal argues with his daughters over spending money to buy him medicines:

"Ow bettay! me pore man, me tell you. Na able pay doctor. Bide lil' time bettay. Me tek quinine."

"Quinine alone na get you better. You want doctor's medicine. Doctor mus' sound you, see wha' wrong, den e' write paper, an dispenser mek up medicine." (p128)

However, by comparison with the speech of Baijan, their half-brother, now a wealthy rice-mill owner, Beena's and Kattree's limited country backgrounds are suggested. Baijan's speech is closer to that of the urban creoles, and has a rhythmic confidence markedly lacking in Beena and Kattree's speech. His greeting to his father illustrates these qualities:

"Ol' man, you lookin' meagre," said Baijan. "An' why you don' wear clothes? You shouldn't walk round naked so. You must buy cloth an' mek dhoti and shirt." (p141)

However, when Baijan takes Ramgollal and his half-sisters to the home of his prospective father-in-law, George Ramjit, a wealthy

rice, proprietor, Mittelholzer suggests that Baijan is ashamed of his creolese when he makes the introductions decorously, in a 'very stiff sort of tone.' In this episode Mittelholzer mocks the pretensions of the Indian merchant class, particularly the contrast between the attempted sophistication of Eliza Ramjit's piano playing, and the inability of her speech to match the aspiration:

"I going to play you annoder one, ... it nicer dan Hearts and Flowers... it call Backerollee. from de Tales of Hoffman." (p148)

Perhaps there is here an intrusion of Mittelholzer's prejudices as a bona fide European, in the supercilious ridiculing of Eliza.

But it is in Sosee's speech that the contradictions of experience are most acutely mirrored. Her speech hovers uncomfortably between the unself-conscious dialect of Beena and Kattree and the standard English of her own acquired family. Standard language patterns clash with dialect forms. The split loyalties and pretensions of Sosee's speech are exposed when, for instance, she greets the visiting doctor:

"Doctah Roy! How you do nah? We ain' see you dis long, long time." "Wha' wid one t'ing an' de odder. You hear Geoff-pass 'e exam, na?" (p21)

Within Weldon's family language divides, reflecting and exacerbating the tensions of race and culture. Sosee's snobbery towards her half-sisters, Beena and Kattree, expresses the insecurity of her position:

"We na wan' hear 'bout Beena and Kattree. Beena and Kattree not on your level of sociology."
" 'Sociology' ! Holy Sherrigas!" Geoffry whistled and looked at the ceiling. (p55)

The embarrassing nearness of the East Indian connection emerges sharply during a family meal, when the sounds of the drum beats at Jannee's curry-feed intrude in a disruptive, almost menacing way.

The tension comes to the surface when Jim, Geoffry's younger brother, is reproved for lapsing into dialect:

"Well, wha' you laughin' at?"
"Phew! " whistled Geoffry, looking pained. "Well, wha' you laughin' at? Heaven paint us red! What sort of English is that, Jim?"
"Oh, you go an' hide you' face," Jim grumbled. What you know 'bout English at all?"
"No, no, no," rebuked Big Man, frowning at Jim. "Your brother

is quite right to correct you. Your English is putrid. You mix too much with those confounded coolie boys around the place. Bad influence. Better see less of them in future."

Finally, it is in Geoffry's and Kattree's efforts to talk to each other that the huge gulf between the two sides of this family, bridged temporarily and irresponsibly by the act of sex, is made most explicit. At a loose end, Geoffry asks her for suggestions about what they should do:

"Only t'ing me, can say left to do is bathe in de canal."
 "Bathe in the canal....But my dear girl, has it struck you we lack bathing costumes? Or am I to assume that you don't care a damn whether we flaunt our persons in the nude or not?"

She laughed. "Me na understand dah big talk." (p.188)

Indeed, Kattree becomes so much of a non-person to Geoffry, that his long self analytical monologues are addressed, as she is aware, not to her but "her jumbie standing beside her, her pale yellow shadow." Geoffry remains selfishly unaware of what the affair may have meant to Kattree: the possibility that he, like his father for Sosee, may have appeared to hold out to her the prospect of escape from the precariousness of peasant existence. (p.189)

Mittelholzer's dissection of inter-racial relationships in this novel is blunt and pessimistic. Weldon's co-habitation with Sosee is vitiated by the very cultural and racial attitudes which had brought it about. He sees her "only as a kind of slave, a healthy female slave whom he had brought into his house to satisfy his sexual needs and to reproduce his kind." Geoffry's and Kattree's liaison, which remains limited to the sexual, leaves an unborn child which is not so much a pledge as a hostage to the future. (p.94)

Whatever the limitations of characterisation, particularly of the Indian peasant characters, Corentyne Thunder remains an authentic and unremittingly honest portrayal of the coastlands of Guyana and the divided lives of its inhabitants.

1946 - c. 1964.

The events of 1937 were effectively the death-knell of white political power in the Caribbean, though for various reasons white politicians maintained a measure of influence for some time yet. Though there was a brief respite in Trinidad when the 1939-1945 war was used as an excuse for delaying the implementation of the Moyne Commission recommendations for moves towards representative government and the introduction of full adult suffrage, when the first elections under full suffrage were held in 1946, white politicians, with the exception of Gomes, were decimated at the polls. In addition to the continuing growth of black racial consciousness, by 1946 Indian political and cultural assertion had also emerged. Gomes at this stage was a persistent and hostile critic of this awakened pride in continental India and upsurge of local religious and cultural activity, describing it as 'separatism' and 'fifth column'.⁷³ By the elections of 1950 the whites had come together in the Political Progress Group, lead by a now unashamedly conservative Albert Gomes, and by good organisation and money won two seats. Although the Butlerites won the largest bloc of seats in the legislature, a coalition of conservatives lead by Gomes was elected to the Executive and to a limited exercise of power. It was to be the last time that an elected European politician would hold such a position.⁷⁴

It was only a temporary reprieve for white political interests. By the elections of 1956 in Trinidad both Indians and Blacks were organised in mass political parties. What was now the Party of Political Progress Groups won only 5% of the vote and no seats. It was obvious then to most whites that any future political influence would have to come through joining one or other of the two main political parties. Some whites had already joined the black supported People's National Movement, and when its cabinet was formed after the elections it included two white creole business men.⁷⁵ Gomes claims

that whites who supported the P.N.M. did so out of distrust of the Indians who were seen as 'shifty oleaginous and untrustworthy...'⁷⁶ In truth such whites displayed much shrewder political judgement than did the majority who, mistakenly alarmed by the radical noises the P.N.M. were making, favoured an alliance with the Indians who were seen as a politically conservative force. In the words of one former white politician, 'These alarmed people were like wet fowls, running around an exposed yard vainly seeking shelter from the pelting rain.'⁷⁷ The child of this farm-yard marriage of convenience between the People's Democratic Party with its Hindu votes and the P.O.P.P.G. with its money, was the Democratic Labour Party. The D.L.P. proved a very unsatisfactory political coop for those white fowls. When the D.L.P. beat the P.N.M. in the Federal elections of 1958, the white involvement in the D.L.P. attracted bitter animosity from Dr. Williams, leader of the P.N.M. He threatened that if the whites tried to hold back the P.N.M. programme he would 'bulldoze the hills of St. Clair' (the main white residential area). In the run up to the 1961 elections Williams made the whites the target of many campaign speeches. He attacked their racism, their conservatism on social issues and accused them of using their economic power to sabotage Government policies. He told them that 'Massa Day Done.'⁷⁸ It must have been clear to the new leader of the D.L.P., Rudranath Capildeo, anxious to give his party a more radical image, that the whites were an electoral liability. After the D.L.P.'s defeat in the 1961 elections, most of the leading white politicians were expelled from the party. Thereafter, most whites either abandoned politics or joined the P.N.M., particularly when it became evident that it was pursuing free-enterprise capitalist economic policies and its social programme was only mildly reformist. Symbolically, after his defeat in the 1961 elections, Albert Gomes emigrated to the United Kingdom.⁷⁹

However, if whites in Trinidad lost political power during this period, both in Trinidad and Guyana their economic and managerial

power remained largely intact. Though whites met increasing competition in the professions and in the middle tiers of the civil service from the increasing number of well qualified Blacks and Indians, in the senior positions in business and in the state machine white power remained entrenched.⁸⁰

In British Guiana the rejection of white politicians and the removal of whites from positions of economic power and social influence was ultimately even more sweeping than in Trinidad. For a time though whites benefitted from a less advanced political constitution than that of Trinidad, from the dismissal of the radical multi-racial People's Progressive Party administration in 1953, and by playing on the subsequent racial divisions between Blacks and Indians much more astutely and cynically than had the whites in Trinidad. Although in the elections of 1953 none of the white conservatives who stood against the P.P.P. were elected, after the constitution was suspended, no fewer than seven of the ten members of the nominated executive of the interim Government were of European extraction.⁸¹

By the time the next elections took place in 1957, the P.P.P. had split along ethnic and ideological lines. Because the elections had shown Forbes Burnham, leader of the urban, African section of the party that he could only command a minority of votes, he looked to build an anti-P.P.P. coalition, and in particular attract European money and support. At first attempts at a merging of interests failed when Peter D'Aguiar, political leader of the Portuguese business community, overplayed his hand by demanding a virtual take-over of the P.N.C. executive in return for financial backing. Instead, D'Aguiar formed his own extreme right wing United Force party, which drew support from whites, some middle-class, mainly Christian, Indians and the Amerindians of the interior.⁸²

The height of the U.F.'s success in maintaining white political influence lasted from 1962 up to 1968. In 1962 D'Aguiar, extreme right wing business man, joined with Burnham, radical black socialist, in street demonstrations and a C.I.A. financed strike to topple

the P.P.P. Government. After the elections of 1964, fought under an imposed system of proportional representation which favoured a minority party like the U.F., the P.N.C. needed the U.F. to join it to form a coalition Government to replace the P.P.P. The coalition lasted until 1968 when new elections were held. This time the P.N.C. rigged the elections to ensure that it had an over-all majority and no further need of the U.F.'s support. Since then the economic, political and social power of Europeans in Guyana has completely gone, although D'Aguiar still flourishes as the largest private employer in Guyana, no doubt having made his 'arrangements' with the ruling party.

In the immediate post-war period though, Europeans still had a real political, economic and cultural stake in the Caribbean. In almost all cases, the fiction written by white or light-skinned creole authors during this earlier period reveals a sharp concern with the changes confronting the European community.

Edgar Mittelholzer's novel, A Morning At The Office (1950), set in Trinidad in 1947, appears to adopt a highly contradictory attitude towards such social changes. It expresses both a keen sense of the absurdities and injustices of a society whose hierarchy is racially determined, (and a highly critical view of the white and light-skinned elite) and a deep attachment to the European cultural heritage and a corresponding mistrust of Black and Indian culture. The contradiction is only apparent, since it expresses quite logically Mittelholzer's awareness that the system which nurtured white privilege could only be maintained if it absorbed the pressures for advancement from educated Blacks and Indians. Racial barriers had to come down. However, if the dominance of European culture was to survive, then its acquisition had to be prescribed for new entrants to the elite. Such a point of view was also logical for a 'swarthy' European like Mittelholzer whose own position (until he made him-

self independent through writing and emigration) was best guaranteed through the dominance of European cultural values rather than through rigidly applied skin-criteria. It is no accident that the most venomously drawn characters in Mittelholzer's fiction tend to be successful Indians who have not assimilated to the European norm.

A Morning At the Office , in a wholly different manner to de Boissiere's Crown Jewel, makes a quite explicit attempt to create a fictional world which does justice to the social and racial complexities of the real Trinidadian world. The structural aspects of the novel and their philosophical under-pinnings are discussed in the final section of this study; here I am concerned with examining the extent to which Mittelholzer's novel expresses a distinctively European point of view. My feeling that it does rests on four kinds of approach to the novel: considering the symbolic nature of the boundaries of the office; the way Mittelholzer uses the reflections of European characters to provide a European focus for events in the novel; the role of the absent poet, Arthur Lamby; and finally, the way the portrayals of characters like Miss Bisnauth, Jagabir and Horace Xavier dramatise Mittelholzer's racial and cultural biases.

Mittelholzer stated that one of his objectives in writing the novel was to nail the metropolitan fallacy 'that makes us out to be a backward, half-civilized people.'⁸⁴ This objective is partially realised through the way that Mittelholzer portrays the office as if it were a microcosm of Trinidadian society. Within it is mainly the 'civilised' minority of whites and the urbanised coloured middle-class who comprised, at the time of the novel's composition, less than 10% of the population. Within the office there is consensus on the pre-eminence of European values, however fallible many of the office's occupants are at upholding them. Outside the office is the threatening, disorderly world of the 'uncivilised' majority.

For instance, Mary Barker, the black cleaner, brings to the office tales of her troubles over her son, a steelbandsman, who has just been arrested for disorderly behaviour. The reader also learns of the complications of Mary's extra-legal marital life: both her sons have been abandoned by their different fathers, the second of whom has collapsed in an orgy of drinking, reckless living and venereal disease. This stereotype of the disorderly mores of the black urban proletariat is the dominant image of the world outside the office.

In the main, the contrast between the order of the office and the disorder outside it rests on cultural rather than racial grounds. Individual Europeans are as fallible and as flawed as anyone else, and Mittelholzer makes it quite plain that it is absurd that pigmentation should determine social opportunity and status. Several of the white expatriates are well aware of the unfairness of their privileges. Murrain, the chief accountant, is troubled by his idleness and the fact that Jagabir does his job for him but earns only one third of his salary. However, Murrain is shown as too morally supine to do anything about his guilt and rationalises his idleness as a whiteman's privilege. More directly, Mittelholzer uses the explosion of anger from Sidney Whitmer, Murrain's friend, an English estate overseer, as a means of excoriating a society which encourages some of its members to trade on the colour of their skin. Whitmer, unmarried, and thus permitted the luxury of flight, quits Trinidad in disgust. He writes:

The life on this estate is cramping my spirit. At first, the sensation of feeling like a king was novel and pretty good. Now I've got to hate this club... because I've come to see it for what it really is - a cheap tawdry institution infested with pretentious, shallow, local whites. 85

The ideal is clearly the kind of personal respect based on an appreciation of individual qualities such as the Indian Miss Bisnauth feels for her coloured friend, Arthur Lamby:

For Miss Bisnauth, Arthur was the best man in existence; the different bloods of which he was composed meant nothing to her. (p 75)

Yet if that is the ideal, Mittelholzer shows it constantly overwhelmed by either the depth or the pettiness of his characters' racial animosities. It is one of the qualities of the novel that while Mittelholzer very clearly regrets the consequences of racial feeling, he also shows a very sympathetic understanding both of those who want to preserve their racial exclusiveness and those who want to storm the barriers which others put up. In the character of Mrs. Hinkson, an olive-skinned, straight-haired lady from one of the best coloured families, Mittelholzer shows how a basic tolerance and kindness and distaste for prejudice can go hand in hand with a powerful gut repugnance for the idea of any kind of sexual contact with a black man. Similarly, Mittelholzer tells us that although Miss Bisnauth's parents are Christian and Westernised, they cannot accept the coloured Lamby as a prospective son-in-law. Mittelholzer's feelings are undoubtedly mixed. Miss Bisnauth's indifference to race is clearly the ideal, but he understands very well the depth of her parent's feelings:

It was as though this trait had continued subconsciously in them from the seed of their forbears, so that wherever there came a decision that involved a mixing of racial strains it rose to the surface. (p. 75)

Moreover, the novel frequently suggests that sexual feeling, when it falls outside the boundaries of race, becomes a threat to the order which Mittelholzer wants to preserve. It is black Horace Xavier's forbidden admiration for Mrs. Hinkson which is the engine of all the upsets of the morning. In contrast, Mr. Lorry's philandering after Mrs. Hinkson is portrayed as harmless; both belong to the same skin group. Mittelholzer echoes other Euro-creole writers in his portrayal of this topic.

However, if the novel is not particularly explicit about what the European civilised values are, it is clear enough about what the enemies of those values are: the cultural barbarism of the Assistant Accountant, Jagabir, and the rural world he still psychologically belongs to; the disorder of the black creole world which is symbolised by Mary's troubles and its racial resentments, brought into the office

by Horace Xavier. Even the attempt to infuse Euro-Trinidadian culture with African and Indian elements must be resisted. As Arthur Lamby, too obviously Mittelholzer's mouthpiece, tells Miss Bisnauth, Caribbean writers should work 'very nearly in the European tradition, for weren't the West Indies practically European in manners and customs.' He objects strenuously to the 'faddists' who were trying to 'dig up everything pertaining to Negro Folk lore in the West Indies.' Mittelholzer's own extra-fictional attitudes to Indian culture in the Caribbean were even more strongly held. He felt, evidently, that it had no place or contribution to make. He wrote acerbically of the revival of Indian festivals in the post-war period as evidence of a "mere fanatic group spirit" and of such festivals as having "no real significance to anyone outside of India," and that East Indian consciousness was incompatible with West Indian nationalism. ⁸⁶

Throughout the novel Mittelholzer insists that his notion of civilisation rests on cultural rather than racial criteria. Yet Mittelholzer's falling back on racial stereotypes in the description of Jagabir and the ambiguities in the portrayal of Horace Xavier, suggest that Mittelholzer was unable to separate the two. On the surface the portrayal of Edna Bisnauth would appear to contradict this observation. ⁸⁷ She is the novel's most fluid, developed and inwardly drawn character. In contrast, most of the other office staff are presented as types. There are times when she seems to carry the authorial point of view. Her judgements of the revelations of human absurdity at the office ('we ought to see ourselves with ironic eyes, but we should revere the humanity in us') is very much Mittelholzer's postscript to the novel. And we can be sure that she is the only character through whom we see others without distortion. Her ironic view of life remains benign:

....It was a tinkling laugh but restrained and entirely lacking in maliciousness, and it produced in her an effect as though she was emitting rays of good nature, vital and saturating - a good nature, the warmth and naivety of which gave the impression of surrounding her personality with an aura of insulation proof against the invasion of evil. For this particular instant she had a transfigured, spiritual air. (p67)

Mittelholzer's portrayal of Edna Bisnauth only just escapes being made too inconceivably sensitive and sympathetic, thanks to his gentle satire of her sincere but bad verse-writing and her slightly ludicrous vulnerability:

She wrote rapidly, then paused, biting her lower lip. The next two lines came.

'Oh, I wish it were mine, this flower,
Just to hold to myself for an hour...'

She stopped writing, breathing fast, her eyes half-closed, the lids quivering slightly. She did not seem at all ridiculous, for her mien was too earnest, too intensely sincere; there was almost anguish in her sincerity. (p73)

Because of his brown skin and straight hair and the skills he possesses, Jagabir ought to belong to the light-skinned middle class. He does not, because he still carries with him the stigma of his estate background, he is still a 'coolie': even the urbane Mrs. Hinkson detests him, and Mary, the black cleaner at the bottom of the office hierarchy, sustains solace from her contempt for Jagabir as a "cheap coolie". Jagabir himself is acutely conscious of how others feel about him. At first, Mittelholzer appears to suggest that the responses to Jagabir are prejudiced. When Miss Henery insists that, "It was not that she hated East Indians... But this man Jagabir made her sick in every way. His dissembling, his slyness, and prying habits, his sycophancy, his ingratiating..." she rehearses a list of stereotyped traits straight from the nineteenth century and the rhetoric of justifying indenture, and Mittelholzer adds authorially that Miss Henery's response is a conditioned one:

In her social sphere, a child was from an early age made to feel that the East Indians were inferior, contemptible people. They were dirty coolies, you learnt, ... they were low filthy people who wore dhotis and smelly rags.... lived in stinking tenement barracks, hoarded their pennies in mattresses. (p56)

However, everything that Jagabir does supports the stereotype. He is obsequious to his superiors, bullies Horace, is deceitful and is paranoically anxious to know everything that is going on. His hearing is 'preternaturally acute.' He is an intruder in the office, his awkwardness sharply imaged in the grease stain in his coat-pocket from the roti he always carries to work with him.

There are elements of sympathy in the portrayal; it is clear that in part Jagabir's behaviour is understandable because of his permanent insecurity, his fear of being sent back to a life of hardship and humiliation in the cane-fields. He himself feels that he does not belong in the white people's office. Yet on the whole the portrayal tells us more about Mittelholzer's cultural biases. Jagabir, the coolie, remains part of what Mittelholzer evidently perceived as an alien, uncivilized culture, whereas Miss Bisnauth, civilized and sensitive, has decisively rejected all aspects of her Indian past. She has the advantage, Mittelholzer implies, of parents who are wealthy, and despite a regrettable clannishness, "thoroughly Christian and Western in outlook..." and "spoke not a word of Hindustani". (p75)

If the separation between racial and cultural criteria is slightly blurred in the portrayal of Jagabir, there is a total eliding of the two in a later Mittelholzer novel, A Tale of Three Places (1957). During the first section of the novel, also set in Trinidad, there is an election campaign. In a country area there are two very different Indian candidates standing. Pujan, the caricature Indian, is the man of the people: illiterate, a "fat middle-aged, cold blooded money-shark," who uses strong-arm tactics ranging from bribery to murder to further his campaign. His opponent, Barransingh, is a male counterpart to Miss Bisnauth, an educated, Westernised lawyer, who is honest, idealistic and critical of Indian clannishness. The contrast between the physical attributes of the two characters

reinforces the evident cultural biases with racist venom. Pujan "had a roundly jutting paunch, and his clothes looked ill-fitting... He had bulging eyes that stared at the gathering in a dull fishy way. He had rather thick lips, and was a very dark Indian." ⁸⁷ Barransingh, on the other hand, looks intelligent: "It could have been a European face; only the heavy eyelids and the shape of the mouth seemed reminiscent of India." ⁸⁸ Corrupt Indian politicians certainly existed, but Mittelholzer does not seem able to conceive the possibility that to be culturally Indian could be compatible with having a civilised code of conduct and a morally sensitive inner life.

Such an elision between race and culture strikes me as being at the heart of what is equivocal in Mittelholzer's portrayal of the black office boy, Horace Xavier, in A Morning At the Office. Horace is shown as trying to escape from the disorder of the black proletarian world to achieve the security and order represented by the office. He despises the world of his upbringing for reasons which Mittelholzer would seem to endorse. Yet Mittelholzer also seems to be mocking Horace as a black man in white face. This is suggested by Mittelholzer's descriptions of Horace's attempts to become part of the white world: talcum-powdering his armpits to impress the 'bacra people', forcing himself to read unrewardingly through A Tale of Two Cities as "necessary for his betterment", and copying out a chunk of As You Like It as a love verse for the light-skinned Mrs Hinkson, for whom he has conceived an hopeless infatuation. Horace particularly admires her because she has "genuine white - people hair, not kinky hair straightened with a hot comb." ^(P56) At one level then Mittelholzer appears to satirize Horace's house-slave, mimic mentality, his embarkation on the 'weary road to whiteness'. Yet in the perspective of the novel as a whole, Horace's commitment to the values and culture of the European world can only be approved.

Why the contradiction? If one was convinced that Mittelholzer's motive was to show that Horace's pain came from his failure to be true to himself, then there would be nothing strange about the way he creates the character as both clown and tragic figure. It seems to me, however, that at the root of the portrayal of Horace as absurd lies the familiar nineteenth century stereotype of the imitative and emotionally childish negro. The contradictions in the creation of the character of Horace can be related to the world outside the novel. Universal suffrage meant that the political leadership of the country would inevitably be dominated by Black Trinidadians. In the office all are indeed agreed that Horace must "rise in the world". The white minority were in general aware that Blacks, more than any other group felt huge and legitimate grievances about their past and present disadvantages. In the novel Mittelholzer describes Horace's pain at the barriers facing him as a "burning in the chest as though grains of sand were slowly trickling through his lungs." Yet, as Gomes has described, it is difficult for those whose world was under threat to separate fear of those who resent your privileges from the old engrained racist attitudes which have always been the ideological justifications for those privileges. Thus, when Mittelholzer shows Horace exploding in anger, the impact is ambiguous. It suggests both an act of revolt, a discovery of pride ('Because I black? You all not better dan me!') and also that feared irruption of emotional disorder which threatens civilised life.

If the novel expresses an ambiguous attitude towards social change, there is no evasion of the fact that change was inevitable. Towards the end of the novel, down in the street below the office, there is a march of striking Black and Indian dockworkers. Even though the office only stops work briefly, the march provokes discussion and tentative identification.

... A Morning At the Office is by no means the work of objective sociological fiction (or "mere social document" (very necessary, how-

ever) in the guise of a novel", as Mittelholzer wrote to his friend A.J.Seymour.⁹⁰) that its author may have set out to write. It is much more interesting than that, dramatising the conflicts, ambivalences and perceptions of a 'swarthy' Euro-creole highly conscious of the social and cultural changes taking place in his contemporary world.

The discontinuities of Caribbean literary development are clearly seen in the absence for almost twenty years of any Guyanese novel which reflects the Indian presence after the publication of Mittelholzer's Corentyne Thunder. There were a number of white creoles writing short stories during the period,⁹¹ but with the exception of a few stories by Gordon Woolford, the son of a very senior civil servant, those few with Indian themes are of an offensively stereotyped nature. Even Woolford's stories represent something of a throw-back in style and approach to the Beacon period, with a pioneering air of self-consciously breaking into new territory.⁹² 'Suspicion'⁹³ broadcast in 1951, is fairly typical with its obtrusively plantation images. A silence does not last a few seconds but 'only the time it would take him to slash off the top of a canestalk with a sharp cutlass.' Even though the tone of the stories is sympathetic, stereotypes of jealousy and litigiousness still abound. One more interesting story, 'The Talk Fool'⁹⁴, deals with the reflections of a young Indian who is in prison for wrecking a bar after his girl friend has left him. It is more genuinely observant, but still seems derivative from one or two of Selvon's earliest stories, particularly in style. In all the stories Woolford's distance from his subject is evident. It is not surprising that the estate story which registers as most authentic in feeling, 'A Matter of Conscience,'⁹⁵ focuses on the position of a white overseer oppressed by his sense of separation from the Indian workers who surround him.

This theme of white isolation in the midst of an alien and threatening mass of Indian plantation workers is the central motif of Christopher Nicole's novel White Boy (1966). Kenneth Ramchand's phrase, "...the terrified consciousness"⁹⁶ of the White West Indian, is nowhere more appositely applied than to this novel. It is a crude pot-boiler with the familiar Nicole ingredients of pubescent sex, violence and mutilation, all wrapped up in an overtly racist and reactionary ideology.⁹⁷ Published only a couple of years after the worst violence between the Afro and Indo-Guyanese communities, the novel strikes me as being deliberately provocative about the nature of Afro-Indian relations. Nevertheless, the novel almost certainly represents very accurately the feelings and viewpoints of a sector of the European population, people perhaps like Nicole's father who was a senior police officer. The undisguised message of the novel as a whole is that the non-European majority, in particular the Indians, are biologically and culturally unfit for the responsibility of representative government.

In White Boy, Nicole caricatures the anti-colonial movement of the immediate post-war years. In particular, the career of the novel's chief Indian character, Johny Sikram, is written as a tasteless though carefully inaccurate parallel to the career of Dr Cheddi Jagan.⁹⁸ Sikram, like Jagan, has an impoverished estate background from which he escapes via education; both attend overseas universities, and become involved with Marxist ideas. Both marry white Marxist wives, destined to play formidable roles in the political movement. However, though the novel mimics history, the superficiality and one-sidedness of its treatment of the period, and the hysteria of some of the images, suggest only the bitterness and the fear of those whose material interests were threatened by the political ferment in the sugar belt and the likely consequences of independence.⁹⁹

The main source of the terror is the sullen and savage mob of estate 'coolies' who are described as a menacing 'tide of treacle' as they besiege the estate house during a strike. They exist only as an undifferentiated mass out of which slip the shadowy figures who murder and mutilate two whites. At first Sikram, educated and westernised, is characterised as very different from the estate mob. Later, however, Sikram is presented as no more trustworthy than his barbarous followers. As his former headmaster, a European, explains, because of his background Sikram has 'an open mind on right and wrong.' Since Sikram has enjoyed a western education, we can only assume that his indifference to moral issues is an ethnic trait.

Like many of the novels described in this chapter, this too has as its centre of consciousness a white boy, Rupert Longdene. He has a brief political involvement with Sikram, his childhood friend, but when Sikram's movement threatens the security of his class, he discovers that his multi-racial ideals have been an illusion, a misplaced liberal sense of guilt. By the end of the novel Longdene is only too pleased to be white and withdraws totally from his involvement with the Black and Indian world.

In White Boy, as I have argued, the issues are cut-and-dried in an ideologically motivated fashion. However, that does not mean that they are not genuine issues, as Ian McDonald's novel, The Hummingbird Tree (1969) shows. In my view no other novel discussed in this chapter deals quite as honestly with the problems, in George Lamming's phrase, of daring to descend the ladder of racial privilege, or deals as sensitively with the theme of the white child growing up amidst the contrary attractions of the white colonial womb and the larger adopted world outside. What is also notable about this novel is that although it is narrated in the first person by the white boy, the Indian children who are involved with him do not exist merely as aspects of his experience, but as

fully realised characters whose perceptions of, and responses to situations, exist independently and sometimes criticise the values of the 'I' narrator.

Briefly, the outward events of McDonald's life are to be found portrayed in the parallel life of the novel's narrator, Alan Holmes. Like Alan, McDonald is the son of a plantation manager who was also the director of a number of grower's combines.¹⁰⁰ It seems probable, given that a good many incidents in the novel also feature in McDonald's poems,¹⁰¹ that parts, at least, of the novel are autobiographical.

The novel describes two phases in the relationship between Alan Holmes and Kaiser and Jaillin, the Holmes's young Indian servants, and his response to the world they inhabit. During his childhood friendship with them, Alan is emotionally suspended between the safety of the comfortable dull world of his parents and the exciting but bafflingly unfamiliar world that Kaiser and Jaillin introduce him to. The childhood friendship ends when Mr. Holmes discovers the awakening of sexual interest between his son and Jaillin and dismisses the Indians from his household. The friendship has, however, been more deeply betrayed by Alan's fastidious sense of superiority and his ready submission to his father's view of the world.

When, as a young man about to leave Trinidad for University abroad, Alan meets Kaiser and Jaillin again, much has changed. An older Alan, the narrator, looking back, sees that an 'unthinking racial distaste' had grown in him 'out of sight', and when he sees Kaiser again, all he can see of his former hero is 'a little Indian commercial clerk. He was shallow, poorly educated, and he liked his rum.'¹⁰² But Kaiser and Jaillin have also changed. Kaiser has left the village and converted to Catholicism because it will help his career. Jaillin has turned to working as a belly-dancer and sleeps with a Syrian whom she hates. At the time of meeting the two Indians again,

Alan is experiencing a conflict between loyalty to the correct but obsolete traditions of his family (a 'sad, helpless, race-remembered pity and nostalgia') and an impulse to commit himself to the changing world, a 'West Indies growing in a new world and way of life.' Meeting Kaiser and Jaillin is a test of those divergent pulls, and it nudges him in the direction of the new. The old relationship is, of course, not recoverable. Between the child and the man is the passing of innocence.

At the heart of the novel is a concern with perception: with the contrast between Alan's half-innocent seeing as a boy when he saw Kaiser as his hero because 'he was better than I in all the things that mattered' and the race-conscious young man who sees only the shallow Indian clerk. However, the world of childhood has been no uncorrupted Eden. Even then Alan's relationship with Kaiser and Jaillin is complicated by his contrary impulses of 'opinion' and feeling. He feels an intense boyish love for Jaillin, but her frank unaffectedness also provokes in him thoughts of disgust:

Sometimes I did not bear to look at her lest she did something ugly, like picking her nose or spitting on the ground. Vulgar, my mind kept taunting me, vulgar. (p 97)

It is this corruption of Alan's feeling by opinion which makes him so cravenly betray the friendship to his father:

'All right, Dad. I was getting not to like them anyway. They're too coarse, aren't they?'

The contradictions in Alan's feelings towards Kaiser and Jaillin are part of a larger confusion which his starkly discordant impressions of Indian village life bring him. ¹⁰³ Whilst he is initially attracted by a world which is, as in the cricket match or the fete, so much more vivid and energetic in its pleasures than the dull, decorous pursuits of his home, McDonald shows that Alan's split consciousness is not capable of absorbing the totality of the village. It is a world where scarlet ibises "like barbs of blood in the sky" fly over the stinking carcass of a pot-hound stoned to death. And at the fete, before the cockfight, the profane gaiety

of the rum-drinking, dice playing and cursing mingles with the strange spirituality of the old Indian drummers:

When they began to beat, thrumming, thrumming, rapid and mysteriously low, the crowd quietened. The beat spread out and captured silence.... Then the first time I heard the Indian drum, the Indian chant so close, I just suddenly felt sad about the whole world. And I felt vastly afraid, like those nights when I dreamt of the terrible, exact moment of my death. I felt that the whole party around me was chilled by sadness and fear...

Old Boss must have noticed something because he gave a signal brief as a wink and the two shadowy old men cut their chanting off so quickly that it still seemed to hang in the air for seconds afterwards, as if surprised at its recall. The old men tapped their drums twice for some reason. Then they hurried back into the hut, their red sleeves flapping in the wind. I never saw them again.

The old men had come and gone so quickly and had impressed something so strange, either too evil or too beautiful to grasp firmly, that their visit seemed exactly like a dream. (p. 93)

What Alan hears is a sermon on time; time which will make his boyhood Eden pass and take him into a world where his experiences will drive a wedge between himself and Kaiser and Jaillin. Above all, what time takes is the first richness of perception.

It is part of the honesty of the novel that there is no attempt to impose a false resolution of the division between Alan and his former friends. Time cannot be recovered. On the estate Alan could both enjoy the privileges of being white and enter the Indian world. His relationship with Jaillin could exist for a time without an awareness of what, historically such relationships invariably were: casual, exploitative and illicit. Now each has to accept Old Boss's truism that 'people to 'come people mus' kill a chile.' Moreover, although Alan has begun to look for a place in the West Indian world, his place in it will be radically different from Kaiser's and Jaillin's.

However, McDonald does not abandon the contact between white and Indian to pessimistic despair. There is much that Alan, if he learns to look at it with an enlarged vision, is shown to have gained from the contact. McDonald does not minimise the difficulties of that process. Although Alan is shown to be gratefully aware that

his boyhood experiences of the village have given him something not available to others of his 'high class' world, it is also clear that Alan has been unable to integrate his responses of 'pity, fear, hatred and love' to the harsh energies of the village. There is also a greater difficulty, the temptation for the white creole to become a sentimentalist about this world, or a collector of experiences taken from other people's lives. McDonald makes the point that Alan's recounting of Kaiser and Jaillin as 'wild creatures,' who knew how to live " to his new white friends, treats the experience in the same way as Mrs. Holmes treats the carved mango seeds which she displays among her collection of treasures:

They had been made by a Chinese girl in the St Ann's Mental Hospital, and my mother picked them up for sixpence at a sale there; the girl cried and shouted when they went and they took her away for bad behaviour. (p.31)

McDonald also explores the refining processes of art as a means of coming to terms with the village experiences. There is, I think, the implication that the vision and practice of the artist is one possible means of integration into the Afro-Indian world. Again, McDonald treats this possibility with great honesty. Art appears to have the capacity to resolve the tensions experienced by Alan. There is for instance the picture of the cockfight inlaid in the parquetry which adorns Alan's house, which was:

designed in a pattern of two fierce cocks in a fight. They were meeting in the air, their dangerous spurred feet flashing at each other.... They were magical... one or two of their feathers had escaped from them in a flurry and hung about like little red new moons. (p.30)

Clearly, art has the power to purify and make permanent, but it is also evident from Alan's response to a real cockfight he sees in the village, that art can both diminish and falsify the harsher realities of experience. The real cockfight is both uglier and more emotionally demanding than art. It seems to Alan that when 'Red feather flapped his wings and crowed, his wings were hot bronze. I thought if anyone touched them he would burn his fingers.' The fight leaves

(p.29)

Alan almost 'tearful with the tension and fierce cruelty.' It is the same point about the seductions of art that McDonald makes in his 'Colour Poem':

I make colour-poems of an easy choosing,
 Trying to forget, forget, forgive.
 I praise the artist, I praise the sun,
 I praise black,
 I praise white,
 Colour-poems easy, soothing.

Nevertheless, it is the vision of the artist or the child, the former an attempt to recapture the richness of the latter, which Old Boss, Kaiser's and Jaillin's grandfather, urges on Alan when he visits the old man before his departure abroad:

I say the whole worl' is only a dam' little morsel of a place. But besides Trinidad is a smaller place even. It all close up on itself, an' you have to look out fo' that with the bigges' eyes you have. When you lose you' firs' richness what you have to expan' to? You min' get cheaper, Trinidad get cheaper, the worl' get cheaper. You have to fight that like hell. (p. 181)

As in most of the novels described in this chapter, it is the predicament of the white person which has the privileged focus of interest in The Humming-Bird Tree. However, in a distinguished way, it goes much further than any other novel with a similar theme in creating Indian characters who are fully realised. In the first place, Kaiser and Jaillin are carefully placed within a recognisably authentic village background. It is an observant and unromanticised picture which records both the sense of community and the strains placed upon it by over-population, the decline of sugar estate work and the consequent emergence of a disaffected youth and a breakdown in loyalties resulting from the drift towards the towns. Few novels though have communicated more sensuously what is rich and vital in the peasant world. Secondly, by using an 'I' narrator who is scrupulously honest in recording not only his own reactions, but also those of the people around him, to events (including his own actions) McDonald establishes Kaiser, Jaillin and Old Boss as alternative and independent points of view in the novel.

As children, Kaiser and Jaillin impress on Alan a first awareness that his beliefs and assumptions are not necessarily accepted by others. Whether it is in ridiculing the Holmes's absurd expatriate practice of importing costly English apples when local fruits abound, or in challenging Alan's assumption of the superiority of his Catholic faith, Kaiser provokes Alan to begin questioning his relationship to his world. Kaiser tells him:

You only saying, boy. Long, long ago in Mother India we had we God. We is holy people oui!... You know what you call by a whole lot o' people in the worl'... infidel, dat is what! (p105)

And in teasing Alan by calling him a "white coolie" because he has never set foot outside Trinidad, Kaiser and Jaillin expose the limits of his commitment to them. 'What! Don't be mad! I'm white, don't you see that?' he explodes when they suggest that he might have some Indian blood. Similarly, McDonald uses Jaillin to comment on Alan's evasion of the racial realities. When they are swimming together in the sea at night, Jaillin tells him of his skin:

'I barely see it is white at all, you could be a Indian.'
'No. We both could be anything we wanted. Let's pretend we're purple or green or blue. Let's pretend.'
'You really chupid, boy, you mek me laugh.' (p.130)

Thirdly, Kaiser and Jaillin are portrayed as coherent characters who develop in the novel. We are as much aware of Jaillin's response to their early adolescent affection as Alan's, and McDonald handles very sensitively the way Jaillin's feelings change from the tentative, vulnerable responses of the child to the proudly independent contempt of the young woman she has become by the end of the novel. It has been Jaillin who has been most conscious of the cultural and class divide between herself and Alan, and who had made most effort to bridge it. She is consequently acutely sensitive to the reasons for Alan's hesitations and minor treacheries. In contrast, Katre in Mittelholzer's Corentyne Thunder is most implausibly undiscerning of Geoffrey's motives. Jaillin tells Alan:

I well know what you want to say tho'. You think I don' hear what you' 'custom saying all the time? They not nice to play wid. They vulgar. That is the word: all we vulgar. Everything we do is that word, eh! (p94)

Again, Kaiser is portrayed with a complexity which goes well beyond the one-dimensional stereotypes of most of the Indian male characters discussed earlier in this chapter. A mixture of contradictions, Kaiser is anxious to please Alan, both because he likes him and because he is white, but is also very prickly when he feels that Alan has treated him as an inferior: "Go to hell, eh! You white people too scornful boy"^(p10). Kaiser is, as we have seen, proud of his background, respectful to his grandfather, Old Boss, yet is also prepared to give up his culture for "getting on" and reject Old Boss. Kaiser can see acutely what are the prevailing values in the wider Trinidadian society: "The only dam' loyalty is loyalty fo' you' own self. What I have to do wid cutting cane in the dam' mud all the time!"^(p152).

The fact that McDonald uses an 'I' narrator who records but does not comment over much on his behaviour, has led some critics to think that McDonald views the separation of Alan Holmes from Kaiser and Jaillin as inevitable and at best the occasion of mild regret.¹⁰⁵ This would, I think, be a true reading of several of the novels discussed in this chapter, in their treatment of the process of white contact and then withdrawal from the Indian world (in some, of course, the narrative is outrightly cautionary) but it strikes me as a misreading of McDonald's tone and fictional rhetoric. It seems quite clear to me that the novel as a whole poses a value system which is different from and highly critical of Alan Holmes's temporizations; if Alan Holmes does not express any great pain over what occurs, this is not only in character, but illustrates McDonald's perception of how easily a comfortable character like Alan becomes socialised into the prejudices of his clan. One fairly obvious clue to the novel's loyalties is found in the contrasting characterisations of Alan's father and Old Boss. Alan's father is a grey, dull figure whose kindness and fairmindedness are limited

to his own clan. His chief bequest to Alan is an 'unthinking racial distaste' whereas Old Boss, despite his tendency to moralise ('When a donkey shit in the road he ready to draw a conclusion fo' you right away,' Kaiser complains), is presented as having a genuine wisdom, far-sightedness and racial generosity.¹⁰⁶ It is from him that Alan derives some understanding of his experience.

Postscript: The White Creole in the Post-Independence Period.

Ian McDonald's The Hummingbird Tree leaves its white narrator at the end of the novel thinking 'of the next day and what to do.' The time is the early 1950's; what that next day has been for white creoles in Trinidad and Guyana has depended both on their own commitments and on national developments beyond their control. In Trinidad, under a free-enterprise capitalism, the white business and technocratic elite has fared exceptionally well.¹⁰⁷ Though there are individuals who have made their commitments to radical politics, to intermarriage, to stepping off the top rungs of George Lamming's metaphorical ladder, it is clear that there is still a white creole group which is socially and racially cohesive, 'though infiltrated by some elements from below,'¹⁰⁸ in the words of one of its number. It is a group which is no nearer to the lives of the mass of the Afro-Indian population than its parents had been. Politically, its interests have been well served by the P.N.M., whose own elite has become increasingly light-skinned. Even the 1970 Black Power revolt, when a few whites were physically assaulted and some properties damaged, was only a temporary shock. To the extent that a magazine like People¹⁰⁹ gives a true reflection of the elite and its self-perceptions, it is evident that it has become increasingly Americanised in its life-style, concerned with the acquisition of glossy real-estate, consumer durables and the celebration of material success. Whether other sections of the population will be content to allow this group to remain perched on top of the ladder, in a future when

social tensions are certain to grow as the oil revenues decline sharply, must be doubtful.

As part of a consuming elite, white creoles have made decreasing contributions to the serious arts in Trinidad. There is some diletantish poetry and one or two calculatedly 'naughty' novels of philandering among the upper class whites and light-skinned creoles and expatriate visitors.¹¹⁰ However, as in most generations a handful of whites have stepped outside their group to make a personal contribution to the cause of social justice or to a radical conception of the arts. For instance, the tradition of individual commitment has been carried on by a man like J.D.Humphrey, a successful and wealthy architect who has been preaching for the last twenty years an idealistic blend of Utopian socialism, universal brotherhood and the abolition of money under the slogan of 'Trinityism',¹¹¹ and has been actively involved with a variety of radical causes.¹¹² Other whites with reformist consciences have tended to be involved with a mainly middle-class intellectual movement, the Tapia House Group. In the arts there are individuals like Christopher Laird, who edited and produced Kairi, one of the most innovative literary magazines yet produced in Trinidad, between 1974-1978. Both in his criticism and in his poetry, Laird has written on subjects which assert an identification with the folk-cultures of African and Indian.¹¹³ His championship of the fiction of Sonny Ladoo and his own poem 'Hossay'¹¹⁴ both show a sensitivity to the cultural displacement of Indian culture from the mainstream of Trinidadian sensibility.

In Guyana, the racial and economic policies of the present Government have prompted the remnants of the white elite, along with many other Guyanese, to withdraw to the more welcoming shores of North America. Those few whites who still have positions of power and influence have them because they possess skills the regime cannot do without. Ian McDonald, for instance, is the Administrative Director of the state-owned Guyana Sugar Corporation, and one of the hand-

ful of people in Guyana who maintain some commitment to the survival of the arts. His Selected Poems was published in Guyana in 1983.

Whether white creoles will contribute to Caribbean imaginative writing in any major way in the future must be doubtful; nevertheless, though much of the fiction discussed in this chapter is illustrative of the prejudices of the group, there are at least three works, Mittelholzer's Corentyne Thunder and his A Morning At The Office and McDonald's The Hummingbird Tree, which deserve recognition for the quality of their attempts to portray something of the region's cultural complexity and, in particular, the place of whites and Indians within it.

Competitors or Allies? Images of the Indian Presence in
Afro-Caribbean Fiction.

With the exception of perhaps three novels, George Lamming's Of Age and Innocence (1958), Wilson Harris's The Far Journey of Oudin (1961) and Earl Lovelace's The Dragon Can't Dance (1969), most Afro-Caribbean fiction dealing with the Indian presence has been limited in form to a largely unreflective autobiographical naturalism. It has, for reasons argued in Chapter Three, tended to reflect the general ethnocentricity of Afro-Caribbean attitudes towards the Indians, tended to be symptomatic rather than analytical of the divisive forces of cultural pluralism and failed utterly to provide any imaginative perception of the Indian presence as part of the region's resources. On the contrary, Indian characters in Afro-Creole novels tend to be stereotyped, peripheral to the novel's action and often marginal to the Indian community itself.

Some of the social reasons for this state of affairs have already been discussed in Chapter Two; in particular the way in which the historical division of labour in the nineteenth century, which led to Africans becoming mainly urban and Indians mainly rural, provided the basis for a residential segregation which still exists today. As a result, except at the fringes of both communities, intimate social relations have been rare and Afro-Caribbeans in particular have had little real knowledge of Indian life. Few even now would disagree with V.S. Naipaul's complaint that 'Few non-Indians know much about the Indians, except that they live in the country, work on the land, are rich, fond of litigation and violence.' Afro-Caribbean novelists appear to have been little more familiar with the Indian community. Where there was contact it has tended to be with more creolised urban Indians, such as the fairly prosperous class of small merchants or shop-keepers or the depressed 'coolie' lumpenproletariat. Very rarely do Afro-Creole writers appear to have had close contact with the rural, Hindu core of the

Indian community. For instance, in Arnold Apple's quasi-fictional autobiography, Son of Guyana (1973), the portraits of Indians are of the beggars, street-cleaners, porters and hawkers who were forced by poverty and the hostility of the Afro-Creole working class to live in the most squalid ghettos of Georgetown. Rural Indians are distant figures in a landscape seen from a rapidly passing car. As a child, Indians were either exotic bogey-men of maternal threat, or the butt of cruel persecution by negro street children.² Even in an author whose background was rural, such as Michael Anthony, it tends to be a countryside sparsely populated by Indians, or by Indians who are creolised, like Mr. Gidharee, the provisions grower married to a Creole in Green Days By The River (1967).

As this chapter will show, Afro-Creole attitudes towards Indian culture have been essentially Euro-centric, seeing it as backward, barbarous and irrelevant to national development. There have been several reasons for such inherited attitudes. Firstly, it is clear that until Afro-Caribbean groups began to start revaluing the African resources of their own culture, there was no inclination to regard the Indian presence as an additional non-European cultural resource. Secondly, there is some truth in V.S. Naipaul's charge that the Afro-Caribbean has had a limiting preoccupation with the European world, or, as Wally Look Lai expressed it, an irritation with the Indian presence as an intrusion into a private Black-White quarrel.³ For instance, one looks in vain in the pages of the Guyanese magazine Kyk -over-Al, produced between 1945 and 1962, for any reflection of the Indian presence, despite the journal's aim to 'be an instrument to help to forge a Guyanese people, to make them conscious of their intellectual and spiritual possibilities...'⁴

Because of its naturalistic 'reflectiveness', most Afro-Caribbean fictional treatments of the Indian presence tend to echo the dominant political attitudes of their group towards Indians. There have been periods when Indians have been seen as potential allies, and periods

when they have been seen as competitors. In order to understand changes in the fictional image it is necessary to trace the relationship between Africans and Indians in an historical context. Without it, it might appear that Afro-Caribbean attitudes, and their reflection in fiction, were determined solely by racial considerations. This is simply not true. I have used four approximate and overlapping temporal divisions in describing the unfolding of Afro-Indian relations: the formative nineteenth century period, the colonial years before a significant measure of internal self-government was achieved, the years of political competition leading up to independence, and the post-independence period when both Trinidad and Guyana have been dominated by Afro-Caribbean governments facing Indian opposition.

Although no Afro-Caribbean fiction appeared in the nineteenth century, it is impossible to understand later attitudes without briefly noting the response of Afro-Creoles to indentured Indian immigration. Contemporary European commentators were inclined to see Creole hostility as simple xenophobia and racial chauvinism:

The native looks upon the heathen Indian as an interloper or intruder...⁵

...the dislike of the negroes...to the introduction of the emigrants from either India or Madeira is very great, and they take every opportunity to insult and deride the newcomer.... laughed at them and their scanty costumes.⁶

Day also notes that the Blacks in Trinidad ill-treated the Indians and 'defrauded them of their small gains and grossly insulted them into the bargain.'⁷

Such hostility had real roots, though Creoles mistook the weapon for the wielder, because indentured immigration affected the black Creoles in three significant ways: in their ambitions to become an independent peasantry; in the general level of wages received by the Black estate labourer and in the extent to which the costs of immigration were shifted from the planters to the wider Creole population. In general Creoles in Guyana were more severely affected than Creoles in Trinidad.

In both countries the planters and the limited companies which succ-

eeded them, attempted to frustrate freed Africans' ambitions for land by deliberately repressive land-sale policies, designed to ensure that Africans would remain dependent on seasonal plantation labour. In Guyana they succeeded because the ex-slaves did not possess the resources to undertake the drainage of the land they settled on.⁸ In Trinidad there were no such major geophysical problems and Africans by-passed official policy by large scale squatting on unused private and Crown lands and resisted the authorities' attempts to evict them.⁹ Nevertheless, in both countries Indian immigration enabled the plantocracy to continue to monopolise the best land resources. In Rawle Farley's words: 'The year which ushered in the renewed hegemony of the sugar planter, saw the decline of the free-holder and the villager.'¹⁰

Because of the artificial increase in labour supply, the planters were able to depress the wages of those Afro-Creoles who remained in the sugar industry. Indeed, by the 1870's in Guyana and the 1890's in Trinidad, the planters created a deliberate labour surplus, despite which immigration continued until 1917. There are reports of high levels of unemployment amongst rural Creoles in the later nineteenth century. Investigators for the government of British Guiana found in 1873 that there were black people on West Coast Demerara, 'crying and begging for work.'¹¹

Particularly in Guyana, the sugar oligarchy was able to shift a large part of the very substantial costs of financing immigration from themselves onto the Creole population. They increased the taxes on imported food-stuffs and other necessities and removed an existing tax on the export of sugar, rum and molasses.¹² In Trinidad, a Crown Colony where the planters had no equivalent legislative power, from 1853 onwards, the costs of immigration were met partly by the planters and partly out of public revenues. There was, however, no increase in tax on vital imported food-stuffs.

Nevertheless, the Creole working populations of both countries were very much aware that they were forced to pay for a labour policy cont-

rary to their interests. In Guyana in 1881 over five hundred black Creoles met to express their feeling that 'since the introduction of coolie immigrants...the creole people were not fairly dealt with.'¹³ In Trinidad, a representative of the Trinidad Workingmen's Association told the Sanderson Commission of 1910 that Indian immigrants should be repatriated if unemployment worsened and that the creole labouring classes were being 'reduced to destitution by a system of state-aided labour.'¹⁴

Unfortunately, most black Creoles directed their hostility towards the Indians not those who had brought them; plantation managers were able to boast:

They do not intermix. That is of course, one of our great safeties in the Colony when there has been any rioting...If the coolies attacked me, I could with confidence trust my negro friends for keeping me from injury.¹⁵

In a strike on Lusignan estate (East Coast Demerara) in 1912, Negro factory workers were armed to crush the Indian strikers,¹⁶ and in all industrial disturbances, which mainly involved Indians, the rank and file of the para-military police force used to break strikes was predominantly Black.

It was during the indenture period that the stock of African-held stereotypes about Indians developed. Two in particular have some historical foundation. One was the ascription of 'lowness' to Indians because of their indentured status and because they performed the most hated drudgeries of plantation labour. It was reported that as late as 1873, when there were many free Indians in the colony, an Indian travelling the roads was liable to be accosted by the Negro taunt of, 'Slave, where is your free paper?'¹⁷ Indentured Indians were compelled to carry tickets of leave if they were absent from their estates. Two novels in particular, C.L.R. James's Minty Alley and Merle Hodge's Crick-Crack Monkey, reveal that those Black attitudes of superiority persisted into the twentieth century.

The second stereotype was the notion of Indian competitiveness, the potent fear (that grew as Indians began to move off the estates) that

through their habits of 'slavish' industry, 'miserly' thrift and 'clannish' communal solidarity, the Indians would come to dominate the Creole population. One expression of this fear was the emergence of the figure of the 'coolie-jumbie' who appeared to Blacks near burial grounds, showing long white teeth and demanding to know the time. The persistence of such fears is illustrated in the words of an old black woman to the researcher Leo Depres in the early 1960's:

Me very fearful of de cooliemán taking over de whole country. Dey band themselves together to get all we own. Dey so wicked I want to cry. I cry for me children. I see the terror - the spirit of their activities. Dey rent we land and take it away. Dey loan black people money and take all dey own. Dey smart people, you know. Cunning. Dey work cheap, eat cheap, and save and save. Black people can't punish themselves so. If we punish ourselves like cooliemán, we slaves again. 18

Behind those fears one can see an image of the Indian like the demonic grasping character of Ram, the money-lender in Harris's The Far Journey Of Oudin.²⁰

In actuality, particularly in Guyana, this creole fear of competition had a concrete basis in the period before the bauxite industry and the expansion of urban employment provided black Creoles with greater opportunities for non-rural labour. Initially though, Indians moving off the estates tended to gravitate towards existing African villages. At the same time younger Blacks were drifting away from the villages, though not with permanent intentions, to engage in migratory occupations such as gold and diamond prospecting, balata bleeding and woodcutting. However, they regarded village lands as something to fall back on, particularly in old age. By contrast the Indians wanted land immediately, and were able to use it more effectively for rice-farming, with the aid of their ability to organise the the kinship network as a semi-corporate economic unit. Tensions rose when formerly African owned lands passed into Indian hands, perhaps when former Black owners failed to pay rates. The 6th Annual Conference of village chairmen, held in 1906, noted that villages were 'passing from the race to which they originally belonged.'²¹ One expression of the resentment that Indians suffered was an epidemic of praedial larceny by Blacks.

This kind of conflict occurred to a far lesser extent in nineteenth century Trinidad; with less pressure on land resources Africans and Indians were less likely to come into direct competition. Nevertheless, at the end of the century there is some evidence of Creole resentment of competition from Indians moving off the estates and from small-island immigrants, in a period of high unemployment.²²

However, the existence of communal hostilities should not be overstressed. For many Africans and Indians in both Trinidad and Guyana, mutual indifference based on separate functions in the colonial economy was the norm for relationships until the mid-twentieth century at least.

Yet there were also areas of more positive contact in the nineteenth century. Contemporary commentators noted with disgust that some African creoles had begun to participate in Indian religious ceremonies. In Guyana, Bronkhurst feared that rural creoles were becoming 'Hinduized and Muhammedanized. They actually take a lively part and interest in all the heathenish ceremonies they see performed around them.'²³ Whites were most alarmed by Creole participation in Tadjah processions. Initially they had been occasions of inter-racial hostility, but by the 1870's young creoles began to take part. There were even reports of a Creole Tadjah procession on the Essequibo coast in 1873.²⁴ The alarm was two-fold in origin. The missionaries feared a loss of their hold on the black population, but the civil authorities feared that the processions might provide the opportunity for Indians and Creoles to unite in anti-colonial disturbances. In Trinidad, an ordinance in 1884 forbade Creoles to take part in Tadjah processions. Even so, the report on the large-scale rioting which followed a procession in San Fernando later that year, noted that amongst the marchers were 'creoles dressed as coolies.' When troops opened fire on the procession it was to prevent Indian and Creole marchers from entering the city and linking up with 'disaffected' Creole 'roughs and blackguards' who were waiting to join them inside the town.²⁵

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the diversification

of both the Guyanese and the Trinidadian economies began to take Africans and Indians, for a time, out of competition in employment. More far reachingly, these economic developments saw the emergence of a Black working class with a proletarian ideology and a middle-class of Coloureds and some Blacks which was closely attached to European cultural values. The formation of these groups was the motive force both behind the political developments in Trinidad and Guyana which took place from the 1920s onward and behind the growth of new politically and culturally defined Afro-Caribbean attitudes towards the Indian presence.

The new Coloured and Black middle class was based on the expanding public services (banks and private offices tended to offer work only to light-skinned Coloureds) and the small number of Afro-Caribbean professionals. Since the position of this class depended on their ability to imitate as closely as possible a European cultural model, they tended to see the Indians as a threat to those values. More significantly, because the Black middle-class failed to make any inroads into industry or commerce up to the time of political independence, they jealously hung onto those areas where they had gained access. When he visited Guyana in 1929, C.F. Andrews remarked the 'undercurrent of apprehension and strong racial feeling' amongst middle class Negroes, and predicted a 'racial clash between East Indians and Africans of a very painful nature.' Informants told him that clashes were likeliest to occur when Indians began to seek employment in teaching, the lower civil service and clerical posts in Georgetown. This consciousness was expressed in the formation in the first decades of this century of ethnic middle-class organisations of an embryonically political nature, such as the League of Coloured People in Guyana. There was also a similarly motivated East Indian Association. In Guyana, Afro-Creoles had, up to 1928, certain political privileges to protect. Even under a severely restricted franchise, middle class Africans and Coloureds were in 1915 62.7% of the electorate, compared to only 6.4% for Indians. In the Combined Court there were five Negro members to only one Indian.

The racial assertiveness of the Afro-Guyanese middle class can be seen in the literary culture of the period. N.E.Cameron's anthology of poetry published in 1931, is specifically concerned with displaying a Negro tradition of verse in Guyana, in order to answer the detractors 'of the race'.²⁸ Despite claiming to be a national collection, the anthology did not include any of the verse already written at that time, of equal quality, by Indians such as the Ruhomons, Chinapen and Ramcharitar-Lalla. Significantly, an Anthology of Local Indian Verse appeared a couple of years later.²⁹

In Trinidad, under a Crown Colony constitution, the Afro-Creole middle class had far fewer privileges to protect. Their attitudes towards the Black working class and the Indians tended to be ambivalent. On the one hand both groups were an economic threat, yet the Creole middle class also recognised that without mass support there would be little political change. Even so, the suspicion with which they regarded the Indians in particular can be seen in their efforts to insist on an English language test for voters during the constitutional talks of 1941.³⁰

The attitudes of the black working class to the Indians has been hesitant and contradictory,³¹ yet it has been working class organisations which have come closest to realising Afro-Indian unity. In Trinidad, in the waterfront strike of 1919, Indian porters, sweepers and street scavengers joined African stevedores. There is also evidence that when indenture ended in 1917, one of the barriers between Africans and Indians on the estates was removed and the concept of trade union organisation began to take root. During the 1920's, when the Trinidad Workingmen's Association was revived, there was some attempt to involve Indians in it. A few did join and one, Timothy Roodal, a business man, was the Association's southern organiser.³² The process went further in the 1930's when Uriah Butler, a Grenadan trade union leader in the oil fields of South Trinidad, saw the necessity of forging an alliance between Sugar and Oil if the foundations of the colonial order were to be challenged. Butler made an alliance with a number of Indian radicals, the most sig-

nificant of whom was Adrian Cola Rienzi, at that time a revolutionary socialist. When the 'Butler riots' took place in 1937 there was some response in the sugar belt of central Trinidad, a class spirit which was reciprocated in the election of Rienzi in a constituency with a substantial African population against an African opponent. However, it would be misleading to suggest that these events had any lasting effects beyond suggesting a potential towards which Trinidadian radicals still aspire. At no time did the Butler-Rienzi alliance win the mass support of the Indians, particularly the small peasantry who remained loyal to their communal leaders. Similarly, though Butler called for 'land to the people' there is little evidence that much thought was given as to how to win over a suspicious rural people.³³ Because of their failure to swing the Indians behind the campaign of nationalist agitation, some Afro-Caribbean radicals impatiently felt that Indians were to be regarded as a reactionary element in the society. In addition, during the 1930's, separatist Pan-Africanist elements developed within the trade union movement. Significantly, the most radical socialist organisation of the time was called the Negro Welfare and Cultural Association.³⁴

Separation was reinforced during the 1940s by the rise of East Indian nationalism, stimulated by pride in the struggles of continental India to achieve independence. Some Hindu priests and conservative politicians also campaigned against self-government on the grounds that Indians would become subject to hostile Negro dominance. Creole nationalists for their part were angered by the activities of various emissaries from India, such as the Commissioner, Shri Satya Charan, appointed in 1948, who took a peculiarly active role in local Indian politics.³⁵ Although there were still Creole radical groups such as the West Indian Independence Party who were conscious of the need for working class Afro-Indian unity, they lacked mass support either amongst Africans or Indians.³⁶ Politics in the post-war period in Trinidad became increasingly dominated by middle-class politicians who organised their car-

eers on the basis of ethnic support. In the elections of 1946 and 1950 there were localised racial clashes. Butler continued to make alliances with Indian politicians in the elections of 1950 and 1956, but they were fragile 'now-for-now' deals masking differing class and ethnic motivations. Embittered by the cynicism of some careerist Indian politicians who used and then defected from his party, Butler was provoked into an outburst against the traitorousness of Indians as a whole.³⁷

In Guyana too there were periods in the 'pre-party politics' phase when class feelings predominated. For instance, in 1924, following the bloody suppression of an Indian sugar workers' strike at Ruimvelt, African urban workers rioted spontaneously in sympathy when the bodies of the dead were brought to the city.³⁸ Later, the British Guiana Labour Union, lead by Herbert Critchlow and based on the waterfront, began to have some influence on the sugar estates near Georgetown. The sugar strikes of 1924 saw active labour unity between African and Indian workers despite the efforts of the managers to keep the B.G.L.U. off the estates. As a recognition of his interest in their conditions,³⁹ Indian workers began to call Critchlow the 'Black Crosby'. Later Indian sugar workers and African workers in bauxite were organised jointly in the Man Power Citizens Association. However, none of these movements towards labour unity survived the effects of employer and Government hostility and ethnic divisions. By 1937 the labour movement had split into two ethnic sections. As in Trinidad there was a growth of black working class organisations of a racially separatist nature such as the Georgetown branch of the United Negro Improvement Association and the African Communities League.⁴⁰

In the immediate post-war period, however, the pattern of events in Guyana was different from that in Trinidad. In 1947, together with a number of socialists and Marxists, Dr. Cheddi Jagan established the Political Affairs Committee, which was not identified exclusively with either racial grouping. Out of the P.A.C. came the Peoples Progressive Party which in the 1952 elections won heavy support from African and

Indian voters. The P.P.P. was a coalition of different interest groups for a time united ⁴¹ on a nationalist anti-colonial platform. Its split demonstrated that whilst both groups had that as a common objective, the question of the relationship of Africans and Indians to each other, and the changes in the economic, social and cultural structure of Guyana which genuine racial unity entailed, had not been faced. Symptomatic of this failure was the role of a group of young Creole intellectuals in the party, which included Sidney King (Eusi Kwayana) and the poet Martin Carter. They remained in the Jaganite section of the party after Burnham had taken most of the urban Black support with him when he split with Jagan. However, within eighteen months of Burnham's departure most of the intellectual creole group had also quit the P.P.P., accused of ultra-leftism by Jagan, leader of its Stalinist wing, but probably also because of their inability 'to breach the cultural barriers in the party.'⁴² This was regrettable, because they were uniquely situated to understand and express the nature of the cultural forces which were to fragment Guyanese society. They did not do so. Carter's fine revolutionary poetry draws exclusively on images of Afro-Guyana,⁴³ and in the work of Jan Carew, also at one time closely involved with the P.P.P., one sees a passage, from early sympathetic treatments of the Indian presence to bitterly negative stereotypes of Indians,⁴⁴ which mirrors his movement towards a Black chauvinist perspective.

The imaginative writing of this period which deals with the Indian presence mirrors the same tendencies present in social and political life. Firstly, there is not much of it; secondly, with a few exceptions there is a reluctance to explore the existence of inter-ethnic hostilities; thirdly, much of it is ill-informed and expresses mainly tribal prejudices; finally, there is a small quantity of writing which displays a socially committed recognition of the depressed conditions suffered by Indians, particularly in the country. However, it is significant that apart from C.L.R. James's Minty Alley (1936), the

only story which explores race relations with dissective honesty is by the Jamaican Barry Reckord, set in a society where Indians are only 3.4% of the population and where their presence has never been a major political or cultural issue. Trinidadian and Guyanese writers on the other hand appear to have been content to leave the myths of racial harmony unquestioned.

Trinidadian kaiso, as a popular rather than a bourgeois art, has at least had the virtue of directly expressing Afro-Trinidadian fears and prejudices. In the 1940's and early 1950's there were a good number of kaisos which mocked Hindi songs, babu English and the 'uncivilised' ways of Indians, and also expressed Creole anxieties that the untrustworthy Indians were 'taking over'. Indians were, incidentally, often much offended by what Creoles called 'picong', but which were often, in truth, insults of a very unsubtle kind. In the 1940s Mighty Killer sang of Indian encroachment with some good humour:

What's wrong with these Indian people
As though their intention is for trouble

.....
Since the women and them taking creole name
Long ago was Sumintra, Ramnalwia
...But now is Emily, Jean and Dinah.
...And you see them in the market. They ain't making joke
Pushing down nigger people to buy them pork. 45

But in 1954, Mighty Cobra begged:

... the higher authorities to check up on the Indians
seriously,
Long ago it was the Indians toting load
Otherwise with a broom they sweeping the road
But if you tell them so they'll tell you you're wrong
The Indians and them they owe half the town. 46

Such attitudes are expressed by the Afro-Creole characters in James' Minty Alley (1936)⁴⁷. James, like Mendes, was a member of the Beacon group before he emigrated to Britain in 1932. Minty Alley was written before he left, before the political activities of Butler and Rienzi began to raise Afro-Indian unity as an issue. There is a good deal of similarity between the status of Stella, the Indian servant girl whose role in Mendes's Pitch Lake (1934) was discussed in the previous chapter, and Philomen, the only major Indian character in James's novel. Both are decultured but not yet fully creolised domestic servants at

the bottom of society. However, while Mendes deals with Stella in the context of White-Indian relationships, James writes about Philomen's place in the yard society of struggling black and brown Creoles.

The women at the centre of the yard (around whom drift a number of shiftless, unfaithful men) are coloured petit-bourgeois scrambling for respectable survival against the pressures of creditors, men and their own rivalries. Their struggles are essentially individual ones. Mrs. Rouse, the mortgaged owner of the yard, runs a small bakery and takes in lodgers. Although her 'hair was coarse and essentially negroid', enough white ancestry shows in her skin to support her pretensions. Even though Maisie, her niece, is 'not as light-skinned as her aunt' she still feels superior to Philomen. Asked by her aunt for once to earn her keep, Maisie retorts that she will leave the house before 'I wash the clothes of any damn servant. And a coolie besides.' (p.190)

It is an environment of verbal back-stabbings, petty treacheries and jealousies, a female version of what Fanon termed 'the fratricidal combats of the oppressed'⁴⁸. Maisie states James's moral judgement of the yard when she says of Mrs. Rouse's behind-the-back mockery of Philomen and her lover Sugdeo: 'She have eyes to see them, but she haven't eyes to see herself'^(p.191). But Maisie's own reaction to her frustrations is to torment Philomen. 'Every chance I get to dig her I will,' she says.^(p.196) Philomen, as a servant and an Indian, becomes a convenient scapegoat and target for abuse. Petty degrees of privilege become all important. Fanon's statement that 'the last resort of the native is to defend his personality vis-a-vis his brother'⁴⁹ accurately summarises what James vividly portrays.

James also shows how a sense of overwhelming oppression can lead to a 'positive negation of common sense'. Mrs. Rouse's irrationality is shown in her inexplicably perfidious treatment of Philomen on whose indispensable loyalty and hard work her bakery business depends. Suddenly, without explanation, she becomes 'unjust and overbearing' towards Philomen, and begins to 'throw remarks about coolies'. To the astonish-

ment of all the pressures Philomena to leave, though obviously aware that without her her business will collapse. Finally, when Haynes, the young black middle class lodger, plucks up courage to ask her why she dismissed Philomena she explains:

You see, Mr. Haynes, I have someone who guides me in my life. He is a man who can do things and I can tell you he has helped me a lot. And when I went to him once he told me that my blood and coolie blood don't take... He says I have nothing to expect from coolie blood but treachery... he warns me against having any coolies around me. (p. 201)

In his anxiety to expose the prejudices of the yard, and the righteousness of his own attitudes, James obviously felt it necessary to intervene directly in the novel and defend Philomena from the slurs made against her. For instance, when Maisie spitefully tells Haynes, the novel's 'lucid reflector' (who has just been somewhat primly criticising her prejudices) that 'All Coolie heads have lice. And she is too nasty', the narrator solemnly rebuts:

This was an out and out slander of Philomena, who, as is customary with Indians, bathed often, more often than anybody in the house. (p. 149)

It is a patronising approach which James would rightly have found offensive in a white author writing of a black female character. Philomena is characterised, in fact, as a female East Indian Uncle Tom, ⁵¹ 'with her fat face wearing a fine grin, full of interest and importance.' (p. 114) The treatment of Philomena's character is the novel's weakest element, failing to match her structural importance (she appears more frequently in its pages than any other character than Haynes) with a realised sense of her presence. Her insipidity derives in part from James's narrative method. The reader sees only what Haynes encounters. Whilst Mrs. Rouse and Maisie emerge vividly because Haynes is involved with them, Philomena is merely the uncomplicated recipient of his (and James's) liberal sympathies, so that only her passivity is shown. Because of this her moral status in the novel becomes problematic. We are given a picture of almost incredible altruism, yet it is impossible not to see her as culpably submissive in her voluntary slavery to Mrs. Rouse. James has leant too heavily on creole cultural stereotypes of Indians as willing and subservient drudges.

If the yard is intended as a microcosm of Trinidadian society, the possibility that Philomen, 'the pillar of the house', like the Indian agriculturalists whose labour supported society, had any values and ambitions of her own, does not seem to have occurred to James.⁵² Indeed, her Indianness exists only in the animosity of her Creole neighbours.

⁵³ Barry Reckord's story, 'High Brown' (1953) deals with Afro-Indian suspicions with a much greater awareness of Indian feelings. By making his Indian character, Rama, the centre of consciousness, Reckord plunges the reader into a more vivid apprehension of his fearful, ambivalent feelings towards the Negroes amongst whom he lives, in the squalid urban slum of Trenchtown. The sound of drumming coming from a Black dance-hall tempts him 'to be entranced, to tap the point of the toe... the feel of black bodies throbbing - the lure to close and sway with them'. Yet Rama also feels a fastidious 'revulsion from [their] passionate ignorance' and fears black violence:

He was a damn coward and wanted to be away from the ugly, mad niggers who would at short range, hurl a rock against a man's temple and watch him fall and bleed.⁵⁴

The story conveys powerfully how insult and frustration secrete a bitter racial chauvinism inside Rama. When he reproves a black stranger for calling him a coolie man, the Negro merely laughs in his face:

You too damn fool. Me never call a coolie man nutten but baboo yet. Any nayga who do dat mus' dead a pauper.

Rama salves his wounded pride by reflecting on what another Black has remarked to him about the business success of Indians compared to 'de poor foolish nayga people dem'. Rama proudly sees himself 'as the heir of coolie proprietors'. Then Reckord sharply undercuts Rama's illusions when he shows him in envious admiration of a group of 'high brown people', the real possessors of the prestige Rama so desires. He fantasizes about his relationship to them and their 'nicely-dressed twelve-year-old daughter, whom he would marry in ten years time'. Back to reality, Rama is choked with frustration. As he walks away he hears an unlit cart approaching. Suspecting it to be driven by a Negro, Rama

vengefully calls out 'Offence', hoping to attract the police. But the carter, when he comes into view, is a sleek handsome black boy who attracts Rama. The ambivalence reasserts itself, Rama begins to try to ingratiate himself with the boy.

In Guyana in 1952, on the other hand, there was perhaps a greater temptation to see an underlying human unity beneath the cultural differences of Indian and African. This is the theme of Jan Carew's⁵⁴ idealistic story, 'Death of the Gods' (1952). The conscious focus of the story is a doctor who is brought a bleeding boy, knifed in one of his villages festivities. The doctor associates the pumping of the blood-beating heart with the various drums he can hear in the boy's mixed Negro-Indian village. The mourning drumming of the negro followers of the Jordanite sect, bewailing their dead leader, merges into the tadjah drumming of Indians commemorating the slain Islamic martyrs, Hassan and Hossain: Jordan died suddenly. The drums went on beating. They celebrated his death in unconscious moods of nostalgia: even the tadjah drums spoke for him in the midst of the East Indian festival of Hossein, though they knew not of the underlying identity in this melting pot of rhythm and perspective.⁵⁵

This perception of shared human grief would have been persuasive were it not for the obviousness with which Carew has to play God with the unconscious motivations of the drummers and the occasional pretentiousness of style. Too clearly a phrase like 'the melting pot of rhythm and perspective' is a rhetorical evasion of real analysis.

However, another short story of Carew's, written in the same period, 'Guianese Wedding', gives a sharply observed but sympathetic account of the pressures on Indians and their culture in a creole society.⁵⁶ The meaning of the Moslem wedding has been lost to all except the old:

The crowd of wedding guests milled around, heedless of the words of the prophet; only the old men, their faces grave and carven, pressed close around the priest, quiet in their intent listening.

The young chatter and continue with the festivity and feeding, until an old man is provoked into crying:

All you got no respect for God or men - you can't keep still till the ceremony over, all you generation lost, you don't even know the language of you' people no more.⁵⁷

Even the bridegroom appears uninvolved in the affair. The priest tells

him acidly at the end, 'Well you married man now.'

Cultural change in the Indian community is also the theme of Wey-⁵⁸Wey (pre-1957) by the Trinidadian playwright Errol Hill. However, whereas Carew stresses the pathos of loss, Hill's play (one of only a couple of Afro-Trinidadian plays out of over sixty written between c 1955-1975 which deals with the Indian presence) shares some of the satisfaction felt by sections of the Creole community that Indians were becoming 'more like we'. Wey-Wey, in a suggestive rather than fully worked out way, presents an Indian, Harry Roopchand, who is caught between two worlds. The kernel of the play comes at the end in the conflict between Harry and his wife Beti. She wants Harry to give up his risky and recently unprofitable 'occupation' as a banker for the illegal game of Wey-Wey and return to the patch of rural land she has inherited. But it is from the land that Harry has escaped:

Since I born I been fighting for me rights. I leave the two
ole people catching they tail on the white people estate.⁵⁹

All that remains of his Indianness is a fierce racial pride and a feeling that women should know their place:

Bow to Chinees? Never! You think any chinee-man got brain
with Indian?

One time Indian women uses to have respect for they husband.
But now they more jamet than creole. (p. 8)

However, Hill also shows that Harry has achieved no real security in the creole world, surviving only by his cynical brashness and ruthless determination. Still pressing in on him is his sense of his origins, thrown back at him by his vituperative wife:

Make it up? With that! That piece of dirty coolie? He ain't
have no pride, no decency. He mind still in the filthy cow-
shed on the estate where it born. (p. 19)

Beti, it emerges, is even more ruthless than Harry, for to achieve her goal she has been systematically ruining Harry's profits and has arranged a police raid to catch him with incriminating evidence. Hill then shows that he takes the situation seriously by not writing the predictable comic ending with Harry going off meekly with Beti. On the contrary, Harry rejects the deal made between Beti and the police sergeant (who happens conveniently to be Indian):

Sarge, me ain't make for land and land ain't make for me. Me poopa and me poopa-poopa work land in Trinidad, and all them poopas before them work land in India, and all they got to show when they bones dry up and they fingers cramp, is a set of hawking and spitting and a cold room waiting for them in six foot of free government earth. I have got to get more than that out o' life. (p.31)

Many of the short stories published in the decade after the war⁶⁰ simply retail current Afro-Caribbean prejudices about Indians.⁶¹ In many of them Indians are punished for stereotypical 'Indian' behaviour and rewarded for 'creole' behaviour. Few show any knowledge of Indian life other perhaps than might have been gained from reading Seepersad Naipaul's fiction. Even in the work of writers of genuine talent, writing about Indian life produces obnoxious caricature and crudely cliched style. In E.A.Carr's⁶² 'The Snake Charmer'⁶³ (1947), for instance, a clash between Creole good and Indian evil, Kobraman has 'fang-like teeth in a gloating smile' and eyes which appear to his girl victim like a 'well that was said to be bottomless'. Kobraman's Indianness is stressed in his babu English and the jealous slyness of his behaviour. The girl he comes to carry off as his sexual and domestic chattel (her guardian owes the snake charmer a favour) is on the contrary creolised, 'that is among other things she knew few, and certainly observed fewer, of the customs and practices attaching to the traditions of her forebears.' She loves Popo Green, an 'outstanding dougla youth'. Kobraman keeps her a prisoner in his house, disliking 'heartily her creole ways, and kept jealous eyes on her.' He beats her sadistically when he suspects her affections for Popo, seeming 'to gain a certain terrifying satisfaction from her cries of pain'. He is shown to feel sexually threatened by part Negro Popo, towards whom he is 'hag-ridden with a progressive sense of inferiority'. Creole innocence triumphs and the biter is bit when Kobraman is bitten by the snake with which he has intended to remove Popo from the scene.

Similarly, in a story by the distinguished poet Eric Roach,⁶⁴ stereotypes abound. In 'The Portrait'⁶⁵ a white manager takes an attractive Indian woman to help in his house. An amateur artist he begins to paint

her only to be interrupted by his groom Hassan, flourishing a cutlass and foaming at the mouth in jealousy. Hassan is, of course, her admirer. In Michael Brown's 'Swamp Seed',⁶⁶ Majub, 'the cruel miser of Cariva plain', is a rice farmer who works himself and his wife like slaves to accumulate wealth and, 'notorious for his cunning as his greed' illegally profiteers during the war-time food shortage. When the authorities eventually catch up with him he prefers a prison sentence to paying the fine. Even when he returns to find both wife and rice-harvest gone he single-handedly plants and reaps a huge area of rice. The comments that he was 'labouring courageously to finish the great task to which he put himself' and that in his treatment of his donkey he was 'the nearest approach to the devil that Cariva had known' reflect a horrified admiration felt by some Creoles for the seemingly supernatural enterprise and energy of the Indian proprietor. When Majub finds that he can no longer make huge profits he commits suicide rather than deny his nature.

Other elements of the stereotype are found in a number of typically sentimental stories of the period. In Undine Giuseppi's 'The Green Flag',⁶⁷ Sooklal is about to throw himself under a train because his wife has only borne him a girl and left him after he began to ill-treat her. However, just as he is about to jump his wife reappears with a chubby boy-child.⁶⁸ Olga Comma-Maynard's 'Deo's Dream'⁶⁹ deals sentimentally with the tyrannical extended family and the ill-used daughter-in-law, and in C.A. Thomasos's 'Moonee'⁷⁰ an acquisitive Indian peasant manages to win his true love (who sits under a saman tree and sings prettily like a china shepherdess) despite the objections of her typically autocratic father, after he rescues her from drowning. L. De Paiva's 'His Last Watch'⁷¹ describes an old estate watchman whose last wish is to return to India, but dies before knowing that he has won a sweepstake. However, as he dies he believes he has arrived in India.⁷²

Nevertheless, a few writers portrayed the hardships of rural Indian life in a rigorously naturalistic style. Their subjects are

socially realistic, though in some there is a tendency for the figure of the oppressed Indian peasant to become a new kind of cliché. The chief weakness of most of these stories lies in the tone of the narrator's voice, the result of an unbridged distance between the middle class writer and his peasant subject. The intention of winning the reader's sympathy for the oppressed character lies behind most of them, but there is a tendency for a sentimentality of style which draws attention away from the situation of the character to the quality of the writer's pity.

The stories of Vincent Bowles, an Afro-Tobagan who worked as a structural engineer in the oil-fields of Southern Trinidad, illustrate both the commitment and the weaknesses of fictional perspective. In 'Life'⁷³ (1952) Balubal, the victim of the oil companies' neglect of safety regulations, is a talented but frustrated artist just on the point of leaving Trinidad for Britain to realise his ambitions. What is of interest is that it deals with an Indian character who is not a peasant and who is presented simply as a person. As will be shown, it makes the story, sentimental as it is, something of a rarity. Bowles's earlier story, 'Poolbasie'⁷⁴ (1950) draws attention to the harshness of Indian life on the sugar estates. It describes the last half-hour in the life of an aging labourer dying of pneumonia, who is waiting for his young wife, Poolbasie, to return with medicine. Bowles very successfully captures the obsessional sense perceptions of a feverish man and the claustrophobic terror that Ramdath feels as he lies half-paralysed:

Suppose shi sell di goat an run way widde money and leave me here to dead...dem woman bard...dey eye lang.

He reflects on a life of 'poverty, drabness and never-ending labour... the brutal overseer's incessant yellings', but though tempted to feel that death would be release, Ramdath shows a gritty determination to cling to the life he has struggled to maintain. He has just made the first step away from dependence on the estate by buying some goats. He thinks: 'Now that he had everything he must not die, he must live, life

could not be so unfair to him.'

There is sentiment in the story, but it is to some extent redeemed by the energy of Bowles's writing, for instance, when he describes the moments before Ramdath's death:

He reached the press, pulled out a water-washed shirt and put it on. He looked at the mirror in front of him and it reflected the dull image of an aged, bearded man. He turned towards the bed, then suddenly, as if confronted by an object of terror, he gave a mournful terrifying wail like the last convulsive cry of a dying beast. He stood rooted, his face pleated in pain... A creeping numbness had invaded his legs, at every inch contracting his muscles. He felt as if he stood in a sea of invisible thorns, which pricked mercilessly at his thighs, making him breath heavier, faster, in a pant, squeezing beads of sweat from his body. 75

Bowles never quite manages to integrate his desire to expose the conditions which have brought Ramdath to this state, and his attempt to create him as a conscious, self-sufficient character. It is not so much that Bowles overloads the story with details of Ramdath's misfortunes, the weakness is that Bowles remains outside the character and conveys his situation through the narrator's sympathetic but somewhat patronising comments. For instance, when he writes of how the couple's self-denial of 'the elementary necessities of a proper existence' reduced them to 'creatures of a certain type', he emphasises his distance from them and eats away at their autonomy as characters.

Owen Cambell's ⁷⁶ 'Old Seeram' ⁷⁷ (1957), rather more successfully resolves the problem of distance by largely eliminating the narrator as an intrusive voice and using Seeram's workmates as an ironic chorus. In addition, romanticised as the statement of the dignity of labour is, the story has a poetic unity as a statement of Seeram's revolt against life without meaning. He knows that as an old man he will be amongst the first cocoa workers sacked because of a slump in the market. To the astonishment, irritation and then misunderstanding admiration of his matties, Seeram begins to work at the heavy job of trenching with frenetic vigour. They think he is belatedly trying to impress the overseer to be kept on. They tell him:

You is a foolish ole man Seeram. Is twenty one years now yo' worker in dis estate...yo' bring dis place back from 'bandon...Now dey kicking yo' out like dog...Yo' shoulda been ah foreman now, but yo' too stupid and outspoken.

Seeram's closest friend counsels him to throw himself down in the trench to feign injury so that he can claim compensation. None understands Seeram's true reason for his outburst of energy:

Dis is me las' chance to experience hard wuk. I know it. After dis I goin' to resign... Yo' doan know how wuk sweet...De younter generation doan know 'bout dat.

It is the sweetness of work that Campbell poetically celebrates, the pride that Seeram feels in the co-ordination of muscle-power and endurance, and in his own determination to prove that he still possesses that capacity:

Seeram worked silently on, his arms rising and descending with powerful swiftness. Some spirit animated him. It could not be the old man on his own. He smote like a knight at arms of long past times wielding his truncheon.

However, the inappropriateness of the medieval metaphor for the physical actuality of regimented estate labour is all too striking, and the story ends predictably and melodramatically when Seeram falls dead into the trench, his matties supposing that he has been playing sly all along. Kenton Philip's prose piece, 'Flower's of The Field' (1948)⁷⁸ has at least the distinction that it recognises, unlike most other Afro-creole stories, that the Indian woman's greatest burden was not the 'backwardness' of Indian marriage customs or the brutality of Indian men, but the harshness of estate labour. However, it too is written in a sentimental way which emphasises how sympathetic the writer is, and there is an evasiveness in the metaphor used which makes the suffering of the women more a natural process of time than the result of the human exploitation of her labour:

The sun came hot and soaring, and like young flowers dried of morning dew, their animation died. They strained their young bodies, they must, with parents old and husbands ill, and later children. Flowers that flourish in youth, wither in age before the sun. How long! how long! ...Time had done its job. Time had brought its heavy load of pain and toil and tears.

Kenneth Newton, perhaps of all the writers discussed in this chapter, conveys a close and sympathetic observation of rural Indian life in

several of his short stories. 'Little Boy' (1949) is an ironic tale about an Indian carter who wants his son to escape from the estate to a respectable professional life. Ramlal knows that he has the same relationship to his mule 'Little Boy' as the manager of the estate has to him. He treats his mule kindly but firmly, just as 'someone else ruled him'. His son, however, does not share his ambition, but despises the pretensions of the middle-class:

I go like to drive a mule bharp, wen he galloping an' the cart bouncin' an' you standin' up without falling. It mus' be does feel good, bharp, better dan ah car.

Even when Ramlal tries to put him off with heavy work the boy stays eager. The inevitable tragedy comes when the boy starts showing off in the cart, the mule bolts and he is thrown and crushed. The story ends some time later with Ramlal watching his new child, wondering whether things will be different this time. The story is not free from sentiment or cliché, but Newton approaches the theme seriously and shows evidence of a sharp eye for place which stands out even more clearly in his best story, 'Seeds of Wrath' (1952).⁸¹ In this story the quality of Newton's vivid realism comes into greater tension with the folk-tale shape of the narrative, and his very skills in creating authentic creolese dialogue make the external, educated narrative voice stand out even more awkwardly. If one compares the differences between the authorial description of the youth, another Ramlal, and the youth's description of his unwilling future father-in-law, one notes that the first is stilted and patronisingly external, whereas the second is lively and supports the autonomy of character in the story:

He was diffused with gentleness and a type of rustic determination. Hard work and responsibilities had given a mature hardness to his face and his body lacked the fullness of healthy youth.

Can't do nothing heself...but he could sit dong on he bony behind on he peerah an' watch you working day come, day go! He could sit dong an watch he rice growing good an' think 'bout how much money he go make wen he sell it! What he doin' wit money? Tell me. Not a damn fart -jest hide it up.

Such discrepancies in tone arise from a conflict between the nature of the story Newton tells and where his gifts as a writer lie. The

narrative is virtually identical to that of a much inferior piece, C.A. Thomasos's 'Moonee': Ramlal wins his bride, Meena, against her father's wishes, when he rescues the miserly Moulah from drowning in a flood. It is a modern folk-tale with strong narrative lines and a conventional moral. Newton tells the story with good humour, though the use of a dialect-speaking narrator, or the suppression of the intrusive narrative voice, would have given it greater unity of style. However, what makes the strongest impression in the story is its very vivid realisation of the peopled landscape of the Oropouche Lagoon area, the rice-growing heartland of Indian Trinidad. Descriptions of human activities are not merely naturalistically exact in giving a very plastic grasp of the physical, but, as in the case of the description of Ramlal driving his ox-cart, also convey inner feelings, in this case his frustration over Moulah's stubbornness:

He kept a sharp eye on the wheels to see how deep they sank into the mud and when the furrows they cut were a dangerous foot deep and the muscles of the big ox were quivering under its grey hide, he pulled hard on the left rein. The ox twisted its head sideways to the left, its hooves churning up mud and brown water. It forced the heavy cart up a low mheree bank and into a cola of rice plants bursting with seed.

Newton also casts a sharp and humorous eye over human relationships, conveying very exactly the hesitancy of Ramlal's and Meena's secret meeting. Meena feels guilty about abandoning Moulah ('He ole. He can't do nothing heself') and nervous of social disapproval ('They go say I is a runaway dhoolahin'). Ramlal asks her how she feels:

Meena whispered, 'I well.' And then for the next two minutes she just looked at the grass at her feet while Ramlal looked at her, at the bush and sky. Suddenly he spoke.

'Tell me nuh. You make up you mind yet?'

Meena's eyes alerted for a fleeting moment.

'Ram, boy,' she whispered, 'I ain't know what to say.'

The problem is one of framework. Newton frequently shows that he is capable of sympathetically realistic characterisation, but the demands of the folk-tale require that Moulah be the familiar miserly stereotype. The vivid realism of description repeatedly comes into conflict with the needs of the tale for uncluttered narration. Newton's vision seems to me to have needed a much wider canvas. Nevertheless, Newton's

stories are amongst the very few by Afro-creoles which not only escape from ethnocentricity but achieve an imaginative identification with Indian lives.

The image of the Indian in the post-war decade is preponderantly rural. In some instances that focus was the consequence of a socially committed recognition of rural poverty (though rarely that Indians had an independent and self-sustaining culture), in others simply the acceptance of the stereotype that Indians live in the country. With the exception of Errol Hill's Wey-Wey, there are few pieces which recognise the growing heterogeneity of the Indian community. Only, for instance, in a literary essay, 'Moonoo',⁸² by the Trinidadian poet Neville Giuseppe is there any recognition of the rising class of small Indian business men. 'Moonoo' is written somewhat in the manner of the 'Life Histories' of the Rev. J.G. Pearson on East Indians in the nineteenth century. Like them it has a double purpose. It combines the individual and the typical to give an admiring portrait of this new class, but it also serves as a warning to his fellow Creoles that they were being left behind by the purposeful energy of people like Moonoo who 'toiled hard and in all weathers, making every possible sacrifice'. In other essays in his collection, From Grave To Gay (1957) the Trinidadian (i.e. the Creole not the Indian) is described as care-free and casual in his attitude to life.

Similarly there are few fictional portrayals of members of the growing class of Indian professionals, although it was with this group that Afro-Creoles were likeliest to have had contact. An exception is E.M. Thorne's 'The Native Who Didn't Return'⁸³ which describes the return to Trinidad of an Indian doctor after ten years of training in England. Just outside Port of Spain docks he wonders what will have changed since his departure and recalls his country childhood, the mornings selling milk from 'a slow donkey cart', the 'Saturdays he had waded about the rice fields with a great show of industry.' He thinks of the gulf education has put between himself and his family. Most of all he

recollects his last meeting with Sookial, the unsophisticated fourteen year-old whom he had left behind with the unmeant promise that he would marry her on his return. Then Thorne shows the further cultural distance Ramsingh has travelled since his departure by making him fall in easily with a smart crowd of hard-drinking middle class Creoles returning home. When Ramsingh finds that there is no one waiting to meet him, he gratefully accepts the offer of the Creole woman who has become friendly with him, to travel home with her family. Ramsingh can be seen as a precursor of V.S. Naipaul's K.K. Singh in The Mimic Men, but there the comparison has to end for Thorne's story is clumsily written and the characterisation of Ramsingh is wooden.

Creole Nationalism in Trinidad c 1955-1970

Though there was racism in the 1945-1955 period, politics was still individualistic and no party grouping appealed exclusively to one race. By the elections of 1956 both Blacks and Indians were organised in mass parties on an ethnic basis, the Afro-Creoles in the Peoples National Movement and the Hindus in the Peoples Democratic Party. From the start the P.N.M. was a Creole nationalist party, a coalition between a black and coloured middle class leadership and the black working class. The P.N.M. leadership never appears to have understood or had any sympathy with Indian fears or aspirations. Consequently its drive towards internal self-government and independence brought it swiftly into conflict with the Hindu political leadership, and it never succeeded in making an appeal to the mass of Indian workers and peasants which overcame that group's fears of Negro domination. There were a few Indians in the P.N.M., but these came from the minority Muslim and Christian sections of the Indian community; in 1963 only 7% of delegates to the P.N.M.'s annual convention were Indians.⁸⁴ Though the P.N.M. paid lip-service to non-racialism, party attitudes and electoral strategy were racist. As long as the black working class stayed electorally loyal, there was no real need to pay any attention to the minority comm-

unity.

The role of party politics in responding to and then promoting racialism in Trinidad can be seen in the ambivalent relationship of Dr. Eric Williams, political leader of the P.N.M. for over twenty years and supreme articulator of creole nationalism, to the Indian community. During the early 1950s Dr. Williams publically recorded his solidarity with Indian social aspirations:

...every Indian admitted to the professions and the civil service is a further victory in the cause of that full participation of local men...without which self-government is a delusion. 85

Similarly, in his History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago (1962)

Williams stresses the contribution of the Indians to Trinidad. Yet Williams clearly failed to understand the continuing coherence of Indian cultural identity in Trinidad, equating it with the much lower level of African cultural survivals amongst the Creole population.

He would undoubtedly have liked to see the Indians fully assimilated to the dominant creole culture:

Indian temples and some adherence to Indian dress and languages among the older generation of Indian immigrants are the principal survivals of indigenous Indian culture; they provide little more than a rallying point for reactionary Indian politicians who see the political leader as a man of racialism...86

Moreover, there were occasions when Dr. Williams's intemperate public utterances revealed not only an impatient distrust of the Indian community, but also cynical play on his Negro followers' fears. During the 1956 election campaign Williams was outspokenly critical of the Hindi movement, the Hindu school-building programme and the Maha Sabha, the main Hindu religious, cultural and welfare organisation.⁸⁷ Following the P.N.M.'s defeat by the Indian supported Democratic Labour Party in the Federal elections of 1958, Williams angrily labelled Indians as a 'recalcitrant and hostile minority masquerading as the Indian nation and prostituting the name of India for its selfish, reactionary political ends.'⁸⁸ It was a speech intended to stir Black voters to ensure that the P.N.M. would never again be embarrassed at the polls by the D.L.P.

Williams and the Creole establishment assumed that there was already

a national culture to which all groups owed allegiance. The desire of the Indian community to maintain their own culture was seen as an act of disloyalty. 'There can be no Mother India for those whose ancestors came from India,'⁸⁹ Williams wrote. Since many Indians felt that they possessed cultural values superior to the 'mimic' values of a Creole culture still subservient to its European parent, they felt that Dr. Williams was asking for a very one-sided sacrifice. Indian resistance to the cultural objectives of Creole nationalism was inevitable.

Although there were never outbreaks of racial violence in Trinidad on any significant scale, race played an increasingly divisive role in national life in this period, since it suited the middle-class leaderships of both the P.N.M. and the D.L.P. to maintain racial hostilities to retain the loyalties of their supporters. However, after the elections of 1961 when large-scale racial violence was a real possibility, it was evident that the P.N.M. leadership took greater trouble to soothe the fears of the Indian business class. Legislation such as the Industrial Stabilisation Act, the declaration of a state of emergency in the sugar belt in 1965 and the law which compelled all cane farmers to belong to an Association dominated by a handful of big landowners, all benefitted conservative business and landowning interests in the Indian community. The I.S.A. and the state of emergency were designed to ensure that Indian sugar workers stayed under the control of traditional communalist leadership rather than making⁹⁰ common cause with the radical Black Oilfield Workers Trade Union.

The ideology of Creole nationalism, dominant in the period between 1955-1970, has been pervasive in its cultural and literary manifestations. Kaiso once again made no concessions to myths of racial harmony. There were many kaisos which celebrated the P.N.M. victory in 1961 in explicitly racial terms. Mighty Christo sang tribally:

Whip them P.N.M. whip them
 You wearing the pants
 If these people get on top is trouble
 And we aint got a chance.

Ah hear up in Couva
 They attack a minister

And one Ramadeen
 Try to thief a voting machine
 Well that was ignorance
 But he didn't have a chance
 So they send him to Carrera
 And when he come out is straight back to Calcutta. q1

Lord Brynner in a kaiso of 1962 begged the Indian to shave his head in the interests of national unity so 'nobody would guess your nationality.' The highly popular sketches of 'Macaw' (Kitty Hannys) published in the Trinidad Guardian also demonstrate the same Creole prejudices. 'Bhajan Leaves For Calcutta' mocks Indian meanness and superstition; 'Ramdhas Found a Solution' Indian cultural backwardness and family violence. In 'Ramdeed Wants to Kill Himself', Macaw links the stereotype of the suicide-prone Indian with Creole indignation over Indian ethnic solidarity in the 1958 elections. Ramdeen is about to hang himself to round off a perfect evening, but is prevented by his father who tells him:

A mister from the D.L.P. comin' rong to everybody. He say none a we is to t'row weself on de track or do anyt'ing son until election time finish. q2

Much of the fiction of the period also repeats the old stereotypes. It is not simply that Enid Lewis's Voices of Earth (1972) is set in the 1940's, its sensibility in its treatment of the Indian presence is of that time. The ten inter-related stories in the collection portray an ethnically mixed village in Southern Trinidad. They celebrate a peasant sense of community but also explore a darker underside to that life. Significantly, the stories tend to identify the Creole villagers with the sense of community and the Indians with the darkness underneath. 'Bhap-Nana' (literally father-grandfather) is a grim study of incest within an Indian family. The portrayal of the incestuous father, Jainarine, to some extent recalls that of Mohammed in Wilson Harris's The Far Journey of Oudin (1961). But whereas Harris portrays Mohammed as having a consciousness of what he has become, Jainarine, portrayed wholly externally, remains a stereotype of rural degradation. His moral deficiencies are related to his Indianness. He beats his wife because she has failed to provide him with any male children, and breaks the taboo on incest because he regards children only as an econ-

omic resource and his daughter is the only available female who can bear him male children. Although 'La Titick' has wider implications as a parable on the folly of limitless desire, it is based on the stereotype of the acquisitive Indian. The creole villagers' comments on John Lalloo's suspected pact with the devil contrast those people who are 'very cravegious and want to have the moon and the stars,' with their own creole philosophy: 'Look how we happy here drinking we little grug.' Even the Indian character whose behaviour is not stereotyped is portrayed as the exception which proves the norm. For instance, the story, 'The Bandmistress,' focuses on Doolarie, who appears in other stories as a bold upholder of women's rights. We are told that:

Doolarie was quite different from the ordinary Hindu wife. She argued with her husband privately. She often told him what to do... Mai... contrary to convention was relegated to a subordinate position. 43

Called the 'Bandmistress' because she orchestrates the lives of the village women, Doolarie breaks the rules most riskily when she takes a creole lover. The wronged husband is stereotypically jealous, and having failed to end the affair with his cutlass, stereotypically suicidal. The amoral implications of the story are clear. Doolarie thrives by a creole style of independence; her hinduized husband has to hang himself when he becomes an object of derision.

Several of Richard Bowyer's naive and conventional stories in The Wedding Ring and Other Stories (c. 1972) show ethnic stereotypes being used to make some simple moral point. In 'Ramlal at the Races', Bowyer uses a contrast between the stereotype of miserliness and a deviation from it to make the point that a man will get more respect from his family if they need things from him. Ramlal has so far behaved in stereotyped creole fashion, he has 'never saved any money in his life', and his 'philosophy was work hard and fete hard.' However, when he discovers that as he grows older he loses his family authority he takes his Indian friend's advice and puts his fortuitously gained winnings on the race track out of his family's reach. They start respecting him again. Implicit in the story is the assumption that the latter be-

haviour is the Indian norm, and that the Indian family is merely held together by selfish economic interests. In 'The Bully,' Bowyer's phrase describing the inhabitants of an Indian village as a 'primitive violent people'⁹⁴ may be taken as indicative of the patronising attitudes which inform the stories concerned with Indian life in this collection.

The only Afro-Trinidadian novel of this period to attempt a portrayal of political life and a panoramic view of Trinidadian society, Frank Hercules's Where The Hummingbird Flies (1961) very clearly illustrates the ethnocentricity of Creole nationalism. In the more readable sections of a grossly overwritten novel (its chief aim seems to be to impress the reader with its recondite vocabulary) Hercules satirises the old pale-skinned creole bourgeoisie and writes in an embarrassingly self-congratulatory way of the new black bourgeoisie (the hero is rather transparently called Francis Herbert), though their political heroism seems confined to making turgid anti-colonial speeches in the legislature. Indians only appear in peripheral and stereotyped roles. There is the Honorable Bubulphat Dahlpoorie O.B.E., whose role in the novel goes no further than the pun on his name (bobol - grown rich on corruption, dhal - but still living meagerly on lentils. There is a passing mention of an Indian servant who has coolly chopped off a man's leg and a sentimentally cloying portrait of an old, ganga-smoking Indian dreaming of his past. The only Indian who has any functional role in the novel is portrayed as a sycophantic baboo-man who comes out with lines like, 'Oh; yes Sahib! T'ank you, Sahib! God bless you Sahib.'⁹⁶

In this period it is really only in the novels of Michael Anthony and Earl Lovelace that one finds a serious and artistic exploration of Afro-Creole experience in Trinidad. However, neither of Lovelace's earlier novels, While God's Are Falling (1965) and The Schoolmaster (1968) deal with the Indian presence at all, and his later The Dragon Can't Dance (1979) does so from the perspective of a later period and

is discussed later in the chapter. Anthony's novels, however, reveal both the strengths and the weaknesses of what in Chapter Three I described as 'autobiographical naturalism'. They deal with the Indian presence only in so far as it is part of the experience of the focal Creole character. As such Anthony's treatment of that presence can never go beyond an expression of Creole perceptions, but his work is generally so open and honest, even in its evasions, that it gives a valuable portrayal of the experience of ethnic heterogeneity.

The short story, 'Enchanted Alley,' typifies Anthony's approach in that it presents the apparently unmediated impressions of a young, visually alert but naive boy. This mode of narration enables Anthony to reveal the distance between African and Indian with a sharpness of perception which would be unrealistic in an adult. The 'Enchanted Alley' is a street of Indian traders in San Fernando the young narrator passes through on his way to school. What he sees is foreign and strange:

In places between the stores several little alleys ran off the High Street...there was one that was long and narrow and dark and very strange...There would be Indian women also, with veils thrown over their shoulders...and chatting in a strange sweet tongue...I would recall certain stalls and certain beards and certain flashing eyes...I looked at the names of these alleys. Some were funny...The smells rose up stronger now and they seemed to give the feeling of things splendoured and far away.

When the boy approaches an Indian stall he feels he is making a daring adventure:

I stood there awhile. I knew they were talking about me. I was not afraid. I wanted to show them I was not timid. 97

When the stallholders treat him with amused friendliness he feels delight at having built a bridge into a strange foreign world. The writing is sharply observed, but whether the full irony of the story - that it is not about a white boy in India, but a negro boy in the second largest city in his small island - is one that Anthony was conscious of must be open to doubt.

The portrayal of the character of Mr. Mohansingh, the Indian shopkeeper who seduces his black assistant, Sylvia, in The Games Were Coming (1963) illustrates both the careful naturalism and the evasiveness of Anthony's treatment of Creole attitudes to the Indian presence. It is a

matter of naturalistic authenticity that the shopkeeper Sylvia works for should be Indian and that he should have the means to give her the kind of presents that her cycling-obsessed black boyfriend, Leon, could not give her. There is no attempt to explore the relationship in the kind of racial terms found in Jan Carew's Black Midas, discussed below. It is Mohansingh's attentiveness and desire for her (whilst Leon neglects her for his race-training) which flatters Sylvia into acquiescence, rather than any hint of 'oriental' allure. And even when Sylvia pictures Mohansingh 'Like a snake suddenly uncoiling and taking shape in the grass',⁹⁸ it is not because he is an Indian she repulses his first advances, but because she sees him as a smooth, middle-aged adventurer. But if Anthony avoids the explicit ethnocentricity of Carew's treatment, there is something evasive in his reluctance to explore Sylvia's feelings about carrying a part-Indian child, or even more, trying to pass it off as her boyfriend Leon's. Of course, the ending of the novel at the point of Leon's victory in the cycle race can be seen as ironic: he has yet to discover the price he has paid for his victory. However, it is undoubtedly convenient for Anthony that he should not have to deal with the consequences of the discovery.

Green Days By The River (1967) comes closer to exploring Creole attitudes to the Indian presence, but the closer it gets, the more evasive it becomes. As in 'The Enchanted Alley', the events of the novel are presented 'wholly' through the eyes of its young adolescent narrator, Shellie Laming. In general Shell is bright and sensitive but distinctly naive, the latter quality a product both of his age and his up-country upbringing, a point reiterated in the novel. Thus it is strictly realistic that Shell should approach Mr. Gidharee, his new Indian neighbour with few preconceptions of his 'Indianness'. This keeps the focus sharply on the relationship of Shell, one black boy, to Mr. Gidharee, one Indian man, as a process of gradual discovery and of his adjustment to the Indian's ruthless ambition.

However, Shell's point of view is modified in two ways, the effects

of which combine to give the novel an ambiguous focus. Firstly, Anthony is explicitly ironic in giving a significance to Shell's reflections that the boy himself is not aware of. As he listens to the whistling song-birds in the bush around Mr. Gidharee's land, Shell recalls:

those times when I used to catch birds, and I began remembering how I used to make my cages from bois-canoe stalks, and how I used to bleed lagley gum from breadfruit trees, and set the stickiest lagley all around the top of my cage, and perch my cage, with my best semp inside, right on top of a pole, in the bushes, and how I would hide myself away, listening to my semp calling all the other birds. As soon as a bird was lured to rest on the cage, and got itself stuck on the lagley I would pounce out from my hiding place.⁴⁹

The reader, but not Shell, soon realises that Mr. Gidharee's generosity is the gum, his daughter, Rosalie, the singing semp, and marriage the cage in which to trap the unwary Shell.

The second kind of irony is more unstable. It arises from the contrast between Shell's restricted perceptions and the unstated wider social context within which Anthony wrote the novel and, aware of which, some readers will have read it. Anthony quite naturalistically plays down Shell's awareness of Mr. Gidharee as an Indian, but the context within which Anthony wrote was one of a heightened awareness of the differences and antagonisms between the two races. Yet if Anthony's construction of Shell's point of view is naturalistically authentic, it must also be seen as a deliberate choice. By contrast, for instance, Merle Hodge's first person child narrator in Crick-Crack Monkey (1970) is always socially and ethnically aware. However, whether Anthony intends that Shell's racial innocence should be seen ironically is less certain. Certainty in the matter would depend on knowing what Anthony expected the reader to bring to the novel. Nevertheless, the first kind of explicit irony must lead the reader to the second. There are, for instance, moments of unease within the general bonhomie of Shell's and Mr. Gid's relationship, before the showdown, which hinge on their racial difference.

First, Anthony establishes that Mr. Gid is, or appears to be a thoroughly creolised Indian married to a creole wife, making credible the

ease with which Shell takes to him. It is over his daughter, Rosalie, the 'first class little dougla jane', whose mixed-race attractiveness constantly tantalises Shell and his friends, that there is one of those eddying moments of racial awareness which flow under the smooth surface of the relationship. Mr. Gid is trying to find out who Shell's father is, whilst Shell does not yet know that Rosalie is his daughter:

'Ain't he the man who Rosalie showed the place - up here?'

'You mean the dougla girl?'

'That's my Ro,' he said laughing, 'the dougla girl.'

He seemed to be amused by my saying 'dougla' which was the slang everyone used for people who were half Indian and half Negro... He just looked at me again and he said, 'Her mother is creole just like you.' (p. 3-4)

Now Shell might not know that 'dougla' is an insulting word as used by Indians, dugala meaning bastard, but Anthony assuredly does. Considered in the light of what we discover later about the caustic nature of Mr. Gid's laughter, the 'He seemed amused' suggests that the mirth is not totally open. The look and the rejoinder sound suspiciously like a veiled reprimand. The fact that Shell should mention the conversation to his father, puzzled that Gidharee seems to have taken offence at the word, further suggests that Anthony is encouraging an ironic reading. There is a similar moment of unease during Shell's and Mr. Gid's first day working together:

'When you feel peckish, say, we have plenty roti in the bag.'

I said nothing.

He looked at me as if doubtful. 'You ain't one of those creole who shame to eat roti?'

'Me? No, Mr. Gidharee. Not me.'

'Oho,' he said. (p. 14)

Anthony reticently omits any description of the intonation of the 'Oho'. Although Shell does not register any threat, the reader must interpret it to mean, 'You don't entirely convince me. I'm watching you.' Later another casual conversation increases Shell's uncertainty about how well he actually knows Mr. Gid, and in particular, his precise cultural orientation. Is he as creolised as he seems to be, or are there aspects of his talk and behaviour which can only be seen as Indian? After hearing Gidharee use a patois phrase Shell tests him:

'What is jeune male? I mean in English?'

He looked at me grinning... 'You is a patois man and you don't

know that?'

'I don't know a lot of patois. We don't talk so much patois down the beach.' In fact, I was just testing his patois knowledge. (p.119-120)

Gidharee, of course, knows, and Shell reflects that 'One of the strange things was that you hardly found Indian people speaking French patois.' However, Anthony never makes it plain why Shell should want to test Gidharee's cultural orientation. Indeed, even when Shell starts to become suspicious of the motives behind Gidharee's friendliness, he does not see the Indian man's strategy in ethnic-cultural terms. Yet there are several points in the novel where Gidharee's actions and motivations are those of the 'typical' Indian of the Creole stereotype. In the first place Mr. Gid clearly feels the need for a son, having only a daughter, to work with him on the land and ultimately inherit it. This economic motivation contrasts sharply with the way Shell's father steadfastly refuses to make any kind of selfish emotional demand on his son, even when he is dying painfully. Secondly, Mr. Gid evidently feels a pressure to marry off his daughter even though she is only sixteen, and use her as bait to secure Shell for his household economy. As one of Shell's friends says jokingly early in the novel:

That little thing doesn't go out at all. They must be saving her up or something. (p.17)

This contrasts with the approach of the parents of Shell's black girlfriend, Joan, who counsel the couple to have patience in their plan to marry in the near future. Again, there is a sharp difference between the thoughtful kind of relationship Shell is establishing with Joan (who gently represses his desires), and the way Rosalie Gidharee allows Shell to make love to her as part of her father's plan.

Having walked into the trap that Gidharee has set, Shell at last discovers that the apparently creolised Mr. Gid has a very Indian point of view as far as his daughter is concerned. He plays on Shell's guilt about Rosalie with gratuitous cruelty, harping on the new chemically induced ferocity of the dogs and the fact that Shell seems so nervous. His assault on Shell is two-pronged, telling him that he has recently

bought a large piece of cocoa land, and hinting at what happens to Creole boys who play around with Indian girls:

'That girl, Sonia, she does work with you?'

'Yes.' I looked up. I was very surprised at this question...

'She's a nice, good girl.'

'Yes.' My heart began racing again.

'That is Ramdat daughter, you know. He like her too bad. He does make me laugh - this Ramdat. He say if any man play the fool round Sonia he'll have to married she, else he'll chop him up in fine pieces.

A shudder ran through me.

Mr. Gidharee went on: 'I agree with him. I mean to say if the man fool around the girl and then get married, that's okay, not so? Nobody wouldn't worry about that.'

I said nothing.

He said, 'You know, it's funny, but I like Creole people - I mean, you see my Marie. From little boy I like Creole people. Especially decent Creole - like you. And I mean we is all the same people - Creole and Indian. But one thing about Creole, boy,' he stuck his cutlass violently into the ground,

'One thing with Creole, they like to play around but they don't like to get married. Never! Never!'

My hands were trembling as I rooted the weeds. I could feel the blood pounding in my chest.

'They prefer to get married to somebody else,' he went on.

'That does always happen. Because they feel the girl ain't good enough for them. Although she was good enough to play around with. This does hurt me. No wonder people does chop people for this sort of thing. (p.175-176)

Gidharee feeds the dogs more 'dragons blood' and vanishes to leave

them to savage Shell. When he reappears he makes his actions even clearer:

Perhaps they know something about Rosalie. Perhaps that's why... Perhaps they mean to tear you up unless you get married to her. Dogs funny, boy. (p.180)

Yet even after Shell has been savaged by the dogs and Gidharee has revealed his motives (which have been glaringly obvious throughout), Shell still refuses to consider the full implications of the experience. He knows that Gidharee set the dogs on him deliberately, but persuades himself that it was at worst an inexplicable aberration. Shell knows he has been trapped:

The position was that I could not escape Mr. Gidharee now. I knew it would not be beyond him to do what Ramdat talked about, because I had seen how cold-bloodedly cruel he could be.

Yet only a week afterwards Shell reflects:

I felt very close to him and fond of him. I knew that if he said the engagement would go well it would go well. Thinking of the way he had treated us with my father's funeral, doing everything, and being so effecient and good, and spending his own money so freely, I felt nearly as close to him as I had felt to my father. (p.191)

It is difficult not to conclude that Shell has been cheap at the price

of the money that Gidharee has spent 'so freely'.

What is one to make of this? Is Shell really intended to be such a spineless, impercipient and morally undiscerning character? Are his judgements of Mr. Gidharee, even at the end, intended by Anthony to be seen ironically? The only alternative would be to assume that Gidharee is a Jekyll and Hyde character, but a Creole Jekyll and an Indian Hyde, which would make the same point about the Indianness of his behaviour as I believe the novel's ironic focus is intended to make. Certainly, Anthony maintains his ironic position on Shell's impercipient at some cost to consistency and plausibility of characterisation. Elsewhere in the novel Shell is shown to be sensitive and mature for his age in his relationships with Joan and his parents. Yet with the Indian Gidharees he is blind. Even after he begins to nurture some suspicions of their motives, he still walks head-first into the trap they set. He thinks:

I wondered what made her turn to me all of a sudden. I did not mind this very much, but the friendlier she was to me, it was the nicer Mr. Gidharee became...

...and I know this Mr. Gidharee playing smart - well not playing smart, but I know what happening, and I don't want to encourage anything. (p. 100)

Nevertheless, he still accepts her Christmas gift despite 'great misgivings' and still allows her to seduce him even though by that stage her motives are obvious.

One is forced to question both the function of the novel's ironies and the reticence it appears to display in the matter of ethnic relations. There are two statements which Anthony has made which throw some light on the issue. In an interview discussing this novel he said:

In some corner of my mind, I felt this difference between the Indians and the people of African descent in general. But this particular person, Mr. Gidharee in the book to my mind, he was a man who lived... in fact, I only called him by a different name.... And the relationship between us was rather good. In fact, I never realised in growing up ... I mean, I knew they were Indian, but I did not realize it... we played together, and we grew up together. But of course, I am aware, and I was aware, that there is this sort of tension, if you like, between the races. I, of course, know the stereotyped views of each other that the Indians and Africans have. 99

The second statement Anthony makes concerns his reluctance to write a novel about race because 'What they actually do...is to widen the gulf by creating an awareness of it.'¹⁰⁰ The novel's ironic focus can thus be seen as both an attempt to convey the doubleness of the child's and adult's differing awareness of growing up in an ethnically heterogeneous society, and an attempt to deal obliquely with his perception of the differences between Africans and Indians. Yet because the second type of irony the novel employs, between Shell's racial innocence and the heightened racial tensions of the period the novel was written in, is unstable, quite frequently the obliqueness reads not as a reticence concerned not to widen racial gulfs, but as an ironic warning of an Indian economic threat which Creoles were aware of but failed to do anything about. How are we to read the end of the novel when Shell and Mr. Gidharee are discussing his marriage to Rosalie according to Indian rites? Is it to be taken as a suggestion of the possibilities of racial harmony or, in the light of what Gidharee has done, as a signal of how complete his victory has been? As I argued in Chapter Three, the novel, particularly the naturalistically unreflective novel, is a sticky medium which picks up conscious as well as unconscious intentions. As Green Days By The River shows, intending not to write about race does not guarantee that a novel is not more ethno-centric in its perceptions than the author may ever have imagined.

In Guyana, the collapse of the P.P.P. as an Afro-Indian coalition has never been repaired. Race was only one reason for the split; there were significant differences of political ideology, international orientation and, above all, there was personal ambition. But when Burnham took with him all but the committed Marxists from the P.P.P.'s African following into his People's National Congress, the effect was to divide Guyana racially. Between 1957 and 1964, the P.P.P., with a rapidly shrinking African membership, held office under increasingly difficult circumstances. Many Afro-Guyanese believed that the P.P.P.

Government, with its emphasis on a rural development programme, was discriminating against them; an eminently reasonable tax programme was denounced by the business community as 'communistic' and by the urban working class as anti-negro, since as higher wage earners they would pay proportionally more tax than the rural population. However, since the Indians were the largest section of the population, there seemed small chance of the P.N.C, as a predominantly African party, defeating the P.P.P. electorally. For that reason the P.N.C. attempted to broaden the basis of its support. It soft-pedaled its socialist rhetoric to effect a merger with the United Democratic Party, a conservative party of the coloured middle class. It also played on Afro-Guyanese fears that the Indians would take over the country permanently. Ginger groups like the Society for Racial Equality preached that independence under Jagan would mean that Africans would become slaves to Indians, and advocated the division of the country into racial zones.¹⁰¹ Then after the P.P.P. won the 1961 elections, the P.N.C. engaged in extra-parliamentary activity in alliance with Peter D'Aguiar, the colony's biggest local capitalist and leader of the extreme right-wing United Force party, to try to bring down the Jagan Government. With the aid of C.I.A. money the P.N.C. engineered a political strike, including the civil service, against the Government. Demonstrations in Georgetown turned into violence against Indians and the looting of Indian property.¹⁰² Five lives were lost on the day recorded as 'Black Friday' in Martin Carter's poem:

were some who ran one way.
 were some who ran another way.
 were some who did not run at all.
 were some who will not run again.¹⁰³

Though the P.P.P. Government survived, it stumbled from crisis to crisis, and Jagan was outmanoeuvred by the British Government and its American masters into accepting a proportional representation system of election. To the Indian supporters of the P.P.P. it seemed that power was being taken from them. Violence broke out again, this time in the rural areas. In 1964 Guyana was in a state of virtual civil war, some

176 persons lost their lives and about 15,000 people were forced to flee from their homes. When elections were held in that year the P.P.P. again had a majority over the P.N.C., but under the P.R. system the minority U.F. secured more seats than before, and a cynical post-electoral alliance between it and the P.N.C. ensured that the P.P.P. was removed from office. Independence came to Guyana in 1966 with the two communities as far apart as they had ever been.¹⁰⁴ As the Guyanese poet Slade Hopkinson noted in a poem ironically titled 'Guyana: Freedom Year':

Note well: across the country's face,
Mocking hypocrite pose and creed,
Enmities of blood and race
Branch like rivers, and disgrace
Each father's seed. 105

Although the situation stabilised with the entrenchment of the P.N.C. Government, this was due largely to the demoralisation of the P.P.P. and the incapacity of the Indian population to mount the same kind of disruption that the P.N.C. had organised in the capital. Dr. Burnham made efforts to present himself as a national leader with well-publicised attendances at Indian cultural festivals and the appointment of a few Indians to token positions in his Government. But the regime's attitude to the position of the Indian majority was more faithfully indicated in an interview Burnham gave in which he asserted that only 'some of the more racist' Indians were complaining about discrimination in the public service, and justified the imbalance by saying:

...I think that they [the Indians] have merely shown a greater aptitude in that field [the trading sector] in the same way that the African has basically shown a greater aptitude¹⁰⁶ where the skills, administrative or otherwise, are concerned.

He was in effect justifying the natural right of the Afro-Guyanese to govern Guyana, but a reference to the predominance of the Indians in the trading sector was both misleading and hypocritical. At the time of the interview, the trading sector was still dominated by the multinational giant Bookers Ltd., and the P.N.C. was already in the process of putting under party control many sectors of the local economy which had been dominated by Indian ownership.¹⁰⁷

By the elections of 1968, the P.N.C. was already well down the road of electoral corruption and the creation of a one-party dictator-

ship.

The response of the imaginative arts in Guyana to the years between 1957-1968, of racial separation, civil war and the reversal of ethnic hegemony, was largely one of stunned silence. Apart from a handful of poems written at the time of the racial troubles, it was not until 1978 that the first novel which dealt with the years of violence, Beatrice Archer's Poison of My Hate, appeared. In contrast, in the immediate aftermath of the Nigerian civil war, a spate of work by major Nigerian writers appeared which tried to make sense of the events which had split their country in two.¹⁰⁸ There are several reasons for the paucity of the Guyanese response. Firstly, most of Guyana's most talented writers were in exile, secondly there were strong political pressures in the period after 1964 on writers not to deal with the events of 1961-1964 because the P.N.C. Government wished to maintain a myth of racial harmony to mask the actual discrimination it countenanced.¹⁰⁹ Its nervousness in this respect was signified by its decision to ban the showing of the Trinidadian film Bim in 1975 on the grounds that :

in the context of Guyana's recent history, the stark exploration of East Indian, African antagonism, although set in Trinidad, would be detrimental to the national effort to mould a unified Guyanese society, and would tend to raise to the surface sensitivities which Guyanese were in the process of overcoming. 110

The film's scriptwriter, Raoul Pantin, saw the Guyanese decision as 'a failure to confront those historical forces which have structured Guyanese society and which the present regime use to remain in power'.

However, the Afro-Guyanese writing of the period does reflect, though it mostly fails to analyse, the growth of African fears of Indian political and economic ambitions and the increasing hostility between the races. The only contemporary literary treatment of the split between Africans and Indians is a naive and escapist story by Donald A. Robinson, 'Laura,'¹¹¹ (1957) in which a wealthy young Indian doctor falls in love with a Black girl from the slums of Tiger Bay. and, despite all the class and ethnic pressures put on him, still marries his African beauty. There is, of course, the work of Wilson Harris, which in its oblique

and visionary way, also responds to contemporary Guyanese reality. His work, in particular The Far Journey of Oudin (1961), is discussed in Chapter Nineteen, but it is worth noting that this novel also starts from the point of Afro-Guyanese stereotypes of Indian economic aggressiveness and racial exclusiveness.

In Jan Carew's first novel, Black Midas (1958), the nature of his portrayal of the Indian presence quite noticeably differs from that of his short stories written while the P.P.P. was still a unified movement. The passage of Aron (Shark) through the house of Dr. Ram serves as a thematic contrast to the heroic creole odyssey Aron then embarks on. At first Dr. Ram appears as urbane and sensitive as we are told he is; then he is revealed to be a sly and secretive miser:

He looked at money with reverence. When the last patient had left the surgery in the evenings, he locked the door and took a large iron cannister out of the cupboard...

'You alone know of my secret, Aron,' he said opening the cannister and taking out a handful of silver coins.¹¹²

His miserliness contrasts with the titanic generosity of the adult Shark's spending in his porkknocker days. While at Ram's house, Aron is also seduced by his teenage daughter, Indra, exotically and stereotypically described as having laughter 'like tadjah bells' and 'the grace of the Hindus'. She is sexually voracious, with the 'cunning of an ocelot' to deceive her parents, and when she fights with Aron, she is like a 'leopard...all claws and fangs.' Having permitted him to turn her into a woman, Indra then dispenses with Aron's favours and marries a well-to-do Indian man. The portrayal turns on the Afro-creole stereotype that the Indian woman wants the Black man's sexual vigour, but is racially prejudiced against him. Indra screams at Aron that he is a 'Black beast, Black brute.'¹¹³

The extent to which even as good a writer as Carew could become trapped in the racial hostilities of the period is illustrated by his fourth novel, Moscow Is Not My Mecca (1964), which was written after Carew's break with the P.P.P., who had offered him the job of Director of Culture in 1962. The overt thesis of the novel is the disillusion-

ment of third-world students in the U.S.S.R. and the warning that Russia was becoming a new-style colonialist power. The subtext is Carew's quarrel with the neo-Stalinist leadership of the P.P.P. of Dr. Jagan ('who talks as though he would like to hand us over bound hand and foot to the Russians'¹¹⁴). Though the novel reveals little about Soviet society not already known, it does reveal something of the feelings of the few Afro-Guyanese who had stayed close to the P.P.P. but were then forced to reconsider their position as Africans and Indians turned on each other. What the novel reveals, in particular, is the difficulty many, in addition to Carew, found in trying to keep ideological and racial issues separate.

Guyanese racial politics intrude into the Moscow scene in the intrigues within the Guyanese Students Union, whose ethnic imbalance reflects Afro-Guyanese accusations that the P.P.P. discriminated against them. It is overwhelmingly an Indian group with 'a handful of negroes for window dressing.' All this might have faithfully reflected the 'facts' as told Carew by the Afro-Guyanese informant whose story forms the basis of the novel. What reveals the racial animus behind its writing is the way that heroes and villains divide along racial lines. The Indians are either peasant simpletons or devious Stalinists; only the Negroes like Malcolm and Jojo are principled and intelligent enough to see through the Moscow illusions. In particular, the character of the Indian student leader, Hardy, is too overburdened with the author's spleen to be wholly credible: he is too shallow, two-faced, racially prejudiced and slyly treacherous. Carew also seems unaware of the racialist assumptions behind Malcolm's advice to his friend: 'All we can do is play a minority game, throw in our votes for one Indian candidate who might be less racialist than another.'¹¹⁵

However, the events of 1964 also produced from Carew a response of quite a different order. His long poem, 'Requiem For My Sister,'¹¹⁶ is a deeply considered and movingly expressed response to a personal loss

ear, of the spontaneous invention of the tactical and strategic problems that are bound to arise. ¹¹⁸

By 1970 the Burnham Government, under the influence of ASCRIA (the African Society for Social Relations with Independent Africa), was cultivating an aggressively Pan-Africanist image. It funded liberation movements in Africa and declared an open arms policy to Black victims of racist oppression in the U.S.A. and other parts of the world. ¹¹⁹ The irony of a Government busily destroying democracy at home, and practicing racial discrimination against the Indian majority, was not lost on the Indian opposition. The fact that the victims of racist oppression so warmly embraced by the Burnham Government included Jim Jones's People's Temple, ¹²⁰ and Rabbi Washington whose House of Israel thugs rapidly became the P.N.C.'s own goon-squad for breaking strikes and breaking-up opposition demonstrations, ¹²¹ hardly inspired confidence in the Government's racial position. However, by 1970-1971, growing unemployment, rising prices, Government corruption (in 1967 \$19.5 M of Government expenditure could not be accounted for) ¹²² and the conspicuous consumption of the new party elite engendered popular discontent with the Government. Then an unofficial strike in the bauxite industry brought ASCRIA into open conflict with the Government and with the independent workers' movement. Eusi Kwayana was sacked from his job as Chairman of the Guyana Marketing Corporation and ASCRIA members were purged from positions in the Government and party. At the same time, ASCRIA clearly reviewed their position in the light of the evidence that the black working class was more interested in bread than race. ¹²³ Even so, ASCRIA's contribution to the politics of race in Guyana can be looked at both positively and negatively. It undoubtedly acted for a time as the ideological justification of the P.N.C.'s racial chauvinism, but it can also be seen, in Lloyd Best's words, as the first serious attempt to come to terms with the Afro-Saxon heritage 'which so debilitates him [the Afro-Creole] and erects a barrier between himself and the Indian subculture in the rural areas.' ¹²⁴ The subsequent development of close relationships between ASCRIA and its Indian counterpart IPRA, would seem to confirm Best's

analysis.

At the same time as ASCRIA was splitting from the P.N.C., a number of other radical groups, such as Ratoon, Movement Against Oppression, the Workers Vanguard Party and the Indian Peoples Revolutionary Association, emerged in opposition to the P.N.C.'s increasing authoritarianism and the mutually supporting racialisms of the P.N.C. and the P.P.P. These autonomous groupings recognised that Africans and Indians had separate cultural identities, that the colonial economy had left the groups differing economic interests and above all, that no single ethnic group could hope to achieve material and cultural dignity and security at the other's expense. Increasingly these groups co-operated in organising opposition to the Government, publishing a much harried news-sheet, Dayclean and eventually coming together to form the Working People's Alliance.¹²⁵

In response to this upsurge of opposition and the stark failure of its attempts to run Guyana as a mixed economy, the P.N.C. leadership abruptly became revolutionary socialists. The process began in 1971 with the nationalisation of the Canadian-owned Demba bauxite mines and reached its conclusion in the state takeover of Bookers' sugar and commercial concerns in Guyana. These actions were widely welcomed by most of the Guyanese population, though the manner in which the P.N.C. party apparatus has subsequently run these concerns has pleased nobody except the party beneficiaries. At the same time, the P.N.C., which had come to power with C.I.A. money, sought direct party relations with the Cuban Communist Party and close relations with the Soviet Union and China. As a consequence, the P.P.P. has been effectively neutralised as an opposition, particularly when it emasculated itself by declaring its critical support for the Government. In the meantime, the P.N.C. was making Guyana a virtual one-party dictatorship as it declared the paramountcy of the party over the various organs of the state (1973), made Burnham an executive president with supra-legal powers (1980) and, not content with putting the police and army under party

control, created the Guyana National Service and the People's Militia as the party's own armed wing. Over 90% of the personnel in each of these organisations is Afro-Guyanese. Somewhat superfluously the P.N.C. has continued to hold elections which are rigged with ever more cynical fraudulence. Although the P.N.C. has won over a small number of former P.P.P. politicians and rewarded them with prominent but token positions, the P.N.C. remains a party which serves the interests of the Afro-Guyanese middle class and which depends on the support of the wider Afro-Guyanese population.¹²⁶

'Socialism' has served the economic interests of the black elite very well since it provided the legitimation for giving them control of the economy in which formerly they had had no foothold. Within a liberal capitalist economy, Indian businessmen and the bigger rice-farmers were easily outstripping the black middle-class. Now even those sectors of the economy which are not under direct state control are largely in the inefficiently bureaucratic hands of party supporters.

Similarly, the Government's cultural policies have been aimed at giving Guyana a uniform 'national' cultural identity, which is essentially Afro-Guyanese, and destroying as far as possible the independence and autonomy of Indian culture. Supine Indian organisations are swallowed up by the party and recalcitrant ones are persecuted.¹²⁷

The one real threat to the P.N.C. came from the Working People's Alliance between 1979-1980, when, under the dynamic leadership of Walter Rodney it was beginning to win widespread support amongst both the Afro and Indo-Guyanese communities. Recognising this threat the Government arranged for the assassination of Rodney, a blow from which the W.P.A. has never recovered.¹²⁸

In the 1980's the Government seems almost to have made a tool of its economic mismanagement in bankrupting Guyana. In the absence of foreign exchange, the Government's food policies have reduced many Guyanese to near starvation level and submissive despair. Only rum is

cheap. There is also a thriving black economy in which large fortunes are being made by a few, both Africans and Indians. Law and order and the basic services of health and sanitation have all but collapsed. The police force is corrupt and racially arrogant. In such an environment race relations are tense. However, this is never admitted in the blanket of misinformation and lies the party-controlled media wraps over the country.

Indian households suffer extensively from violent crimes by Afro-Guyanese gangs, some suspected of containing off-duty policemen. In turn, Indian villages have set up vigilante groups, and Afro-Guyanese, caught by Indians, engaged in praedial larceny would be lucky to escape with a fearful beating. One notes that in the city no Indian taxi driver will willingly pick up Afro-Guyanese passengers; since the majority of taxis are Indian owned, resentments inevitably smoulder. What makes the situation so grim is the strong suspicion that were the P.N.C. ever to feel really challenged, its leadership would have no qualms about stirring up racial hatred against the Indians. The presence of Guyana Defence Force camps in the middle of the Indian sugar areas is an ominous sign of how the Government is likely to respond.¹²⁹

It is astonishing that the present hideous reality in Guyana has any interpreters at all. It is noticeable though that of those still based in the country, only the Afro-Guyanese have dared to speak out. But there is inevitably not much writing, particularly fiction, which is being written inside the country. It is not hard to name the reasons. Virtually every established Guyanese novelist, dramatist or poet, with the exceptions of A.J. Seymour and Martin Carter, has gone into exile. Carter, the national poet of Guyana, had his ribs broken by P.N.C. thugs when he joined a demonstration against the Government. There are also very practical reasons for the absence of much writing. Paper is either unobtainable or impossibly expensive. In the summer of 1984 a ream of paper cost over \$120 G. (approx. £25, well over the average weekly wage). Virtually all the fiction written by Guyanese authors since 1970, has been written outside the country, and tends to deal with the recent

past rather than the immediate present. The only locally written Afro-Guyanese stories of the post-1970 period which deal with the Indian presence, Rudolph Ten-Pow's 'Raymond and Sonita,'¹³⁰ (1971) a sentimental tale of Indian poverty, and Franklyn Langhorne's 'Me Kyant Tek It,'¹³¹ (1981) a sentimental tale of racial harmony, manifestly avoid more sensitive themes. Poets have evidently felt freer to comment. Ayodele in 'Race' and 'Black Man and Coolie man' in his collection Smoke and Fire¹³² (1982) calls for racial unity against the regime, whilst Sardar Asare in 'Padam for a Tabla and Sitar' in Poems of Separation (1981) celebrates the continuing independence of the Indian cultural tradition, though the sounds of Indian music recalls a thwarted affection :

Long...Long I'll ponder

That she and I,

Unlike that other 'star-crossed' pair,

For our race-crossed love dared not die,

But stilling the stir of our bloods

Suffer our hearts to fret,

And our souls to pine mutely in despair. 133

In the work of those novelists who wrote and published abroad, both personal and social aspects of the relationships between Blacks and Indians are explored more closely than in any previous Afro-Guyanese fiction. Even in Angus Richmond's A Kind of Living¹³⁴ (1978), concerned mainly with the struggle of a black man from the slums of Albouystown for racial and social dignity, there is a sub-theme which deals with Willie Abbott's relationship with Dwarka Singh, an old ex-indentured beggar in Georgetown. The relationship shows Abbott's growing consciousness of the parallel oppression suffered by Indians and reveals a human decency which his antagonistic passage through a harsh life rarely allows Abbott to express. Although Richmond sentimentalises the relationship in an otherwise toughly written work of social realism, he also shows that many of the black working class held anti-Indian prejudices. It is a worthy, but not wholly successful part of the novel, un-integrated into the whole and the occasion for sermonising rather than narration. The treatment of the Indian presence suggests a sense of duty rather than any imaginative grasp of it as part of Guyanese life.

The same cannot be said of Roy Heath's trilogy, From The Heat of The Day (1979), One Generation (1981) and Genetha (1981), perhaps the most imaginative and richly documented attempt so far, within a realist fictional model, to portray a broad span of Guyanese life. The novels deal with the social, racial and cultural tensions within a coloured lower-middle class family, the Armstrongs, and, in One Generation, with how those tensions shape their ambivalent relationship to the Indian world.

In From The Heat Of The Day¹³⁵, set in the 1920's, the Indian world represents no more than an occasional refuge from the pressures of respectable, repressed lower-middle class life. Armstrong discovers that his teacher friend, Doc, has been spending his weekends in the country with his Indian mistress, Baby, and her mother, learning to relax and 'walk around without a shirt.' Armstrong envies Doc's arrangement, his possession of Baby with her 'languid carriage' and absence of sexual inhibitions, but both Doc and Armstrong evidently see the arrangement as merely a more pleasant and relaxed alternative to the brothels of Georgetown. Doc treats the scarcely literate Baby with an affectionately proprietorial contempt.

Rohan Armstrong's involvement with the Mohammed family in One Generation is altogether more deep. Set in the 1940's the novel portrays the contact as between individuals from communities which are both suffering from the tensions of change. The social and cultural position of families like the Armstrongs has become less stable as competition from Blacks and Indians increases. Whereas in the 1920's, the coloured middle class confidently assume their Afro-Saxon cultural superiority, by the 1940's the latent tensions within that world have reached breaking point. There had been a world in which a strict sexual morality had repressed desires, except those illicitly released by the men's philanderings in the slums of the city. As those religiously sanctioned restrictions crumble, incompatible guilts and urges to

sexual satiation are thrown into the open. The cultural barriers between them and the Afro-Guyanese have begun to collapse. Rohan's father, suffering from filariasis, has taken to seeing a Black healer who prays to 'Jehovah and the blood of Africa.' Rohan contracts a friendship with Fingers, a youth from the slums, through whom he discovers the 'uninhibited' pleasures of black proletarian life. Rohan, however, is shocked to hear his father sing an Afro-Christian hymn, fearful of becoming too involved with Fingers, and absolutely disgusted when he discovers that his sister has slept with Fingers. It is a world which is rotting as surely as the family house and Armstrong's decaying body. It is against this background that Rohan discovers the Indian world through his friendship with Mr. Mohammed, the 'grave witty scholar', his colleague in the civil service. Rohan's decision to become more involved with this family is part of his revolt against the shell of his own group's pretensions. When he resolves to take a post up-country to be near Mohammed's married daughter, Indrani, with whom he has become infatuated, he thinks:

What did he owe society, which had foisted on him the participation in a daily ritual, devoid of meaning, a society that was unmindful of his own private aspirations. 136

His contact with the Mohammeds is strongly disapproved of by his father and sister. Armstrong regards Indians as 'ruffians' and his sister, (at this stage still virginally pure) suspects an affair, 'something obscene and unpardonable.' ^(p 26) When Indrani calls on the Armstrongs' house one Sunday, Genetha clearly feels that the holy day is being desecrated by the heathen presence. Even Rohan suspects that his inability to talk about the Mohammeds to his family hides his shame. Indeed, knowing that Genetha disapproves keeps Rohan away from his friends for some time. Even though his love for Indrani, and, as a substitute, her sister, Dada, binds Rohan inextricably through the Indian world, it quite frequently appears strange and outlandish to him, once he has moved outside the creolised Mohammed family home. Heath shows how Rohan's involvement with the Mohammeds is limitingly self-centred. He is only interested in the relaxed, joyful side of Indian life. When Mr. Mohammed

tries to tell Rohan something of the hardships of rural Indian life, he is just not interested. His use of the Indian world is even more evident in his treatment of Ramjohn, his badly-paid clerk at Suddie. Before Dada comes to live with him, Ramjohn is Rohan's constant companion. However, there are limits:

Rohan, generous and broadminded, nevertheless suffered from the limitations of all his class. Ramjohn was thrust into the background whenever there were guests, and although he found this only proper, Rohan was conscience-stricken over his own cowardice. (p.109)

When Dada comes to him, Rohan ignores Ramjohn and expresses his surprise that the Indian, who has been so flattered by his attention, is so offended by his neglect. Rohan pays for this lack of imagination and sensitivity with his life. Equally self-centred is Rohan's decision to go to Suddie in the first place, for Mohammed has warned him that his presence there will make life hard for Indrani:

If you so much as look at Indrani they'll start gossiping; and when that happens, God help her! Remember she's a Mohammedan. If his parents get to know of her association with you in Vreed-en-Hoop they'll carve her up.' (p.102)

Above all, Rohan is wholly unaware of the tensions within the Indian world, tensions which distress to the point of provoking the most violent of responses. As a person escaping from a 'rotten structure', Rohan assumes too readily that the freedom he seeks is what is sought by others. He has no idea how desperately the Alis, Indrani's husband's family, will fight to protect what appears to Rohan a repressive culture.

Heath's portrayal of the ambivalences and limitations of Creole perceptions of the Indian world is admirably done; his portrayal of that world itself is altogether more questionable.

He portrays the Indian Muslim world as split between those who feel suffocated within its 'narrow' proprieties and those who are trying to protect its boundaries. Its uniformity has been rent by education and creolisation. The Mohammeds, living in Vreed-en-Hoop on the West Bank of the Demerara are in contact with Georgetown and the Creole world; the Alis, living in Suddie on the Essequibo Coast, a steamer's journey away, feel that they preserve an 'uncontaminated form of

Indian Muslim life, though they are more affected by contact than they care to think. However, even those breaking from the 'purely' Indian world are uncertain about how far they should become involved in the Guyanese world. Mr. Mohammed needs Rohan's company as his only means of access to talk about books and politics, yet he too feels pressured. At the end of the novel he tells Dada:

The world is changing too fast for me...Some worm is eating at the family. My father's family was like my grandfather's and probably like his father's. Not so now. It's like having to learn a new language when you're old. (p.145)

For his daughters, Indrani and Dada, part of Rohan's attraction is his being part of what they see as a freer world. Education has made Indrani's life with the spoiled, immature Sidique Ali a constant misery.

As her father says:

You see what education does? It only separates people from the stock they came from. When I was a boy you could wander into a stranger's house and talk to him as if you'd been life-long friends. Now everyone's on his guard, looking over his shoulder as if his shadow might pounce on him. (p.33)

In the Ali household, Indrani leads a bored vacuous existence. Her education and intelligence constantly infuriate her husband, driving him to try to humiliate her, but knowing that his outbursts of impotent rage only demonstrate her superiority. Mrs. Ali takes a 'malicious delight' in the evidence of strife. 'I did always say so,' she kept telling herself. 'Education don make a good wife. What she want is the whip.'^(p.111) It is in reaction to the restrictions of the Ali household that Indrani is prepared to risk all for Rohan. Similarly Dada, though she loves Rohan for his own qualities, is drawn to him because he offers the possibility of escape from the kind of domestic oppression she sees her sister and Deen, Ramjohn's wife, suffering. It is after an embarrassing visit to Ramjohn's house that Dada quarrels with Rohan about the way that Ramjohn treats Deen, a worn-out mother of seven children at the age of twenty-six. Rohan defends Ramjohn as a better Indian husband than most but:

Dada refused to be reconciled, unable to drive out of her mind the image of Deen clad in white, the colour of death. (p.26)

Heath reinforces the picture of what Dada flees from by showing the wretchedness of Deen's life and her suicide very graphically. Before

she kills herself she protests to her family: 'You all trample me from morning to night and then you say I don't sing no more...'^(p.141) Yet even the young are not sure where they should be going. Indrani is sent by her father-in-law to plead with Rohan to send Dada away because the Alis feel that her presence in his house is a shame to them.:

Deep down, she thought to herself, she was on the Alis' side. If people wanted to behave like that they should go and live in some isolated place. This depravity was like a drug, the more you took it the more you needed it. When all was said and done Boysie Rohan and Dada were insulting not only the Alis, but herself as well. (p.165)

The Alis have no doubts; they only feel threatened by contact with a 'freer' world. When, for instance, Rohan calls on Indrani at her father's house, unaware that Sidique has come to take her back to Suddie, his presence provokes Sidique into betraying all his pent-up sense of inferiority as he behaves with deliberate crudity, trying to humiliate Indrani in front of Rohan and boasting of his ignorance and power and Rohan's education and powerlessness. For Mr. Ali, who believes in 'Like to like! We Mohammedans don't go round hob-nobbing weself', (p.131) Dada's behaviour is a grave breach in the boundaries of the world he is trying to preserve. Behind the deviousness and crudity of his behaviour (his first instinct is always to try to bribe people) there is fear. He tells Indrani:

Is this feeling of insecurity that make me behave like an animal. Do you know I have never been to Georgetown once to have a good time.... I hate meself, but I kian't change. (p.152)

In so many ways the middle class creole world and the Indian Muslim world are mirror images of each other. Rohan has left his home partly to escape from the incestuous feelings he has for his sister. He can love the Mohammed family 'without the hate and dismay' with which he loves his own family. But he then finds himself involved with the Alis who nurture their own incestuous inwardness. As old Mrs. Ali thinks after Indrani's and Rohan's murder by Ramjohn:

Indrani gone, like we did want. Armstrong and Dada gone, like we did want. And the family together again. All they got to do is listen to me and nothing'd ever go wrong. (p.200)

Although Heath gives the impression of observing and never overtly

preaching, it is hard not to feel that there is a message here. Nevertheless, if he feels that the coming together of cultures is ultimately a resource, a means of escaping from an inward narrowness, his novel has the scrupulous honesty of observing how painful and open to misconception those initial contacts may be.

However, though I feel his novel gives an admirably incisive view of the nature of the Afro-Creole response to the Indian world and a highly imaginative portrayal of the complexities of their mutual involvement, his depiction of the Indian world remains limited by its ethnocentric assumptions. There is, for instance, a difference between his sympathetic inward treatment of the more creolised Mohammeds and the cruder, more external treatment of the Ali household, where he tends to fall back on stereotypes: on Sidique's brooding jealousy, on the violence within the family, on the way that money plays a dominant role in family relations. It is not that Heath is unaware that the behaviour he portrays conforms to popular stereotypes. For instance, the ranger in the Suddie district office tells Ramjohn:

You know what eating you up?...What eating you is that Mr. Armstrong been more friendly to you than the other chief clerks. Yes! the others did treat you like a dog and you did prefer that. You coolie people, if you not cutting somebody throat you licking their boots.' (p. 159-160)

Everything in Ramjohn's subsequent behaviour confirms that stereotype. As the narrator remarks, 'A life of boot-licking had left its mark on him.' (p. 109) Heath is not suggesting anything intrinsically Indian in Ramjohn's stereotypic behaviour, for he carefully relates it to the tenuousness of his position in the civil service and his bitterness over the gulf between his educated ambitions and his poverty. However, Heath is not entirely convincing in showing Ramjohn's response to his situation as sufficient motive for him to murder Rohan and Indrani. Again, Heath goes to some lengths to show that both Sidique and his father have some consciousness and shame over their behaviour, but an inability to act differently. At times Heath's treatment suggests both an endorsement of the truth of the stereotype and a liberal attempt to excuse or explain it. Yet these are Creole stereotypes, and Heath's characteris-

ation of Mr. Ali's motives for protecting his world as: 'You want to see our women ending up smoking or going to work?' ^(p.150) deliberately trivialises. His ideological position is made plain in the description of Sidique's feelings as he is held in jail, falsely suspected of the murders:

A new life was germinating in him, he felt, for within the four walls of his confinement he dared to do more than he did when he was free; to challenge what was accepted in his father's house. Here he dreamed and he dared... His greatest injustice to Indrani had been forcing her to live in his parents' house. Should he ever leave this hole he would marry again and set up house among the sand hills and bring up his son as he wanted, even at the risk of being a pariah in the Mohammedan community. (p.142)

The other ethnocentric element in the novel, which stands out even more clearly in relationship to the novels of Carew, discussed above, and Archer, discussed below, is Heath's portrayal of the sexual relationship between Creole and Indian. At one level Heath's portrayal of the power of sexual passion has a powerful poetic truth. It is simply one force which collides with others: class, race and religious feelings. Heath delivers no sentimental message over the power of love to redeem. It brings moments of bliss but also leads people to behave in selfish and deceitful ways. At the same time Heath's treatment of the sexuality of Indian women seems, however, just a little too much beholden to Creole stereotypes. Indrani, Dada and Doc's still young mistress, Baby, all thrust themselves eagerly on Rohan. In part Heath no doubt intends to show their behaviour as a healthy contrast to the guilt-ridden sexuality of the petit-bourgeois coloured world, but in the wholly gratuitous scene when Baby seduces Rohan on the night of his father's death, there is the familiar stereotype of the exotically sensuous Indian woman:

She crawled over to him on the other side of the bed, where he had taken refuge, sat by him and kissed him in her clinging manner. Rohan found her style irresistible and allowed himself to be seduced. No doubt, at the end of the second bout he would again feel disgusted...
...She was the banquet of the flesh he had dreamed of... her wanton limbs had plagued him in his sleep. (p.89)

The same stereotype of the Indian woman's sexuality plays an important role in Beatrice Archer's Poison of My Hate (1978), an equally

serious though less subtle and self-aware attempt to explore Afro-Indian relations. The novel is set in the aftermath of the racial riots of 1962 when the mother and sisters of Ken Daniels, a young Afro-Guyanese boy, are murdered by Indians who bomb their home on the West Coast of the Demerara, where they have lived happily in an Indian area for many years. The boy and his headmaster father then move to the island of Leguan in the Essequibo river, an area which in its peasant backwardness and isolation from political ferment, largely escaped the racial conflicts of the time. The novel portrays with great honesty how the father's and son's former affection for Indians turns to hatred and distrust. In time Ken's father forgives, but Ken nurtures a poisonous hatred and tries to infect the peaceful area with his venom. In his teens he meets Sandra, an attractive Indian girl, whom he determines to seduce as an act of racial revenge. However, Sandra who is much more sexually experienced, seduces him. He is torn between desire for her and the urge to hurt her. However, when he disgraces her and humiliates her father and she will have nothing more to do with him, he begins to feel rejected and love-sick, especially when he learns that her father has arranged a marriage for her. Finally, he begins to reconsider his racial attitudes and in time convinces Sandra and her even more reluctant father, that he is sincere. They marry in an atmosphere of 'peace ...of love and goodwill.'

Poison Of My Hate is undoubtedly a novel with its heart in the right place with its plea for tolerance and warning on the self-destructive nature of racial hatred. It is acute on the psychology of that hatred, showing Ken detached but aware of his better feelings though powerless to resist the urge to hurt. It deals frankly with the nature of Afro-Guyanese prejudices against Indians (coolies are liars, cruel, devious, dishonest) and the unreasonableness of hating a people for the misdeeds of individuals.

However, it is also moralistic and simplistic. After Ken has seen

the light, he starts delivering lectures on the sameness of blood under the skin. The basic theme of the novel is that love conquers all, 'purifies the heart and soul' and redeems Ken from his racial hatred. However, it is not merely that the novel preaches; its action fails in critical ways to support the text. For instance, although Ken, the narrator, uses phrases such as 'She and I naked were hungry souls' and 'Each time I thrust I seemed to go deeper into her, into the world that must be love.' ^(p. 121) the account of the affair never suggests more than a physical infatuation with Sandra's voluptuous charms. It is only after she very understandably rejects him that he belatedly considers her as a person with 'an enormous amount of understanding and common-sense.' It is more a case of lust conquers all. The novel is equally unconvincing in its portrayal of Ken's conversion from racial hatred and Sandra's father's from his unwillingness to allow his daughter to marry a black man. Both conversions come after Sandra has preached sermons on the unrighteousness of racism. For Ken, 'the burden of hate I carried all the years suddenly dropped and disappeared into nothingness.' ^(p. 176) Mr. Surju, who up to that point has been threatening, not without some reason, to chop Ken with his cutlass, says: 'I mus be goin mad too but I tink I'm beginning to believe wat dese fools are saying.' And then he grins 'to no-one in particular.' ^(p. 240)

It is, as I have said, a novel with its heart in the right place, but also an unreflective one which fails to present a coherent point of view. It is frequently observant in a naturalistic way, but several of the observations serve only to show that its thesis, that race feelings exist only because selfish politicians have injected them into the national bloodstream, is absurdly simplistic. 'Blacks and Indians were brothers of one country and one heritage' ^(p. 1) we are told; Guyana should be like Leguan where 'Black and Coolie ... work hand in hand. We depend on each other for maintenance. We cannot survive separated.' ^(p. 43) Yet even on Leguan the novel suggests, casually, through conversations and small incidents, there are some of the root causes of the

racial conflict present, though these suggestions are never explored or faced up to. For instance, the fact that Indians seem to be overtaking the Africans in economic and educational progress is mentioned and then dropped. When Mr. Daniels starts giving extra lessons after school, only Indian children come and even when he starts giving lessons to black children free, they never stay. Despairingly he says: 'How could we possibly stop the Indians. We people have no zest, no zeal, we show no interest.' ^(p. 57) Similarly, under the surface of even peaceful Leguan there are tensions of economic disparity between the races. Ken is delighted to find that his friend Stanley and his gang engage in praedial larceny on Indian properties. Stanley explains:

'Ah tell yuh, dem Black byes does mek dem coolie ting go round. Dey does tief bad.... Only de coolie gat tings to steal. Yuh see we gat to break dem down. (p. 49)

Again, in the matter of sexual relationships, central to the novel, there are several observations which are subversive of the message that if only Blacks and Indians got together sexually, everything would be all right. Firstly, the novel hints that Black sexual attraction towards Indians stems from self-contempt. Ken stresses the blackness of his appearance several times and wonders why people should be attracted to him. He says: 'I was the ugliest in our family and everyone pampered me to soften my wound.' ^(p. 18) It is not difficult to suspect that 'ugliest really means 'blackest'. Ken's description of Indian girls stresses those features which make them desirable are non-African ones: 'brown, gracefully tall and slender with long flowing hair and flawless complexion.' ^(p. 75) Archer also touches on the resentment of black women in the face of that preference when Judy, the black girl Ken has seduced, as a means of taking his mind off Sandra, and then abandoned, protests: ^(p. 207) 'I know I can't fuck good enough like dem whoring Coolie gals.' It was resentments such as this which lay behind the participation of some black women in the sexual humiliations and brutal rapes of Indian women and girls at Wismar in 1964. At times Archer seems aware of what the theme of the novel implies as far as black women are concerned (there

are no Indian men interested in Black women in the novel), but she seems to be unaware that hinting at a connection between Ken's desire to breach the barriers of Indian racial exclusiveness and his racial self-contempt, rather undermines the positive treatment of his relationship with Sandra as a breakthrough in Afro-Indian harmony. For instance, she uses without question some of the familiar stereotypes about Indian women which either directly, or by implication, also stereotype the black woman. Ken tells us that Indian women are:

...not promiscuous the way Negro girls are although when night's shadow falls to cover the light, their veils of pretence seems uncovered. They become like snakes in the arms of the tamers. (p.75)

In particular, Indian women supposedly find black males irresistible, for although they will not marry them, 'nearly every Indian woman here has or has had a black lover.' Sandra's behaviour thoroughly conforms to the stereotype. She responds with eager submissiveness to Ken's advances, and though she also regularly lets her Indian boyfriend make love to her in the outdoor, urine-reeking bathroom, she would prefer to marry a negro:

Because they are so strong...These Indians don't know about love. In fact I think a black man makes a better lover. They fall in love then marry but Indians, they just arrange weddings. (p.99)

The descriptions of their lovemaking stress her sensuality and sexual luxuriance. By contrast, when Ken seduces Judy the description stresses her gaucheness and the small-breasted meagreness of her body.

The unreflecting acceptance of these stereotypes goes hand in hand with an equally unconsidered treatment of the significance of Ken's sexual conquest of Sandra and his marriage to her. He presents it in the floweriest language as a 'light in love's pathway. Sandra and I will have broken one of the most sacred customs of the Indian community which sets about to divide races.' (p.212) Apart from the illogic of dividing something which has never been together, it is curious that one should want to break something which other people find 'sacred'. It is a curious way to build racial harmony. But in reality, it becomes clear that the major ideological thrust of the novel is that Indians must be

forced to take down that barrier. Sandra insists: 'There must and should be room for such changes. Does our walled society have such room.' Ken says, with more threat than is recognised:

They're bound to perish with their own swords if they don't withdraw. They can never win this battle of division. (p.239)

It was views such as this that many Indo-Guyanese in real life saw as lying behind the pressures on them to 'integrate', where integration, they suspected, really means cultural and racial assimilation. There is no perception in the novel of why some Indians attempt to preserve marriage within their group, because there is no perception in the novel of there being any Indian cultural identity worth preserving. Indian culture is seen only in the stereotypes of Mr. Surju's racism, his distaste for love-matches, his violence to his daughter and his concern over his property. Sandra's view of this 'rotten Indian society, geared in dictating people's lives to the point of slavish subjugation' (p.239) and the conclusion of the novel where the wedding is seen as a precedent where a 'yoke was severed, the enchained were set free' (p.241) only serve to illustrate how ethno-centric the perspective of the novel is.

Both Poison of My Hate and James Bradner's Danny Boy (1981), which also deals with an interracial relationship during the period of the riots, touch on the extent to which Guyanese fell back on colonial attitudes in their shock at the violence. As one of the Daniel's black friends says in Poison of My Hate, 'Anything we black or coolie put our hand in must come to confusion.' In Danny Boy, an old blackman says:

De white people ain' gone yet, an we people owny burnin down one another house and killing up mattee. What gon happen when all de white people gone? Coolie man can run this country? Black man nah even own a proper cake-shop, he gon run country? (p.129)

The question remains rhetorical because Bradner's conceptualisation of the reasons for racial conflict are as simplistic as Archer's, and the perspective of the novel is as colonialised as the old man's question.

Danny Boy attempts to relate the fated relationship between black Danny Thorne and Indian Lily Serwall to the national conflicts between

the races. However, the social and political background is so vaguely and naively drawn, and the characters of both Lily and Danny so culturally 'saxonised', that no real exploration of the meeting of races and cultures ever takes place. The novel, which lacks the naturalistic honesty of Poison of My Hate, presumes to judge racism from a non-racial position, but the action and the judgements reveal a thoroughly Afro-Saxon bias. The barriers to the romance are all Indian, from Lily's father and from Danny's melodramatically portrayed rival, Somir. 'Cunning' Mr Serwall is a socially aspiring teacher with a 'craving for wealth and success', 'anxiety and greed...gleam in his eyes.' When he discovers Lily has been seen with Danny he thrashes her and tells her, 'Didn't she know that the thought of a nigger for a son-in-law would drive him insane.'^(p.41) He arranges for her to be married to an Indian: 'You'll see how miserable Blacks are...They want pity, attention, fine clothes, plenty of money... women, drink and music; that's a nigger in a nutshell.'^(p.61) When his plan fails because Somir rapes Lily, Serwall tries to hang himself. When Somir sees Lily with Danny it doubles him over in jealous anguish, his 'thoughts are soaked in gall'.^(p.34) After beating up Danny and raping Lily he heads for the forest where he lives as a deranged wild man until, 'his eyes staring, red and swollen...like a servant of the diabolical',^(p.126) he stabs Lily just before Danny is about to come home to marry her. Not content with this, Bradner puts further anti-Indian stereotypes in the mouth of Sam, apart from Lily, the only 'good' Indian in the novel. After being cheated by Somir he thinks of:

...those history cases where an Indian son would do his own mother out of property, or where brothers cut one another's throats for bigger shares immediately the parents' eyes were closed. Silently Sam conceded that sometimes he was ashamed of his own people. (p.23)

Somir is evidently intended as a local image of the 'madness' which afflicts the warring Blacks and Indians of the country. As Danny travels back from the city he wonders whether it was people like Somir 'who were responsible for these disasters.'^(p.114) Otherwise Bradner blames the politicians for the problems: the people are their innocent tools who

have little idea what is going on.

The portrayal of the relationship between Danny and Lily similarly betrays Bradner's Afro-Saxon biases. It is based, though Bradner does not recognise it, on self-contempt. Danny wants to be like his white foster-father and have 'silky, wavy hair', though he wishes his foster parents were a 'trifle brown-skinned'. His best friend is white and he is disturbed by the Indian accusation that Blacks are 'hopeless at business, poor decision makers' and a 'naturally destructive people.' ^(p101-102) He wonders whether these stereotypes apply to him. Similarly, Lily has no feelings about her culture or religion. 'She couldn't fathom why religion was that important when people were in love. Surely God was love!', and though she is at first put out by Danny's insistence that, 'There is only one Saviour,' ^(p.31) feeling that he overlooks Krishna, she soon accommodates herself to his point of view. By the end of the novel she is Christian, telling Danny with her dying breath that her fate is 'His will.' The intention behind the writing of Danny Boy was no doubt honourable, but the treatment of the theme is both trivial and frequently silly. Above all it demonstrates that no truthful novel about the racial conflicts of the 1960's can pretend to be above race and culture. All three novels discussed immediately above, Heath's, Archer's and Bradner's, revealingly echo both the structure and the images of many of the Euro-Creole novels discussed in the previous chapter. In doing so they suggest three things: the actual immaturity of Black-Indian relationships in Guyana, the continuing dominance of colonial ways of seeing, and the inability of the novelists, with the partial exception of Heath, to question their own cultural assumptions.

In Trinidad by the mid 1960's, the Creole nationalism of Dr. Williams was coming under increasing attack from within the Afro-Creole community. There was dissatisfaction with the economics of 'invitation' capitalism, subservience to the North American political axis, the continuing relationship between lightness of skin and socio-economic position,

and the cultural Afro-saxonism of the ruling elite. Three sections of the creole community were particularly dissatisfied: the radical intellectuals and students, a section of the trade union movement and the urban unemployed and semi-employed. For a brief period in 1970 these groups came together in the revolt of February of that year in which, following huge street demonstrations and an army mutiny, the government of Dr. Williams appeared to be on the point of collapse.¹⁴⁰ In the process of this revolt there seemed to have been a re-evaluation of the nature of Afro-Indian relations. After the mutiny collapsed the revolutionary moment faded, and though the elections of 1971 when 70% of the electorate boycotted the elections showed the extent of popular discontent, the P.N.M. has never subsequently lost its grip on the electoral loyalties of the vast majority of Afro-Trinidadians. In retrospect it would seem that Black Trinidadian attitudes to Indians have changed scarcely at all. Nevertheless, the events of 1970 and 1975 raised the issue of Afro-Indian relations more pertinently than ever before and stimulated a number of writers to explore the relationship in new ways.

For different sections of the Creole radical movement the Indians had different kinds of significance. For the intellectuals in the New World Group and its off-spring the Tapia House Movement and the United National Independence Party, political unity with Indian radicals represented the best chance of breaking from the shackles of ethnic party politics. C.L.R. James's West Indians of East Indian Descent (1965) had been one of the first attempts to analyse, from within, the failure of the P.N.M.'s pretensions to being a multi-racial party. Lloyd Best's 'From Chaguaranas To Slavery'¹⁴¹ was another seminal polemic on the abandonment by the P.N.M. of its original ideals. One of the main contributions of these radical groups to the re-assessment of Afro-Indian relationships¹⁴² came through their spawning of a briefly flourishing alternative radical press: Tapia, U.N.I.P.'s paper Moko, Vanguard, N.J.A.C.'s Liberation, the independent Marxist paper, New Beginning and campus papers such as Pivot, Pelican and Embryo. In each of these

journals there were attempts to analyse the nature of race relations, to create some awareness of the continuing vitality of Indian culture in Trinidad and publicise some of the new research being carried out on the Indian experience. There were articles acknowledging the values and skills possessed by the Indian community and seen to be needed by the whole society. Tapia's Lloyd Best saw the Indians as part of the area's culture of survival, with special skills in small farming and business, which depended on 'patient building from below,' and possessing an organic relationship to the land and a philosophical tradition which had much to offer a society submerged by North American consumerism. Similarly, Liberation saw the 'love and stability which a society built around the family structure that the Indian community is fighting to maintain can have' and the 'resourcefulness and admirable sense of collective sacrifice of the Indian people which are necessary qualities for our liberation.' Most valuably, the radical press printed articles by Indians which criticised the easy assumption that Afro-Indian unity could be based solely on shared hostility to the Government, and the feeling still held by some Creole radicals that Indian cultural assertion was incompatible with a radical social position.

There were occasions though, when it appeared that Afro-Indian unity was an opportunistic sentiment which could be turned on and off like a tap. Moko, for instance, went through a phase when the attempt to reflect Indian life faded and series like 'The Great Negro Stories' began to appear, along with sentimentally drawn illustrations of Afro-haired and dashikied Blacks and a North American black power idiom. Omowale, the leader of a black small business co-operative, which U.N.I.P. were supporting, wrote:

Africans and Indians unite...that seems to be the cry of the day; but remember you can't unite with anybody before you unite with yourself. 147

A couple of months later, the exclusively 'Afro' image faded and the emphasis on unity reappeared. There can be little doubt that this coincided with the political advantage of blazoning support for the

sugar workers whose struggles had come to the boil once again.

The relationship between Afro-Indian unity and the pan-African consciousness of the Black Power movement in Trinidad was one of the thorniest issues the radicals had to confront. Black radicalism in Trinidad had never been entirely free of anti-Indian undertones. During the early Black Power demonstrations in Port of Spain some Indian properties were attacked and, according to Brinsley Samaroo, then a Tapia supporter, Indians who participated in the marches were sometimes told by the Black rank and file: 'Indian, what you doin' in this march.'¹⁴⁸ The leadership of N.J.A.C. recognised how damaging this was and, in an effort to show that they wanted unity with Indian workers and peasants, organised a symbolic march from Port of Spain to Couva, heart of the Caroni sugar area. However, there was still no genuinely thought out policy towards the Indians. Initially the N.J.A.C. leadership seems to have taken over the Caribbeanised version of the Black Power philosophy expounded by Dr. Walter Rodney, then currently involved with 'grounding' with the sufferers and Rastafarians of Jamaica. His The Groundings With My Brothers (1969) represents a stage in his thinking before he returned to Guyana and confronted the problem of creating a new-style of Afro-Indian radicalism which respected the different culture of each group. Although Rodney, at the stage of his Jamaican involvement was adamant that Black Power must not be anti-Indian, his approach to the Indians simply included them within a movement defined by its opposition to the economic and cultural domination of Europe and North America in the Caribbean. Rodney asserted: 'I maintain that it is the white world which has defined who are Blacks - if you are not white then you are black.'¹⁴⁹ It was one of the lessons black radicals had to learn in Trinidad that Indians by no means wished to be subsumed within the black-white relationship. Gradually N.J.A.C. recognised that the Indian experience and struggle had to be seen as autonomous, and its attitudes towards Indian culture changed markedly. In 1969 Dave Darbeau, one of N.J.A.C.'s leaders had dismissed Indian cultural revivalism as

divisive: 'manoeuvres by old-school politicians and lacking in substance-
¹⁵⁰racism rather than culture.' A few years later N.J.A.C. was to see in
 Indian grass-roots culture one of the surviving non-European resources
¹⁵¹of their society, and their cultural rallies regularly featured Indian
 drumming, music and dancing.

The 'Indian question' was also of vital importance for the independ-
¹⁵²ent, radical sector of the trade union movement. In particular, George
 Weekes, Marxist leader of the Oilfields Workers Trade Union, recognised
 that a racially united working class was the precondition for achieving
 a revolutionary transformation of Trinidadian society. Weekes looked to
 develop a close relationship with the sugar workers union, particularly
 as it had shed the corrupt pro-company leadership of the old-style
 politician, Bhadase Maraj. In the same period there was a similar movement
 amongst the small cane-farmers to form a union separate from the Govern-
 ment controlled body, T.I.C.F.A.. These developments within the Indian
 community did much to convince creole radicals that the Indian workers'
 struggle was crucial to the working class movement as a whole, and they
 ought to have changed the black image of Indian workers as passive and
¹⁵³politically backward. Whether they did or not is difficult to say. How-
 ever, there is little evidence that the Black working class leadership
 really faced up to the fact that there were substantial economic inequ-
 alities between rural Indian workers and urban African industrial work-
 ers, or that there was racism within the trade union movement itself.
 Above all, the leadership of O.W.T.U. has never been able to break its
 membership from political support for the P.N.M., which they saw as
 protecting their relatively privileged position.

These factors, and no doubt the conflicting personal ambitions of
 the leadership, go a long way in explaining why the United Labour Front
 failed in its primary aim of uniting the African and Indian working
 class. In 1975, leaders of the sugar workers, cane farmers, oil and trans-
 port workers came together to form the front. Twenty thousand Africans
 and Indians attended its inaugural rally. However, following the defeat

of the front's industrial objectives and dissension within the leadership, it rapidly fell apart. By 1976, when it became a political party, the U.L.F. was simply an Indian party which replaced the D.L.P. ¹⁵⁴

The comparative stability and economic growth which Trinidad has enjoyed over the past dozen years, and the kind of patronage which a party which has been in continuous power for twenty-eight years can manipulate, has kept the P.N.M. and its brand of Afro-Saxon creole nationalism in a very strong position. In the 1981 elections, the P.N.M. won 52% of the votes cast and 72% of the Parliamentary seats. However, the oil boom is now over and the revenues which have cushioned Trinidad are disappearing. There is a widespread perception that there is much that is wrong with Trinidadian society. There is as yet no real national unity, and nor will there be as long as the Afro-Saxon middle class uses the power of the state to protect themselves from the economic enterprise of the Indian middle class, or as long as the rural areas, which don't vote P.N.M. are neglected. Nevertheless, it is clear that the P.N.M. cannot be defeated, or national unity created, except on the basis of an opposition which builds unity between Black and Indian, and not merely as an electoral gimmick. At present, the opposition is trying to construct a federation which brings together the Indian U.L.F., and the mainly middle class and creole parties, Tapia, the Democratic Action Congress and the Organisation for National Reconstruction into the National Alliance for Reconstruction. Whether this group can hold together its disparate ethnic and class interests remains to be seen. ¹⁵⁵

The Afro-Trinidadian imaginative literature of this period variously expresses the desire of the radicals for Afro-Indian unity, attempts to portray the Indian presence as part of a social whole, recognises the nature of Black attitudes towards Indians, and in some cases still expresses them. It is evident that in 1984 many sections of the Afro-Saxon middle class, which controls the Government, the civil service, the media and education, still fear Indian competition, still regard

Indian culture as inferior and irrelevant, still see Indians in terms of stereotypes and still do not regard their experience as genuinely Trinidadian.

The recognition that there was still much that kept Blacks and Indians apart is present in a number of stories and poems of this period. Anson Gonzalez in his short story, 'The Lime' ¹⁵⁶ and St. Clair Dorant's play, Panyard ¹⁵⁷ (1974) both deal with the hostility Indians sometimes experienced when they moved into Creole territory. Mwalima Efebo's 'Blind Man Cyah See,' in That Man May Live (1976), a fast-talking rap-poem, wittily and seriously attacks the stereotypes each group has of itself and the other. He savages the black man who believes that the world owes him a living:

ah stretching out mih hand
gih me a quarter man
I is a nigger

and suggests that this attitude, as well as colonial brainwashing, lies behind Black suspicions of Indian success:

Whey he got all dat land
he thief or something man
doh thrust the fellah
doh thrust the fellah
he love all coolie
he hate all nigger. 158

The emphasis on how each group has come to see the other through 'white' eyes is frequent, a theme which seems at times a shifting of responsibility onto an absent third party. In Merle Hodge's Crick-Crack Monkey (1970), however, the tragi-comic treatment of a miseducation, into a false way of seeing (that 'the Indian was an inferior, that he was primitive, pagan' ¹⁵⁹) is sufficiently rooted in very sharply portrayed social experience to avoid that suspicion. The novel records the passage of a black girl from being 'Ty' to being 'Cynthia', from the rich Afro-Caribbean culture of her black Tantie and her grandmother, to the pretentiously bourgeois Afro-Saxon culture of her coloured aunt, Beatrice, who is all cut glass to Tantie's rough diamond. Since the death of her mother, Ty has lived in the cheerfully raucous home of Tantie, in a mixed African and Indian area. It is the sight of Ty playing with

her Indian friends which decides Beatrice to take her away. Ty is swiftly corrupted by Beatrice's kindness and generosity and begins to see her former friends through her aunt's eyes. One passage which effectively shows what has been lost is Cynthia's submission to her aunt's wish that she should not go to her friend Moonee's wedding, 'that coolie affair'. Hodges suggests the decay of Cynthia's sensibility when she juxtaposes the precise, direct language of Ty's imagining what Moonee's wedding would be like with the vague and snobbishly evaluatory language Cynthia uses to describe the carnival she once looked forward to:

That night I lay awake for hours in a resentment mixed with apprehension. I thought of the wedding. I thought of Moonee mysteriously transfigured into a startingly pretty and fragile doll smothered in folds of delicate cloth and flowers and surrounded and petted by a drove of women vast and meagre, ...you could never recognise the bride for the tough young girl you had seen striding past morning and evening with a pitch-oil tin full of water on her head... 160

Carnival came, and I discovered that I did not even want to go home...I remembered in a flash of embarrassment Ramlal's inelegant truck...I reflected that even now Tantie and Todden, her brother whom Auntie B. does not take in because he is too black, must be packed into that ridiculous truck with all those common, raucous niggery people and all those coolies. 161

Crick-Crack Monkey is entertaining and often moving, one of the most successful in the genre of 'autobiographical naturalism' (which in Hodge's case rises to a level of genuine self-consciousness) but in many respects it says little more than C.L.R. James's Minty Alley had said in 1936. This is undoubtedly evidence of the durability of racial snobbery amongst the Afro-Saxon petit-bourgeoisie, but it is also evidence of another kind of stasis as well: the dominance of naturalism and the lack, with important exceptions, of innovation and philosophical enquiry in the Trinidadian novel.

Indeed, one still finds conventionally social-realistic treatments of the Indian presence which repeat the same air of sociological discovery found in the fiction of the early 1950's. For instance, Roseanne Brunton's 'Rum Sweet Rum' seems to declare itself an exposure of rural Indian poverty in its portrayal of the sufferings of an Indian woman at the hands of her feckless husband, whilst a poem such as Gonzalez's

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'Cane Ballad' expresses the same kind of sentimental pity found in such stories. In a similar way, the film Bim, widely welcomed as the first really successful Trinidadian feature film and as an honest treatment of race relations which reached a wide viewing public, cannot be said to have gone beyond a naturalistic and in some respects oversimplified picture of rural Indian life. Set in the pre-independence period and loosely based on the life of Bhadase Maraj, Bim, whose script was written by Raoul Pantin, portrays the progress of an Indian boy who flees the sugar belt to Port of Spain when his father is killed in a struggle for control of the sugar union. In the city he is persecuted by his African school-fellows and teachers, becomes a delinquent and a small-time crook. Later he returns to Caroni and kills his father's murderer and takes control of the union. From this base he becomes the leader of an Indian political party. But his success does not insulate him from the past. When he discovers his childhood girl friend working in a brothel he rescues her; however, when she is recognised and molested in the street, Bim is provoked into shooting dead her attacker. The film ends with Bim's cry of trapped despair. There are a number of melodramatic and cliched elements in the film, in particular the portrayal of rural Indian life as bedevilled by mafia-style gangsterism. Nevertheless, Bim clearly had an important impact, and one which perhaps indicates what the naturalistic novel had failed to do. As the literary critic Gordon Rohlehr commented: 'One was recognising what one had been seeing around all the time, or not quite looked at....' ¹⁶⁴

One also finds in the 1970's repetitions of older messages. For instance, as Neville Giuseppe had done in 'Moonee' (1957), so Joseph Cummings in his poem 'Counting the hours (Sadu Say)' in Uphill Downhill (1981) ¹⁶⁵ and Kit Gonzalez in his story, 'Things To Laugh at Then, Is Things to Cry at Now,' (1975), ¹⁶⁶ both present the Indian as an admirable model of industriousness. In Cummings's poem:

Sadu
the old Indian man from Chaguanas,
who sellin' nuts by the Savannah

since night was flambeaux

say,

'hard wuk doh kill'

Many of these treatments unconsciously reflect a sense of the 'otherness' of the Indian in the way that they are self-consciously about the Indian presence. Similarly, there is a self-conscious stridency of tone in several of the poems which call for Afro-Indian unity. Several are sloganistic and declamatory, coming as they did out of oral performance at political rallies, and do not transfer well to the page.¹⁶⁷

However, Malik's (Delano De Coteau) poem, 'Africindia' shows a genuinely inventive exploitation of the rhythmic and phonic resources of language and the kind of serious punning and word-play that several of the younger poets of this period, borrowing from such urban folk-idioms as 'robber-talk',¹⁶⁸ displayed in their work. The whole sweep of Malik's quite lengthy poem is held together by the metaphor of sexual contact.

The past is presented as the European rape which brought the races to Trinidad:

that cracked open
Africa's womb
of humanity
and held to ransom
India's priceless
loss of people.

In the present there is the gentler but no less damaging seduction of North American 'juke box glamour' which tempts the rural Indian girl into the city and prostitution. Then, punning on the whip of slavery and the obstructive eyelash, Malik argues that mimic values have prevented African and Indian from seeing each other clearly:

white lashes
of nigger-coolie
images before us.

This, in a witty inversion of the image of rape, has condemned them to a frigid relationship:

the obscene
sense of living
a frigid lie
in a hot bed-
lam of sugar
cane and oil.

However, Malik can also hear a subterranean unity growing:

the shango drum
 the tassa drum
 roll on till
 cocks crow
 and Africindia's voices
 blend unheard
 before embracing. 169

Malik uses the image of sexual union purely as a metaphor, and in general there is nothing in the Afro-Trinidadian writing of the 1970's that parallels the Guyanese novels of Heath, Archer and Bradner in their emphasis on Afro-Indian sexual relations. There are a couple of exceptions though. Samuel St. John's poem 'Sita and Rawan' explores the racial significance of the Hindu festival of Ram Lila, during which an effigy of Rawan, the evil prince of darkness who kidnaps Sita, is ceremonially burned to symbolize the triumph of good over evil. St. John alludes to the fact that some Indians in Trinidad characterise the blacked-up figure of Rawan as a Negro, and St. John sees in the festival both a representation of Indian racial recoil from the Negro and a denial by Indians of part of themselves. He argues that Indian racial exclusiveness denies the essential unity of man and expresses the concern, addressing the Indian, that:

...you must flay yourself
 torture yourself
 destroy yourself
 go through a senseless masquerade
 of hating me.

All this might seem wholly unexceptional were it not for the genuine fears that many Indians felt about what Blacks meant by integration. Rawan declares in the poem that '...the time is coming when I shall take her [Sita] unto myself'. And though he commiserates with the wound suffered by the resisting party, insists that the outcome is inevitable:

One is always hurt/ Out of us
 Can come one people.
 You only postpone consummation
 in a purposeless self-denial,
 None can block the Wind.
 You cannot flee
 Your destiny.
 Please understand

Rawan. 170

St. John presents the overcoming of Indian reluctance as a necessary step towards an ideal, but in A.M. Clarke's story, 'Her Accepted Love' 171

in Revolution At Grass Roots (1976), the treatment of the theme is altogether malicious. In this story Ramdita Sirwan, daughter of an Indian businessman who is 'wealthy', 'thrifty', 'ambitious' and profiteering, a girl of 'plump shapeliness' and lavishly unconfined breasts, leads all her Indian suitors to think that she is not merely chaste but prudish. However, she is discovered to be sleeping with a spectacularly ugly blackman, a sweet-man who has a number of such Indian women who keep him in comfort. It is the same stereotype as that found in Prison of My Hate, of the underhand sexuality of the Indian woman and her secret desire for the blackman. In Anson Gonzalez's play The Rice Mill (c. 1970)¹⁷², the stereotype is for a change reversed, and it is Hassan Ali, the mill-owner, who is the pursuer of a negro woman.

There is only a small quantity of Black writing which goes beyond an expression of the 'otherness' of the Indian. In a couple of Lloyd King's stories, 'Bim'¹⁷³ (1976) and 'In Some Other Life,'¹⁷⁴ (1980); in Derek Walcott's poem, 'The Saddhu of Couva'¹⁷⁵ in The Star-Apple Kingdom (1980) and in Earl Lovelace's novel, The Dragon Can't Dance (1979), there are genuinely imaginative attempts to inhabit an aspect of the Indian experience. All impersonate an Indian voice. Lloyd King's stories begin in affectionate parody of the style and sensibility of V.S. Naipaul; the brahminical fastidiousness, the distaste for Trinidadian provinciality, the urge to escape and the dead-pan irony of the earlier novels. 'Bim' is little more than parody, but 'In Some Other Life', which encompasses the earlier story, begins to take on a life of its own as a portrayal of a Naipaulian character who didn't get away, and reveals an unusual inwardness with what could be taken as an Indo-Trinidadian way of seeing and feeling. However, the material is slight and as yet there is no evidence to indicate whether King's is simple a talent for mimicry or something more.

As a St. Lucian who settled in Trinidad, it is perhaps not surprising that Derek Walcott's earlier volumes of poetry reveal no perception of the Indian presence. However, through his response to the fict-

ion of V.S. Naipaul, one might guess, as recorded in such poems as 'Exile' in The Gulf (1969) and 'At Last' in Sea Grapes (1976), Walcott has clearly come to see experience of the Indians in the Caribbean as part of the whole region's pattern of loss and the attempt to establish new roots. In 'The Saddhu of Couva' the poem speaks in the voice of the priest who recognises his spiritual separation from India, as he sends out his soul:

like a white cattle bird growing more small
 over the ocean of the evening canes
 and I sit quiet, waiting for it to return
 like a hog-cattle blistered with mud,
 because, for my spirit, India is too far.

He has made his substitute India in Trinidad ('...behind Ramlochan Repairs there was Uttar Pradesh') but has lived to see its numen vanish under the loss of language, the impact of commerce, local politics and loss of respect for the elders. He has to wonder: 'Suppose all the gods were killed by electric light.' In the fire of the setting sun he sees the image of a funeral pyre, and the final release of his soul from its material shell:

Sunset, a bonfire, roars in my ears;
 embers of blown swallows dart and cry,
 like women distracted
 around its cremation.
 I ascend to my bed of sweet sandalwood. 176

As in Roy Heath's One Generation, the starting point of Earl Lovelace's The Dragon Can't Dance (1979)¹⁷⁷ is the perception that many of the difficulties of contact between Africans and Indians arise because neither community feels secure in the changes it is going through. However, whereas Heath's Rohan Armstrong escapes from the restrictions of the lower middle class coloured world into the apparently freer Indian society of the Mohammeds, but discovers fatally that the rural Indian feels threatened by his presence, Lovelace's Pariag escapes from rural life to live in the Black slum of Calvary Hill overlooking Port of Spain. Like Rohan, Pariag discovers that this area also has its unwritten rules, and it too responds violently to the threat of his presence.

Pariag and his wife Dolly have left the serfdom of village life to

be 'part of something bigger than just New Lands Sugar estate.' However, the freer world they come to is going through changes which so discomfort and distress its inhabitants that they cannot respond to Pariag in the way he wants. The people of Calvary Hill are the descendants of freed slaves who for generations have led a maroon existence contemptuous of the imposed disciplines of apprenticeship and wage-slavery. They have reduced their wants and created a culture which is purely expressive and non-materialistic, a culture of pure style, which is, of course, characterised as one of idleness and disorder by the colonial authorities. Out of their creative energies have come the only genuinely inventive Creole cultural forms: calypso, carnival and steelband. However, by the late 1950's when the novel begins, the 'warrior' world of the Hill has been unable to counter the more insidious enemy of modern consumer capitalism. Steelband, once the war music of the tribes of East Dry River, John-John, and Calvary Hill, has been swallowed up and tamed by commercial sponsorship; Carnival, once the festival of the oppressed, has become respectable as the white bands appear on the streets; and Philo, the calypsonian, wins recognition and reward when his kaisos cease to be subversive and become anodyne songs of sexual suggestiveness. Calvary Hill has begun to lose confidence in itself, and feeling threatened on all sides, responds with hostility to outsiders like Pariag.

Thus Pariag, who has come so that 'people could see him, and he could be somebody in their eyes', finds that for his first two years on the hill no-one even notices him. He tries to show that he is creolised, 'more than just a little country Indian,' but is repeatedly rebuffed. As a channa seller at a football match he ventures an opinion on the game: 'Haii! What the hell this Indian know about football? You ever see a Indian on a football team.' He pretends to himself that he is part of the crowd, but is in fact so excluded that he is half-pleased by the bullying relationship Fisheye, Calvary Hill bad-john,

(p.78)

(p.84)

develops with him. Fisheye demands money from Pariag every time he passes, and Pariag feels that 'in some strange kind of way...it joined him more firmly to the hill.'^(p.89) However, Pariag concludes that as a non-Creole he is invisible and that his attempts at mimicry simply make him ridiculous: 'I don't sound tough, and I ain't tough, and I can't fight, and I don't know how to play steelband or sing calypso, and I don't know much about carnival.'^(p.91) Instead he invents an Indian role which he thinks will make the Hill dwellers notice him, but it is not himself. Nevertheless, as 'The Crazy Indian' riding his cycle around recklessly as he sells his barra and doubles, he begins to achieve a modest commercial success. As such he threatens the values of the Hill (the egalitarianism of being without ambition) and becomes an actual commercial threat to Miss Cleothilda's over-priced and inefficient shop. She starts a whispering campaign: '...I never trust them...They too sly and secretive...Turn, just turn your head and they knife you in the back.'^(p103) Lovelace links the fear of Indian competition in particular to those like Guy, the rent-collector, who are insecure in their blackness and trying to rise in the world. Guy is soon squealing that 'The Indian must take over this place.'^(p.109) Only Aldrick, the one true remaining exponent of the Creole ideology of style, feels unthreatened by Pariag, though he understands why the others do: '...the little they have they frighten the Indian come and give them competition.'^(p.111) For his part he feels, 'All we thinking about is to show this city that we is people, not because we own anything, but because we is.'^(p111) But Aldrick's detachment also includes his failure to respond to Pariag's overtures of friendship or to support him when the rest of the yard turns against him and smash up his bike.

It is, however, in Pariag's response to his crucifixion on Calvary Hill, when he abandons his 'soft wounded' apologetic stance, and carries his bike away in front of the hard men of the hill, that he establishes himself in their eyes; they see him:

marching...with that solemnity and bereavement and martyrdom reserved for wounded soldiers who, ambushed and outnumb-

ered by their enemy, and, captive now, walk through the city occupied by their conquerors, with head held high and that attitude of undefeat that challenges the whole meaning of war. (p.140)

They see in Pariag, 'that calm, tall, dangerousness that was not even anger, was beyond it.' The significance of this moment is unstable for a number of reasons. Firstly, if Pariag proves himself to the Hill, he does so in ways which suggest that theirs is a culture of defeat, which values dignified suffering above all else, and secondly, that in deciding that he must be true to himself, he has to withdraw from them:

Yet it pained him that they had recognised him just at that moment when he was drawing away...so that he was at that time both closer to them and further from them. It would be across this distance and with this closeness that they would view each other henceforth. (p.141)

Such a drawing apart did indeed take place, particularly on the University campus, during the 1970's. Lovelace sees it to have been both necessary and tragic, perceiving that a true meeting can only occur when both groups are sure of their identities. The tragedy is in the separation of individuals. Thus, from the moment when Pariag stops trying to please the Creole world, both he and Aldrick follow separate paths to self-discovery.

Aldrick finds that in his obsession with being the dragon during the two days of carnival he has imprisoned himself in an increasingly sterile ritual and the illusion that he can re-enter an unbroken state of Africanness: 'this tribe marooned so far from the homeland that was never their home, their warriorhood that had not died in them, their humanness that was determined not by their possession of things.' (p.120) He realizes that his involvement in the People's Liberation Army has been no more than a 'threatening gesture', another kind of masquerade. Given the liberty to think in prison, Aldrick recognises that their revolt has been only another plea for deliverance from the pain of dispossession, a wholly unplanned demonstration without clear objectives or consideration of the consequences. Aldrick admits:

Even with guns in hand, even with power, we was looking to somebody else to make a decision... Is like even when we acting we ain't the actor... (p.188)

Above all, what Aldrick realizes is that there must be no more carnival escapism; that he must orient himself to the reality of having lost a self and of having to build a new self attuned to the real world and that he must start by taking responsibility for his actions and their consequences for those around him.

Pariag has his own path to follow. He has disabused himself of the illusion of becoming a Creole, but he has still to come to terms with being an Indian in Trinidad. For a time he lives in limbo, an invisible man in the city, but his attendance at an Indian film stimulates a longing in Pariag and Dolly for their family and the sights and smells of the village. They return to New Lands, but Pariag has changed too much; he still wants to be part of a bigger world and feels alien in the village. They return to the city to live, as his uncle protests, 'among Creole people, like cat and dog.'^(p.146) Pariag's complex feelings crystallize when he watches a deodorised Indian talent contest on television. It is the Indian equivalent to tamed steelband, and toothless calypso, too homogenised and too much of an ideal India to reflect the real heterogeneity of Pariag's 'Indo-Creole' experience:

The show itself was too smooth, too easy... It lacked the guts of the struggle he, Pariag, had lived... It didn't have the sugar cane and cowdung in it and the roasted peanuts and the boiled and fried channa in a basket round the Savannah with Colts playing Malvern... It jingled with jewels...
^(p.108-109)

Yet what the show idealises still has meaning for Pariag and must be fitted into the person he becomes:

Yet as distant as it was from him, it was close, very close to him, and he was glad to have it as one is glad to have the memory of a self. (p.109)

Pariag has two daydreams which enact his new awareness. The first has him re-entering the Hill, as if for the first time, but on his own terms; the second has him playing with the steelband, but playing Indian instruments and making music about his own rural experiences, playing with the band, but not submerging his identity in theirs. Lovelace uses Pariag's just desires to criticise the hypocrisy and false homogeneity of the Afro-Saxon definition of the Creole amalgam. Pariag thinks of

Miss Cleothilda's carnival slogan, 'All o' we is one', knowing that it excluded him:

No. We didn't have to melt into one. I woulda be me for my own self. A beginning. A self to go in the world with, with something in my hands to give. We didn't have to melt into one. They woulda see me. (p. 210)

It might appear that Lovelace writes a novel of 'might-be'. But he is in fact a realistic artist who embeds his vision of possibility in the history of what has been. Africans and Indians cannot simply pretend that their suspicions, misconceptions and stereotypes of each other have never existed. Lovelace suggests this in the failure of Aldrick and Pariag to make contact with each other after Aldrick leaves prison and returns to the Hill. Aldrick sees Pariag's new, successful shop, hesitates, but walks past, 'as before the door of one who might have been an old friend if they had managed to make friends earlier.' He realises that:

...he did not really know Pariag; though he might have known him if he had known himself. Pariag had been asked to bear a burden of a battle he did not know was his own... (p. 204)

Aldrick wonders if the hostility of the hill-dwellers to Pariag was perhaps an unconscious displacement of their shame that they have nothing of value to offer him:

...And even if they could have explained it, could they have offered him that life? Could they have offered him the dragon, carnival, rebellion, the possession of nothing. (p. 204)

For Pariag too there is a moment of hesitation when he thinks about calling Aldrick in, but does not, though he feels a 'sense of loss and aloneness'. Pariag hesitates because he feels that their past relationship will always colour Aldrick's perception of him:

But how do you make someone know you, who know you too long and don't know you at all? After a long pause he answered the question himself. 'When you expose your whole self to them. (p. 212)

Lovelace creates in Pariag and Aldrick two highly sympathetic characters, whose failure to make contact must be felt as tragic. However, Lovelace's treatment of the fact of ethnic plurality is not pessimistic. In the same way as Roy Heath and Lamming, and Indo-Caribbean writers such as Selvon and Ismith Khan, he sees African and Indian needing each other's presence. In particular, Lovelace, I think, sees in the Indian

presence an invaluable resource for his society. He sees, I think, a Creole culture which is split between the Afro-Saxon denial of an authentic part of the self, and the 'African' 'maroon' culture of the hill-dwellers which has its own one-sidedness. The culture of Calvary Hill represents a protest against the pain of regimented work compelled by others, but it is a withdrawal on terms dictated by that other, and its emphasis purely on the expressive condemns it to remain a culture of the heroic gesture and, in reality, of defeat. It is in his commitment to patient building and work that Pariag, as a representative of the Indian community, offers a genuine, native alternative to the political economy of metropolitan domination.

In The Dragon Can't Dance, Lovelace creates an accessible and inventive fictional structure which enables him to convey his vision of the difficulties and opportunities which exist by virtue of his society's ethnic and cultural diversity. The structural dimension of his novel is discussed in Chapter Seventeen. Though the sections of the novel dealing with Pariag's rural background are less richly detailed than the life on Calvary Hill, and though Lovelace has little to say about the lives of that vast number of Indians who continue to live in the country, making their own kind of Trinidad, there are few other Caribbean novels where the writer of one ethnic group has so successfully impersonated the voice of another.

Chapter Seven.The People Who Came: The Folk Culture of the Indians in
Trinidad and Guyana.

This chapter focuses on the origins of the Indian immigrants to the Caribbean and the cultural practices they brought with them. It surveys their response to the experiences of indenture and their transition from temporary immigrants to permanent settlers. In particular it is concerned with the essentially aesthetic areas of what for convenience I have labelled a folk culture, though in reality the term covers a number of distinct strands. What these elements have in common is their independence from the Euro and Afro-creole cultures of the host society.

Such a focus is essential for understanding how the contemporary Indian communities were formed, and is part of an attempt to construct a picture of the real historical world against which the specificity of fictional portrayals can be measured. In this respect the chapter attempts to correct a number of persistent over-simplifications. The focus also draws attention to the persisting culture of the rural world as a contrast to the involvement of the educated, urban Indian middle class in the culture of the creole world, and, in a few cases, in the literary culture of the West.

In time-span, the emphasis of the chapter is most heavily on the period up to the ending of indenture (1917), the point at which westernised organisations began to play a decisive role in the leadership of the community, and a few individuals began to engage in literary activities. However, as Chapter Eight makes clear, the Indian middle class was already developing in the nineteenth century, and the folk culture of the countryside has by no means ceased to exist.

It is obviously important to know something about the geographical and social origins of the Indian indentured labourers in the Caribbean. However, there are several caveats to be made. First, one can talk with confidence about the earliest Indian immigrants (1838-1870), and many who followed them, only as precursors rather than ancestors of the

of the Indians now living in the area. This is because many immigrants left no physical issue, either dying unmarried because of the sexual imbalance, or returning to India, as did nearly one third of immigrants to Guyana (and Jamaica and Surinam) and over one fifth of those sent to Trinidad. Yet even these must have contributed some accretion to the cultures of the estate and the village. Secondly, it is important to recognise that contrary to the lingering oversimplification that indentured immigrants formed a homogeneous group of illiterate peasants, the reality is that immigrants came from backgrounds of considerable religious, social and cultural diversity.

Most of the first group of indentured Indians were not Hindus, but hill tribals, Dhangars, from the Chota Nagpur area. They were people who had already become migrant landless labourers, some to the more advanced agriculturalists of the plains, others as a semi-urban lumpen-proletariat. As marginal members of Indian society they seemed ideal material to the shippers, having no caste prejudice against emigration (a much overemphasised factor in any case) and being "perfectly ignorant of the place they agreed to go to."² One estimate is that up to 1850, 50% of all recruits were Dhangars, most of the remainder being landless peasants drawn to Calcutta looking for work. These first immigrants suffered disastrously: they died on board ship, died from disease on the estates and starved when they ran away. Charles Day, a visitor to Trinidad in 1847 reported: 'I am compelled to admit the coolies here are a failure...they prefer idling about the city, picking up a precarious subsistence, and even camping in the ditches of the suburbs and feed on carrion'.³ Their mortality rate was too high for the colonial authorities to ignore, and in 1848 immigration was temporarily stopped. So few of the earliest immigrants survived,⁴ that their contribution to Indian culture in the Caribbean probably amounted to no more than attracting hostile prejudices in the minds of the host community. Certainly these early groups appear to have been more involved

with the black population than later immigrants, though, as Day reports, the contact was mostly hostile:

They spent their leisure in drumming and singing; sometimes, however, quarrelling with the negroes, whom they hate, and to whom they hold themselves much superior...⁵

If there was any continuity between these and later immigrants, then it was possibly the hill people who first absorbed into Indo-Caribbean culture (they were non-Hindus and believers in witchcraft and magic) the folk mythology of the blacks.⁶

After this first experiment (which the planters in British Guiana at least looked on as a success)⁷ the recruiters in India began to look elsewhere for labour. Tinker suggests that in this period (1850-1875 circa) there were three main sources. Firstly there were those recruited from the country districts of the central Indian provinces of Agra and Oudh (41.7% of migrants to Trinidad up to 1871) and also from Bihar (21.9% to Trinidad).⁸ Yet while it is true that most of these from the overcrowded agricultural districts came from the most depressed castes; it should not be supposed that this was true of all. Indeed, it is my contention that the minorities, as distinguished by geographical origin, occupation and status may well have played a disproportionate role in the making of Indo-Caribbean culture.

Ships' records suggest that in fact a true cross section of the Indian village population was recruited. S.R.Ahsan indicates that a village in Uttar Pradesh, a key recruiting area, with a population of between 300-400, would have been composed of about 10% artisans such as barbers, tailors, blacksmiths, carpenters, washers and sweet vendors, 20% landless agricultural workers, 15-20% higher castes and 50% of middle caste agriculturalists, many of whom had insufficient land.⁹ The records for emigration from Calcutta in 1872-3 show that approximately 14% were high caste, 28% of the middle agricultural castes, 11% artisans, 30% of low caste and 17% Muslims.¹⁰ But recruitment also came from the large towns and cities like Calcutta and

Delhi, both from the genuinely urbanised labour force such as might be employed in the households of the princes or of the European traders, or in portering and stevedoring work along the dockside, and from migrant rural workers picking up casual urban work. In addition there were such independents as dancers, musicians, prostitutes, scribes, teachers and professional beggars who were recruited in quite significant numbers. Indeed, the planters were always grumbling that far too many of the migrants had never held a hoe in their lives. Many observers of the system also felt that these were the people who submitted least to estate discipline.

Besides those who emigrated through the port of Calcutta there was a small but significant level of recruitment from Madras. This was limited both by the reluctance of the Madrassis to indent and the prejudice of the planters against the Tamils and Telegus as labourers. In Trinidad, where recruitment from Madras had virtually ended by 1861 (there were only 5,266 Madrassi migrants to Trinidad in all¹¹) there is very little trace of any distinctive South Indian influence. However, in Guyana, even though the actual numbers who migrated is very small - by 1874 there were only 2,459 immigrants of Madrassi origin against 44,239 who had migrated from Northern India - there remains a potent presence. One reason for this is that there was a late resumption of immigration from South India between 1913-17 when 1,200 Tamils and Telegus emigrated to British Guiana. This South Indian cultural contribution, most notable in the growing cult of Kali-Mai, is discussed later in the chapter. The ancestors of writers Peter Kempadoo, Samuel Selvon and Rooplall Monar came from Madras.

The third phase of recruitment (from the late 1870s to the end of the nineteenth century) was marked by an increased drive into the rural areas now known as the United Provinces and Bihar. This was an area where the people suffered most notably from the leachings of landlordism, and the layers of intermediaries such as tax collectors

and money-lenders who mediated between the peasants and the landlords. At the bottom of the system were the landless labourers often existing in a state of semi-slavery. Even so recruitment continued to draw from a wide range of social strata. For instance, in 1883 ship records indicated that out of 1,200 immigrants from Northern Bihar, 264 were Muslim, 231 were high caste Hindus, 454¹³ were middle caste agriculturalists and 277 were of the lower castes. This phase of immigration was important in several respects. With the immigrants from this area came the Bhojpuri Hindi dialect which became the lingua franca of Indians both in Trinidad and Guyana. Also from this area came the Brahminical culture of orthodox Hinduism which has dominated life in Trinidad, but not to anything like the same extent in Guyana. The contribution of the lower caste groups to the evolving Indo-Caribbean culture was no less important. For instance, it was from the Chamar caste that one source of folk drumming came.¹⁴ It was also in this period and from this area that V.S. Naipaul's grandfather came as an infant from eastern Uttar Pradesh some time in the 1880 s.¹⁵

The last phase of immigration occurred when the demand for labour in Malaya meant that recruiters had to move from Bihar to the outer areas of the United Provinces, to new areas in the Central Provinces, the Punjab and even as far north as Nepal. The planters were not keen on this area of recruitment, considering the Punjabis and the Pathans as 'unruly and troublesome'. It is probable that some of these recruits had been soldiers.¹⁶ Ismith Khan's grandfather, portrayed fictionally as Kale Khan in the novel The Jumbie Bird (1961),¹⁷ came from the Pathan area.

It should also be remembered that in addition to indentured immigration there was a steady if small stream of free immigrants or 'casuals' as they were recorded on the official reports. Thus between 1894-1907, 1075 casuals entered British Guiana from India.

Although this was only 3% of the total number of immigrants, it may well have been a significant proportion.¹⁸ Some would have been re-emigrants, persons who had taken up their rights to return to India but had been unable to resettle. Others were priests, merchants and traders. Hugh Sampath suggests that a number of Parsee merchants were among the similar number of free immigrants who entered Trinidad. But even within the ranks of the indentured there were according to a contemporary commentator in British Guiana, 'a few men of some education and ability who, arriving in this colony ostensibly as agricultural labourers, devote their talents to the work of inciting their uneducated fellow country men to acts leading in some circumstances to the most serious consequences'.¹⁹

Thus the backgrounds and geographical origins of Indian immigrants to the Caribbean were nothing like so uniform as has sometimes been supposed. Nor were the motives which brought these people to indent always the same.

It is, of course, possible to indicate very succinctly what factors put the bulk of migrants into the hands of the recruiters. For most it was merely a question of survival, and contemporary commentators, their opinions supported by recent research, noted that emigration fluctuated according to the recurrent disasters of flood and famine.²⁰ As Oliver Warner, who had been Immigration Agent in Calcutta reported, the vast majority left not because they wanted to, but because they were starving, their faces full of 'fear and trembling' as the ship left Calcutta.²¹ In addition to natural disasters there were several man-made factors. The endemic land hunger of the poorest had been worsened by the British policy of encouraging the concentration of land ownership, and an increase in land tax was yet another burden. Similarly the destruction of Indian cottage industries added to the numbers of migrant workers roaming India for a living, drawn to the towns and an easy prey to the promises of the

recruiting agents. Indeed, the chaotic political situation in India in the nineteenth century - the Nepal wars, the downfall of the Province of Oudh and the Sikh - British wars - all added to the numbers of displaced persons.²¹ The event which perhaps had most effect on recruiting was the Mutiny, the rebellion of 1857. Thousands were displaced, particularly in the centres of recruitment, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, and the defeat of the Mutiny and the repression following it brought about the emigration of a far higher proportion of high caste Indians who had been local leaders of the revolt. Records of estate strikes and disturbances in both Trinidad and British Guiana indicate that the leaders were frequently ex-soldiers, and certainly the planters were very fearful of the presence of such men.²³

For the individual, emigration offered the possibility of escape from family quarrels, trouble with the law²⁴ or the local landlord. Although women in general were reluctant to emigrate, it did offer the possibility of a second chance for widows, alienated wives and women driven to prostitution. For the substantial numbers of middle and higher caste Indians who indented, the system may have seemed to offer the chance to recoup fallen fortunes, to return to India after the period of industrial service with enough money to buy land. These possibilities were magnified beyond reality by the often fraudulent claims of unscrupulous recruiters who were paid by results. The district magistrate in Allahabad, for instance, found pamphlets which described Demerara as a 'perfect paradise'.²⁵ Many Indians felt that they had been tricked, a response which J.D. Speckman suggests was due to the fact that migrants came from an environment hostile to emigration, that the decision to indent was often made on the spur of the moment and without consulting other members of the family; feeling guilty about their decision, immigrants were anxious to lay the blame elsewhere.²⁶ There may be some truth in this explanation, but there is also ample evidence that trickery and coercion occurred with some frequency.

One fairly common practice was for recruiters to tell villagers that work was available in Calcutta. When the dupes learned the truth and refused to proceed with the contract they were told that they would be charged with carriage expenses. As the district Magistrate of Ghazipur wrote to the Indian Government, 'The wretched coolie may be a hundred miles from his home, and finding he has the option of returning penniless....and of emigrating, chooses the latter alternative, but this is not voluntary emigration.'²⁷ C.F. Andrews reported that many unwilling emigrants were struck by 'a helplessness like that of an animal who has been caught in a trap and has given up the useless struggle to escape'²⁸. During the earliest phase of immigration, some Indians left their native soil under no better circumstances than slaves. As Captain Swinton reported in his ship's diary:

One woman died through fear, having been chastised for giving her child a poisonous nut. These people pine after being put on board, being in doubt as to their destination.

(April 26 1859)

His wife, in her journal remarked, 'I do not believe five, at most, ²⁹ either know where they are going, or what is to be their occupation'.

Only within the last two or three decades of the indenture system does the recruiting and shipping system appear to have become in any way adequate to support the claims that the indenture system was free and humane.³⁰

However, there was a small minority of migrants who could be said, in a genuine sense, to have made a free and conscious choice to leave India. There are contemporary accounts of those who left in a spirit of adventure, or who left alienated by the caste system. One such was Lal Bihari, born a Kshatrya (warrior caste) and trained in the brahminical faith, who revolted against the oppression of low caste labourers by his relatives, and, 'sick at heart' had decided to emigrate.³¹ Another, who later became the Rev. Andrew Gadayeen, was the son of a Brahmin, educated at a Government school in India, had signed indenture papers out of disgust with the running of the Hindu

holy places. When he arrived in Trinidad in 1881 he was received as a guru and drew disciples to him. He was converted in 1899. Such persons, though a small minority, appear to have played an important role in the development of Indian leadership on the estates, in the villages and, in becoming the first converts to Christianity, as brokers between the Indian community and the wider society.

Yet whatever their origins or their motivations, virtually all Indians who came to the Caribbean went through the experience of indentured estate labour. In Chapter Three I dealt with the indenture system as something constructed by the British Government and the local planters to further local and metropolitan interests and imposed on and suffered by generations of Indian labourers. In this chapter I consider the indenture system as an environment within which Indians acted in a variety of ways. Within such a framework one can both examine the determining characteristics of the environment and focus on the real agency of the Indians who maintained, adapted and invented a viable social and cultural life. Undoubtedly the indenture system was structured to deny the labourers their freedom but, as I will show, that denial was frequently resisted and indentured labour rapidly became only one, albeit the most crucial, of the material frameworks within which Indians led their lives.

It is impossible to generalise about the Indian response to indenture with any great certainty. Most contemporary accounts are, as I argued in Chapter Four, so much involved in ideological defences or condemnations of the system that one has to pick one's way with caution. However, it is possible to identify at least four types of response. Some Indians undoubtedly did become dependent on the authoritarian structure of the estate. The dependence, where it existed, had real economic roots. Because first year immigrants were often incapable of earning enough to maintain themselves, the Immigration Agent-General made it a responsibility of the planter to supply such immigrants with rations. Since these were charged for, it meant that some, perhaps

the least physically able or least psychologically adapted immigrants entered the second year of their indenture in debt to the employer. Again, the use of bounties to persuade labourers to undertake a second period of indenture was another device which could induce a servile dependence on the estate. Thereafter, astute managers used the techniques of patronage - in giving labourers access to small plots of land for instance, and in shows of personal attention - that appear to have induced shows of childlike gratitude, if contemporary accounts are to be believed.³³ Quite how genuine such shows of submissive behaviour were is, of course, a matter for conjecture. There are two other considerations which may be pertinent. It should not be forgotten that the Indians came from a society in which fixed differences of status were ascribed by birth. It is possible that some shows of child-like dependence were less the result of the social relations of indenture than the continuance of proper caste behaviour by immigrants of low-caste origin. On the other hand this should not be taken as a general rule since there is ample evidence of low-caste Indians energetically making use of the new environment to seek new status. The second comment on the question of dependent behaviour is that European observers may simply have misinterpreted Indian non-verbal behaviour with its greater elaboration of ritual shows of respect.

Probably the most characteristic response to the experience of indenture was stoic indifference to its hardships and inequalities. Most Indians expected to return to India and so devoted their time trying to finish their tasks, save as much out of their meagre earnings as possible and wait until it was time to return. For some this happened, and the apologists for indenture were always able to point to what looked like a fairly high level of savings for returning time-expired Indians. The truth was that fairly large savings were made by a very small minority, very little by about a third of returnees and absolutely nothing by the majority.³⁴ Savings were usually made through independent efforts after the ending of the contract.

through small scale provisions growing, milk-supplying, shop-keeping and in the case of some of the wealthiest returnees, money-lending. No doubt those who found it impossible to earn more than the basic means of existence behaved the way most people act in such circumstances: transferring their search for gratifications from the long-term to the here-and-now, however much the missionaries and their like disapproved of the conviviality centred around the drinking of cheap rum.

However, one of the enduring stereotypes of the Indian in the Caribbean has been that of their docility under indenture compared to the rebelliousness of the African slave. This simply has no basis in fact. Scarcely a single year passed during the eighty years of indenture, when the planters and colonial officials were not faced with strikes; daily the estate management faced a variety of forms of resistance and there were several periods during indenture when the European elite in both Trinidad and British Guiana were terrified by the prospect of general insurrection on the sugar estates. As in so many other areas of discussion there are quite substantial distinctions to be made between the situations in Trinidad and British Guiana. Even allowing for incomplete records (or access to them) it is evident that labourers in British Guiana acted with far greater militancy than those in Trinidad. All but one of the large scale estate disturbances took place in British Guiana: Devonshire Hall (1872) Friends (1903) Lusignan (1912) Rosehall (1913) Ruimvelt (1924) Leonora (1939) and Enmore (1948). Only the Mohurrum Disturbances in Trinidad in 1884 were on a comparable scale. Again, the numbers of recorded strikes vary sharply between the two countries. In Trinidad between 1880 and 1914 there are records of eighteen sizeable strikes. In British Guiana there were 13 major strikes between 1869 and 1873, 211 between 1885 and 1903 and 43 between 1903 and 1909. Some of the possible causes of the differences I have already suggested in Chapter Four: the greater harshness of physical labour in British Guiana and the far greater aggressiveness of the

British Guianese employers. Other equally important factors include the greater physical proximity of estates in British Guiana, and the fact that many more of the labour force remained resident on the estates in Guiana, whereas in Trinidad, from the 1870s on, there was a shift of the Indian population to free village settlements. It is evident that the Indian labour force in British Guiana rapidly developed a proletarian ideology and an egalitarian social solidarity which was expressed and supported by the 'bung coolie'⁴⁰ culture of the estates. The point is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Resistance began even before arrival on the estates. There was an unsuccessful attempt to take over a ship in 1873 led by two Indians called Hooloman and Lutchman,⁴¹ who may well have been the prototypes for the main characters in Jenkins's novel Lutchmee and Dilloo (1878). Amongst the very first immigrants to Guiana there was a group who in 1839 travelled to Georgetown to lobby the Governor over their conditions;⁴² this group was by no means as naive as the shippers had imagined. When their five year period was completed and the labourers discovered that there was no ship ready to take them home, they struck and refused to accept food lest it be taken as evidence of their agreeing to a new contract.⁴³ The English traveller to Trinidad, Charles Day, reported in 1847 that the coolies struck work frequently: 'This is the common wind-up of the coolies on every estate and they prefer a most inadequate and precarious existence in the woods, to steady well-paid labour on the estate'. Similarly it is evident that these early indentured Indians were very far from obsequious to their white visitors. Day complains that they 'refused to salaam to us as we passed.'⁴⁴ Again, from the earliest days of the system desertions formed one of the commonest forms of resistance. In the earliest days desertion was a chancy affair, and it was a sign of the harshness of estate conditions that so many risked the starvation and death that befell a sizeable number of runaways. However, by the 1870s desertion became less risky since the deserter could disappear into one

of the free Indian villages that had sprung up around the plantations. Deserters did not always fare well when they reached such villages; there are reports that some of the runaways found their labour being exploited by those who harboured them.⁴⁵ By the end of the indenture period desertion became perhaps the major problem for the planter. It is not known how many desertions were successful, but their scale can be judged by the fact that in Trinidad between 1910-1911, with an indentured population of only 9,657, there were 582 prosecutions for desertion.⁴⁶

When individuals could not see ways of escape they adopted the time-honoured ploy of the powerless: malingering. It is, of course, by now impossible to know the extent to which hospital admissions reveal genuine physical suffering or pretence. The planters certainly regarded malingering as the greatest curse of immigration, and did every thing they could to dissuade their labour force from spending time in the estate hospital. They do not appear to have been very successful. On his estate in Trinidad one manager estimated that he lost on average 37% of his possible labour time: 13% through absences without leave, 12% through desertions and 9.7% through sickness.⁴⁷ In 1895 in Trinidad, when there were 10,720 indentured immigrants, there were 23,658 hospital admissions.⁴⁸

By the 1870's there appears to have been a change to more overt forms of action. The confidence to defy the authorities probably came from the very rapid increase in the numbers and proportion of Indians in the population, as well as the increasing number of literates, returnees, sepoys and brahmins on the estates. In British Guiana, the Indian population had doubled between 1861 and 1870, by which time they had become 23.47% of the total population.⁴⁹ It is difficult to quantify the other factor, but the complaint is frequently to be found in the reports for this period (1870 s -1880 s) that Brahmins and returnees were to be found at the back of most trouble. Indeed, Government officials recommended that these categories of recruit should not be admitted to the Caribbean. Returnees were 'too indep-

endent and up to the tricks of the trade' whilst Brahmins 'invariably give trouble and incite others to do the same'.⁵¹ Increasingly one finds individuals named as leaders of strikes and disturbances on the estates, such as Paraag, mentioned in the official report on the strike at Plantation Devonshire as having organised stoppages to enforce a ten-hour working day.⁵² Another was Sookhoo, who played a leading role in the Mohurram disturbances in Trinidad in 1884. He had organised the petition which demanded an end to the ban on Hossay processions, and when the petition was rejected he is reported to have said during a meeting with the local authorities that: '...he could only die once... there would be a mutiny...we will have no more petitions;we will fight it out with the strength of our hand'.⁵³ His attitude is evidence of the unservile spirit that many Indians preserved throughout the indenture period.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century a new kind of leadership had emerged, that of the educated, often Christianised middle classes. Their role and their increasing separation of interests from the lives of the estate and rural population is discussed in the following chapter. However, before this divorce occurred, the official reports bear witness to the presence of a small number of literate, articulate Indians on the estates who were more than capable of putting their community's case. One such was Bechu, a Bengali who had been brought up in India by a European missionary, indentured and arrived in British Guiana, where, proving incapable of field work, he was employed as a domestic. Nevertheless Bechu emerged as one of the first real spokesmen for labouring Indians in British Guiana, presenting both oral and written evidence to the West Indian Royal Commission of 1897, which reveals a very thorough knowledge of the immigration ordinances and is presented with exemplary cogency.⁵⁴ Paraag, Sookhoo and Bechu were almost certainly three out of other such figures.

Whether action took the form of constitutional protest, spontaneous action or carefully planned strikes (the Protector of Immigrants complained of the 1903 strike at Harmony Hall in British Guiana that it was the 'longest and best engineered strike in this colony'⁵⁵) the motives for action were fairly common. They included opposition to the custom of keeping back pay (sometimes for as long as a few months), the practice of making arbitrary wage stoppages for allegedly unfinished work, unilateral increases in the size of the task, and attempts to lower wages. Two other sources of conflict were Indian anger over acts of brutality by overseers and cases of white estate staff interfering sexually with Indian women.

The planters and the colonial bureaucracy were not much inclined to admit that strikes were effective, but one Trinidadian manager, P. Abel told the West Indian Royal Commission that in 1885 the planters had met and agreed to reduce wages by 20% , '...but within a week of that resolution some of the very men who had attended that meeting found their cane fields going to grass, and immediately raised wages not only to the old figure but five cuts in advance of it'⁵⁶. Similarly the British Guianese Immigration-Agent reported that in 1902-03 two of the ten strikes had resulted in higher wages, with similar figures for 1905-6 and 1906-7.⁵⁷ Not all attempts at industrial action were successful. I have already outlined in Chapter Four the way in which infractions of labour discipline were punishable under criminal law, and the frequency with which managers used the pro-planter biased courts to punish individuals. In that chapter the use of the law was discussed as one of the inequities of the system, but it is also possible to see the extraordinarily high number of prosecutions in another light: as evidence of the lack of docility of the Indian indentured labourer.

However, beyond these individual actions and cases of crude but sometimes effective industrial bargaining, there were also occasions

when the white minorities in both Trinidad and British Guiana felt that they were threatened by insurrectionary actions. Two instances serve to reveal both the determination and courage of the Indians in the face of the customarily savage response of the colonial authorities. The disturbance at Devonshire Castle Estate on the Essequibo in 1872 began after the Immigration sub-agent had rejected complaints over the lowering of wage rates and enforced long hours of work at crop time. A mass picket spontaneously formed on the estate and a protestor was arrested for disorderly conduct but was rescued by his fellows. Then a group of 250 set off on the long journey to Georgetown to protest their case. They were met on the way by the Governor who promised an immediate investigation if they returned to the estate. Meanwhile though, warrants had been taken out for the arrest of those involved in the earlier disturbances, but those named refused to attend the magistrate's court. Armed police were then sent to the estate where it had been reported that the Indians were 'drawn up in battle array' in front of the manager's house. The riot act was read but 'the coolies remained in position insulting and defiant'. The police then charged with fixed bayonets, but according to the report the Indians treated the bayonets with contempt and met them with their hakka sticks. Then shooting began and five unarmed Indians were shot dead and nine wounded. Very shortly afterwards a similar demonstration, though without fatalities, occurred at the neighbouring plantation of Anna Regina. In the aftermath there were urgent official meetings on the need for 'the pacification of the district: ...many respectable people were leaving the coast, so frightened were they at the coolie displays of strength'. The colonial authorities lost little time in making British Guiana the most heavily policed colony in the West Indies. The Colonial Secretary asserted that the 'coolie population is at once disaffected and dangerous' and the Governor argued that agricultural implements in the hands of 40,000 immigrants made them a 'potential armed force.'

The conflict between Indians and the authorities in Trinidad was of an even more political character. It began when the Hossay processions were banned from the public roads and from entering San Fernando. In the past there had been much inter-estate fighting; regularly over 12,000 had taken part. As noted in Chapter Six, one of the features of Hossay that worried the authorities was the growing creole involvement. After going through various official channels and being turned down, the Indians declared their intention of defying the ban. San Fernando was turned into an armed camp and a ship full of marines was anchored outside the town. On the day of the procession the inevitable clash occurred leaving thirteen Indians dead and over one hundred wounded when the procession was fired on as it tried to enter San Fernando. What is revealing about the affair is both the degree of co-ordination and the militant consciousness shown by the Indians. Thus instead of the usual haphazard competition between estates, the procession was led by the recognised strong men from all the estates. The subsequent investigation heard claims from the authorities that Hossay had become a national Indian demonstration, 'as a sort of means of demonstrating their power'. In fact the demonstration came as the climax of a period of intense labour unrest. There had been 542 convictions for absence from work during the first half of 1884, an index of the discontent over the increased size of tasks. It was also brought to the attention of the inquiry that there was much indignation on the estate of the Colonial Company over the sexual molestation of women on that estate.

These events belie the stereotype of Indian docility and timorousness, but they were displays of courage that had their price. In British Guiana at Devonshire Castle five were killed and seven wounded, at Plantation Friends in 1903 six were killed and seven wounded, at Lusignan in 1912 one was killed, at Rose Hall in 1913

there were fifteen killed and 40 wounded. Indenture ended but the pattern of colonial repression went on. At Plantation Ruimvelt in 1924 thirteen were killed and eighteen wounded, at Leonora in 1939 four were killed and several wounded, and at Enmore in 1948 five were killed and fourteen wounded. In Trinidad, with the exception of the thirteen dead in the Mohurrum disturbances, the record was not nearly so sanguinary.

Despite all the displays of courage, and the local victories won by the Indians, it is clear that the colonial authorities were always capable of containing Indian rebellion when it struck directly at their interests. The Indians lacked either any clear or realizable political objectives or any permanent organisation to defend their interests. They were further weakened by divisions between the indentured and the free and, even more crucially, by the absence of any real relationship with the black creoles. Indeed, the rank and file of the military police was composed of blacks, and creoles in skilled positions on the estates could often be relied on to support the planter. Nevertheless the importance of these confrontations as expressive symbols of dignity in the culture of the estate should not be underestimated.

However, and it is the most important distinction between slavery and indenture, indenture was finite and for all Indian immigrants there were always, in principle at least, a variety of alternatives to indentured labour. In reality the vast majority remained tied in some way to the estate; but for a minority, indenture was no more than an unpleasant interlude. In the next section of the chapter there is an attempt to outline what these alternatives were, the numbers who achieved them and the effects of these alternatives on the diversity of Indian cultural development in the Caribbean.

All indentured immigrants began life on the estate. Thereafter it is possible to identify five alternative directions their lives could take. The first was movement away, the return to India; the

second was stasis, to remain living on the estate; the third was the movement inwards to the little Indias of the independent villages. The fourth and fifth involved movement outwards, either via Christianisation and education into the professions, or into the urban proletariat and the urban small shop-keeping class.

It had been a key principle of the recruiting system that, after the completion of their period of indenture, all migrants had the right to a free return passage to India. Equally though it had soon become the planters' intention that they should retain experienced labourers and create a labour surplus in order to keep the wages of free labour down. Most immigrants almost certainly indented with the intention of returning to India. What actually happened lay somewhere between the desires of the two parties.

There are again significant differences in the proportion of returns between Trinidad and British Guiana. Of the 143,939 Indians who emigrated to Trinidad, 33,294 (22%) returned to India; in the case of British Guiana there were 75,547 returns out of a total of 238,909 entrants (32.3%). The main reason for the difference almost certainly lay with the far greater prospects of acquiring land in Trinidad. However, the relative proportions between returns and settlers were not evenly distributed throughout the period of indenture, and this variation may well suggest a more complex pattern of motivation. For instance, of the first batch of immigrants to British Guiana (1838-1843) of those who survived 59% returned to India. Of those who emigrated between 1845-54 probably 30% returned; of those who arrived between 1855-1864 probably 14.5% returned, between 1865-1874, 25%, between 1875-1884, 37% returned, between 1885-1894, 33%, between 1895-1904, 30% between 1905-1917, 37% at least. Comparable data for Trinidad has not been obtainable, but the pattern of a relatively low return in the middle period is repeated. Up to 1875 only 11% of those eligible to return had done so, which means

that the proportion of returns later in the period must have been well in excess of 20%. Possible explanations for these swings in the proportions could include such factors as the availability of women, (which would account for the very high returns amongst the first batch; 13 women to 379 men); the proportion of Indians in the colony, and fluctuations in wage rates. The fall in wages during the last two decades of the nineteenth century probably influenced the high proportion of returns in this period. Another factor was the ending of the manager's right to persuade labourers to re-indent after their first term was finished. It is possible that reindenture was seen by some Indians as simply a deferment of the eventual return, whereas in the later period (after 1870 circa) the alternative to returning was the uncertainty of settlement and the prospect that one was never going to return. It is also possible that towards the end of the nineteenth century it must have become increasingly apparent to those who were making their decisions that the Indian communities in both countries were undergoing considerable changes. For those whose deepest loyalties remained with their ancestral culture the pace of this process must have been a powerful incentive to leave. Return for some was clearly a powerful emotional necessity. Morton writes that returnees included Indian Christians (people one would have supposed the likeliest to stay - and no doubt a lower proportion left than for any other group) amongst whom though 'some wept for friends left in Trinidad; the faces of others were bright with the vision of a long awaited happiness drawing to a realisation'. Finally, as has been indicated earlier, individual motivations could also include the level of material success achieved. The distribution of savings among returnees would seem to permit the hypothesis that those who had made exceptional savings and those who were pauperised were more likely to return than those who were just making a moderate living.

Whatever the precise motivations were in each individual decis-

lon to return, they had to be strong. Indeed, in the last few decades of the system there were stronger disincentives against leaving than before. The colonial governments began to put greater obstacles in the path of the immigrant's decision to return. The conditions for obtaining a free return passage were made more onerous until by 1895 it was no longer free; males had to pay one quarter of the cost, females one sixth. Positively, the Colonial Governments, particularly in Trinidad, made greater efforts to dissuade immigrants from leaving by offering, for a time, free grants of land in lieu of the return passage, and in general making land more available for purchase. Secondly, there were social factors which one would have thought would have reduced the numbers of immigrants returning home. For instance, there had been a steady rise in the ratio of women to men, and in general, following the Royal Commission of 1870, conditions on most estates probably improved. A third factor which should have acted as a discouragement was the steady stream of re-emigrants, those who had been repatriated but for a variety of reasons wished to return to the Caribbean. In 1887, for example, 285 out of 2,147 immigrants to Trinidad were returning. They were people who had perhaps become more Indo-Caribbean than they realised, in particular could no longer fit into the caste system; people who had returned to find their families dead or missing, or who were rejected by their ex-village neighbours as polluted by their absence overseas.⁶²

Even for those who stayed in the Caribbean many contacts were maintained with India. Bronkhurst noted that the 'majority of coolies who come to this colony keep up a constant correspondence with friends and relatives left behind'.⁶³ One witness to the Sanderson Commission (1908) O. Warner, a former immigration official in Trinidad, complained that Indians invested little in the colony, sending money back to relatives in India instead.⁶⁴ Several observers noted that the right to return to India had the effect of encouraging a sense of transitoriness, and an unwillingness to put down roots even amongst those who ultimately stayed. The Rev. L. Crookhall, for instance, noted the

lack of domestic furniture in Indian homes as a symptom of this attitude and Bronkhurst also noted that Indian homes were frequently 'in a state of confusion and disorder.. [and] ...careless of the comforts of life'.⁶⁵ A Trinidad Government official further argued that the right of return operated as a re-inforcing mechanism for cultural retention: 'Looking ever to return to India, he retains the habits and prejudices of the country where he was born...He does not identify with the population around him, nor does he admit the religious instruction which is offered him.'⁶⁶

The range of alternatives available to the Indians who stayed in the Caribbean varied both through time and between Trinidad and British Guiana. Unfortunately there are no precise records of the occupations of the earliest settlers, though it was recorded that of the sixty migrants who had remained in British Guiana in 1843, fifty-five were in the country districts and five in the towns or up river. Several had purchased land and some were reported to be living with black women.⁶⁸ Charles Day notes that by 1847-48, only two years after their arrival in Trinidad, that Indians were settling in the urban areas and following such occupations as porters, cattle-drivers and milk-sellers.⁶⁹ By the 1850 s, by the time the system had become more carefully organised in the planter's interest, differences in opportunity between the two countries began to emerge more sharply. In British Guiana the vast majority of those who remained reindentured, but in Trinidad the proportion was probably only half. In 1857 in Trinidad it was found that in addition to those who had re-indentured, out of a total of three thousand time-expired immigrants over four hundred were to be found in commercial occupations, and the other thousand comprised independent peasant agriculturalists and free labourers who moved around the estates seeking work. In Trinidad the planters found it increasingly unnecessary to use re-indenture since they were able to attract enough labour without it, and labourers were keener to earn the higher wages of the unindentured. By

the 1850s there began a steady movement off the estates in Trinidad. Initially most of this had involved the building of ajoupas on marginal land near the plantations, often scattered without any village pattern, so that the inhabitants were part free labourers and part subsistence peasantry. Gradually the pattern changed to the establishment of nucleated villages situated along the roads and railways. In the south of Trinidad settlements were often established on higher ground, above flood levels and not using cultivable land. In 1869 the Trinidad Government accepted a proposal from a group of twenty-five Indians that they would abandon their right to a return passage if they were given land of a similar value. By the end of 1870, one hundred and eighty Indians had commuted their passage for land; others bought land but did not surrender their rights of free return. Between 1869-1890 there were a variety of schemes intended to encourage Indians to settle in the colony. Initially the grant was of ten acres, then this was reduced to five acres and £5, and then simply £5. In 1890 the scheme was abandoned since the grants were felt to have little effect on the decision to stay or leave. In addition the planters were hostile to land grants since they felt that they removed Indians from the labour pool. They preferred settlements on land marginal to the estates. Nevertheless, during the 1870's, 3,908 Indians accepted the commutation offer. In the process new Indian villages sprang up, often of provisions growers. Government sponsored villages developed at Oropouche Lagoon and Chaguanas. At the same time independent settlements were established in considerable numbers both through the purchase and the renting of land. During the 1880s the most significant development away from plantation labour occurred with the establishment of cane farming. Between 1885-1909, 69,087 acres of cane land were sold to Indians. By 1891, 726 Indians were listed as proprietors, though most had quite small plots of between five to six acres. However, the bulk of the villages remained partially dependent on seasonal work on the estates, though

the growing of provisions and rice became important additions to the economy. By 1896, local growers provided one sixth of the total consumption of rice. However, in Trinidad, rice growing never became the major industry it became in British Guiana, and most rice was grown for subsistence only.

Thus during the 1870's in Trinidad there had begun a wholesale change in the status of Indians and their patterns of residence. By 1891, 54.65% of Indians were resident in towns, villages and settlements and only 38% were still resident on the sugar plantations. The majority of those outside the estates lived in villages in Naparima Ward Union, Couva, Chaguanas and Tacarigua. However, it should not be thought that migration to the villages ended Indian sufferings. Some prospered, most remained tied to the estates, and for others there was simply the exchange of exploitation on the estate to being exploited by their own countrymen. Nevertheless, even if the villages did not achieve economic independence, the effects of this early move away from estate residence had a crucial effect on the kind of Indian culture that developed in Trinidad, with, as I shall argue, continuing social and political consequences.

In British Guiana, on the other hand, there was no similar scale of movement off the estates. The planters there were far keener to use re-indenture as a means to keep experienced labour on the estates. Jenkins asserts that up to 1870, at least, non-indentured labourers had earned no more than indentured labourers, so that apart from the desire for independence, which was real, there was little advantage in free labour. Even so the Indians distinguished between Girimitwallah (agreement people) and khula (opened or free people), though by 1871 only 8.4% of the Indian population lived off the estates.

However, after 1870 the movement away began. Between 1872-76 some 15,000 people moved off the estates, and by 1881, 24% of Indians were non-resident. The main Indian motive for this movement was the abolition of re-indenture since as free labourers they were not obliged to remain on the estate. The movement away, provided that it could be manipulated, was also to the advantage of the planters;

many estates were suffering from housing shortages, because, despite developing a labour surplus, the number of new immigrants was higher than ever. Some estates, however, did stop applying for new immigrants and began increasingly to use free labourers, paid slightly higher wages and offered a variety of inducements such as the provision of cheap or free firewood, pasturage and small plots for rice cultivation. Other estates, though glad to see time-expired labourers leave the inner estate housing, nevertheless ensured that many of them remained close by offering houselots with little or no land on the estate front lands.

A third cause of stimulating movement away was the planters' anxiety not to have to pay the costs of repatriating the huge numbers who had entered Guiana between 1860-1870. The result was the Government's agreement, in 1872, to offer Indians three acres of land in lieu of return rights. However, the offered settlement at Nooten Zuill was a failure since Indians who visited the site 'laughed at the idea of settling on it' - ⁷⁶ the holdings were too small and the drainage inadequate. The idea of encouraging Indian village settlement was shelved for ten years, and when new schemes were introduced in the 1880s and the 1890s they too failed for various reasons, at the root of which lay the contradiction in planter attitudes. They wanted to keep the Indians in the colony yet they did not want to see the establishment of a genuinely independent peasantry. The plots offered were too small to enable total self-sufficiency, and the planter-dominated Court of Policy blocked official schemes to spend money on drainage. Many plots were offered leasehold rather than freehold, a further discouragement to serious settlement. Other reasons for the schemes' failures may well have to do with the kind of settlers they attracted. The most enterprising probably steered clear of the Government schemes and struck out on their own. The records suggest that the background of those involved in these schemes was disproportionately weighted towards the low castes. J.B. Cropper, the energetic

and dedicated supervisor of these projects, felt that many of these settlers still depended on estate labour and remained psychologically bound to that system: many needed to be 'cared for almost as a child.' He felt that it was unsurprising that these villages were very slow to develop any communal spirit.

Parallel to this faltering development there was a far healthier growth of independent settlement, though this too fell far short of the rate of change in Trinidad. It was not until the 1890's that another exodus from the estates similar in scale to that of the 1870s took place. This exodus was stimulated by the slump in the sugar market, which reduced both wages and jobs. Free allotment of land as an alternative to repatriation was revived and a large quantity of Crown lands was made available for purchase at a cheap rate. The planters now needed to shed labour and avoid the costs of repatriation.

Each of the successive waves of dispersal from the estates brought settlement to different parts of British Guiana. Before 1870 the non-estate population was concentrated on the coasts of the Demerara. In the internal migration of 1872-76, Essequibo, East Bank Berbice and the upper Courantyne were settled. In the following decade settlement continued in those two areas and the islands of Waakenham and Leguan.

The most crucial factor in the diversification of the Indian community was the development of the rice industry. Indians had begun small plantings as early as 1865, and during the 1870s some planters had encouraged the growth of a cottage industry scale of rice farming by making land available to free labourers in return for the commitment to work on the estate at crop time. As a low capital, labour-intensive crop, rice farming was ideally suited to peasant development and, with large quantities of land available, by 1902-03 the industry had grown so fast that 20,000 persons were employed in it. By 1911, 60,000 persons, mainly Indians, were employed in rice cultivation and by 1913, 33,888 acres were devoted to it. Even in the areas of highest capital expenditure, the setting up of rice mills, Indians were heavily involved, owning

20 out of the 60 mills. By this stage large rice farms dominated the industry, with the result that many of the Indians who moved into the rice planting areas remained as landless labourers, employed by the new class of Indian landowners.⁸¹ Further, many of those growing small quantities of rice remained dependent on estate labour.⁸² Even so, when there was a revival of the sugar industry during the early 20th century, the estates found themselves in difficulty in competing for labour, and so one of the side effects of the Indian rice industry was to bring about a considerable improvement in the conditions, welfare and fringe benefits offered to sugar workers. For instance, in 1909, 11,000 acres of estate land was rented to labourers for rice cultivation.

Even allowing for the rapidity of the late development of movement off the estates in British Guiana, the kind of social formation of the Indian population remained very different from that in Trinidad. In the first place, though both in Trinidad and British Guiana the percentage of indentured labourers as a proportion of the total Indian population fell sharply from the 1880s on, the composition of the estate population in the two countries differed sharply. In Trinidad, by 1891 only 15.4% of the Indian population was indentured and by 1901 the figure had fallen to 8.9%. In British Guiana by 1891 the percentage was approximately 18.2% and by 1901 12.1%. However, in Trinidad by 1891 the estate population was not only much smaller than that of British Guiana (38%:68%) but in Trinidad the estate population was preponderantly made up of the indentured and Indian born who comprised 73.5% of the estate population, whereas in British Guiana the estate population mainly comprised free labourers (approximately 82% of the estate population). The continuity and the size of the free estate population (nearly 50% of the total Indian population, was crucial to the development of an estate culture very different from the village culture of rural Trinidad. Further, when indenture ended the estate population in Trinidad virtually disappeared, so that only the essential work-

ers continued to live on the estates. In British Guiana the estate population remained resident on the central estate area right up to 1946-1950 when 71,480 or 43.7% of the Indian population belonged to this group.⁸³

In summary then, one can compare the distribution of the Indian populations of Trinidad and British Guiana at the end of indenture as follows: in British Guiana 47% of the population were resident on the sugar estates, and 46%, approximately, in the free village settlements. Of these many were in small settlements on the front lands of sugar estates, others in the villages based on rice production and a small number in the Government sponsored settlements. This division of the population corresponded roughly to geographical areas with the Berbice/Courentyne area as the centre of rice growing and independent settlements, and the East Coast Demerara was the centre of sugar and estate residence.

In Trinidad by 1921 the vast majority of Indians were living in independent villages, some of which, such as Chaguanas or Debe, soon became small towns.

There remains one further area of diversity to note: the movement of small numbers of Indians into the urban centres. Though in both cases numbers were small, urbanisation developed rather more rapidly in British Guiana than in Trinidad. By 1871 there were 1,466 Indians in Georgetown and New Amsterdam, 2.7% of the total Indian population. The numbers rose slowly to 5238 (5%) in 1891 and to 7310 (5.8%) in 1911, still less than one in eleven of the total non-estate population.⁸⁴ In their movements Indians consistently declared their desire to live amongst their own. In Trinidad, even by 1891, only 1.15% of the Indian population lived in Port of Spain, and only slightly more in San Fernando.⁸⁵ The few professionals who lived in towns were probably mainly those in Government positions, such as interpreters. The bulk of the urban Indian population worked as domestics, porters, cart men, scavengers, sweepers, hucksters and odd-jobbers.⁸⁶ This group included the most depressed and despised members of the Indian community, people who had perhaps been low caste sweepers

and night-soil collectors before they emigrated. One indignant Indian in Trinidad in 1854, Sirdar Jaumeer Jendar, wrote to the Port of Spain Gazette complaining about the slanders put on respectable Indians when they were judged by the manners of the 'carrion eating' untouchables who scavenged Port-of-Spain. He asserted that 'Town Coolie low caste fellow, very dirty, very lazy; but countrie coolie-Naparima coolie -very clean...⁸⁷' After indenture ended Port-of-Spain became the haunt of a pathetic band of Indian destitutes, vagrants who lived in the streets, the casualties of indenture. Initially poor Indians settled among poor black people; in British Guiana the Albouystown district of Georgetown is still the area of highest Indian concentration. Indian districts in Port of Spain, such as the St. James district, developed later. Urbanised Indians in general comprised the most assimilated or creolised group.⁸⁸

What then of the culture or rather cultures which were grounded in these varieties of occupation and social relationship? Discussion of the cultural patterns of the Indians in the Caribbean has been fraught with contradiction and confusion. Commentators have regarded the process as one of acculturation to the norms of creole society,⁸⁹ or have looked mainly for evidence of cultural retention,⁹⁰ or have regarded Indian cultural practices as dynamic, or have seen them as fossils. Some of the confusion is quite unnecessary. In the first place there has been a tendency to generalise about the nature of Indian culture on the basis of a single area of investigation, only to have the generalisations challenged by another piece of empirical observation in a different community. It is evident that no progress can be made until it is accepted that not only between Trinidad and Guyana, but within each society, there are different Indian cultural communities grounded in variations of economic activity and social relationship. One of the failings of cultural anthropology in the Caribbean is that whilst there are a good number of monographic studies of individual communities,⁹¹ no attempt has been made, to my knowledge, to

construct either a comparative picture across the full range of variant communities or to develop a general model of cultural change adequate to that variety.

The second area of confusion is, I believe, conceptual. Many of the studies of culture rest on a positivistic structural-functionalism and treat the Indians as victims of cultural change determined by external economic and social factors. A view of culture as a system of meanings can clarify some of the problems thrown up by positivist reasoning, and the kind of actor-environment model referred to earlier in the chapter can more adequately account for change. For instance, determinist-positivist treatments of cultural change argue that particular features of the indenture system force the abandonment of some cultural practice. From this it is inferred that the practice is no longer part of Indian culture in the Caribbean, and that Indians are becoming more acculturated. One variation of this argument might be the observation that a particular cultural practice is no longer functionally operative in the way it had been in the ancestral culture. From this it is reasoned that the practice in question is a cultural fossil.

The chief weakness of this kind of approach is that it does not stop to ask what such cultural practices mean to those who practice them. It does not recognise that particular cultural signifiers may disappear (e.g. part of the ritual of the marriage ceremony) but what it has signified may not disappear, but may become related to a different signifier. Inversely, signifiers may have become detached from what they originally signified (for example caste distinctions) but then attach themselves to new signifieds. In the discussion that follows several examples are given of such processes.

Nevertheless, there is a useful starting point to be had in considering the experience of indenture as a social and cultural dislocation of traumatic and potentially determining force. R.T. Smith, for instance, has argued (following Goffman's analysis of total

institutions in Asylums(1961) that the social order of the plantation was structured in such a way that the 'old self' and the culture of the group entering the system was destroyed and a new and dependent identity (and culture) was moulded to conform to the needs of the estate system. I believe Smith both overestimates the degree of passivity of the inhabitants of the plantation, and misconceives the changes which actually occurred. Nevertheless, such a view rightly demands a focus on what was hostile in the new environment to the range of cultural practices the Indians brought with them.

The experience of indenture indeed constituted a very sharp deracination, beginning with the kitting out of the emigrant in non-Indian costume at the emigration depots and the disorientation of a long sea voyage. Many had never left their villages before and some believed that crossing the 'black water' was a pollution. High caste emigrants who were forced into an unaccustomed contact with lower castes on board ship probably felt mortified by the experience. Yet even on board ship one element of the 'bung coolie' culture was created; this was the bond of 'gehaji' or shipmate, a replacing of the lost bonds of the village family network with the new bonds of shared experience. For many older Guyanese Indians the term 'gehaji' remains a meaningful concept. A more than generally observant planter noted the perturbation of the newly landed Indian: his "feeling of isolation, the altered demeanor of his fellow countrymen who have proceeded him, the unknown language or patois...and the rough, albeit good humoured coarseness of the Negroes, puzzle and alarm the sensitive East Indian". However, it was on the plantations that the greatest incompatibility between their ancestral culture and the new environment occurred.

The most immediate impact of the indenture system was on the family life of the Indians. Throughout the indenture period there was a severe imbalance between the sexes, for few married men were willing to bring their wives, and, for obvious economic reasons, the planters were anxious

that most emigrants should be men. Even though ordinances recommended that a ratio of 40:100 females to males be the minimum permitted, the actual ratios were nearer 25:100 throughout the period. Even after thirty years of immigration and settlement the proportion of females to males resident in British Guiana in 1871 was only 10,000 to 29,000.⁹⁵ Gradually the ratios improved owing to births in the colonies, but even by 1931 in Trinidad there remained a significant imbalance.⁹⁶

Inevitably such a disequilibrium had serious social consequences, the most notable of which were the very high rates of wife murder and suicide. The former was one stereotype which had real social roots, though not as a manifestation of intrinsic national character as sanctimoniously horrified missionaries implied, but as the result of the imbalance, the temporary breakdown of social networks and the clash between ancestral culture and the new environment.

In Trinidad there were 27 wife murders between 1859-1863 committed by Indians who numbered 13,488 residents in 1861. This is a ratio of 0.4 murders per thousand population per year.⁹⁷ (This would be the equivalent of 24,000 wife murders a year in the British population. Even towards the end of the indenture period the numbers were still high. In British Guiana between 1894-1905 there were 29 recorded murders of Indian women (nearly all involving a sexual relationship), an average of 0.0196 per thousand per year.⁹⁸ The more immediate provocations for such murders stemmed from the intense competition for women and the practice of enticement (to see it from the male's point of view) when a wealthier man might attempt to seduce a poorer man's wife, or (to see it from the woman's) when women decided to change partners. Coming from a background which placed great emphasis on the marital fidelity of women, and in a situation in which the traditional authority of the panchayats had broken down, the jealous husband or lover too often took the law into his own hands, with his cutlass.

Without the support of marriage the numbers of Indians who committed suicide rose to scandalous proportions. Although there were no doubt

other causes as well , there is an evident correlation between the suicide rate and the level of sexual imbalance. Fiji, with the lowest percentage of females (30.4%), had the highest suicide rate of 926 per million of the Indian population; Trinidad, with 35% females had a suicide rate of 406 per million, whilst British Guiana, with arguably the worst economic opportunities but the most favourable percentage of females (40%) had a suicide rate of 100 per million.⁹⁹

Other consequences of the sexual imbalance were the spread of prostitution , the prevalence of male homosexuality and the perpetuation of child marriages. (In Fiji, indeed, the forced quasi-prostitution of Indian women was one of the factors which shocked the colonial moral conscience into seeing the necessity of ending indenture.) Homosexuality was observed both on the emigrant ships ('Sodomy prevails among them to a dreadful extent', wrote one ship's captain.)¹⁰⁰ and on the plantations (usually referred to in such coy phrases as 'practices which cannot be mentioned here'.)¹⁰¹ To what extent homosexuality has cultural roots in continental India I do not know; however, if the novel of Sonny Ladoo, Yesterdays (1974) has any representative truth, then it remains part of Indo-Caribbean village life. It is impossible now to determine what social role homosexuality played on the estates, but it is interesting to note that the term 'mati' refers both to comradely worker solidarity and also to a homosexual relationship.¹⁰²

Inevitably the role and status of women also changed as a result of the imbalance of the sexes. Owing both to their position as independent wage earners and to their consciousness of their scarcity value, some Indian women went through a profound reevaluation of their position. Bronkhurst writes:

...the Indian indentured woman in the colony feels that she is independent of her husband, as she has to earn her own living by working in the field, and gets her weekly wages in her own hands.¹⁰³

Bronkhurst felt that the woman believed she could 'change one lord and master with the greatest of ease'. One Indian woman told Sarah Morton:

When the last ship came in I took a Papa. I will keep him as long as he treats me well. If he does not treat me well I shall send him off at once.¹⁰⁴

However, it should not be thought that the position of women inevitably improved. A woman could as easily be treated as property, sexual and domestic. As Bronkhurst noted, the male immigrant did not accept the increased independence of the woman, but did 'everything at home to humble her'.¹⁰⁵

For those who aspired to a stable married status, conditions on the estates posed severe problems. In the first period of indenture in British Guiana there were initially no separate quarters provided for married couples.¹⁰⁶ Even when separate quarters were provided they were of a type wholly inimical to privacy and marital stability. Throughout the indenture period there was a relatively standard kind of estate housing, known as ranges in Trinidad and logies in British Guiana. These barrack-style dwellings not only provided only one room (usually 10 ft. x 12 ft) to live and sleep in for a whole family, but also the inner walls separating one unit from another were usually only head high, permitting ventilation but denying any privacy.¹⁰⁷ Up to 1870 in British Guiana two storied logies were common, though after criticism in the Royal Commission of that year long single storied buildings became the standard pattern, such as the one described by Lechmere Guppy, Lord Mayor of San Fernando, in 1888.

The barrack is a long wooden building eleven or twelve feet wide, containing perhaps eight to ten small rooms divided from each other by wooden partitions not reaching the roof. The roof is of galvanised iron, without any ceiling; and the heat of the sun by day and the cold by night take full effect upon the occupants. By standing on a box the occupant of one room can look over the partition of the adjoining one, and can easily climb over. A family has a single room in which to bring up their boys and girls if they have children. All noises and smells pass through the open space from one end of the barrack to another. . . . comfort, privacy and decency are impossible under such conditions. A number of barracks are grouped together close to the dwelling house of the overseers, in order that they may, with the least trouble, put them out to work before daylight in croptime, which they do by entering their room and, if necessary, pulling them off their beds where they are lying with their wives. . . .¹⁰⁸

This enforced proximity was quite contrary to patterns of housing in village India or what the Indians actually desired. When estates permitted free labourers to build their own houses on estate land these were invariably detached, the wood and trash 'troolies' of British Guiana or the 'ajoupas' of Trinidad. On the free village settlements, particularly in the earlier days, housing was often scattered, being built on the cultivable plot.

There were other ways in which the stability of marital and family life was undermined. Couples were sometimes separated when one partner had completed indenture and was turned off the estate whilst the other was obliged to remain. Again, as explained in Chapter Four, liaisons between white supervisors and Indian women were frequently the cause of disturbances. Finally, although the Indians had freedom of worship, their marriages, whether solemnised under Hindu or Muslim rites, were not recognised as legal. At first this did not matter, but as soon as Indians began to amass property or desire education for their children, they noticed the inconvenience. Then they discovered that if a property owner died intestate, the state not the children gained the inheritance. A man whose wife left him carrying some of the matrimonial property in the shape of jewellery would find that he had no redress, nor would a wife who had been abandoned. Later, the fact that Indian children from unregistered marriages were regarded as illegitimate excluded them from secondary schooling. These disabilities stimulated some of the wealthier and more educated Indians to agitate for the unqualified recognition of Hindu and Muslim ceremonies, but it was not until 1916 in British Guiana and 1945 in Trinidad that non-Christian marriages were recognised as legal.¹⁰⁹

Undoubtedly, the state of family and sexual relationships went through a stage, in Jenkins's words, of 'chaos', and it is one of the symptoms of the resilience of Indian cultural life that the stable family unit was so rapidly reconstructed. On the estates the pattern of housing and economic activity meant that the kind

of kinship patterns that existed in rural India could not be maintained. Nevertheless, there is evidence that even on the estates most marriages were solemnised under full Hindu or Muslim rites, and a form of exogamy was practiced. Although it created nothing like the vast kinship networks of rural India, it made contacts with other estates which facilitated movement for work or better conditions. This is but one example of the adaptation of traditional practices; another was the substitution of the estate community as kin. Even today in rural Guyana, older men and women are invariably addressed as Aunty or Uncle by unrelated younger people. However, alongside such adaptations went the adoption, by a minority, of the consensual sexual partnerships most common amongst rural Creoles.

In the independent villages there was an almost total reconstitution of traditional kinship patterns. Klass's study of 'Amity' a village near Chaguanas, showed that even by the late 1950s both the terminology and the actuality of a rich and complex system of kinship relations survived; marriages were still mainly caste endogamous and village exogamous; and patterns of kinship behaviour found in North India, such as avoidance and joking relationships still persisted. Not least, Klass found that the traditional joint, three-generational, family was still prevalent. Since other studies of less rural areas show greater changes in kinship forms, it seems safe to deduce that in villages like Amity, the reconstitution of village India may have been even more complete in the past than Klass had found it.

The distinction between estate and village holds equally good for caste, the key determinant of social relationships in rural India. On the estate both the structure of employment and the consciousness of the workers made it impossible for the caste system to function in any real sense. Firstly, the relationship between occupation and caste was broken, the proscriptions on inter-caste contact destroyed by the organisation of workers into gangs and the hierarchies of the caste system overturned by the fact that a fit and intelligent low caste worker

might well be found as a driver over higher caste labourers. Caste endogamy in arranging marriages also broke down, both because of the shortage of women and the absence of the patrilineal family networks of the village. A more positive reason for the displacement of caste criteria was the development of worker solidarity which necessarily cut across caste lines. However, even on the estates it should not be supposed that caste feeling disappeared immediately. Bronkhurst reports the case of a high caste labourer on a Guyanese estate in 1863 who lost caste by eating in the house of a pariah. The caste-breaker not only suffered the indignity of being pelted with cow dung, but was forced to pay \$30 to make a feast for the gods before he was re-admitted to his caste.¹¹⁰ W. H. Gamble noted with disgust that '...a woman, for instance, will drop down, touch the foot of this holy Brahmin, and then kiss the hand that has been in contact with the priest's foot'.¹¹¹ In general, however, only the extremities of high (Brahmin) and low (Chamar) were recognised, and these were really ascriptive when they coincided with other criteria such as wealth or status.

In the free villages, particularly those of Trinidad, a caste system, albeit simplified to the recognition of the four varnas, was re-established. One nineteenth century observer noted that in Trinidad, though all castes had sunk by leaving India, 'the relative difference between them remains the same'.¹¹² Brahmins restored themselves to their former ascendancy, and residential settlements grouped together people of similar caste background. Thus Klass found that 'Amity' had four distinct areas - one for Brahmins and Kshatriyas and some 'respectable' Vaishya castes, another for Vaishyas and some non-swine raising Sudras, another area known as Jangli Tola (jungle district) inhabited by Sudras and Madrassis. A fourth area settled by former estate dwellers was regarded as similar in status to Jangli Tola. Even by the late 1950s as many as thirty-nine caste 'jats' were recognised and felt to be still part of the parent Indian caste group. Though the close correlation between sub-caste and occupation had largely disappeared, certain vest-

iges remained. Occupations which involved the taking of life such as pig-raising and crab-catching¹¹³ were still low caste, and the village midwife was still invariably of chamar caste.¹¹⁴ Moreover, there was for a long time a fairly close correlation between high caste and elite status, which even now has not entirely disappeared. It seems likely that being of high caste gave considerable advantages to Indian professionals, who would be doubly respected by their clients.¹¹⁵ In 'Amity' Klass found that significant inter-caste relationships remained, specifically the 'praja' relationship of mutual obligation between high and low castes, the former to give protection, the latter respect.¹¹⁶ Again, Klass found well observed restrictions on who could prepare food, and an absolute reluctance of high caste Hindus to eat in the homes of the low caste.

Central to the social order of the North Indian village was the panchayat or council of elders. Again there were wide differences between estate and village in the way Indians adapted to the forms of power and authority in the Caribbean. On the estate the manager was the ultimate authority, with effective jurisdiction over most minor offences. It would seem inevitable, as Smith and Jayawardene have asserted,¹¹⁷ that traditional Indian means of creating order would be undermined. This was largely true, though I have evidence that on at least one estate the panchayat operated up to the 1950s under the blessing of the manager but effectively independent of him. The manager was pleased to minimise the loss of labour time of workers attending courts away from the estate, and the Indians were able to maintain an element of their communal identity.¹¹⁸ What in the end may have been most inimical to the existence of the panchayat on the estates was the egalitarianism of the workers. To pass judgements on one's fellows was to claim an unwarranted superiority, an 'eye-pass'. Nevertheless, if the panchayat finally disappeared, social norms were still enforced by strong communal sanctions: public approbation or disapproval remained powerful regulators of behaviour.

There is some evidence that the panchayat survived in villages in Trinidad until the 1940s at least. In the oral history of Klass's 'Amity' there is reference to the reconstitution of the panchayat after an early period in the village's settlement when power was exercised solely by a high-caste land owner.¹¹⁹ However, by the 1940s, the panchayat had begun to lose authority; offenders increasingly ignored its judgments and complainants preferred to use the colonial courts. Even so, Klass found that many disputes were settled through informal meetings or through the intercession of one of the village 'big' men.¹²⁰

It was the view of that most perceptive of observers, C.F. Andrews, that the most profound alteration of the cultural condition of the Indians in the Caribbean was the loss of Hindi, since language carries 'all the culture's religious associations and traditions'.¹²¹ Andrews may well have found an estate population which was in the process of losing its Hindi without yet having adapted the local creole to its own needs. Two incidents from my own limited experience lead me to feel that the loss of Hindi was not as deculturising as Andrews feared. One Jhanam Astami I attended in Guyana involved the pundit in translating from Hindi into English. The Hindi was rote-learned, wooden and halting. Here indeed was loss. The translation began, phrase for phrase, in stilted and grammatically shaky standard English - probably for my benefit. Here too was loss. However, as he went on the translation became more and more creolised, fluent and dramatic. On another occasion an old lady told me a tale from the Mahabarata in the creolese of the older rural Indians. What was glaringly apparent was that though the language might have changed, what was signified remained as real and as pertinent as ever.

The move away from Hindi to English or creole was inevitable. Hindi was only one of a number of Indic languages brought to the Caribbean (others included Bengali, Tamil, Gujurati and Punjabi). At first the lingua franca was the Bhojpuri dialect of Hindi spoken by the numerically dominant immigrant group from the United Provinces. Ultimately, however, Bhojpuri was destined to fall under the challenge of English and creole

since they were the languages of work, the law and commercial interaction with the wider society.¹²³ Again, there is evidence of different rates of change between the village and the estate. Bronkhurst reports how keen indentured labourers were to learn English, 'because they fear that because of their ignorance of the language of the country, undue advantage is taken of them...'.¹²⁴ He also suspected that the main reason many Indians attended his open air services was to listen to English. Andrews found that on most of the estates he visited in 1929 there had been a large-scale loss of Hindi, whereas in a village like Windsor Forest the people still used Hindi in everyday speech. In the villages of Trinidad, Bhojpuri probably remained the dominant language until the 1930s. The Niehoffs' research in the 1950s in Southern Trinidad showed that most of the older people still spoke mainly Hindi, though the majority of younger adults mainly used creolese with a background knowledge of Hindi. By contrast, Jayawardena states that on the sugar estates of Guyana during the same period, nine-tenths of those under thirty-five did not understand Hindi. However, what Jayawardena does not record is that a fairly extensive Hindi vocabulary has been integrated into the creole spoken by Indians, particularly around those areas of life concerned with the kitchen, rice-planting, kinship and ceremonies.¹²⁵

At this point it is perhaps worth summarising the ways in which estate and village, as ideal types, differed.

The economic activities of the estate were almost wholly controlled by the sugar company, whereas most villages had at least one area of economic independence - rice cultivation. On the estates, status was determined mainly by position in the occupational and skill hierarchy whereas, in the villages, caste position remained important. In the villages, the extended family remained a living institution, whereas, on the estates, the nuclear family increasingly dominated and formal marriage networks were replaced by informal intra-communal ties. The social relations of the village were recognisably hierarchical, whereas the estate community, at the points where it was separate from the manage-

ment structure, was notably egalitarian. If the 'mati' relationship ('All o' we is one') and the offence against it, the 'eye-pass', epitomises the ideology of the estate, what Klass identifies as the 'praja' relationship (the recognition of reciprocal obligations between social superior and inferior) and its offence of 'nimakharam' (ingratitude) would seem to epitomise the traditional village. Again, whilst it is only a suggestive caricature, it is possible to see the value systems of estate and village as contrasted between communality, conviviality and the tolerance of publicly expressive behaviour, and the values of work, saving and respectability. Village communities have tended to look down on estate dwellers as riotous, immoral, drunken and foul-mouthed.

By and large it is the village which has been seen as the locus of Indian cultural survival, and of village life as superior in almost all respects to that of the estate. Yet, as I will argue, the estate was an important environment for the survival and development of an element of Indian culture in the Caribbean, a non-Brahminical element, which has proved remarkably resilient. Certainly the passing of estate life is viewed with mixed feelings by those who now live in the villages in Guyana which were established in the late 1940s and early 1950s as part of the extra-nuclear settlement programme. All appreciate the space, the superior housing and sanitation of the new villages, but many still feel a nostalgia for the estate days and the closeness of its social life.

In the remainder of this survey I wish to correct the false picture of the immigrants as an illiterate, helot class, wholly involved in mindless labour, scrimping and saving and totally deracinated. Much of the past has gone unrecorded, and there are no doubt materials which await discovery; nevertheless, if the scattered records of contemporary observers are pieced together, a picture of considerable diversity begins to emerge. Such a picture, of course, in no way contradicts that other truth about this period of Indian residence in the Caribbean, that at its heart lay a harsh system of quasi-servitude.

At the centre of the cultural survival of the Indians was their steadfastness in their religious beliefs and practices. Although Christian missionaries made determined efforts to proselytize, and were able to offer a fairly assured route to social success, remarkably few Hindus and even fewer Muslims were ever converted. The missionaries constantly complained that not only did they meet hostility but highly sophisticated counter-arguments. Bronkhurst wrote that the immigrant 'looks upon the missionary of the cross as an agent sent by the English Government to effect his religious subjugation'. He blamed the Brahmins as a 'pernicious and baneful influence' and admitted that 'among the immigrants there are a great many persons who are highly educated.' This was part of the truth, but the groups who were most impervious to the temptations of conversion were the uneducated rural peasantry and plantation workers.

Hinduism and Islam provided individuals with the means of making sense of their experience in the world and gave immigrant communities the moral codes to guide the conduct of their affairs. Beyond these traditional functions, both religions took on new significances for a transplanted people. Rituals and rites of passage became means of preserving ethnic pride and a coherent identity in societies which assigned Indians to the lowliest position in the socio-economic order. Religious organisation also provided the basis for communal ties in an economic system which treated Indians as atomised individuals, and gave the Indian population a degree of social integration which for, a considerable period, survived the actual differences of material interest within the group.

The survival of traditional cultural practices and the degree of communal cohesion, though often criticised as clannishness, must be regarded as positive phenomena. Had matters gone otherwise, I believe the Indians would now have little to contribute to whatever diverse/coherent culture might grow in the future in the Caribbean, and, as a group, they would have been even more vulnerable to the impact of Anglo-American cultural imperialism.

However, the role of caste distinction in religious survival does not lend itself to such positive evaluation. Whilst Brahmins appear to have played crucial roles as guardians of cultural authenticity, the dominance of high caste groups in other areas of leadership, particularly in politics, has been wholly inimical to the interests of the cane worker or subsistence peasant.

By 1966, the religious festival of Phagwa or Holi had become a national holiday in Trinidad. However, in the earlier years of the indenture period, the survival of Hinduism and Islam had depended on individual, family or small group efforts. Indeed the central place of domestic worship in Hindu life accounts in no small measure for this continuity. All the major rites of passage are essentially domestic affairs, and accounts of them from different periods show little change. Bronkhurst's description of birth ceremonies in British Guiana in the 1880s is almost identical to those described by Klass in Trinidad in the 1950s.¹³² Similarly, nineteenth century accounts of Hindu weddings suggest they had changed little from the ceremonies practiced in India, and the more recent accounts of Klass and the Niehoffs show only slight variations.¹³³ Only the rites of death appear to have changed, and this was largely because the colonial authorities would not permit riverside cremations until the 1930s. However, many Indians appear to have adopted the creole wake as a means of paying last respects.¹³⁴

By the early 1860s in Trinidad and by 1870 in British Guiana, Indians had also begun to build permanent temples and mosques. By 1893, 29 mosques and 33 temples had been built in Guiana, and by 1917 this had been increased to 46 mosques and 43 Hindu temples. The larger number of mosques, despite the numerical inferiority of Muslims to Hindus (approximately 1:5) would seem consistent with the missionary observation that Muslims provided the best organised and most obdurate opposition to Christianity.

As Karna B. Singh has shown in his excellent monograph, Temples and Mosques: An Illustrated Study of East Indian Places of Worship in Guyana,

(1980), the first phase of institutionalised religious activity was one of transplantation; literally in the case of the trees and plants which were brought from India, such as the peepul, the neem and the tulsi plant, to recreate sacred groves and provide fruits and leaves essential for ceremonies. Also shipped from India were the brass vessels, temple bells, sacred prints and books necessary to perform authentic rituals. Where direct transplantation was impossible there was a process of symbolic substitution, for instance designating a local river as a substitute Ganges for ritual bathing and the provision of water brought to a dying person. The river on Pln. Albion in Berbice was, for example, known as Albion Ganges. The earliest temples or 'shivalas' authentically followed the essential spatial features of temples in India, though on a less grand scale.¹³⁵ These early shivalas housed the shrine of a deity but were not built for a congregation. Only the pundit entered them whilst other worshippers remained outside. Later, however, the architecture of the temples changed in a way which both reflected the increased importance of Brahmins within the Indian community and the influence of the more prestigious Christian churches. As Karna Singh argues, the role of the brahmin pundit probably became an increasingly important symbol of the authenticity of religious observation and cultural 'Indianness' as the proportion of Indian born people declined. As the Indian population as a whole became in some respects more creolised, the brahmin pundit still dressed 'India style' and, supposedly at least, still followed private ritual practices which were being abandoned by the community in general. Around the 1920s period there was a widespread building of Indian temples which resembled the Christian churches in that they housed the congregation, and the interaction of priest and congregation became the centre of worship. In some temples there was even the complete displacement of the garba griha (inner shrine) by the building of a 'sinhasan', a raised throne for the pundit which became the visual focus for the congregation.¹³⁶ At its peak the power of the pundits was very great. Klass, for instance, was told that

it was common in the past for boys to be put in the hands of the pundit for initiation (gurumukh) and from there on the pundit had acted as their guru.¹³⁷ As a person who still was able to read Sanskrit the pundit was also important as a means of access for the ordinary villager or estate dweller to the 'big' literate culture of Hinduism.

However, the pundit was not always revered. As a number of novels show, the folkloric image of the dishonesty, cupidity and immorality of the 'cut-pocket' pandit¹³⁸ has passed into imaginative literature. The fact that pundits were often men of wealth did not always appeal to those who had to pay for their services.

Much less is known about the position of the Muslim maulvi; there is little evidence to suggest that they ever attained the same influence or the same odium. In general, Indian muslims appear to have been far more immune to influence from the new environment. Certainly, from the nineteenth century to the present the architecture of mosques has maintained a remarkable consistency in following traditional symbolic spatial arrangements.¹³⁹

Parallel to the building of temples and mosques in the nineteenth century was the re-establishment of the major public festivals of the Hindu and Muslim calendars. Because of the dearth and vagueness of contemporary reports it is impossible to be certain about the sequence in which this occurred, and it is perhaps the case that it was those festivals which most offended European sensibilities which tended to be noticed whilst other festivals actually in existence might have gone unreported. Nevertheless, it is significant that those festivals which appear to have been the earliest to become established were of a popular non-Brahminical kind: Hossay, fire-walk and Phagwah.

The popularity of Hossay in the nineteenth century (and after) was secular more than it was religious. In its Indian origins it had been a festival of the minority Shiite Muslims. It involved the carrying in procession of 'tajahs', intricately ornamented models of the tombs of the slain martyrs of the sect, ritual weeping by females and self-

mutilation by some male devotees. However, there is evidence that even in India in the nineteenth century, the procession had become something of a carnival, involving battles between rival sects and the participation of Hindus.¹⁴⁰ These tendencies were accentuated in the Caribbean where there were very few Shiite Muslims; most reports indicate that the majority of participants were Hindus. There is no evidence of the fanatical self-mutilation that occurred in India. Instead, apart from the carrying of the Tadjahs, the most important element in the procession became the gatka (stick) dance, originally a symbolic declaration by the Shiites that they would defend their sect, now a means of competition between rival estates and a symbol of Indian solidarity. Bronkhurst reports several cases in British Guiana in the 1860s when Europeans were beaten by Indians because they had passed in the way of the procession. By 1875 in British Guiana and 1884 in Trinidad the local Governments had passed regulations restricting the holding of Hossay. The events of the large scale clashes between Indians and the armed forces in San Fernando in 1884 have already been told.¹⁴¹

The other source of popular Indian religious activity came from the Indians who had migrated from Madras. South India had its own caste system, but it seems that, as a minority in the Caribbean, most Madrassis were fitted onto the lowest rungs of the North Indian caste ladder, probably because of their relative darkness. Whereas Brahminical Hinduism in the Caribbean has tended towards respectable congregational activity focussed on the reading of sacred texts and a conservative attitude towards the maintenance of social order, the ceremonies of the folk have tended to include animal sacrifice, possession, ritual ordeal and emotional catharsis. The distinction, of course, also relates to larger contrary tendencies within Hinduism; the inclination on the one hand to codify and institutionalise and the countervailing 'Bhakti' revolt with its focus on subjective emotional experience and religious rapture.¹⁴²

A number of South Indian ceremonies established themselves early

on in the Caribbean. The Madras fire-walking festival is reported to have become an important event in both Trinidad and British Guiana in the 1850s. Linked to fire-walking was the 'charkh puja', also South Indian, when devotees swung from a high pole from wires which were impaled in their flesh.¹⁴³ Both charkh puja and fire-walking were banned by the colonial authorities, but reports indicate that the former continued throughout most of the nineteenth century in Trinidad. A report of the 'Thimi Therunal' festival in 1890 describes the erection of a thirty foot pole with a platform on top from which the pujari sang verses from the Ramayan. Men with their sides pierced 'with umbrella wires' were attached to the pole, though there is no mention of them swinging.¹⁴⁴ Fire-walking survived in British Guiana until the late 1940s. The South Indian festival with the greatest longevity and dynamism has been, and is, Kali-Mai Puja. Kali, a black aboriginal Goddess, the savage destroyer of evil, is part of the Hindu pantheon, but low in the Brahminical hierarchy. However, in South India Kali is the most important deity. In the Caribbean, Kali-Mai pujas are held within individual families, at estate or village level, and at large scale events such as the three day Great Kali pujas, formerly held every six years on the Albion estate in Berbice, to which worshippers came from all over Guyana. Whatever the level the process of the puja is similar. It is concerned with two functions: with propitiating the Goddess and with invoking her power to heal the sick, principally those with psychological problems or psychosomatic illnesses. The Goddess works through the pujari(s) who, induced by drumming, enter a trance-state and become possessed by her spirit. In this state they give advice to or heal sufferers. In order to prove that their possession is genuine, the pujaris undergo some act of attestation, which in the past would have included fire-walking, but now mainly includes taking burning camphor in the mouth or being lashed on the forearms with a mule-whip. If the possession is genuine, no marks appear. Finally the Goddess is propitiated and thanked by an act of animal sacrifice.¹⁴⁵

The Kali-Mai Churches are now the most dynamic element of Hinduism in Guyana, and there are now several groups in Trinidad where Kali worship had either died out or been driven underground by orthodox Hinduism. It is not hard to understand the popularity of the Kali Churches in Guyana where, in a climate of oppression, they provide both a means of emotional release and an assertion of Indianness which Sanatanist rituals do not seem to provide.

Nevertheless, the festivals of 'orthodox' Hinduism also played a central role in the maintenance of an Indian cultural identity. Phagwah is now probably the most public of Hindu festivals in the Caribbean and, after Hossay and Fire-walking, it was probably one of the earliest to be established. Phagwah is a celebration on the boundaries between the 'folk' and the 'brahminical'. It was an important festival in the villages of Central and North India, and part of the orthodox Hindu calendar. But it is also a festival when all kinds of boundary rules are transgressed such as respect for one's elders and the segregation of men and women. Phagwa is marked by the singing of the 'chowtal' bands and the throwing of abir, a red dye, at anyone met in the street. In the early days Phagwahs were even more boisterous affairs, when people were thrown into the estate canals and cow-dung as well as abir was thrown.¹⁴⁶

Other, and probably more latterly established, Hindu festivals were more evidently organised by the pundits. These included Divali, the festival of lights commemorating Rama's triumph over evil; Kartic Nahan, a period of ritual bathing; and the Ram Lila festival. In the Hindu temples the most important events in the cycle of devotional, brahminical ceremonies included Bagwat, Siupuran, Ram Noumi, Shiv Ratri and Jhanam Astami.¹⁴⁷ In general, it seems likely that by the 1880s, both Hindus and Muslims had recreated much of their former religious environments. Bronkhurst, for instance felt that the only aspects of Indian religious life not to be found in the Caribbean were yogis,

penitents, pilgrimages and holy mendicants.

In addition to orthodox Hindu elements, whether Brahminical or Madrassi, Indians also brought with them the older folk-beliefs of the villages. The Rev. K.G. Grant, writing in the late nineteenth century, noted the persistence of animistic beliefs, particularly amongst the low-castes, in Trinidad. Such beliefs readily merged with elements from the Afro-Creole spirit world and creole spirits such as jumbies, lagahu, soucouyant, moongazer and diablesse fitted very easily into the consciousness of estate and village dwellers. Indian 'najar' became interchangeable with Afro-Creole 'mal de ojo' or evil eye and Indian magic (ojha) has tended to blend with Afro-Creole obeah.¹⁵⁰

Christian symbols have also been appropriated; in the cult of Siparia Mai of South Trinidad, first noted in 1882, a black painted statue of the virgin in the La Divina Pastora church was venerated by Hindus as a blending of two mothers, Mary and Kali.¹⁵¹

Besides their spiritual and moral functions, religious activities provided the focus for a wide variety of folk arts: dance, music, drama, decoration and story-telling. Many festivals, such as Hossay with its Moon Dance and fire-walking with its 'banarathi' dance, had their own special dance steps. The tajahs carried at Hossay were always highly ornamented works of complex structure and decoration, and other religious ceremonies and the temples themselves called for sculptures, carvings and intricate forms of ornamentation. However, though it is still possible to see lively examples of folk-sculpture in remoter village temples, in general such 'creole' artefacts have tended to be replaced by materials directly imported from India.¹⁵²

Music was always an integral part of Hindu worship, and to a lesser extent Muslim devotions. The singing of bhajans (hymns of praise) and of verses from the Ramayana are but two deeply rooted examples of devotional singing. The drum was the essential instrument: the tassa drums, the tabla and the dholak. Formerly instruments such as

The Saranji and sitar were used, but now the portable harmonium, the dhantal (metal bars used as a kind of cymbal) and the dholak form the basic folk music ensemble in both religious and secular settings.

The Ramayana, in particular, joined the folk world to the classical tradition. Bronkhurst notes that by the 1880s Indian merchants in British Guiana were importing Hindu and Muslim sacred books, and C.F. Andrews, on the visit to British Guiana in 1929, reports being visited by a malarially weakened labourer carrying bundles containing books in Hindu and Urdu. Such literates kept the common people in touch with the classical past. Comins reports how immigrants 'found great pleasure in congregating round a mulla or pandit, listening to the tales or sacred books read by him.' K.G. Grant noted how familiar even the humblest Hindus were with the Ramayana:

Snatches or slokas from this great epic are often heard in song, accompanied by cymbals and drums, when the day's work is over....Legends from the other great religious poem, the Mahabharata...are frequently told by the more intelligent to the delight of the less informed and the young.

Such sessions were known to the Hindus as Satsanghs. Older people recalled the days on the estates when heaps of slow burning, smoky materials were lit to keep away the mosquitos and large groups would gather together for sessions which might last long into the night. There was even a special term in Hindi 'hockari-bhanja' for the appreciative 'hm' the audience gave to the story teller.

The high point of the religious folk arts was probably, through, the drama. In a sense all religious rituals involved drama, and an event like Hossay with its re-enacted funeral procession and crowds of mourners was a kind of passion play. However, the most complex and theatrical of the festivals were the Ram Lilas

and the Krishna Lilas. Bronkhurst reports that in British Guiana in the 1880s there were regular and impressive 'scenic representations' based on the 'deeds of Krishna, Rama, Siva, Durga and others'. The players were professionals who toured the estates as a troupe, and Bronkhurst noted that the headman of the exhibition usually collected large sums of money. The performances, held at night, were clearly dramatically powerful; 'the spectators being affected with grief and joy, according to the drama performed'.¹⁵⁹ It seems likely that the holding of Ram Lilas declined at some point, since there are references to the revival of the festival in the 1930s and 1940s. From recent accounts Ram Lilas appear to have become more amateur affairs, with the players dependent on the pundit for stage directions.¹⁶⁰ Immigrants from South India also brought with them their own very different dance dramas. Whether some of these dramas can really be termed folk performances is arguable, since some were performed from a written choreographed plan.¹⁶¹ There is a frustratingly vague description of such a drama from Comins: 'The Madras immigrants on certain occasions ... have entertainments consisting of very effective theatrical performances, representing various episodes in the ancient history of India'.¹⁶²

Whilst it is often difficult to establish any dividing line between the sacred and the profane it would be a mistake to blur the two spheres, for there are important differences in the fortunes of the folk arts in each area. For it is in the secular aspects of life, in areas like dress, use of leisure time and of social stimulants that the greatest changes in Indian cultural practices occurred. Even so, there were vital survivals in the secular sphere. The problem is that contemporary accounts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tend to stress the extent

to which Indians were adopting creole practices and say little about those aspects of Indian domestic life, secular pastimes or secular folk arts which remained Indian in content and form. Thus there are extensive references to the way that rum drinking took over from the use of bhang (ganga)¹⁶³, comments on the way Indians adopted such creole pastimes as cricket and horse-racing,¹⁶⁴ but few mentions of what pastimes the immigrants brought with them or how long they survived. However, some Indian pastimes referred to include wrestling, 'patang' (kite-flying), cock-fighting and card games such as biska, troop-chall and gann.¹⁶⁵ Now, cricket and more recently football are the favoured games of the young males.

Dress also changed sharply so that whereas in the nineteenth century most rural Indian men wore turbans, kurtas and dhotis, they are now only worn by pundits on ceremonial occasions. Female dress changed more slowly, perhaps because women were subject to less ridicule than dhoti-clad Indian men. Traditional dress in women seems to have survived up to the 1930s at least, but now only older women in rural areas wear the traditional orhni, and saris tend only to be worn by middle-class women as formal dress. It is still possible to find fine examples of Indian jewellery in the Caribbean such as the solid silver hasulis (neck-bands) and rolled silver churias (bangles), some brought from India, others manufactured in the Caribbean, and worn by Indian women as visible evidence of their savings, but now these traditional ornaments are rarely worn and the skills employed in making them lost. Other visible signs of 'Indianness' still to be found in rural India but vanished from the Caribbean include the chewing of betel, tatoos, caste marks and the ceremonial shaving of heads (churki). Again, it is probable that all of these survived at least into the early twentieth century, though documentary evidence is hard to find.

Other vanished aspects of Indian life to be seen in the nineteenth century Caribbean included travelling story-tellers, singers, dancers and fortune-tellers. Bronkhurst reports of the professional story-tellers that, '...there are several immigrants in the colony who are adepts in that work. They can invent or make their own tales - always new - so as to deeply interest the hearers.'¹⁶⁶ There were also troupes of professional dancing girls and singers who earned a living by performing from house to house. Other street performers Bronkhurst observed were the fortune-tellers, 'parading the streets...with bags hanging from their shoulders, in which presents are put, and kudu kudakei, or small drums, in their hands, which are beaten with the thumb and forefinger, to keep time whilst their imagination is busy with some foolish but taking falsehood.'¹⁶⁷

Where there have been survivals in the secular sphere they have tended to be focussed on the home. For instance, though there have been local adaptations in the average culinary repertoire, the basic foods and methods of preparation have remained remarkably stable. It is still possible to see the chulha (clay oven) in the poorest rural Indian homes exactly as they are in rural India. Even amongst the most creolised Indian communities in the Caribbean, such as in Jamaica, food preferences have remained one of the remaining signs of Indian identity.

The strength of the home and the neighbourhood circle has also been responsible for the survival, if not always the living practice, of secular folk songs and stories. Although challenged by records from the Bombay movies, there are still real folk artists in both Trinidad and Guyana who play at weddings and other parties (known as 'mowj') and, particularly in Trinidad, perform on radio and television. Even so there has been much loss. In the past

there was a whole range of songs sung at weddings (perhaps now only the Kanyadan is well known), work songs (some still sung to accompany the planting of rice) story songs and caste-specific songs, 'like the Kahar water-carriers' song or the Ahir's dance and song (cowherds). In the past too, Muslims had their own songs, gazals and kaseedas, though as Nasaloo Ramaya, an important figure in Indian music in Trinidad recalls, 'a kind of auster¹⁶⁸ity, as regards songs and music, was observed by many of them'. Ramaya suggests that classical styles of singing survived until the 1930s, but by then were beginning to degenerate and lose favour to the more westernised styles of Indian music which were made popular by Indian films. The later revival of interest in classical music came directly from India stimulated by the tours of classical performers.

Some types of folk songs, however, remained more resistant to decay. For instance, Ved Prakash Vatuk reports hearing over eight hundred different traditional songs, mainly in Bhojpuri, in Guyana over a two month period in 1962.¹⁶⁹ Ninety of these were Indo-Guyanese in subject matter and linguistic usage. There were songs concerned with the trickery of the recruiters, and the attempt to strip the emigrants of their Indian identities:

When we reached Calcutta, our miseries increased.
 We were stripped of all our beautiful clothes,
 Rosary beads, and sacred threads.
 Bengali rags decorated us now.
 The sadhu's hair was shaved,
 And Sadhu, Dom, Chamar and Bhanghi
 All were thrown together in a room. (p.44)

There were songs about the miseries of cane labour:

...With cutlasses in their hands the kafris ate half-
 boiled rice and plantain,
 Reaching number 20 they crossed trenches after trenches,
 full of alligators,
 And began to work.
 So the whips and chains began to pour on them.
 What's next, Oh Lord?
 Our bread is snatched away too.

and songs expressing resentment about the injustices of the law and the courts as weapons of labour coercion:

British Guiana drives us out of our minds.
In Rowra there is the court house,
In Sodi is the police station.
In Camesma is the prison... (p.49)

There were songs that echoed the themes of the archetypal song of all exiles, 'By the Rivers of Babylon'. The Indians' version said,

Listen, oh Indian, listen to the story of us emigres,
The emigres, who cry constantly, tears flowing from their eyes
When we left the ports of Calcutta and Bombay,
Brother left sister, mother left daughter.
In the deep love of the mother country we cried... (p.45)

Such early songs were sung in Hindi, but later songs included creole-English inserts, or were mainly in creole with Hindi inserts and choruses. Unfortunately, Vatuk does not date the folk-songs he quotes, but some songs clearly relate to more contemporary issues, dealing with, for instance, the breakdown of Indian values and Guyanese politics. They express a community looking both forwards and backwards. Regret over loss:

....O these women!
Tying Madrasi kortif on the head, parting their hair on
the side.
Right in the middle of the market, pushing people with
their shoulders, they eat.
No shame is left.
Cigarettes they press between their lips, they sit on chairs
With no shame before their father-in-law or brother-in-law.
They giggle, laugh and talk.

and joy over the political triumphs of Jagan's P.P.P. in the elections of 1962:

D'Aguiar is a fool,
Burnham is the mule,
The man Jagan is born to rule,
Play the mandolin, bhai,
Play the mandolin,
All the young girls drink palmalin. (p.57)

Recently some songs have been influenced by creole musical forms, notably the calypso. The contemporary offspring of these folk songs,

the records produced by such artists as Halima Bissoon, Dasy Panchu, Joseph Nelson, Mighty Enchanter, Joyce Ormela Harris and Daisy and Mumtaz are wholly hybrid in form, described locally as having 'chutney' rhythm, an Indian grounding with a hotted up Afro-beat. If the folk-song tradition survives in a changed form into the 1980s, secular folk-tales are now mainly to be found only in the memories of older people or in printed collections such as Ken Parmasad's Salt and Roti : Indian Folk-Tales of the Caribbean (1984).¹⁷⁰ Most were brought from India, and in the days before radio and film they provided one of the main pleasures of rural Indians. Bronkhurst noted how important all kinds of narration were to the pleasures of domestic life. The Indian worker, he wrote, 'listens to domestic conversation, which turns chiefly upon the business of the family, religious ceremonies, marriages, narratives of heroines and gods etc.'¹⁷¹ Unfortunately, there is little other contemporary nineteenth century reference, and it is only possible to project backwards from research recently undertaken by K.V.Parmasad. The picture Parmasad gives for Trinidad can be repeated in part for Guyana, though there much of the story-telling has been in Creole rather than Hindi, and certain groups of stories are better known than others.¹⁷²

Parmasad refers to a whole range of activities such as singing, discussions, scriptural readings and chantings, and secular story telling all under the same title of 'Satsangh', and he refers to kheesas as both religious and secular stories. My informants in Guyana were adamant that Satsangh referred only to devotional chantings and readings and that the telling of kheesas, always secular and most frequently referred to as nonsense stories, was a separate activity.

Some kheesas came in book form in Hindi from India, but most were brought orally and are part of a tradition which goes back

at least a thousand years. There are, though, several stories which appear to have been adapted to the Trinidadian environment, such as 'The Cat and the Rat', which tells how, to avoid being killed the rat jumps in a barrel of rum and pretends to be drunk and incapable.

As a whole these folk tales display a wholly uncompartimentalised mixture of the cosmic and the everyday, the tragic and the comic, the amiable and the cruel and freely interchange human and animal participants. There are, though, a number of distinct themes. These include the triumph of the weak over the strong, such as in 'Beautiful but Poor' and 'The Dhobi', the foolishness of rulers such as in 'The Brahmin and the Goat', the dangers of over-reaching, the need to be ever alert to treachery, the importance of retaining one's identity, and the celebration of cunning. Many arrive at a moral lesson and are concluded by the saying of a 'kahani' or proverb, some in Hindi, others in Creole. The proverbs express a familiar peasant realism (even if the actual story of the tales is often fantastic). The following are a sample:

One often jump from the tawa into the chulha

When you ent even have a bottom to shit, how you could swallow pumpkin? '13

Some of the stories, though, are simply extended jokes of a very broad kind, and others display a delight in the supernatural. In some cases it is possible that the significance of stories changed with their transplantation to the Caribbean. For instance, there are stories which are concerned with the importance of keeping one's identity and the folly of presuming to be other than you are. Such stories probably related to caste in the Indian setting, but may have come to be concerned with Indian racial identity in Trinidad. For instance, in 'The Ass that Tried to Bark', the ass, though kindly treated, begins to imagine that his master favours

his dog more. He decides to imitate the dog. He refuses to eat grass but cannot eat the dog's food. He grows weak and thinks that working in the fields is degrading. Finally, the ass is punished by the farmer. This is, of course, a story told against the folly of trying to be what you are not, and what you can never be, perhaps referring to those Indians who were abandoning Hinduism for Christianity and adopting creole manners. Other stories could clearly have been used to stress the importance of social solidarity. For example, 'A Sour Revenge'¹⁷⁵ relates how Gangadataa, king of the frogs, tries to quell opposition amongst his followers by inviting a snake into his pond. Once there the snake, of course, makes no distinctions, but consumes every frog in sight. Gangadataa himself survives but only by escaping to another pond as a common frog with no-one to rule. A story like 'The Holy Fox'¹⁷⁶ can be seen as a tale told against those venial pundits who preyed on the religious feelings of the villagers. The fox pretends to be a holy sage but in fact feeds off the tribe of rats who support him. Perhaps, a story like 'The Ungrateful Lion'¹⁷⁷ might have been told as a warning against those who curried favour with the powerful, perhaps against those in intermediate positions on the estates. The lion is tormented by a mouse but is too slow to catch it. He invites a cat to live with him, and the mouse no longer dares to enter the lion's cave. The lion feeds the cat out of gratitude. One day the starving mouse tries to enter the cave and is killed by the cat. Once the mouse is dead, the cat, of course, is no longer needed. One day the lion is hungry and eats the cat.

In Guyana, the most widely known kheesas are those about an eponymous character known as Sakchulee, a 'wicked little chap' as one interviewee described him.¹⁷⁸ Sakchulee is an ambiguous character who is sometimes the victim of the stories and sometimes plays dumb in order to outsmart his enemies. There are obvious

parallels between the Sakchulee stories and the Anancy stories, and it is again possible that Sakchulee may have also gone through the same change in significance as did Anancy in his passage from being a West African trickster figure to becoming a symbol of the cunning of the West Indian slave who plays stupid to fool his master.

A good many of the Sakchulee stories are heartless in tone, expressing, perhaps, for their tellers and listeners the feeling of what life was most often like as opposed to how in justice it ought to be.

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In 'Sakchulee and the Meah', the cruel and humiliating torments a Muslim meah is put through perhaps reveal an undercurrent of Hindu hostility to Muslims which appears not to have surfaced in the Caribbean in any active form during the nineteenth century at least.

Stories like the above were certainly part of a living Indian folk culture up to the 1950s. Thereafter the oral folk tradition declined, or, where it survives, has changed considerably. However, the delight in story telling has by no means died out amongst the rural Indian community in Guyana at least. There the creolese stories broadcast on the local radio excite much interest, particularly when they are written by an Indian writer from the locality using local incidents as the basis of his stories. One writer told me how he had been approached by one old man who wanted to be written about as a 'c'acter' in his next broadcast stories.¹⁸⁰

This chapter has attempted to sketch something of the variety and vitality of Indian folk-culture as it existed in the Caribbean. Much has changed and much has gone, but there remains a living residue which still awaits acceptance in to one mainstream of Caribbean culture. It is too valuable a resource to remain excluded.

Chapter EightIndo-Saxons: The Cultural Expression of the Indian Middle Class, 1870-1945 circa.

The previous chapter dealt with the taking root of an Indian folk culture which, whilst never wholly closed, remained largely self-contained and separate from the mainstream of Caribbean life. In its own eyes, it was so self-reliant as not to demand self-analysis or self-description. It was only with the growth of a middle-class detached by education from this folk culture that one finds the kind of self-consciousness necessary for such an enquiry.

This chapter focuses on the growth of a section of the Indian middle-class resulting from Christian missionary education and exposure to Western culture. The Indian middle-class was not absolutely uniform. Most were urbanised, but not all; some had been converted to Christianity but others had not; and while a substantial proportion adopted a Euro-creole style of life, others remained proudly and self-consciously Indian in their outlook.

Thus, the focus of the chapter is selective. It says little about the village and commercial elite, who remained part of the folk culture, though it is impossible to understand the position of early Indian writers without seeing it in relation to the diversification of interests within the Indian community as a whole.

It is impossible to understand the absence of, and then later the focus on, 'the people' in the literary expression of early

Indian writers without knowing something about the relationship between the elite and the mass.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first covers the period between c1870 (when missionary education began) and 1900 (by which time an elite group had emerged, and the first political pressure groups had been formed). The second period, between 1900-1920, charts the response of the elite to the ending of indenture, the recognition by the Colonial Governments of formal elite organisations as representative bodies and the incorporation of a handful of Indian professionals into the local, intermediary, ruling class. The third period, from 1920 to 1945, follows the involvement of the Indian elite in wider political issues and their attempt to widen their power base by creating embryo trade-union organisations. It is possible to see three related, though not always co-terminous literary phases. The first is the phase of missionary writing, of the almost total mimicry of metropolitan styles and subject matter; this is followed by the period of middle class rediscovery of classical India and the literary influence of writers such as Tagore and Mrs. Naidu. Finally, in the pioneering work of Seepersad Naipaul, the lives of the true preservers of Indian culture in the Caribbean, the villagers and estate workers, become the proper subject for fictional treatment.

There were, in effect, three routes away from plantation labour for the Indian male: through commercial initiative, through missionary education and the professions or through becoming a successful pundit or maulvi. These routes were not necessarily separate. Nevertheless, it is possible to generalise that missionary education, particularly when it involved conversion, led mainly towards the professions, public service and 'denationalisation', whilst amongst those who owed their

status to commercial success were those who remained most Indianised in culture. Proof for this assertion can be found in the biographical details of leading Trinidadian Indians in the Indian Centenary Review (1945)². Whilst it is impossible to check how representative the list is, it can probably be regarded as unbiased, given the mixed Hindu-Christian character of the editorial board. Again, there may be some mistakes in identifying individual's religions, but they probably balance out. The results show clear evidence for the points made above.

	<u>Professional</u>	<u>Public Service</u>	<u>Business</u>	<u>Total</u>
Christian	58	51	33	142
Hindu	7	5	40	52
Muslim	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>29</u>
Total	70	58	95	223

One individual story epitomises the role of conversion and missionary education as the means to success. In 1859 three brothers, Palahad, Ruhoman and Lukhooa emigrated to Guyana. The two youngest became Christians and were known as John Ruhoman and Moses Luckhoo. They founded two of the leading Indian families in the colony. Ruhoman's two sons were Joseph, a crusading journalist, and Peter, a civil servant and the Indian community's first historian. Luckhoo's sons included E.A., the first Indian solicitor in the colony and J.A., the first Indian barrister and later an Acting Chief Justice. Moses's grandsons included Sir Edward Luckhoo, one time chancellor of the judiciary and Governor General and Sir Lionel Luckhoo, a Guyanese High Commissioner in London. The oldest brother of the original three, Palahad, remained a Hindu, and, as far as one can discover, an estate labourer.³ There were other routes to success, but none compared to

missionary education and conversion as the ladder to middle class status.⁴ As an increasing number of Indians became settlers, the issue of their social and cultural role became more pertinent. Between the desire of some planters to use education of a limited kind as a disciplinary force and the wider vision of some Colonial Governors and Churchmen who saw education as a means of creating social cohesion, tentative moves were made to provide schooling for Indian children. Even so, until the 1950s, access to any more than the most rudimentary education was so limited that it served only to create a tiny, westernised elite.

The aims of the founders of the Tacarigua Orphanage in Trinidad in 1857 indicated clearly the function of missionary education. They hoped that the orphanage would nurture an Indian population which was 'Indian...in descent and natural characteristics, but English in education and feeling.'⁵ However, in 1868, the Canadian Presbyterian missionary J.B.Morton found that, 'there was scarcely an East Indian child to be found in school in the whole island.'⁶ Most estate managers were far keener to have the children labouring in the Creole gangs, and most Indian parents either regarded their residence in Trinidad as temporary, or did not want their children to be exposed to Christian proselytization or attend schools with black children. The real history of Indian education began in 1868 with Morton's commitment to Canadian Missionary schooling. By 1878 there were fifteen schools with combined average attendance of 441, and by 1893 there were 52 Canadian Mission primary schools. In 1894 a Presbyterian combined teacher training college and secondary school was established in San Fernando, and by 1900 Naparima College was affiliated to Queens Royal College and had become the main route for Indians

into higher education, the professions or the civil service. In 1912 Naparima Girls High was founded. By 1911 some 4,542 Indian children were on average attending the 61 Canadian Mission schools and there were 45 certificated Indian teachers, all of whom were, and had to be, Christians. However, even by 1921, probably only 50% of Indian children were receiving even a partial primary education.⁷ There has long been the stereotype that the Indians were unenthusiastic about education (an excuse much employed in official circles) but the records of missionaries like Morton, Grant and Bronkhurst describe villagers petitioning for schools.⁸

In general Indian education in British Guiana fell behind that in Trinidad. The report of the Inspector of Schools for 1893-94 noted that the ordinance of 1876 making school attendance compulsory, was widely ignored. It was not until 1896 that the first Canadian Mission school was set up and a further twenty years before the Presbyterians opened a secondary school specifically for Indian boys.^{9 10}

There was also discouragement from the planter-influenced Government. Very moderately, Joseph Ruhomon accused the Government of not wanting to see a literate Indian population.¹¹ He referred particularly to the Swettenham circular of 1904 which recommended that penalties for absenteeism from schools should not be enforced in the cases of immigrants in their first ten years of residence, those who had religious objections or where the seclusion of girls was practiced. This circular was not withdrawn until 1933.¹²

Secondary education in particular lagged behind the provision in Trinidad, and this had undoubted effects on their respective occupational composition of the Indian populations in Trinidad and British Guiana. In those areas which did not necessarily

involve education there was little to choose between their rates of progress. For instance, in the census returns of 1891, in Trinidad, 726 persons of Indian descent are listed as proprietors, in British Guiana 541; 223 overseers in Trinidad, 332 in British Guiana. However, the disparity between the numbers of Indian teachers listed is striking: 109 to 9. Even by 1931, while in Trinidad there were 440 Indian teachers in recognised schools, in British Guiana by 1938 there were still only 100.¹³

Missionaries and Indians inevitably had different views on the function of education. For the missionaries education was regarded as part of the battle to wean Indians away from Hinduism; the majority of Indians were probably keenly aware that the Canadian Mission was itself a sizeable employer in its schools and charitable organisations, and that the education they offered was the only means of access to high status occupations. The missionaries themselves were divided over the effectiveness of their educational programme as part of the wider aim of conversion. The planter, De Verteuil, noted in 1882 that: 'Sometimes they ask to be baptised with a view to secure some worldly advantages, and persevere in their old practices.'¹⁴ These 'rice christians', as they were contemptuously known by some Hindus, formed a group whose stability and orthodoxy as Christians were suspect; many of this group later¹⁵ reconverted to Hinduism.

There was, though, a small group of Indians who were more profoundly transformed by missionary education. Some historians have argued that the Canadian Mission deliberately, and effectively, set out to change the whole man, that conversion involved not merely religious beliefs but changes in language, dress, social customs, food, domestic habits and even names.¹⁶ However, whilst there was an abandonment of Indian cultural practices by the

Indo-Saxon Christian 'middle class' it is less clear that this can be put down wholly to the efforts or intentions of the Canadian Missions. Indeed, what characterised the Presbyterians' approach was their willingness to adapt the Christian message to an Indian cultural context. It seems as likely that those who did become Europeanised did so for social reasons as much as for religious ones. If one was to become a part of the local elite, then it was necessary to adopt Euro-creole cultural practices. The low status of Hinduism and Indian culture was a disabling handicap.

However, there were undoubtedly many Indian Christians whose motives for conversion were religious and who remained steadfast members of the Church, but there was an overwhelming majority of Hindus and Muslims who remained unswerving in their beliefs and customs. In doing so they were denied access to secondary education, for though the Canadian Missions opened their primary schools to all Indian children, they insisted that secondary school pupils be Presbyterian converts. Furthermore, the majority of Hindu and Muslim children were excluded from the Government secondary schools on the grounds of their 'official' illegitimacy under the discriminatory colonial marriage laws.

Thus by the 1890s the Indian elites in both Trinidad and Guyana had distinct elements. There were the professionals, teachers, civil servants and other Government employees, who were predominantly Christian and Europeanised in culture. Then there was the group of the most substantial Indian business proprietors and landowners whose membership was more evenly spread between Christians, Hindus and Muslims. Finally, the small group of religious leaders, the Hindu pundits and Muslim maulvis, also tended to be men of substance.

There were issues which united the elite and issues which divided them. The Indo-Saxon Christians often seem to have been most concerned with establishing their modernity and securing their political and social position, whereas, the leaders of the Hindu and Muslim communities were concerned with cultural survival and the specific disadvantages suffered by their faiths in Christian dominated societies. Though there was co-operation with Christian Indians, many Hindus felt that the Christians had betrayed their origins, and were particularly disgusted by Christians changing their names, eating beef, refusing to eat with their hands and allowing their wives and daughters an indecent freedom of dress and manners. Yet the elite was united on one issue, and this was the advancement of Indian interests in the Caribbean.

As far back as the 1860s well-to-do Indians had become involved in politics in Trinidad.¹⁷ San Fernando was the centre of Indian prosperity and between 1870-1890 it has been estimated that Indians comprised almost a quarter of the total, very limited, electorate. Though no Indian candidates were put up, the role of Albert Sammy, a merchant and Christian, as a powerful 'kingmaker' was recognised and much resented by the local Creole elite. The San Fernando Gazette referred to 'ignorant coolie burgesses' and to Sammy as 'an unscrupulous scoundrel'.¹⁸ However, though it was clearly effective, the Indian involvement does not seem to have gone beyond local civic issues.

There were, however, other Indians, predominantly Christian, who throughout the late 1880s and 1890s were involved, on an individual basis, in the Reform Movement and the debate focused around the Royal Franchise Commission of 1888. Yet it is evident that on the whole the Trinidadian Indian elite took a conservative position on the issue of extending the franchise.¹⁹ Gerard

Tikasingh argues that this was largely due to the group's preoccupation with its own development and to its unwillingness to risk the kind of hostility experienced by those who had become involved in the San Fernando elections.²⁰ It seems to me even more likely that the group feared that under any widening of the franchise the chief beneficiaries would be the Coloured creoles and the Negro middle class, who were far ahead in levels of education and professional status.

In the 1890s two issues arose which stimulated the development of 'formal' Indian political organisation. The relationship between the issues and the form of organisation they stimulated is very revealing. The proposal that free return passages to India be abolished threatened the interests of the indentured and those who still looked to India as their home. The response to this threat included the calling of a National Panchayat in 1897, the first and probably only time that a traditional form of Indian village organisation was made to serve a public issue in the Caribbean. Those who organised the event came from the traditional brahmin caste leadership and they noticeably bypassed the new 'Western-type' organisation of the professionals, the East Indian National Association. (E.I.N.A.)²¹

The founding of the E.I.N.A. in 1897 had been stimulated by the second issue, the Immigration Ordinance (12/1897) which required, on pain of arrest and imprisonment, that all non-indentured Indians should carry a certificate of exemption from labour. It was a proposal which affected the well-to-do and westernised elite as much as it did the mass of those who were free labourers or small peasant farmers, but probably offended their sensibilities even more. As it was, the E.I.N.A. pressed only for amendments in those clauses which affected the rights

of time-expired Indians while making it clear that they were not opposed to those aspects of the ordinance which further restricted the lives of the indentured. Nevertheless, the organised protests against the ordinance forced the Government to recognise some of the changes which had been taking place in the Indian community. Even conservative papers like the Port of Spain Gazette began to take some notice of the views of the E.I.N.A. However, the E.I.N.A.'s bid to have an Indian member nominated to the Legislative Council fell on deaf ears for some time.

In this first phase of its existence (c1897-1920) the E.I.N.A., was chiefly a pressure group whose members wrote letters to the press, addressed petitions and sent polite deputations to the Governor. But in holding activities such as debates it also served as a training ground for future Indian politicians, and it was an attempt by the Westernised elite to assert its leadership over the whole Indian community. Painstakingly constitutionalist and fulsomely loyal to the Empire and the British monarchy, it was far from being a radical organisation. It appears to have met fairly infrequently and achieved at this stage little more than being recognised by the Government as a responsible body which could be consulted.²² The only other event of note in the nineteenth century progress of the Indian elite in Trinidad was the publication of the first Indian newspaper in the Caribbean, the Indian Kohinor Gazette which first appeared in October 1898, but probably did not survive long.

The activities of the Indian elite in British Guiana in the nineteenth century were even less notable. The class of more prosperous Indians which emerged appears to have been mainly rural based and engaged in agricultural or small scale commerce.

There is no evidence of any Indian political role in the colony in the nineteenth century; there were probably less than 200 Indian voters even by 1915.²³ The first attempt to form an Indian organisation, the East Indian Institute, had been made in 1892 but it had collapsed without gaining any support.²⁴ The one event of note was the address and publication of the despairing thoughts of one of the first educated Indians in the colony, Joseph Ruhomon's India and the Progress of Her People at Home and Abroad, And How Those in British Guiana May Improve Themselves, (1894).²⁵ The lecture was probably delivered to only a handful of people, but its manner is grand; it is the exhibition of an Indian whose rhetorical skill was as confident as any Englishman's. The medium is as important as the message.

Ruhomon compares the backwardness of the Indian community to the progress of black people in Africa, the U.S.A. and British Guiana. 'The Negroes are a great people, they have been so from earliest times'.²⁶ He urges that Indians use the example of African progress as a model. The crucial factor he believed was the influence of Christianity. He viewed India as a once great civilization which had descended into barbarism but was rising again 'in the light of the glorious Gospel.' It is evident that Ruhomon's view of India was gained from Christian tracts, a continent seen through the eyes of a colonial Guyanese, its millions dwindled to a handful of successful Christian Indians. At one point he refers to the 'women of India...becoming just as great in the various walks of life as the women of England or America. In the early part of the year there were twelve Indian ladies in Great Britain...'²⁷ engaged in study of various kinds. It is a colonial fairy tale, combining ethnic pride with an intense desire to be seen as wholly Europeanised in culture:

East Indians are an inherently great people, and I feel supremely proud of the fact as one who has pure, genuine East Indian blood flowing in his veins.... They have indeed drunk deep draughts at the fountain of European thought and learning, and there is no question of their being beaten in competition with Europeans.²⁸

In British Guiana Ruhomon felt that 'East Indians are doing practically nothing to improve themselves, morally; religiously, intellectually and socially',²⁹ and saw them falling far behind the Afro-Guayanese. Here Ruhomon's analysis of the position of Indians in the colony is toughly realistic and refreshingly free from special pleading. He bewails the absence of Indian professionals but criticises Indians for their lack of ambition for 'the elevation of your race' and blames a lack of communal solidarity. Ruhomon also remains in touch, as many of the new Indian middle classes did not, with the conditions of the labouring population; they are thought of, he wrote, as 'no more ... than the mules who draw along the cane punts... Our people have been simply tools in the hands of their employers.'³⁰ However, Ruhomon's solutions are extremely cautious. He calls on the Indian elite to do more for the welfare of the community and proposes the formation of societies for the intellectual, moral and social development of the elite, a library of Indian books and the establishment of a regular newspaper.

Ruhomon was a voice crying in the wilderness; it was not until 1916 that any formal Indian pressure group was set up.

c1900 - c1920

During the first two decades of the twentieth century Indians in Trinidad had increased their ownership of land from 56,311 acres to 95,972 acres, became influential cocoa growing proprietors and increased their share in the ownership of cane-farms. By 1919 there were five barristers, a solicitor and two doctors, and

even more who were embarking on higher education courses at Universities abroad. By the end of the period there was an Indian member in the Legislature and the first Indian mayor of San Fernando. However, if there was a good deal of political activity, it is harder to say whether there was any political progress.³¹

The E.I.N.A. split and a rival East Indian National Congress was formed in 1909,³² though it too suffered from religious divisions which were described in the aptly named Short History of the E.I.N.C. (1914)³³ as 'well-nigh insurmountable'. There was in fact little to choose between the two organisations; neither spoke clearly on the most important issue: the continuance of the indenture system. Despite clear Indian nationalist opposition the E.I.N.A. continued to support indenture until 1916 and the E.I.N.C. until 1919,³⁴ after it had been abolished. Their position was based on the fact that the prosperity of many in the elite, as merchants and small proprietors, depended on continuing Indian immigration.

Symbolic of the E.I.N.A.'s role was the report that its main activity in 1913 was the presenting of an illuminated address of welcome to one of Queen Victoria's many grand-daughters who visited Trinidad in that year. The elite also spent its time organising patriotic meetings to support Britain in the European war of 1914-18. There was, for instance, a meeting of loyal Muhamedans at Mucurapo in 1915.³⁵ However, the clearest evidence of how the Indian elite was being absorbed into the loyal intermediary colonial class was the behaviour of the E.I.N.C. during the widespread strikes on the sugar estates in 1919. The E.I.N.C. was approached by strikers to act on their behalf, but decided 'not to interfere' although some dissident members did raise a

subscription to hire an independent doctor to carry out a post-mortem on a striker who had been killed. Only when the strike leaders were arrested did the E.I.N.C. belatedly move to retain counsel to defend them. But even then the E.I.N.C. had published in the reactionary Port of Spain Gazette a letter to the strikers which while making sympathetic noises of support ('deeply sympathise'... 'support your legitimate demands for a living wage') effectively stabbed the strikers in the back. Now asserting their claims to leadership, the E.I.N.C. ('who represent you') told the strikers:

'Our task will be unachievable, unless we receive your full confidence and implicit obedience. We therefore appeal to your sense of honour... to abstain from all violent and disgraceful conduct.... Return to your daily task with the hope and consciousness that your just claims will be looked after and defended.'³⁶

There are no further reports of strikes in the newspaper, it evidently folded as the Indian elite abandoned the estate workers to decades of worsening conditions.³⁷

There were, though, a few individuals who were more radical in their views and activities. A few Indians who had fought in the first world war had been radicalised in the process. Whilst the strikes in the sugar belt appear to have been largely spontaneous, there were a number of Indian militants who were members of the Trinidad Workingmen's Association who attempted to spread the strike and link it to the strikes of mainly black workers in Port of Spain. One T.W.A. member, Beharry Lal, was killed in a clash on Woodford Lodge estate, and a white overseer charged with his murder.³⁸ A small number of Indians was also involved in the radical wing of Indian nationalism, subscribers to the paper Ghadr (Mutiny) which was published in India.³⁹ One English born Indian, Mohamed Orfi came to Trinidad during the first world war, founded the East Indian Destitutes League and was duly deported for his pains in 1916.⁴⁰ However, it is evident that neither of these

tendencies had any real influence either amongst the elite organisations or amongst estate workers.

The one figure who articulated what the elite's more radical elements felt was F.E.M. Hosein, an Island Scholarship winner, who took a B.A. Degree and read law at Lincoln's Inn and returned to Trinidad in 1908. He founded the short-lived Trinidad Indian League (1912) but by 1913 was a leading figure in the E.I.N.C.⁴¹ At its inaugural meeting in that year, Hosein delivered a paper, in front of the Governor, which expressed very frankly how the Indian elite saw its relationship to the wider society. Hosein made the usual statements about Indian economic progress and their value to the colony. But his paper, 'East Indians in Trinidad - A Sociological Study',⁴² also dealt with the more problematic questions of their cultural role and their relationship to the black Creoles. It was the first attempt, from an Indian point of view, to examine the reality of cultural pluralism in Trinidad. He controversially attacked those forces, in particular the Christian missions, which were attempting to 'denationalise' the Indians. The 'Coolie Schools' he complained, were simply vehicles of cultural imperialism, where despite their name 'nothing Indian was taught, but every idea was English.' The other threat to Indian culture, Hosein argued, was contact with the black Creoles. Here Hosein's remarks displayed that mixture of chauvinist pride and racial anxiety which have characterised some sectors of Indian opinion in the Caribbean right up to the present. On the one hand, Hosein displays a somewhat arrogant confidence in the strength of Indian culture to remain immune from racial assimilation. On the other hand, there are the doubts, the dismayed recognition that Indians were not immune to change and influence. Hosein argues that it was the Trinidad-born Indian who was in most 'danger of being influenced by his African associate who was very deficient

in virtue.' In particular, he claimed that Indian children, left at home while their parents were at work, came into damaging contact with Creole children. The praising of the Indian-born over the Trinidadian-born was characteristically contradictory.⁴³ Hosein himself was Trinidad born and one of the few beneficiaries of the colonial education system, and was well on his way to becoming a complete Indo-Saxon gentleman. It is the argument of a man looking in two directions, who was leaving behind the world he praised.

Hosein's greatest horror was the idea of miscegenation with the Blacks, which in reality had scarcely happened at all, and which he evidently regarded as the mixing of superior and inferior forms.

However, what really offended all shades of opinion was Hosein's prediction that one day the Indians would be master of the island. He argued that if the Indians maintained their current birthrate and economic energy:

'... it was no mere hyperbolic statement that Indians would people the colony and drive out the rest of the inhabitants. ...The African was not as productive as the Indian; and if circumstances did not compel him to leave the colony, he would naturally die out... Trinidad would be maintained and owned by the Indian in the field, the office and the shop.'

There was a predictably splenetic response from the white press, the 'regrettable illustration of the effects of occidental education on a certain type of oriental mind,'⁴⁴ spluttered the Port of Spain Gazette. But the whites were only getting back from this upstart Indian what they had been constantly telling the Indians, that they were the saviours of the colony and that the black man had had his day. When calls were made for responsible Indians to denounce Hosein's speech little response was forthcoming. The Rev. C.D. Lalla, an Anglican Indian priest, a leading figure in the E.I.N.C., issued a statement which was not so much a disavowal but an explanation.⁴⁵ Hosein's paper is an important

clue to the motives which generated the political behaviour of the Indian elite for at least the next few decades.

The other activities of the two main groups were mainly cultural; the holding of debates and lectures on such topics as the past glories of India and social issues such as child marriages and divorce. Other cultural and sporting organisations also sprang up in this period, such as the East Indian Friendly Society, The Literary East Indian Club of Woodbrook, the East Indian Literary and Debating Society and the Naparima Debating Club. In 1919 the E.I. Literary & Debating Society were, for example, listening to a lecture on 'Pointers in the Use of Good English' delivered by the Rev. J.H. Poole, who cautioned against the use of creolisms.⁴⁶

Though there was to be a flowering of short-lived Indian run newspapers and journals in the twenties and thirties, the only paper connected with the Indian elite in the period up to 1920 was the East Indian Herald. This was, however, mainly an organ for the Presbyterian Church, which published, for instance, an article by a Presbyterian minister justifying the action of the British in massacring unarmed Indian demonstrators in Amritsar in 1919. There was, reportedly, much criticism of the article by non-Christian Indians in Trinidad.⁴⁷

Evidence on Indian literary activities in this period in Trinidad is tantalisingly thin. There is a reference to Charles Secundyne Assee, an Indian barrister, who was reportedly the author of Sonnets After Shakespeare and Laus Reginae, a collection of patriotic poems.⁴⁸ However, no date of publication or further evidence of their existence has been found. There was also a curious Islamic devotional poem in English, The Writing on the Fish: The Greatest Miracle of the Age, by Shake Maheuddin Laloo Daniel, first published in 1918. The poem, in doggerel quatrains,

celebrates the finding of a fish whose markings could be interpreted as Arabic letters meaning, 'There is no deity but Allah'. It calls on people to see the fish as a sign of Allah's reproof for the disobedience of his will:

Awake! ye mortals from your sleep!
And list the sacred writ of God,
Upon a fish from Ocean deep,
That tokens all men - beggar and lord. 49.

In British Guiana it was not until 1916 that the first real Indian pressure group, the British Guiana East Indian Association (B.G.E.I.A.) was formed in New Amsterdam by two Christian Indians, E.A. Luckhoo and Joseph Ruhomon. Its aims were to unite the Indian community and advance its interests in the colony. Its strategic objectives included the election of an Indian to the Court of Policy, the abolition of the English language requirement for financially qualified voters; better terms for land settlement for Indians; the withdrawal of the Swettenham circular, and greater employment opportunities for Indians in the teaching profession and the civil service. The B.G.E.I.A. also set out to provide recreational and cultural stimulation for its members, and intended to issue a monthly journal. In the short term little was achieved, principally because the membership was small and isolated in New Amsterdam. When in 1919 a Georgetown branch of the B.G.E.I.A. was formed, the Berbice association conceded direction to it.⁵⁰

The one political 'gain' the Georgetown Indian middle class could welcome was the election of J.A. Luckhoo, a barrister, to the Combined Court in 1916 and again in 1921. Yet Luckhoo could in no sense be described as a representative of the Indian community, of whom only 0.6% had the vote. Even as one of the few who had succeeded, Luckhoo's views on the Indians' place in the colony was astonishingly rosy. He wrote of the 'admirably

organised immigration system' and, like planter and missionary apologists, pictured it as a smooth running machine in which Indians entered 'at one end - humble and illiterate' and emerged at the other end as 'property holders and cattle farmers, and shopkeepers, and doctors and lawyers... and [had] a voice in the Government of the country and a hand in the shaping of its destinies.'⁵¹ This self-congratulation was not shared by all. Joseph Ruhomon, like F.E.M.Hosein in Trinidad, saw indenture and the estate system as a corrupting influence on the moral character of the Indians. He saw the creole East Indian as a 'sadly helpless creature.... Easily capitulating to the enemy in the fight for liberty.... a curious specimen of his race.'⁵² Ruhomon was also highly critical of the Indian middle class, accusing them of being money-minded self-seekers who ignored the sufferings of the labouring classes on the estates. In an obvious and probably justified jibe at J.A.Luckhoo, he also charged the elite with being too anxious not to offend new white colleagues. He had said much the same twenty years earlier; it was still evidently true.

Ruhomon is a very interesting figure, whose contribution to Guyanese life stretches from the 1890s to at least 1940. There is much that is paradoxical in his literary productions; despite his concern with Indian ethnic solidarity his literary output is almost entirely Anglophile in content and style. There is much that shows the constraints of his isolated position, much which is imitative, but also much which reveals a keen imagination and a speculative intelligence which seems to me peculiarly Guyanese. Most of Ruhomon's published work takes the form of philosophically idealist treatises which demonstrate a familiarity with the early twentieth century European revolt against positivism and materialism and a similar openness to all that was cranky or even

dangerous in the irrationalism of the anti-materialist movement.

It takes an effort of the imagination to grasp the context of Ruhomon's literary activity. Here was a journalist, living in the small town of New Amsterdam on the Corentyne coast, an area where probably 95% of the local population were Indian labourers or peasants engaged in sugar and rice cultivation, whose published work is chiefly concerned with the mystical interpretation of events in Europe. It is interesting to speculate on just what Ruhomon's contemporary listeners or readers made of his books and lectures, but the truth is that to speak of an audience outside the handfuls of members of such groups as the Wesleyan East Indian Young Men's Society would be misleading. Viewed in the light of this isolation, Ruhomon's subject matter is perhaps not so surprising.

53

In Good and Evil (1916) Ruhomon explicitly states his intention of trying to fuse the 'discoveries and speculations of Western philosophers' with the mysticism of 'occult and oriental philosophies' '...based on the revelations of the Yogi Fathers many centuries ago...' However, if Ruhomon's thesis is the revelation of the spirit of progress in the social and political life of Europe, his attitude to Europe is ambivalent. Europe is, on the one hand, the source of the ideal, but it is also the place where Christianity 'has failed to make any appreciable impress upon the hearts of the European races and nations.' The writing is genuinely, if somewhat eccentrically, learned (taking Schopenhauer to task, for instance, for his pessimism), though Ruhomon naturally has some difficulty in squaring his idealist evolutionary thesis with the actual events in war-torn Europe. That contradiction is resolved in Signs and Portents (1921) where the idealist optimism has given way to a Yeatsian pessimism prophecying the end of the Present Age in a cataclysm of disasters and the return of barbarism:

If Europe is sick and dying, as every great thinker believes, Asia is stirring from the sleep of ages. The non-Christian nations of the vast continent of the Orient are awakening at the call of arms from the unclean spirits of the vasty deep.⁵⁴

The contradiction between the Christian and the Indian is glaringly obvious. Signs and Portents can, in the end, only be described, to borrow a Guyanese metaphor, as a 'metegeee' of nonsense, an apocalyptic concoction from Biblical and occult sources.

The Transitory and the Permanent (1922) is a more orthodox statement of a spiritually idealist position, though here too one suspects that behind the Christian terminology, Indian mysticism is the main vein which supplies the ore of Ruhomon's thought. Apart from the general argument on the illusory nature of the temporal, material world, Ruhomon also deals with the subject of nationalism in a way which suggests the similarly universalist, idealist arguments of the later writer, Wilson Harris. It is a perspective, which in my view, has roots in the Guyanese soil. Ruhomon describes nationalist sentiments as :

...very proper things indeed in themselves...But when we look at them squarely and rationally they do not mean very much after all in the light of the larger, wider and higher life of man. They do not go outside the merely secular life of the race. They do not rise beyond the mere materialities of existence.... At its root is racial pride and an overweening conceit, a consciousness of superiority over other races...⁵⁵

Ruhomon was also the first Indo-Guyanese published writer of verse, though most of his poems were probably published individually in local newspapers (they were written between 1901-1932) and were not collected together until their publication in the Anthology of Local Indian Verse in 1934.⁵⁶ Ruhomon's poems, written either on religious or European topics, give no indication that he was either Indian or Guyanese. There are religious poems like 'Easter' and 'Nosce Te Ipsum' which borrow respectively from Milton and Victorian hymnody for their diction, and 'The Golden Age', written

in turgid Miltonic blank verse, which relates Christ's triumph over death at Easter to the victory of the British Empire over the German...

..... Antichrist and crushed him
As he swaggered over Europe in his
Shining panolpy, his iron heel and
Mailed fist... 57

Other more secular poems deal with such subjects as the death of Queen Victoria, 'Threnody' and the tribulations of the Empire in 'The South African War'. In both, one feels, manner is more important than matter: the act of writing, of demonstrating a grasp of an English poetic voice even more crucial than the sentiments of pride in the Empire, heartfelt though these evidently are. Sadly though, for all his other qualities, Ruhomon had no originality or poetic ear. His 'Threnody', in particular, reveals a painful deafness to the rhythmic qualities of English:

Hush'd is th'awe that has entered the soul of the
Empire girding the globe,
Sinking to dark depths below depths abysmal that no
mete-wand can probe,
Shrouding the fair earth o'er countless regions as with
a midnight robe. 58

'The South African War' illustrates just how successfully the mission schools had been able to inculcate the Imperial ideal and persuade the colonised to adopt it as their own. Ruhomon's tone is as jingoistic as any patriotic British paper might have wished:

How long, O Lord the cry goes up
Shall War's dread pow'r the Empire blight
.....
And still they fall - these glorious sons
Of Britain - battling for the right... 59

Ruhomon, it should be remembered, had little by way of any native tradition to encourage him to write about Guyanese subjects, and many poems written a decade or two later by other Indian writers reveal just how pervasive and persistent was the missionary influence.

C1920 - C1945

As has already been outlined in Chapter Six, the period after the end of the First World War was marked by the outbreak of industrial unrest, the formation of trade unions and the development of anti-colonial political movements. In both Trinidad and British Guiana these were largely activities of the Afro-Creole populations. With a few exceptions the behaviour and ideology of the Indian elites in this period must largely be seen as responses to this external dynamic. However, the response was not uniform and differences can only be understood by examining the changes in the inner formation of the Indian elite. Broadly, one can see a movement from a mimic European Christian orientation, via a re-awakening of interest in classical Indian culture, towards a rediscovery of the peasants and agricultural workers as a repository of 'Indian' values and traditions. The political and literary discovery of 'the people' are different types of phenomena, but they clearly belong to the same general context.

In Trinidad, there was a steady expansion of the economic base of the Indian elite and significant increases in the number of Indian professionals. Although many small Indian proprietors had suffered in the general decline in the cocoa industry in the period after 1920, other sectors of Indian activity saw notable progress. A number of Indian land-owners in Southern Trinidad profited by the discovery of oil on their lands in the 1920s, and one oil-field was Indian owned. Milk production passed largely into Indian hands, whilst the Indian share of the cane-farming industry grew. In the urban areas some small shopkeepers became quite substantial and moved into wholesaling as well as retailing. There was also a small but influential influx of Indian traders from the subcontinent. One of these, M.J. Kirpalani, founded one of the biggest stores in Trinidad and was politically influential

as a traditionalist within the community. Another important area of Indian enterprise was film distribution and display. Two political leaders S. Teelucksingh and T. Roodal (both Christians) were prominent cinema proprietors. By 1945, 90% of film exhibition in Trinidad was in Indian hands. By 1931 there were around 800 Indians classified in the census as having some degree of professional status. However, over half of these were teachers; no more than twenty were doctors or lawyers.⁶⁰

During the boom years during and after the second world war a minority of Indians, with small scale entrepreneurial skills, took advantage of this opportunity with a rate of success which markedly exceeded that of the Afro-Trinidadian group. In the country, rice farming and provisions growing (both almost totally Indian occupations) received a boost when for the first time the need for local food production outweighed the usual priority of the sugar estates for labour. In the towns, there was a considerable growth of Indian building and contracting firms and by the end of the war Indians had a virtual monopoly of the mechanised transport industry - owning bus companies, private taxis and garages.⁶¹

V.S. Naipaul's great-uncle, the prototype of Ajodha in A House For Mr Biswas (1961) and Egbert Ramsaran in Shiva Naipaul's The Chip-Chip Gatherers (1973) was the proprietor of Trinidad's largest bus company. There are, however, two important qualifications to make about this rate of progress. First, the commanding heights of the economy remained in European and metropolitan hands.⁶² Secondly, though the small Indian business elite prospered and grew, the conditions of the mass of the Indian population, the sugar workers and small scale peasants, worsened considerably after indenture ended.⁶³ And though the numbers of the educated elite grew slowly, the mass of the Indian population remained the most educationally deprived sector of the population. In 1931 it was

estimated that only 25% of the Indian population was literate in English. By 1945 the proportion had reached only 40%; amongst women the percentage was even lower. However, the war years did see a very considerable increase in the number of Indians receiving higher education and entering the independent professions. Between 1920-1940 13 Indians joined the legal profession and 6 became doctors. Between 1940-1950 22 went into law and 26 into medicine.⁶⁴ The increase in the number of Indian professionals did not occur independently of the general expansion of commercial activity, since it was the more prosperous business families who were able to invest in education.

In British Guiana the pattern of development was similar though much slower and on a smaller scale. The main reason for this was the continuing lack of access to education. Only after the withdrawal of the Swettenham circular in 1933 was there any marked improvement. Between 1933 and 1937 the number of Indian children on the school rolls is estimated to have increased by 50%. Even so the drop-out rate amongst Indian children, particularly girls, remained higher than for any other section of the population. The disadvantages of the Indians at the level of secondary education were even greater. At Queen's Royal College, for instance, between 1933-1951 only 15% of the intake was Indian. In 1945 Indians won only 8/61 of the scholarships awarded. However, at the level of higher education and the professions Indians were at least as successful as the Afro-Guyanese population. For instance, in 1924 the 6 Indian doctors comprised 19% of the total in the colony; between 1924-1935 the 11 Indian doctors comprised 37% of the total and by 1931-1940 the 4 Indian lawyers represented nearly half of the Guyanese legal profession. It was at the middle levels of the occupational hierarchy that the lack of development of an Indian middle class was most marked. Up to 1940 Indians held only 12% of lower level civil service jobs. In 1925 only 3.3%

of the teaching force were Indians, by 1933 6.6%.

The one area of appreciable economic progress was the rice industry. Even so, though there were prosperous and locally influential Indian land-owners, there is no evidence that this sector of the elite had anything like the political influence of the business elite in Trinidad.⁶⁶

Although these changes in the occupational and economic structure of the Indian elite resulted in increasing cultural and political divergencies within it, at the beginning of the period, when Major Wood visited Trinidad in 1921 to investigate views on constitutional change, he found only two defined positions. The E.I.N.A. with its conservative - Christian leadership (Jules Mahabir) was against any change in the Crown Colony system and any extension of the franchise. One section of the rival E.I.N.C. (mainly the merchants and business men of San Fernando) agreed with this view. The other section (mainly the cocoa growers of the Couva region who were suffering a slump in their industry) favoured increased representation but only on a proportional, communal basis. Both feared dominance by the coloured and black majority and were firmly against the kinds of changes the predominantly Creole Trinidad Workingmen's Association (T.W.A.) were seeking. The E.I.N.C. complained that:

Our West Indian brethren, who had deserted the colony at a most crucial period in her history, are now asking for such a change in the present constitution whereby the monopoly of the local legislative council should entirely pass over to them.⁶⁷

Major Wood's report rejected both the radical creole demands for responsible government and the Indian request for communal representation. However, when the very modestly reformed constitution came into operation (seven out of the twenty-six members of the Legislative Council were elected by an electorate which

comprised 6% of the population) the Indian elite proved to be by far the most organised section of the community. In 1925 when the first elections were held, Sarran Teelucksingh, president of the E.I.N.C., and one Afro-Indian, C. Henry Pierre (A.K.A. Ramkesoon) were successful. By the elections of 1928 three of the seven seats were held by Indians, all Christians, F.E.M. Hosein, Teelucksingh and T. Roodal.⁶⁸

But increasingly this conservative Christian leadership came under attack. There was the Young India Party which was founded in 1928 and chiefly associated with C.B. Mathura, the editor of the East Indian Weekly, which opposed both communal representation and the nominated system, was in favour of Federation, had links with the T.W.A. and, at least on paper, was committed to the class struggle. However, the Young India Party lacked roots in the working class of either ethnic group and did not last for long. Like a number of other Indian radicals, Mathura then became part of the Creole labour movement as a leading member of the Trinidad Labour Party (T.L.P.) between 1928-1945. In the process, again like other Indian radicals, he lost the ability to influence the Indian workers and peasants who looked with suspicion on Creole political groupings.⁶⁹

The Indian politicians who came nearest to linking the two ethnic groups were Adrian Cola Rienzi and Timothy Roodal. The latter, despite being an exceptionally wealthy man, was associated firstly with the T.L.P. and then with the Butler movement. Rienzi had abandoned his brahmin name, Krishna Deonarine, as a political gesture. He spent the late 1920s and early 1930s in Dublin and London, qualifying as a barrister and becoming involved in the international communist and Irish republican movements. On his return to Trinidad in 1934 he formed the Trinidad Citizen's League, but like Mathura's party before it, Rienzi's group had no roots in the working class and soon collapsed even though there was wide-

spread strike action on the sugar estates during 1934. However, three years later, Rienzi played a major role in Trinidadian politics as one of T.U. Butler's chief lieutenants in his British Empire Home Rule Party. He organised the island-wide strikes after Butler was forced to go into hiding and acted as chief negotiator between striking workers and the employers. He was also the organising founder of three key trade unions in transport, oil and sugar. Between 1938-1944 he was President of the T.U.C. However, it is clear that even at this stage Rienzi's influence on the sugar workers was limited. It has been estimated that only 2000 out of the 34000 sugar workers joined the union. Rienzi also then began to lose his influence with the black working class when he fell out with Butler. Disillusioned, Rienzi was then carefully absorbed by the colonial system of patronage: appointed to the Executive Council in 1943 and then out of politics to become the Second Crown Counsel. Later in his life Rienzi ascribed his political demise to the difficulties created by the rising black consciousness within the trade union movement.⁷⁰

At the same time there was also a steady rise in the influence of the traditionalist caste elite. The issue which stimulated the regrouping of the Hindu traditionalists was the question of the legality of Hindu and Muslim marriages.⁷¹ The situation up to 1924 had been that Hindu or Muslim ceremonies were not officially regarded as valid, though such marriages could subsequently be legitimised by civil registration. Few Indians registered their marriages, even though non-registration meant that the children of such marriages were illegitimate in the eyes of the law and were excluded from secondary schooling, and there could be problems over property inheritance.

In response to pressures from (some sections of) the Indian community the Colonial Government proposed that registration should be made compulsory. This split the community between 'modernisers'

who favoured the proposal and Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists who bitterly opposed registration as sacrilegious. There was sharp, and sometimes physical, conflict. The modernisers, who included Christian Indians, the Arya Samaj and reformist Muslims, used the East Indian Weekly as their voice to criticise the Sanatanist Hindus for playing on caste sentiment and furthering their own political ambitions. The Sanatanists in turn, stiffened by missionary intervention from India, set up a traditionalist Sanatan Sharma Board of control which expelled all non-Hindu elements and called for Brahminical rites and caste endogamy in Hindu marriages. What occurred in the end was a compromise which favoured the modernisers. Nevertheless, the episode reveals the growing influence of the traditionalists.

This phenomenon had a number of causes. The way in which the village settlements were shaped along caste lines, with a renewed Brahmin ascendancy, was discussed in Chapter Seven. In the present chapter the increasing proportion of Hindus and Muslims in the Indian commercial and business elite has been noted. Other important influences included the successes of the nationalist movement in India, direct religious and cultural missions from India,⁷² and the importation of Indian films from the fledgling Bombay movie industry. During the 1930s Gandhi and Nehru became the popular heroes of Indians in Trinidad; demonstrations were held in support of Indian freedom and public meetings were invariably marked by the singing of the Indian national anthem.

However, the influences from India were not wholly traditionalist. The most influential missionaries to come to Trinidad were the Arya Samaj who came in 1929. Although this reformist group had been present in Trinidad since 1910, the presence of missionaries such as Pundit Jaimani and Professor Bhaskarand⁷³ stimulated fierce controversy over such issues as superstition,

idolatry, caste and child marriages with the orthodox Sanatanists, Aryan missionaries were apparently better educated than their Sanatanist rivals and appealed strongly to more educated Indians in Trinidad. The influence of Aryan ideas on Seepersad Naipaul is discussed in Chapter Twelve, and conflicts between the Aryans and the Sanatanists are, of course, dealt with in V.S. Naipaul's A House for Mr Biswas (1961). In 1940 the Aryans founded the first Indian run secondary school in Curepe.

The influence of Indian films was perhaps even more pervasive since they reached mass Indian audiences. The first film to be screened, Bala Joban, had, in the words of its distributor, Henry Teelucksingh, a 'startling and educating' influence.⁷⁴ He noted that though the print was worn out and the film 'lacking in technique and proper direction', its conservatism and traditional ethos had a massive appeal for the rural majority of Trinidadian Indians, who saw in the film an expression of a world which was more familiar to them than the alien world which they felt surrounded them. Ironically, although the film was conservative in its ethos, its effects on Indian clothing and hair-styles in Trinidad was modernising. Bala Joban was only the first of many such importations.

There was one issue, though, which united the Indian community; this was their objection to the idea of a language test as a qualification for enfranchisement. The issue arose in 1941 when a Franchise Committee was set up on the recommendations of the Moyne Commission of 1939, itself the response to the 'Butler' riots of 1937; Moyne had urged that moves should be made towards full adult suffrage. However, the Franchise Committee recommended that electors had to satisfy the registering officer that they understood English. Only two Indians out of the six on the committee

(the others were Christian conservatives) objected to this clause. One, Rienzi, wrote a minority report which persuaded the Secretary of State for the Colonies to delete this clause. However, despite the Governor's recommendations, a majority of the Legislative Council (Whites and middle class Creoles, including some former radicals) voted that the language test be included. All sections of the Indian elite united in an effective campaign which mobilised popular Indian support under the control of a newly formed Indian Central Council. Although the campaign was successful and although some Creole radicals supported the Indian campaign, the experience did much to strengthen the Indian community's consciousness of itself as a racial minority and strengthened the position of those who were encouraging the community to think of themselves as Indians first and Trinidadians second.⁷⁵

In British Guiana the pattern was rather different. Firstly, as early as 1911 Indians formed the largest single ethnic group (42.7%) and it was clear, that Indians would at some stage form an absolute majority of the population. This ethnographic fact had obvious effects on the Indian elite's attitude towards popular suffrage. Secondly, the Indian estate population was the most militant section of the working class, and thereby formed an effective power base for the Indian political elite, who on their own were too small and mostly too disorganised to be an effective pressure group.

In 1923 the B.G.E.I.A. had an estimated membership of only one hundred. Reviewing its activities in 1938, Peter Ruhomon described a chapter of financial mismanagement, personality clashes, inactivity and irrelevance. Amongst its members, the merchants, barristers, doctors and shop-keepers of Georgetown, there was, according to Ruhomon, much talk and little action, 'grandiose' schemes with no tangible results. Many of the issues were important - child labour, equal employment opportunities,

land purchase, irrigation and drainage schemes, Hindu and Muslim holidays, cremation rights⁷⁶ - but the group made little impression on the Government.

However, one of the 'grandiose' schemes illustrates just how cynically some sections of the elite were prepared to pursue the advancement of the Indian racial position and their own class position. The device to achieve these ends was the resumption of Indian immigration under the title of Colonization Schemes, the campaign for which lasted between 1919 - 1926 and involved an unholy alliance between the sugar producers and leading Indians such as J.A. Luckhoo. Wilder aims included the plan that the scheme would ultimately make Guyana a colony of continental India, and at the very least ensure that the Indians had an even greater racial majority. This showed a blithe indifference to the position or even the likely reaction of the Afro-Guyanese population. It was equally cynical with regard to its likely effects on the existing Indian labour force. Although the members of the B.G.E.I.A. who went to India sold the scheme as one of free colonisation aided by land grants, they must have been aware that the Sugar Producers Association was only interested in increasing the pool of labour to increase production in times of demand and hold down wages during the slumps. The Indian elite was not unanimous in support of the schemes though. Joseph Ruhomon, who had opposed indenture as early as 1897,⁷⁸ was staunchly opposed as were some other members of the B.G.E.I.A. However, the opponents of the scheme were clearly in a minority, for the second colonisation scheme was an even more despicable betrayal of the interests of the sugar workers. The impetus came from the Sugar Producers Association who required an importation of labour to break the workers' refusal to accept wage cuts or work at reduced rates. On this occasion the B.G.E.I.A. was solidly behind the scheme.

However, a critical report on conditions on the estates by an Indian Government civil servant, and their insistence that the scheme be one of land settlement, finally caused the plan to be dropped in 1926.

Thereafter, the B.G.E.I.A.'s role in relationship to the estate working class changed rapidly in response to a change in the political constitution. In 1924 the President⁷⁹ of the B.G.E.I.A., Francis Kawall (a merchant) had been prominent in the breaking of the Ruimvelt estate strike of 1924 when 12 workers were killed and 15 wounded by the action of armed police. By 1926 the B.G.E.I.A. was participating in the first British Guiana and West Indies Labour Conference. Although there had always been a few professional Indians such as Joseph Ruhomon who had been sympathetic to working class interests, the change in stance of the B.G.E.I.A. was wholly opportunist. Under the change to a Crown Colony system in 1928, interest groups needed to demonstrate to the Colonial Government that they needed recognition in the nominated section of the Legislature.⁸⁰ Accordingly both the Coloured and the Indian middle classes began to strengthen their positions as ethnic pressure groups by building links with the working class. Key figures in the League of Coloured People (L.C.P.) became active in the B.G.L.U. and members of the B.G.E.I.A. were involved in setting up a union to organise the sugar workers, the Man Power Citizens Association in 1936. The M.P.C.A. was the brainchild of Ayube Edun, a jeweller of decidedly eccentric political views. The title of the organisation came from Edun's fascistic theory of Rational-Practical-Idealism under which principles an ideal state would be formed under the benign dictatorship of a Supreme Council of the intelligentsia, which of course included Edun, who felt he had qualities of intellect 'to be found in the possession of but a few individuals of this

world.' The title stood for the man-power of brain and hands. Edun and his associates were the brain, the sugar workers the hands.⁸¹ It was a concept of the relationship between the elite and the workers which was shared by most of the Indian middle class. Articles in The Indian Opinion referred to the masses as people 'who need looking after'.⁸² It was a belated 'discovery' following the earlier neglect.

In reality the middle classes 'organised' and the workers acted and bore the brunt of the reaction from the state. In 1939 the M.P.C.A. achieved recognition from the Sugar Producers Association (S.P.A.) only after the shooting dead of four workers by the police. At that time the M.P.C.A. executive comprised a doctor, a jeweller, a Hindu priest, a journalist, a tailor and three of Edun's relatives. It did little to organise the workers and was never much trusted by them. Following recognition by the S.P.A., there is evidence that one of the M.P.C.A.'s leaders was on its payroll. It was essentially an embryo middle-class political party which devoted most of its energy to political issues: constitutional reform, adult suffrage and an elected majority in the Legislature.⁸³ On these issues both the M.C.P.A. and the B.G.E.I.A. took a notably more 'progressive' view than the E.I.N.A. in Trinidad. However, it is very unlikely that this would have been the case had not the Indians been in racial majority.

By 1943 Edun had secured his political reward, being nominated to the Legislative Council. He was only one of a number of middle class politicians who attempted to use trade union organisation to further their ambitions. The flagrant opportunism of some of these politicians is revealed in the activities of C.R. Jacob, who in addition to being the President of the B.G.E.I.A. for some years, the first Indian secretary of the Sugar Planters' Association and a wealthy Water Street merchant, was also between

1937 - 1941 a senior official in the M.P.C.A. In 1941 he was expelled from the latter and set up the Guiana United Trade Union, one of whose rules was that C.R.Jacob should be the president!⁸⁴

Nevertheless in setting up labour unions and trying to build 'mass' support the politicians of the period were in fact laying the way for the alliance between a genuinely radical section of the middle class and the working classes, in the first phase of the People's Progressive Party between 1950 - 1955. In Trinidad, by contrast, the political leadership of the community had fallen into the hands of a politically reactionary and often culturally chauvinist leadership.

In British Guiana Indian religious organisations tended to confine themselves to religious and cultural activities, though there were similar splits between traditionalists and reformists within both the Hindu and Muslim communities.⁸⁵

Again, although the Indian elite did look towards India, urging that India should send an Agent-General to look after Indian interests in the colony, there is less evidence of involvement in Indian affairs than there is for Trinidad. Similarly, although Indian religious leaders in British Guiana were dissatisfied with the laws relating to Hindu and Muslim marriages, there was no popular campaign on the issue run by the traditionalists. There were also distinguished visitors from India, such as C.F.Andrews, Gandhi's trusted British disciple, in 1929, and Kodanda Roa of the Servants of India Society, who stimulated the local leadership into greater social and cultural efforts, but there is no evidence that any of the visitors played a role comparable to those Hindu missionaries to Trinidad who did much to support the growing influence of the religious conservatives.

Hard distinctions between practical and symbolic activities are difficult to maintain in this period, both in Trinidad and

British Guiana. Many ostensibly practical political actions were essentially symbolic expressions of cultural feelings. Similarly many apparently cultural organisations were predominantly training grounds for aspiring politicians. Again, some of the literary products of the period may have little to do with aesthetic motivation and much to do with securing social recognition.

Nevertheless, it is legitimate to say that the remainder of this section deals mainly with the cultural and the expressive: the formation of cultural and literary organisations, the publication of general and political newspapers and journals, and with literary-aesthetic activity.

There was a sudden proliferation of sporting and literary clubs in the 1920s whose functions neatly crystallize the paradoxical nature of Indian activity in this period. On the one hand they signalled that Indians were becoming increasingly engaged in the same kinds of activities as the rest of the population; on the other hand, they demonstrated to others that their members were exclusively Indians. Thus East Indian cricketing clubs and leagues were formed in both Trinidad and British Guiana, adopting the national sport but playing within the Indian community. The commonest kind of club was the literary and debating society. There is little evidence that they were much concerned with literary production, though they may have created a taste for literature. Brief surviving accounts of topics discussed or lectured on at meetings suggest that the chief function of the clubs was to help Indians who were moving away from rural backgrounds to acquire the cultural skills which would enable them to take their place in the middle-class world. In Trinidad in 1924 there was an East Indian Literary Club, an East Indian

Literary League of Trinidad, E.I. Literary League of Cedros, the Sangre Grande E. Indian Literary and Debating Society and the Southern E.I. Literary and Debating Society. Topics included, 'The Life of Sadhu Sundar Singh', Pundit Tieuwary on 'The Mother Tongue', the Rev J.G. Earle on 'Paintings and their Messages', talks on 'The Denationalising Influence of Western Education' and A.H. Mendes on 'The Necessity of Poetry'. The last two illustrate neatly the paradoxical cultural character of the clubs. Some of the debates were held in Hindi, but in general the Christian and westernising emphasis is dominant. It is not until 1944 that one finds a record of a specifically Hindi-speaking literary and debating society. By the 1940s the literary and debating society appears to have gone out of fashion in Trinidad, to be replaced by more directly political activity or by social welfare organisations.

In British Guiana there does not appear to have been such a growth. There was an Indian Literary Society, a Corentyne Literary and Debating Society, and an Albion Improvement Association, whose leading member was J.W. Chinapen, whose verse is discussed below (see pp 387⁸⁸). The two most important groups were the Susumachar East Indian Young Men's Society and the British Guiana Dramatic Society. The former has to its credit the publication of a pioneering literary landmark, the Anthology of Local Indian Verse, in 1934, and one of its leading members, Peter Ruhomon, wrote the History of the East Indians in British Guiana: 1838-1938, published in 1946. However, not all Indians involved in cultural activities were exclusively involved in East Indian societies. Seepersad Naipaul, for instance, was involved in the mainly Creole groupings who met informally first around the publication of The Beacon and later Papa Bois.

Another facet of middle class Indian involvement in the

in the political and social life of the Caribbean was the publication of journals and newspapers. An earlier paper in Trinidad, The East Indian Herald had been largely missionary run, but after 1929 there was a spate of weekly and monthly newspapers and journals which represented the radical modernising section of elite opinion. C.B.Mathura's The East Indian Weekly has already been noted for its radical position.⁹² In 1933 another radical Indian monthly, The West Indian Magnet,⁹³ appeared, edited by A.B.C.Singh and associated with the short lived Trinidad Indian League. Magnet was probably also short lived. By 1937 The East Indian Weekly had become The Indian, a monthly journal dedicated to exposing corruption. It ran an 'Is it True?' section which made free use of rumour and innuendo to attack 'bobol' in local government. It was dedicated to religious tolerance and was very critical of the religious tensions which were splintering the Indian community. The Indian lasted till about 1943.⁹⁴ It overlapped with the appearance of The Observer founded in 1941 by S.M.B.Rameshwar, an Oxford graduate. Under Rameshwar The Observer was dedicated to a Trinidadian perspective. Although a journal of 'Indian opinion', the founding editorial stated we 'are not advocates of any narrow nationalism or racial segregation, seeking rights and privileges to the exclusion of others...' The range of material under Rameshwar's editorship (1941-1942) and Dennis Mahabir's (1942-1945) was diverse. It contained articles on the Indian independence struggle, social and political issues affecting Indians in Trinidad (including Seepersad Naipaul's article on Indian destitutes 'They Have No Homes' vol 1 no 3, 1941) cultural affairs - Tagore was a favourite - and Indian films. It also published some short stories and poems, including several stories by Seepersad Naipaul. The Observer continued publication until 1967; but under the editorship of H.P.Singh from 1946 onwards it became the mouthpiece of the Hindu traditionalists. In addition to these specifically Indian journals,

there were also Indian journalists, Seepersad Naipaul being the most prominent, who worked on the island's main daily newspapers. 95

In British Guiana there were no Indian newspapers and only three journals which competed fairly briefly, during the mid to late 1930s. However, as in Trinidad, some Indians such as the Ruhomons, Peter and Joseph, worked as journalists on the colony's main papers. Peter Ruhomon, for instance, wrote a regular column under the byline of 'Indian Intelligence'. The three Indian journals were The Indian Opinion (1936-1938?), The Guiana Indian (1938) and the Guyana Review. Sadly, no more than a few copies of these journals appear to have been preserved, and from these it is possible merely to suggest something of their character. The Indian Opinion, the official journal of the B.G.E.I.A. reflects the phase when some sections of the middle class became more conscious of the sufferings of the Indian poor and the working class. One article enjoins: 'Let us go out and identify ourselves with the masses', and there is much criticism of the complacency of the middle class. Articles deal with the poor living conditions on the estates, illiteracy and the excessive power of the sugar interests in the colony. The Centenary issue of May 1938 commemorating the beginning of indenture, contains some of the first attempts at historical surveys of the Indian experience in the colony written, predictably, by the Ruhomon brothers. Other articles bewail the educational, social and political backwardness of Indian youth and hint at the moral decay brought about by contact with Afro-creole youth. The journal also reveals the cultural perplexities of the middle classes. There is the call of India, expressed in such articles as Peter Ruhomon's 'The Building of Greater India' ⁹⁶ which espouses the old dream of an Indian 'zionism' in which Indians in British Guiana would be part of an Indian Empire, and make a special contribution to India because, by virtue of their contact with the west, Guyanese Indians were 'a new

race with a broader outlook on life and newer standards of values.'⁹⁷
 Mrs J.B.Singh, in her article 'In Defense of Our Elders' looks characteristically both East and West, wishing to see both a recovery of what was genuine and best in Indian culture and a greater knowledge of Western culture. What is dismissed is the actual: what Indian culture had become through its adaptation to the local environment and whatever was creole or Guyanese, particularly Afro-Guyanese. It is a classic statement of Indo-Saxonism, though the process could go even further. (Of J.A. Luckhoo it was said in an obituary tribute: 'Few of us, I imagine, thought of Mr Luckhoo as an East Indian'.)⁹⁸ The Indian Opinion also contained a few literary pieces, mainly of a dutiful than an inspired nature. The Guiana Indian briefly appeared in 1938 as a split from The Indian Opinion to counter, as a 'moderate' journal, the so-called subversive influence of Ayube Edun's Guiana Review. Edun is improbably referred to in the warning that 'certain leaders of our community are communistically inclined and obsessed with the desire of destroying every sugar estate.'⁹⁹
The Guiana Indian evidently attracted the more conservative wing of the B.G.E.I.A., though one finds some of the same writers involved with different papers.

The two main literary and cultural contributions in British Guiana came, as indicated above, from Indians associated with the Susumachar Young Men's Association and the British Guiana Dramatic Society.¹⁰⁰ The Anthology of Local Indian Verse, edited by C.E.J. Ramcharitar-Lalla and published in 1934 in a print of five hundred copies, selling at 24 cents, contained the work of five writers: Ramcharitar-Lalla, Joseph and Peter Ruhomon, W.W.Persaud and J.W.Chinapen. All the writers were Christian Indians and four had been through the Canadian mission school system. Lalla (1906-1948) and Chinapen (c1910-1971) were teachers, the Ruhomons were journalists and Persaud, the son of an Anglican priest,

educated at Queen's College, was a musician who unfortunately spent most of his life bed-ridden from paralysis. The whole project was encouraged by a Methodist minister, the Rev. H. H. Chick, then President of the Susumachar society. Undoubtedly though, the stimulation for the anthology had come from the publication in 1931 of N. E. Cameron's Guianese Poetry, an anthology exclusively of Afro-Guianese poets, though undoubtedly it was known that Joseph Ruhomon was a writer of verse, and the style and quality in the two anthologies is very comparable. Cameron's purpose was to answer the white detractors of the Negro race, and in part at least the purpose of the Anthology of Local Indian Verse seems to have been to prove that the Indians had also made great progress.

In many ways the Anthology documents the impediments in the way of colonial writing. Save for a handful of poems there is little to show that the verses were either written by Indians, Guyanese or in the 1930s. The fact that so much of the verse is derivative and impersonal is not really surprising though, if one considers that these writers had been cut off from the classics of their own cultural tradition (or at least were discouraged from using that tradition by their religious indoctrination), cut off from much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century revival of original literature in India by their emigration to the Caribbean and without as yet a genuine native tradition of verse to relate to. Their main influences were pre-twentieth century English poetry (Tennyson is perhaps the most 'modern' voice) and in the case of younger poets such as Chinapen, the poetry of Tagore and Mrs Sarojini Naidu. The English literary models not only inflict an archaic diction on these writers, but often determine the subject matter as well. Many of the verses are exercises in being verses; full of effulgencies, paens, poesy, ló!'s, anons, zephyrs, bowers and sylvan shades. Shelley's skylark, for instance, turns up in a number of manifestations:

P.Ruhomon's 'To the Keskidee'

Hail Silver-throated yellow breast
That would disturb my morning rest;
High on a tree
So light and free ¹⁰³
Put forth your heaven-born melody.

P.Ruhomon's 'The Wren'

Blithe creature of a tropic land,
Unblest with garb of many hues. ¹⁰⁴

or J.W.Chinapen's 'To A Hummingbird'

O lively sprite
Embodied delight ¹⁰⁵
Fair jewel of the feathered kind.

The other, potentially more promising, influence of Tagore and Mrs Naidu was also something of a mixed blessing. Tagore's work was probably best known through his collection Gitanjali, first published in 1912 but reprinted 34 times between 1913 and 1926. The positives of the Tagorean influence - not so much seen in the Anthology but in the unpublished verse of J.W.Chinapen - were its democratic spirit and the encouragement it gave to these missionary-indoctrinated writers to write on Indian subjects. The negatives of the Tagorean influence lay mainly in the diction. Tagore himself was surprised that his translations from the original Bengali verse should have won so much praise. He wrote to a friend,

...That I cannot write English is such a patent fact....
only translated as an exercise to recreate the feelings
that had gone into writing the originals. ¹⁰⁶

It is probable that the 'Rhythmic and tonal monotony' ¹⁰⁷ of Tagore's English verse was in part caused in the process of translation. Perhaps Tagore's other negative influence was that his concern with the spiritual gave those writers he influenced little encouragement to look closely at the world of concrete experience. In the words of two critics not enamoured of Tagore, there is ¹⁰⁸ 'too much dreaminess and mistiness' or a 'languid diffuseness and wishy-washy daydreaminess.' ¹⁰⁹

The other Indian writer, Mrs Naidu, known as the 'nightingale

of India', presented a particularly assimilable form of influence since her own work (The Golden Threshold (1905); The Bird of Time (1912) and The Broken Way (1917)) was already a fusion of traditional Hindu themes with a derivative late Victorian and Georgian style, 'Western in feeling and imagery' as her work was described by one of her mentors, Edmund Gosse, during her period of education in England at King's College, London and Girton College, Cambridge. Again, her influence was not wholly beneficial. She wrote about the actual scenes of Indian life, but in a way that romanticised picturesque beggars, snake charmers and the like. These were precisely the kinds of images of India which one might expect would appeal to an uprooted Guyanese Indian. On the one hand, such poems perhaps encouraged Ramcharitar-Lalla to write the one poem in the anthology, 'The Weeding Gang' which described the Indian life around him:

I know the girls are coming,
 For I hear the gentle humming
 Of choruses they're singing on their way;
 I hear their saucepans jingling,
 And their cutlasses a-tingling,
 Which as their music-instruments they play.

They fill the silence after,
 With their peals of merry laughter
 Which float upon the pinion of the air;
 And also ease their walking
 With some idle silly talking,
 With kheesaz and boojhowals very queer. '''

This poem has an undeniable freshness and charm, a metrical gaiety and a wholly appropriate use of Hindi words. Though it is a real weeding gang with their cutlasses, dinner in pans and long walk to the cane, the scene has been pastoralised, for in life the gang would probably have been undernourished and malarial. The worst part of Mrs Naidu's influence was the 'sentimentality, sugar sentimentality ...the bane of her verse' and the fey archaic diction she sometimes affected. The following from Mrs Naidu could have been interchanged very easily with some of the poems in the anthology:

In the deep silence of the Garden-bowers
Only the stealthy zephyr glides and goes.

('The Garden Vigil')

The dance of the dew on the wings of a moonbeam,
The voice of the zephyr that sings as he goes.

('The Joy of Springtime!') 113

Ramcharitar-Lalla's poem, 'The Stars!' shows examples both of the kind of simple but striking image to be found in Mrs Naidu's verse and also the degeneration into the fey. The first stanza begins:

The stars!
Like fishes in the azure deep they play.

The second declines into:

The Stars! 114
Like fairy lamps they make a merry dance.

As indicated above most of the poems in the anthology - the religious verse, the patriotic exhortations of Joseph Ruhomon, even most of the verse about nature - bear little sign of their Guyanese provenance. J.W.Chinapen, for example, begins his poem 'To Love' in an unmistakably Shakespearian landscape:

When morn her saffron mantle spreads
O'er mean and wood... 115

However, Peter Ruhomon's 'A Tropical Morn' at least puts native birds into the bowers:

The cool soft air is redolent
With smell of fresh-blown flowers
And sakies, wrens and kiskadees
Awake the silent bowers. 116

The only sign that this is an anthology of Indian verse is W.W.Persaud's poem 'To India' which expresses an unresolved conflict between a rather timorous Indian nationalism and an unfaltering faith in rightness of the Christian British Empire. India, conventionally 'O land mysterious', is urged to

...strive in earnest to restore
Thy past resplendent glory

but is warned

Be not too hasty to attain,
Or be improvident to gain
A topsy-turvy power.

.....
 Reluctant be to throw aside
 The reigns of England, as thy guide. 117

The Anthology of Local Indian Verse perhaps did not wholly represent what its contributors were writing, but more what they considered would best make their public case. J.W.Chinapen, for instance, wrote a good deal of verse on Indian themes which went unpublished. Chinapen, who continued writing and published his own collection of poems, Albion Wilds¹¹⁸ in 1961, was only a very minor talent but he was a serious and, from the evidence of his manuscripts,¹¹⁹ a hard working poet. He produced several poems of a quiet grace, but his work also illustrates how the missionary-colonial ideology he had absorbed strangled his small but real talent. This is revealed most clearly by comparing his published work with his unpublished manuscripts and by noting the revisions a number of the poems went through.

His position as a sensitive Christian schoolmaster on a vigorously Hindu estate, Pln.Albion in the Corentyne, was part of his difficulty. Several poems, for instance 'Columbus', dwell on the estranged, persecuted figure:

Above the muttering mob stood he serene
 Above their unbelief, their threatening cries¹²⁰
 True to the keen, clear summoning call within-

In 'Gitanjali', an unpublished poem, he writes of his solitary walks in the company of his favourite volume:

...Driven by man's bitter scorn and hate, I fled-
 Fled madly from the mean and mocking throng.

However, the greatest constraints come from Chinapen's assumptions about what he should write and what he should publish. The poems in manuscript, written on Indian themes, are of an equal and in some cases superior quality to the anglicised poems Chinapen wrote during the same period and published in Albion Wilds. Nature itself was anglicised. The 'savannah and uncultivated lands

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aback of Albion Estate', of 'Albion Wilds' is transformed into the
England of Collins or Gray:

In heat of noon
How sweet it is to lie
'Neath leafy canopy
And hear the wren's shrill tune. ¹²²

The manuscripts show a nervous censorship of anything Guyanese or Indian. Thus 'sakies' is excised for 'blackbirds', 'Surya' the Hindu personification of the sun becomes 'Phoebus' and even in 'The Flute Divine', Krishna's attendant 'Gopis free and fair' are transformed into 'milk-maids debonair'. Chinapen had a talent for observation, but much of Albion Wilds abounds in ambrosial showers, vernal glades, verdant copses and blithely warbling birds. Even when that talent is revealed in 'To the Flamboyant':

Two weeks ago
Stark naked in the air
You stood, so stiff and bare
Stripped of your lavish show
.....
Your branches, gnarled, exposed
Like bony arms...

Chinapen cannot resist missionary moralisation:

Let me endure 123
Like you and steadfast keep.

Chinapen's cultural censor excludes from publication the many poems he wrote on Indian themes such as 'Tagore', 'Victory M.K.G.', 'Shantimeketan', 'Ode to India', 'M.K.Gandhi', 'To India' and 'The Indian Star'. In these poems the influences are Tagore and Mrs Naidu. In 'Ode to India' Chinapen writes:

Deign mystic mother to receive
This tribute to thy holy name,
An offering far too small to crown
The sun and splendour of thy fame.

and in 'Himalaya', to which mountain range he takes his spiritual flight, Chinapen employs a Tagorean image linking the natural and the spiritual:

Himalaya! I may not see thine height,
But in the self there towers high thy kind.

Mrs Naidu's influence is most clearly seen in a published poem, 'The Flute Player', which responds to her 'The Flute Player of Brindabar.'

In later life Chinapen became reinvolved with Hinduism, writing in 1968 that he felt above the 'confining religious concept that is Christianity'¹²⁴ but that he was neither a Christian nor a Hindu. In the late 1940s he had written criticising the educational system for leaving young Indians 'quite ignorant of their great heritage' and simply 'poor replicas of the western type.'¹²⁵ Yet Chinapen did not want an exclusive Indian consciousness, but rather the opportunity for Indians to contribute their cultural traditions to the national culture. This more public involvement with the Indian experience in Guyana is expressed in three of the latest written poems in Albion Wilds, which, both in diction and in sentiment, give the impression that Chinapen had woken from a dream. 'A Reverie' describes a real rather than an imagined environment. Instead of the mossy bowers of the 1930s poems, the scene is actually the plantation:

Ah! What array of folk of hopeful mien
With cutlass, pickaxe, shovel, fork and spade
Flanking a fleet of clanking vehicles -
Bulldozers, draglines, tractors and combines.

Even the sense of painful isolation from the people is lifted when,

I hear my name: They beckon me to join.¹²⁶

Chinapen the 'socialist realist' poet may not be markedly superior to the poet of the 1930s, but these later poems are certainly more vigorous and observant.

Three unfinished poems written towards the end of his life show him looking more closely at his mixed cultural roots. 'Adieu', commemorating his visit to England in 1961, expresses how much a part of his imagination England had been:

to cherish Persaud as any kind of literary pioneer. The verse lacks any grasp of rhythm, the diction often ludicrous. Two examples will suffice. On 'Creation' he writes:

When lo! the Will Divine had willed
 The power for fulfilment rose,
 The Essence gave the matter all
 And see! the massy gaseous state
 Began to change its form and moved.¹²⁸

In 'A Reverie' the damned are imagined:

For food they had crows' flesh and bloody serpents,
 they were met in the cold -
 Ah! what a state of misery's there for those their
 souls had sold.¹²⁹

Persaud was a Lutheran, who ran a private secondary school at Port Mourant (Cheddi Jagan was one of his pupils) and one of the founding members of the Man Power Citizens Association, but no picture of local Indian life enters his verse or prose pieces. Death is a favourite subject, and the religious poems are invariably of a tear-soaked nature. Most of the pieces which indicate that Persaud was in fact an Indian show the influence of the 'misty' and translated Tagore. However, Persaud writes more directly in 'East and West', an absurdly paranoid defence of India from attacks by Western scholars ('It has been left to me, in this far-flung habitation, to reply to those wicked agitators'¹³⁰) and in 'Hindu Marriages'. Here he writes 'with tear-soaked eyes' as he accuses the pundits of encouraging child-marriages. For a moment the comforting latinate pose is dropped and the inner pain of a man half-inside, half-outside his group is exposed:

Under what authority do you continue to wreck the lives of
 innocent children? RAM-RE-RAM, my own life has been
 wrecked in this way.¹³¹

One way of attempting to resolve the tensions which lie raw in Persaud's collection was to move away as far as possible from contact with one's Indian cultural roots. This is evidently what happened to F.E.M. Hosein and it is a perspective dramatised in

his play, Hyarima and the Saints, published in 1931. Hosein, whose lecture, 'East Indians in Trinidad : A Sociological Perspective' (1913), had offended the Governor, who had threatened that Indians would one day be the masters in Trinidad, was, by 1931, a catholic convert and a perfect Indo-Saxon gentleman, writing fulsome acknowledgments of the current Governor's patronage of his play. Hyarima and the Saints, a miracle play and pageant, was written for the celebrations of Santa Rosa, patron saint of the Caribs of Arima, where Hosein was a prosperous burgess. The play describes the arrival of Columbus, the enslavement of the Amerindians and their decision to rebel under the leadership of Hyarima. In the play Hosein tries to reconcile the oppression and cultural subjugation of the Amerindians with rejoicing over their conversion to Christianity. It is also possible to see in the play's themes a reflection of Hosein's changed attitudes to the cultural survival of (East) Indians in Trinidad. The play dramatises the conflict between Hyarima, who plans to slaughter the Spanish enslavers and the Spanish priests, and his daughter, a Christian, who wants to end their physical enslavement but is horrified by her father's impiety in deciding to murder the priests:

...for Satan 'tis that prompts 133
Our father to such dark unholy deeds.

The priests are duly martyred and in the ensuing fight Hyarima is mortally wounded. Near death he has a vision of the almighty power of the Christian's God. Hosein seems wants us to accept that however unjust the Spanish had been in enslaving the Indians, they had God on their side and the subsequent genocide was part of God's purpose. After seeing his vision Hyarima proclaims:

I see it all and do not now
Bewail my lot, since all alike are subject
To impartial Fate. My People had
Their day of life and must be swept aside.
It is their Fate, sad though it seems to be,
To bow to overwhelming circumstance, ... 134

All is part of a kind of Divine social Darwinism:

Our people are as babes just born compared
With those who've reached an age where they can walk
And talk and even moderately run.¹³⁵

These reflections run significantly parallel to Hosein's current feelings about the value of Indian cultural survivals. He had counselled his fellow Indians:

The Government may tolerate and protect your manners and customs, but the business of the Government is to make you loyal citizens of Trinidad.¹³⁶

Hosein, who was a member of the Legislative Council, had been a strong opponent of Indian pleas to the Government that Hindi and Urdu be taught to their children in the schools.

However, it would be too sweeping to see the play's sentiments as merely the correlative of Hosein's changed material condition. Indeed, though the play as a whole rather plods in its Miltonic blank verse, there are moments of mystical vision when Hosein becomes genuinely engaged with the rhythmic and metaphorical resources of language. It is not fanciful, at such moments, to see Hosein as in some respects a precursor of Wilson Harris in adopting a mystical perspective outside of history, above

...the petty things
Of Earth, the pride of power, possessions race.¹³⁷

From this perspective enslaved Carib and enslaving Spaniard, 'themselves subdued and driven forth from blessed Cairi' simply become part of a process which leads in the direction of human oneness with the cosmos. Hosein was once reported to have said that he was born a Muslim, lived as a Christian but hoped to die a Hindu,¹³⁸ and the vision which he puts into Hyarima's mouth draws less on the Christian mystical tradition than Hinduism:

...but felt myself in perfect rhythm with
The deep pulsating music of the Song
Of Life. I was like a drop of ocean
Pulsing rhythmic in a bondless, endless
And infinite sea of harmonies sublime.¹³⁹

Another face of Indo-Saxonism can be seen in the activities of the British Guiana Dramatic Society,¹⁴⁰ an organisation which had an active existence between 1936 and 1948. During its official existence it put on ten annual plays and regular concerts and reviews. The plays were put on in May of each year to commemorate Tagore's birth. The B.G.D.S. had a socially active core of about thirty, an average of one hundred regular members, and audiences which were regularly over six hundred. From 1942 until 1947 the society also produced an irregular quarterly magazine, first called Quarterly News and later The Dramag.

The British Guiana Dramatic Society was an exclusively Indian organisation, though it permitted the non-Indian wives or husbands of Indians to be members (several of the group had returned from study overseas with European wives) and gave honorary membership to visitors to the colony.¹⁴¹ Coloured or Black Creoles were not invited to join. The Society was by no means singular in its racial exclusiveness; the British Guiana Literary Circle and the Georgetown Dramatic Club were both wholly Creole in composition. Indeed, the B.G.D.S.'s offer to co-operate with the Georgetown Dramatic Club in a production of O'Neill's The Emperor Jones was rejected because the producer felt that Indians were 'not easy to work with.'¹⁴² Even after the Union of Cultural Clubs was formed in 1945 Indian and Afro-Guyanese groups had little to do with each other. Dramag reported that the Third Annual Convention of the Union had been the first time that the B.G.D.S. had presented Indian items to an audience which was not predominantly Indian.

The members of the group were the professional and social elite of Georgetown Indian society: Christians, Hindus and Muslims, united in their Indianness and their Westernness. The guiding lights were Dr J.B.Singh (a member of the Legislative Council, a leading figure in the B.G.E.I.A. and a prominent Hindu) and

his wife Alice Bhagwandai Singh. Much of the social life of the group was focussed on their home in affluent Queenstown. It was in some respects an inward looking and self-congratulatory coterie. Yet if the society provided its members with an active and enjoyable social life there was also a core of seriousness in what they did. They tried to bring images of Indian culture to wider attention and appear to have brought a high level of professionalism to their productions. However, despite the enthusiasm and talent evident in the group, it produced little which was original. Its plays were either translations or adaptations from the Mahabharata (Savitri, performed in 1929 and 1944); Kalidasa's Sakuntala in 1941; and plays by Tagore such as The King and Queen, Red Oleanders, Gora and Malini. The only original play performed was Asra written by Basil Balgobin and performed in 1945. Unfortunately, no script survives, but the reviews suggest Asra was Tagorean in theme and style.¹⁴³ Apart from Asra there was nothing; when the B.G.D.S. offered a prize for an original play, only one was received and this was judged unsuitable for either prize or performance.¹⁴⁴ This dearth of originality was not really surprising. The Georgetown group was concerned with India, but ignored the real India which was present in the rice villages and on the estates. The India which they celebrated was gorgeous and mythical.¹⁴⁵ Although some members of the elite had begun to discover the workers for political purposes, they had not yet begun to make any kind of imaginative identification with their lives. The group was also perhaps too self-congratulatory about their own social progress to be able to achieve the detachment necessary for a dramatic or fictional exploration of their lives. Sometimes they seemed more concerned with continental India than with the problems of Indians in Guyana. For instance, Dramag wrote in 1943:

One of our primary aims in these presentations is to awaken in this part of the world, a better appreciation

for the culture and literature of India with the hope that it will tend to foster a better understanding of the many problems facing her and the civilised world....

(my emphasis)

The plays of Tagore may to some extent have a local relevance in dealing with such themes as tradition and change or the right to choice in marriage. For instance, Gora concerns the clash between a Hindu family who accept some Western ways of living and the fanatically orthodox and narrow minded Gora. The play turns on Gora's humbling and discovery of a broader view of life.

Yet, how the plays were staged seems to have expressed an even more important message. Performances were designed to be spectacular; the play-bill for Shudraka's The Little Clay Cart promised the 'gorgeous setting of Ancient India, beautiful Indian costumes and melodious songs.' The spectacle was there, one feels, to encourage the group's confidence in itself and to make it clear that the despised culture of the plantation coolie was not that of the cultivated Indian. They were, though, a group facing in different directions. Most performances included variety items - Indian instrumental groups, traditional dances, popular songs accompanied by piano and modern American tunes played by the 'Washboard Orchestra'. At concerts one finds that Samuel Massallal Pollard's Indian musical Orchestra (playing traditional instruments) rubbed shoulders with Miss Nalini Singh's popularly received performances as 'a jive and blues singer.'¹⁴⁶ On the other hand they were trying to establish a secure and respected place within the local Euro-creole elite. Participation in the performing arts was self-improving as the aims of the group made explicit:

The British Guiana Dramatic Society stands for the moral, social and intellectual welfare of its members through the medium of music and drama.¹⁴⁷

As a writer in Dramag in 1943 commented, 'being taught how to make myself agreeable in company' was one of the chief benefits

derived from membership. On the other hand, the B.G.D.S. was also concerned with asserting its Indianness. The Indian community was informed of the glories of its past as an encouragement to its political confidence and resolve. Dr.J.B.Singh delivered lectures on Indian history and the group also played host to Dr.Pandia, later Indian Cultural Commissioner, who spoke on 'Social and Cultural Change in India'. Meetings were always closed with the singing of 'Bande Mataram', the nationalists' anthem. However, the B.G.D.S. also began to see its activities in relation to the Creoles, a perception which changes considerably in emphasis during the Society's life. In 1942 Dramag had stressed that the group eschewed religion and politics 'or anything which would tend to create a bias among the other communities.' By 1945 the description of the Society's role is a little more assertive:

...the British Guiana Dramatic Society has taken upon itself the responsibility to bring to the cosmopolitan peoples of this country an appreciation of the grandeur of that civilisation of ancient India, of the continuity of which, with the possible exception of China, no region of the world can boast. 148

The tone could also be strident as members of the group defended the right of Indians to maintain their cultural integrity:

We have experienced many attempts from without to absorb us as a distinct cultural group, and now more than ever, in our midst we find organised propaganda machinery at work, aimed primarily to plunge us into the general melting-pot towards a homogeneous culture.... This we hate, and with a necessary hate. 149

It is an argument as relevant to the Indian position in Guyana in the 1980s as it was when the article was written.

It would be easy to characterise the B.G.D.S. as an example of colonial mimicry, to see in its activities the desire of a 'parvenu' class for social respectability and recognition. There was perhaps an element of this in their 'at homes' and charades and essays in the Dramag on 'Friendship', and their self-congratulation that 'Our society has set the example to other races of British Guiana who are very eagerly, trying to follow

in our footsteps.' And yet, the Naipaulian critique of mimicry implies form without substance, the monkey aping its master, and that did not seem to me the whole truth when I met surviving members of the group and read the unpublished, and fragmentary, autobiography of Alice Bhagwandai Singh. It was evident that some of this Indian middle class group had possessed in an unabsurd and probably self-liberating way the more enlightened values of the late Victorian/Edwardian middle-classes. These included strict ethics of interpersonal behaviour and the goals of urbanity and cultivation. At the same time they retained a strong sense of pride in their distinctive Indian cultural identity. However, it was also clear that the group had found themselves increasingly out of touch with the Guyana of radical nationalism and socialist ideology. These social changes and the more political priorities of some of the group's younger members probably lay behind the failure of the Society to establish the permanent theatre they had planned and the group's collapse. It was a loss. A leading member of the Theatre Guild admitted in the mid 1960s that the Guild had produced no plays either by continental or Indo-Guyanese authors or plays about Indians. ¹⁵⁰ That absence has scarcely been remedied since.

Thus far the kind of poetry written or the style of drama presented has been expressive of the cultural uncertainties of the Indian middle class, without in any sense analysing their situation. There has been no reference to the lives of the Indian masses in villages and on estates. An analytical approach to the lives of the middle class would have required both an intimacy with their background and an ironic detachment possessed only by the exceptional artist. To have written about the rural masses would have required detailed and sympathetic knowledge

and the conviction that their lives were worthy of representation. These the Indo-Saxon urban elite clearly did not possess. It was not until the publication of Seepersad Naipaul's Gurudeva and Other Indian Tales in 1943 that writing which possessed both those qualities emerged. Prose narrative realism has tended to develop later than other literary forms, and briefer forms before lengthier ones, and the emergent literature of Indians in the Caribbean has been no exception.

It is possible that there were fictional contributions to earlier papers such as the Trinidadian East Indian Weekly but unfortunately, copies of this paper have been impossible to find. The first traceable stories were published in the Indian magazines which appeared in the 1940s. The Observer, for instance, published several of Seepersad Naipaul's short stories and serialised a longer prose fiction, Hakim Khan's, 'And So We Came To Trinidad'.¹⁵¹ There was also The Minerva Review, a literary review which ran from 1941 - c1944. It was the brainchild of Dennis Mahabir, the future editor of the Spectator and, later in his life, the author of a novel, The Cutlass Is Not For Killing (1971).¹⁵² Though an Indian supported magazine, The Minerva Review was highly Westernised in tone and determinedly cosmopolitan. It published articles on philosophical and cultural issues, Tagore, folklore and the cinema. And it provided Seepersad Naipaul with an outlet for his stories.

Seepersad Naipaul was probably the first Indo-Caribbean writer of original (and published) prose fiction. The intrinsic merits of his stories and their pioneering qualities stand out all the more clearly in comparison to the only other prose narrative pieces written by Indian authors in the same period. Both of these, Robert I. Janki's 'Bharat Lakshmi' (The Indian Opinion, vol II, no 12, 1938) and Hakim Khan's story, are closely

related in form and didactic function to the missionary tracts and 'life histories', discussed in Chapter Four'; character and narrative are subordinated to these writer's different ideological ends. Janki was a merchant who was active in both the B.G.E.I.A. and the B.G.Dramatic Society. His narrative recounts the life history of Bharat Lakshmi, an orphaned Indian girl born on the first ship to bring indentured labourers to the colony. The narrative celebrates the rise of the Indian middle class from their humble beginnings and in the process becomes a fairy tale which censors the harsh historical reality of the Indian experience. Bharat's seven grandchildren (they are symbolic children representing the middle class of Janki's day) rise to positions in the High Court, Legislative Council, Mayoral Office, the Magistracy, healing the sick, building Vikrams, founding business empires, and even owning the very plantations on which Bharat Lakshmi worked. Even Bharat's other 'grandchildren', who remain on the estates, labour contentedly in this fairy tale:

They ask not to be removed. The soil is sacred, for did not Bharat Lakshmi tread! All they ask for is better wages in some instances...

Although Mohammed Hakim Khan's 'And So We Came To Trinidad' (published serially in The Observer in 1943) employs the same semi-fictional form, in content it is an inverted image of Janki's piece. Khan was the floor manager of a large store and also the editor of a Muslim Quarterly journal Al Azan. A brief reference to him in the Indian Centenary Review mentions him as the author of other short stories, including one called 'Indentured Immigrants', but none of these has been discovered.

Khan's story is primarily concerned with event and very little with character. His object was to remind the middle-class readership of The Observer just how despotic and harsh the indenture system had been.

The first part of the story describes how Khodad, dissatisfied with his religious studies, falls out with his father, runs away, and indents. In Trinidad he realizes that he has 'exchanged [his] liberty to become a slave'. Instead of the milk and honey of the recruiter there is the insanitary squalor of the plantation, 'malarial groves which offered nothing but death' and the despotic overseers who violate the chastity of the Indian women, 'outrages from which the savage would shirk.' The second part of the story deals with the painful growth of his commitment to Trinidad. He returns to India at one point and has to go through a crisis of conscience over his duty to his mother (Mother India) and his wife and children (the new life in Trinidad). The story reflects the fact that Indo-Caribbeans were perhaps more emotionally involved with India than ever before and yet in concrete ways they were becoming ever more enmeshed in the social and political life of Trinidad. 'And So We Came To Trinidad' is more a synopsis for a novel than a short story, and a work which is little shaped by artistic considerations. In contrast, what is striking about even Seepersad Naipaul's weakest short stories is his involvement with the fictional process. With his work Indo-Caribbean writing discovers a true voice beyond Indo-Saxon mimicry.

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'Journalist Dies Suddenly': Readers of A House for Mr Biswas will recognise the curt epitaph for Mohun Biswas. It was also the actual heading for the brief and only obituary record for Seepersad Naipaul, father of Vidiadhar and Shiva, who was born in 1907 and died at the age of forty-six, on the 3rd of October 1953. In a number of other respects the outward dimensions of the life of the fictional character and V.S. Naipaul's father bear obvious similarities. Both were variously journalists and worked in the Social Welfare Department. Seepersad Naipaul began working for the Trinidad Guardian in 1929 but left in 1934 when the editor, who had encouraged his writing, was dismissed.

Between 1934-1937 he worked as a country shop-keeper and as an overseer on a sugar estate. During this period he suffered a severe mental illness. In 1937 he returned to the Trinidad Guardian where he remained until 1944. After a period of training he worked as a Welfare Officer for the Government between 1944-1949. One of his tasks was to carry out surveys of rural poverty in the Indian villages. In 1950, after his health had failed, he returned to the Trinidad Guardian until he was retired in 1953, three months before his death. Both Mohun Biswas and Seepersad Naipaul were the authors of short stories. Naipaul, like Biswas, did in fact write a story called 'Escape' with a broad-shouldered hero called John Lubbock, did in fact write an article on homelessness which began, 'That conundrum - the housing problem' and used in a piece of his own writing one of Biswas's favourite journalistic phrases: 'Amazing Scenes were witnessed...'

However, the resemblances are best treated with caution particularly in respect of Seepersad Naipaul's writing. In A House For Mr Biswas the stories are all failures, pieces of derivative wish-fulfilment. They give no hint of the creativity and achieved art of the stories which Seepersad Naipaul wrote.

Seepersad Naipaul wrote with an acute awareness that the Indian community was in a state of cultural crisis. He himself had been very much involved in some of the issues which revealed the fissions within the community, in particular the controversy over marriage legislation, the clashes between the Aryans and the Sanatanist Hindus and the issue of superstitious practices within Hinduism. However, Naipaul not only saw that Indian traditional culture was decaying from within and under intense pressure from without, but was able to see this process from a perspective which blended involved sympathy and ironic detachment. How can one account for this achievement? Clearly there was a gift, and one which was ultimately never fully realised, but much, I believe,

is accounted for in the facts of his biography. Few literate and artistically inclined Indians had maintained direct contact with the rural population. The fact that Naipaul was part of a staunchly Hindu family meant that his education only lasted until the elementary level. Thereafter he was self-taught and one can theorise that his avoidance of being put through the thoroughly alienating process of Canadian Mission Secondary schooling may well have contributed to his capacity to see Indian village life directly and sympathetically. Again, his approach to writing came not through the received canons for formal literary study, but through his own more idiosyncratic reading and through his stimulating contact with Gault McGowan, his first newspaper editor, who unleashed sensationalist tabloid journalism on Trinidad. The other encouragement to Naipaul's commitment to short story writing was, as noted above, the appearance of a number of periodicals during the early 1940s which provided outlets and encouragement. One of the most generous reviews of Gurudeva and Other Indian Tales had, for instance, appeared in The Indian, edited by C.B.(Pat) Mathura. It had praised the stories for being 'true to the life they portray' and commended Naipaul for bringing to the attention of 'educated westernised' Indians the existence of rural poverty. The review also defended Naipaul from those critics within the community who had complained that the stories showed Indians in an unattractive light: 'These "moderns" want to suppress all the ugliness and squalor and superstition in which people find themselves.'

Seepersad Naipaul's work is discussed in more detail in later chapters as an authentic part of Indo-Caribbean writing which requires no special pleading as pioneering work. However, his originality stands out all the more clearly when it is seen in the context of the Indo-Saxon writing which preceded it. His

range is wide. It includes remarkably perceptive treatments of the position of women in the changing Hindu family,¹⁵⁹ the attempts of villagers to preserve customary practices in the face of encroaching modernity and the tensions experienced by inarticulate people baffled by the rapid decay of their familiar world.¹⁶⁰ He hears and presents the creole dialect of the estate with acuteness and conviction and presents the dual language situation of most of his characters by using a formal English to represent Hindi and contrasting this with the impoverished creolese that represents the villagers' as yet incomplete access to the world beyond the villages.

In addition, Seepersad Naipaul portrayed for the first time something of the situation of those Indians who were becoming part of Creole society and whose new horizons put them in conflict with the Indian world. This was Seepersad Naipaul's own situation. In some of his earlier stories such as 'Escape', he does, in fact, write the kind of projective fantasies which typify Biswas's attempts to write fiction. However, in 'Gopi',¹⁶¹ the portrayal of a man 'whose urge was to transcend present limitations',^{d/} Seepersad Naipaul approaches the humiliations and absurdities of the hero's position in a spirit of detached but humane comedy. The story describes Gopi's comic attempts to convert his wholly practical wife (whom he characterises as a 'hopeless primitive'), to the pleasures of reading and an interest in the affairs of the world, and contrasts this thankless task with the fantasies he indulges when he sees a beautiful girl in a railway compartment.

Seepersad Naipaul's work was also very much still in the process of developing before illness and premature death cut short his writing career. The stories of Gurudera and Other Indian Tales (1943) have a forceful coherence which comes from a consistent focus on the atrophy of the traditional, but in later

stories such as 'Ramdas and the Cow' and 'The Engagement' there is a broader, more balanced view of the relationships between traditional forms and individual feelings, which is achieved through the creation of multiple points of view. The second part of 'The Adventures of Gurudeva',¹⁶⁴ indicates that Seepersad Naipaul was also in the process of moving beyond the limitations of the short story. On the one hand in this long, episodic story he begins to explore the wider political and social issues generated by the changes described in the earlier stories. In particular he gives a highly satirical portrayal of the Sanatanist Hindu revival. On the other hand, he begins to explore the development of the personality of the leading character in a way that chafes at the confines of the short-story form. They are different directions which only the scope of the full-length novel-form might have resolved.

Incomplete as Seepersad Naipaul's work very probably is, in relation to his potential, he nevertheless achieved a great deal. Occasional poets still echo the borrowed idioms of the Indo-Saxon voice, even into the 1980s, but in Seepersad Naipaul's work the transformation from an Indo-Saxon to an Indo-Caribbean sensibility has occurred.

Chapter NineLimbo Consciousness: Between Identities.

In An Area of Darkness (1964), V.S. Naipaul describes his awareness on reaching India of how 'complete a transference had been made from Eastern Uttar Pradesh to Trinidad', but how the 'family life I have been describing began to dissolve when I was six or seven [c. 1939]; when I was fourteen it had ceased to exist'. The same picture of rapid death is given in Peggy Mohan's study of Trinidad Bhojpuri; she argues that as a living language with mother-tongue users Bhojpuri probably died in Trinidad somewhere between 1940 and 1945. The proximity of Naipaul's and Mohan's dates is almost certainly not coincidental. However, Mohan's argument that with the death of the language, died the 'total world view of the system' is, as I have argued in Chapter Twelve, an elegant proposition, but one which implies too mechanical a connection between language form and mental concept. On the one hand, the world view of Indians in the Caribbean had almost certainly begun to change from the moment they embarked ship, and, on the other, it is possible to see the obstinate life of Hindu ideas even in the work of one, such as V.S. Naipaul, who declares his 'lack of belief and distaste for ritual'.⁴ Nevertheless, a qualitative change occurred, and even if Mohan is not right in characterising it as a sudden break, it is evident that in the experience of those who lived through it, it felt like one.

The change itself was inevitable. Living in contact with a politically and economically more powerful culture, cut off from fresh infusions from India after indenture ended in 1917, and increasingly involved in Caribbean life, the marvel is that the self-enclosed, complete Indian world lasted so long. For those who had lived their lives within that world the feeling that they were no longer authentically Indian must have been especially painful. Unlike the Indo-Saxons, they had made no conscious bargain to trade one world for another. It was in the gap

between losing an old world and gaining a new that Indians in the Caribbean had to construct for themselves a new identity. As Wilson Harris has pointed out limbo can mean both a place of oblivion and a liminal stage in the process of an enriched adaptation to a new environment.⁵ This chapter examines the work of Indo-Caribbean writers who have explored this state of limbo in both its senses.

The enclosed, complete Indian world never had its own interpreters. Those who became Indo-Saxons, as Chapter Eight shows, turned their backs on it, and by the time Seepersad Naipaul began to write about it in the 1940s, he was more than half-way outside a world which was already in the process of dissolution. He had grown up in an Indian village and between 1934-1937 he had worked as a country shop-keeper and as an overseer on a sugar estate. But his true life had taken place in Port of Spain as a reporter on the Trinidad Guardian. When he returned to examine village life as a welfare officer for the Government (between 1944-1949) the one piece of writing which reflects that experience, 'In The Village', shows him looking with the distress of an outsider at a dehumanising poverty.⁶ Even in those stories in Gurudeva And Other Indian Tales (1943) which draw on the past, Seepersad Naipaul was unable to exclude an acute consciousness that the old world was decaying rapidly. He had himself been involved in some of the issues which divided the community between traditionalists and reformists, in particular in the controversy over marriage legislation, in the clashes between the Arya Samaj and the Sanatanists and in arguments over the issue of 'superstitious' practices within Hinduism.⁷ However, committed as he had been to the 'modernist' side, Seepersad's stories are remarkable for their fine balance between involved sympathy and ironic detachment.

As a collection, Gurudeva And Other Indian Tales is made coherent by the vision of a community in the process of ossification which runs through all the stories. Although V.S. Naipaul has argued that his father's earlier stories show the Indian community as still whole, whereas

later ones show the 'material and cultural dereliction of the villages', my own reading leads me to a different conclusion. For instance, V.S. Naipaul describes an early story, 'Panchayat' as a 'pastoral romance' because it deals with the continuity of traditional institutions. In fact, the story portrays the panchayat as a cultural relic. There is the appearance of a reconciliation, and old Babuji, the arbiter of the marital dispute, is described as 'kindly and patriarchal', his voice 'heavy and mellow with the wisdom of the Ancients'. Yet it is clear that the villagers regard the panchayat as an anachronism. They attend it not as a community but as idly curious spectators, aware that offenders can snub its judgements and that most plaintiffs preferred the official courts because 'the magistrate often imposed a heavy penalty on the delinquent'. It is evident to all, though apparently not to Babuji that the feckless husband is merely being plausible in persuading the panchayat that the marriage should not be annulled, and that he will undoubtedly abandon his wife again. In view of this likely outcome, the end of the story is shot through with irony: 'Babuji's voice had finality'. In fact the traditional has been undermined.

In Chapters Twelve and Thirteen I have described Seepersad Naipaul's treatment of the process of change as it affected the practice of religion and put particular strains on the lives of Indian women. The title story of the collection, a vehement tract against a world which has lost its point, deals with the process in a more general way. Using an ironically inflated mock-heroic tone to underscore the futility of Gurudeva's actions, Seepersad Naipaul portrays the unconscious and directionless rebellion of the youth within a fossilised village life. Gurudeva is from 'boyhood ...obsessed with a craving for fame' but his only possibility is achieving the notoriety of the village badjohn. He pretends to be a stick-fighter but is really a coward, and beats his wife because he thinks it the proper behaviour for an Indian husband. Indeed, everything Gurudeva does is gesture, part of a much more general inauthenticity of village life. Gurudeva, plucked out of school to make a child-

marriage because his father thinks the immature features look more picturesque in the wedding ceremony, never articulates his frustration, but there is a moment in the story, as he is beating his wife in another motiveless rage, when Gurudeva's derangement suggests a response to social and cultural tensions he does not understand:

...his large taut neck grew tauter and his dark face darker. He foamed at the mouth. He was terrifying. 10

In stories written between the publication of the collection and his death in 1953, Seepersad Naipaul looks at the process of change in less absolute ways. In stories such as 'The Engagement', discussed in Chapter Thirteen and 'Ramdas and The Cow', discussed in Chapter Twelve, there is both a greater sympathy for people baffled by the changes that were occurring and a maturer perception of continuity. It is evident from V.S. Naipaul's accounts of his father's life, that Seepersad Naipaul in some measure managed a kind of balance between the two worlds. He was involved in the creole life of the city and yet, as V.S. Naipaul remarked, 'my father's appetite for Hindu speculation was enormous'. Seepersad Naipaul's own perspective on how Indians should reconstruct themselves is perhaps contained in Teacher Sohun's reprimand to Gurudeva, in the second part of the story (written later than the first) when Gurudeva is enthusiastically but ignorantly propounding the cause of the Sanatanist revival. Sohun tells him:

You cannot be entirely Oriental, nor entirely Occidental; you can be no more entirely Western than you can be entirely Eastern; ...you will be entirely West Indian. 12

However, as V.S. Naipaul suggests in A House For Mr. Biswas (1961), for those not accustomed to reflecting on their situation, who had not already constructed their individual personas, the break up of the communal world was deeply traumatic. In A House For Mr. Biswas, the actual moment of disintegration comes during the Shorthills Adventure. Begun in a spirit of optimism, the episode marks the final falling apart of the Tulsi clan. It shows how the Tulsis, because they are cluttered with the excess baggage of irrelevant ways of seeing the world are unable to achieve a relationship with the land they settle on. In their arrog-

ant ignorance they imagine Shorthills to be virgin territory, when it is in fact the product of French-creole artifice. The removal to Shorthills is an attempt to gather the clan together and to separate themselves from a world which they divine is more dynamic than their own. But because they fail to apprehend the world they have come to and romantically misconceive the world they have come from, the adventure is a disaster. The move takes the Tulsis away from the network of labourers, tenants and retainers whose respect for 'their piety and the memory of Pundit Tulsi' has maintained their caste self-respect and given them their determination to preserve their coherence. Separated from those who give them a stable image of themselves, the Tulsis are thrown back on a false myth of a pastoral, edenic India. In the process of discovering the falsity of those ideas, all the inner tensions of the clan are exposed.

What happens to relationships within the Tulsi clan echoes their barbarous destruction of the land. The dreams of arcadian plenty end in sordid plunder. Indeed, the dream is responsible for the mutilation of the estate, for believing that Shorthills is a natural paradise they fail to appreciate the skills of the French-creole families who made it. They destroy the intricate balancing of immortelles, cocoa and coffee, each growing in the other's shade; they plunder the timber without realising that the trees prevent the erosion of the soil. They are culturally ill-equipped in other ways for their venture. Plunder is also a consequence of their feeling that 'Despite the solidity of their establishment, the Tulsis had never considered themselves settled in Arwacas or even in Trinidad'. Like the old men in the arcade, the Tulsis talk, though less often, of moving on to India. As a consequence their economy is short-sighted and merely penny-pinching. Again, because of their Brahminical expectations that others will do things for them, the Tulsis are incapable of being genuinely productive:

And having got to Shorthills, everyone waited, for the sheep, the horses, for the swimming pool to be repaired, the drive weeded, the gardens cleaned, the electricity plant fixed, the house repainted. (p. 349)

Cultivation is, of course, a low caste activity. Instead, the Tulsis think up ever more absurd schemes for saving money. Mrs. Tulsi even proposes that they eat birds' nests, but:

No one thought of growing vegetables and, since they too couldn't be bought, efforts were made to find vegetable substitutes. (p.364)

So the Tulsis desecrate and reduce the complexity of the estate to their own simpler culture. Naipaul describes their failure to apprehend the land they have come to when, in the midst of spectacular destructions occasioned by a multiple wedding, he comments: '...and now the puzzling estate was forgotten'. (p.350)

Outside Hanuman House and the network of relationships which support it, the intricate interpersonal rituals which preserve the collective balance collapse. Individual lusts and ambitions are released and the economy of plunder generates its own individualistic ideology. Short-hills becomes a micro-society in which 'No one ruled; there were only the weak and the strong'. It is as if the Tulsis, romanticising the past and depending on its fossilized rituals have denied themselves access to the inventive skills necessary to remake their lives in a new environment. With disintegration come all the signs of intense stress. There are accidents and deaths, outbreaks of collective paranoia and gross superstition, thefts and the seeking of scapegoats. There are the sightings of Padma's ghost which express the Tulsis' sense of guilt over what they have lost. Mrs. Tulsi is reported 'to be out of her mind'.

Of course, V.S. Naipaul writes from individual family experience, but there is evidence from a variety of other sources of a convulsion in the life of the Indian communities in this period. It is possible to see the upsurge of interest in the Indian national struggle, the revival of festivals and the assertion of pride in ethnic identity of the 1940s as not merely a response to the threat of creole nationalism but the defensive reaction of a community conscious that its old inner coherence had gone. Extreme manifestations of this response were the campaigns

in both Trinidad and British Guiana ,around 1950, for repatriation to India.Repatriation of the Indian born had continued steadily throughout the 1930s.In the last crossing in 1936 before the campaign of 1950, 943 Indians had returned to the continent.In 1950, there were 3,000 Indians in Trinidad who were registered as seeking repatriation,about 8% of the total Indian-born people who were still alive. This was a significant minority, particularly since the difficulties of those who had returned earlier had been widely publicised.Many who had returned in the 1930s had found either that their villages would no longer accept them because they had lost caste or that they themselves could no longer fit into Indian society.In addition the Indian Government had made it clear that they wanted Indians in the Caribbean to stay and make their homes there. Thus it is likely that those who registered may have represented only a proportion of those who would have liked to return.There was perhaps an even greater number who felt that they did not belong anywhere.Certainly, the passions that the campaign to return raised suggests a panic that it would soon be too late.^{14.}

The repatriation campaign in Trinidad forms part of the material of Ismith Khan's The Jumbie Bird (1961) and Samuel Selvon's An Island Is A World (1955). Both portray it as misplaced and quixotic, but also as an index of how alienated many Indians felt from the Caribbean.¹⁵

In The Jumbie Bird , all the male members of the Khan family exist in a state of limbo, though, as I have outlined in Chapter Thirteen, the women members of the family have made their adjustments to Trinidad. Kale Khan hates both the India from which he has fled and Trinidad 'to which he had come to find a new life', but his detestation of Trinidad is deeper and he sees salvation only in 'Going back to Hindustan... to get away from these worthless scamps and vagabonds'.¹⁶ In referring to Hindustan, Kale Khan of course refers to a country which is now only of the mind. Kale, though he lives with his son's family, is symbolically as homeless as the old Indian vagrants who live in Woodford Square,¹⁷ who have 'lost their trade,their ways of ploughing and sowing', who

have 'vacant' faces and eyes which express a 'strange yearning and discontent'.^(p.27) Kale Khan feels that he still carries India within him; it is an instinctive way of thinking and feeling and it distresses him to see his son Rahim's perplexity:

Pathan must never worry in he head which, what way, what, what t'ing good for he to do. Must act, act fast like a lightening. Mus' feel that fire in he Pathan blood that tell he what wrong and what right. Mus' do without t'inking and t'inking...
(p.107)

Rahim's sense of being in limbo is even more marked: 'we ain't belong to Hindustan, we ain't belong to England, we ain't belong to Trinidad'.^(p.63) Though he has a trade and a family, Rahim is scarcely less lost than Sookiah, the town fool, who weeps under the town hall steps for his lost name, the full Indian name given him at birth: 'ah lose my name! ... ah lose my name! How I ever goin' to go back home to Hindustan without a name?'^(p.134) Rahim despairs when he loses his jeweller's shop, but as his wife, Meena, points out, his deepest distress is because, 'You lose yourself. You lose your religion, you lose your God, you lose your belief in everything...'^(p.144)

Ismith Khan portrays the campaign to return to India as touching a deep collective nerve, the desire of a few old men resonating with the feelings of 'one hundred and eighty thousand Indians with the resentments of one hundred years of deprivation and abuse simmering on the surface'. But it is more than just resentment over past injustices; it is a fearful awakening to what has been happening to them unawares. Trinidad, Kale Khan thinks :

... was a cruel land, cruel in the ways of a lover. It did not stab with a sudden blow, it did not stand to watch the incisions made; it gnawed at the entrails and spread a quiet venom that chased through all the veins and marrows. (p.103)

At the end of the novel Ismith Khan shows Rahim and his son Jamini making their commitments to Trinidad. In many ways the ending falsifies what has been shown in the rest of the novel and it is significant that Ismith Khan has to introduce two deus ex machina devices (the American who brings an order which revives Rahim's jewellery trade and Jamini's grandmother's offer to pay the boy's way through college) to try to make more plausible those commitments. Yet the ending is unnecessarily

false, for Khan has already intimated in more subtle ways that the Indians' commitment to Trinidad is latent within their rejection of the place, so that they can only acknowledge it in symbolic or subconscious ways. The novel suggests that Indians have given much to making Trinidad what it is, but because theirs is a history of exploitation ('we make other people rich all we life, now we days over'^(p. 179)) they cannot acknowledge or possess their contribution. However, Khan suggests that it will be on the basis of these resentments that Indians will before long demand their due reward for their efforts, and that it will be in this demand that the commitment to Trinidad will be made. This is suggested in the feelings some Indians are shown to have about the Government Red House. It symbolizes the colonial oppression which has denied recognition of their marriages and made their children illegitimate; it is the place where their rights to the land promised in lieu of return passage are hidden; but it is also 'red, with their colour, with their blood'^(p. 16). However, for those caught up in the process of loss and resentment such a recognition is difficult. As Ismith Khan shows, Kale Khan's authentic life has taken place in Trinidad, in his leadership of the Princes Town Hossay and his role in the riots against the colonial authorities,¹⁸ yet even in death Kale Khan refuses to mix with the soil of Trinidad. When his family try to bury him they find his grave is filled with water.

Yet if Ismith Khan tacks on a false ending, he is truthful in showing that Kale Khan's death is necessary for the rest of the family if they are to learn to face the future on their own behalf. In the meantime, the lost, such as Rahim, must discover their own individual routes out of limbo:

A man does come in the world, and the first thing he do is to bawl out. He learn that he have this that work to do, he has to find out what work make for he. It ain't have no difference where he is where he go, what thing he have to find out he could find out wheresoever he is, Hindustan, Trinidad... (p. 19c)

Although Samuel Selvon's treatment of the back to India movement in

An Island Is A World (1955) displays, in comparison to Ismith Khan's, a lack of inwardness with the feelings of the traditionalist Indian community, he too portrays it as a sign of Indian alienation from Trinidad. At first Selvon presents the movement as no more than rumshop sentimentality, as when Johny, a drunkard, creolised jeweller, rediscovers his Indianness on Independence day:

'Aaye, we must all go back to India now,' Johny said, waving his glass at his sudden friends, 'now we have independence'.⁴

To his surprise he finds his words taken literally and he is catapulted into the leadership of the repatriation campaign. Selvon sees the desire to return as chimerical as Johny's 'Great Invention' to harness gravity to operate a perpetual motion machine. At best it is no more than a 'flame of nostalgia'. Johny's own motives are entirely negative. He has no feelings about India and simply feels bored and dissatisfied with life in Trinidad. However, Selvon treats more seriously Johny's feeling that he has no identity:

In this place you is nobody. All sorts of people living here, so that you don't know what you belong to. (p. 229)

Those who embark do so because their dream of India is more potent than anything which Trinidad has offered them. Foster, the novel's main character, who is an even more creolised Indian than Johny, watches the returnees embark:

All of them had a light in their eyes, as if salvation had come at last. It was a moving sight, all these old Indians heading for the wharf in Port of Spain where the ship was tied up alongside. And yet no one was interested in watching them, no one in the island felt that this immigration was a big thing, that people were leaving the country in which they had worked their lives away, to go to distant India purely for sentimental reasons... (p. 255)

Their departure impresses Foster that those like himself who remain have to accept their limbo existence and create their lives from that point of recognition:

Foster looked about him, a strange emotion in his heart. He was one of them, and yet he couldn't feel the way they did, nor share in the kinship they knew. They were going back home. They had a home. It was far away, but they hadn't forgotten... They had something to return to, they had a country.

He had nothing. He had been brought up as a Trinidadian - a member of a cosmopolitan community who recognised no creed or race, a creature born of all the peoples in the world...

In his first Trinidadian novel, A Brighter Sun (1952), Selvon, as I have argued in Chapter Fifteen, explores that state of cultural indeterminacy as creating the possibility of an inventive and dynamic cultural eclecticism. However, Selvon's later fiction becomes less hopeful in its treatment of those characters who live in a cultural void, though even at his most dismayed, Selvon's pessimism is never fixed. By contrast, all Shiva Naipaul's novels seem to me to move from the assumption that Indians in the Caribbean exist in a state of nullity from which, naturally, nothing can come. The characters who inhabit Fireflies (1970) and The Chip-Chip Gatherers (1973) are abandoned souls condemned for ever to remain in limbo and, even if they escape from Trinidad, to carry their inner emptinesses with them. They have no capacity to escape from a process which exists wholly outside their agency. The death and dissolution of the Indian world is portrayed as following some inexorable natural law, suggested in Fireflies by the repeated use of biological metaphors. Within the body of the Khoja clan 'every household had its incipient cell of rebellion'²⁰ and, increasingly, the cells of the clan cease to 'overlap'. As the organism breaks down, individual cells, held in balance whilst it was whole, simply pursue their inbuilt determinations. Bhaskar's meaningless repetition of empty forms is one image of the limbo into which the characters are cast. He becomes obsessed with the repetitive mechanical laws of biology, copying notes and diagrams mechanically from his text books:

There was no picking and choosing with Bhaskar. He copied everything, with the result that his notes were no more than replicas of the text.²¹

Romesh, his brother, who carries the 'incipient cell of rebellion' is shown to have no greater capacity for choice. His revolt from all things Indian merely takes the form of mimicking the styles of Hollywood film heroes. As Mrs. Lutchman, his mother, comments, 'If we is slaves then Romesh was just as much a slave as the rest of we. You think a free man would have tried to behave like them film star.'²¹

For Mrs. Lutchman there is freedom of a kind, but it has no relevance to anyone else, founded as it is the resigned cultivation of memory

and the stoic acceptance that her world is dead.

In The Chip-Chip Gatherers (1973) characters lack even the energy to escape. As I argue in Chapter Ten, Shiva Naipaul creates a fictive world which opposes a decayed Indian aridity with a feckless, anarchic creole disorder. The Indian past is only a tattered museum without any meaningful relationship to the present. For instance, Egbert Ramsaran keeps a symbolic herd of cows long after outgrowing his peasant days, in a field which is enclosed and private so that the cows become 'objects of mystery'. Rather unsubtly, Shiva Naipaul adds that they are tended by a sterile bull. Similarly, Ramsaran has a propensity for surrounding himself with the relics of the past, such as his trucks which are:

...allowed to rust and fall to pieces slowly - ritually one might say in the sun and rain. Their disintegrating skeletons, scattered at random over its surface, resembled the dried, washed-out bones of prehistoric monsters.²³

If in Ismith Khan's The Jumbie Bird, time is a resource within which his characters will work out their destinies, in Shiva Naipaul's limbo, 'Time was an arid and featureless desert' and space is merely 'sterile ground'. However, at the very end of The Chip-Chip Gatherers, Shiva Naipaul adds (in a way which is quite unprepared for and external to what he has shown in the narrative) a short poetic passage which suggests a very different response to the 'death' of the traditional Indian world. As Wilbert Ramsaran walks the beach, contemplating the yawning hell of bleak years of marriage to Shanti awaiting him, he sees the chip-chip gatherers, symbols of the pointlessness of human activity, and a piece of driftwood, an 'entire trunk of a tree, interred in the sand'. At one level the log simply images Wilbert's sense of aimlessness when he feels that he is like:

...a piece of driftwood that had been cast upon the ocean currents to circle the globe endlessly. A purposeless wandering.

But the log suggests something more in Shiva Naipaul's description:

Stripped of its bark, the bole looked as if it had been worked upon by a master craftsman. It had been endowed with a sensuousness and rhythm which the living object could

hardly have rivalled. Death had given it power and grandeur. Possessed of the tensions of an arrested fluidity, it was tempting to imagine that, these tensions resolving themselves, it would melt, flow away and be reabsorbed into the earth. The trunk and branches had been bleached bone-white by the sun and salt; and the wood itself worn down - metamorphosed - to the texture of living flesh. It suggested totemic splendour; a sacrificial offering to the gods of fertility and plentiful harvests, divorced from its true time and place and function and condemned to rot slowly on this windswept, shimmering beach of swooping vultures, starving dogs, chip-chip gathers and himself.²⁴

The log ambiguously suggests both something of secular squalor (like the lives described in the novel) as it is condemned to rot on the beach (which is infertile), and also something sacred and sacrificial as it melts, flows away and is reabsorbed into the fertile earth. As an image it suggests both the fear that a deracinated Indian culture is rotting away without issue and the hope that it might fertilize cultures to come, that lives such as the Ramsarans are not wholly without point. Beyond these more obvious readings, it is worth recalling that the tree is a sacred symbolic object in Hindu culture. In mythology it is the speaking tree which bears living objects on it (²⁵'the texture of living flesh'); and in popular Hinduism the sacred pipal tree becomes a totemic focus of worship.

It is significant that this meditation comes not within the narrative but in what is in effect a prose poem appended to it. It is really only in Indo-Caribbean poetry that there has been any attempt to go beyond the initial recognition of the state of limbo and explore whether there was life after death. Although there is a good deal of Indo-Caribbean short fiction, discussed in the following chapters, which unconsciously contradicts the pessimism of Shiva Naipaul's vision, which shows people who seem quite unaware that they live in the aftermath of the supposed death of their culture, there has been little conscious, extended fictional exploration of the fragments of a body which stubbornly refuses to go away. V.S. Naipaul, Samuel Selvon, Ismith Khan and Shiva Naipaul all left Trinidad as young men, and though Selvon in The Plains of Caroni (1970) and Shiva Naipaul in A Hot Country (1983)

have returned to write about Indian characters living amongst the fragments, their treatments show little awareness of the concerns and feelings of the contemporary Indo-Caribbean world. ²⁶ Indeed, it is clear from Shiva Naipaul's autobiographical account in Beyond The Dragon's Mouth (1984) that for him at least there are not even any meaningful fragments:

I grew up in no-man's land. Suburban life with all its ease and its unrelenting worship of American standards, American ideals, had not existed when I was a boy. Its assumptions and prejudices were unfamiliar to me. If I was like a fish out of water at a Hindu rite, I was no less a fish out of water at a drive-in cinema scented with the vapours of hot-dogs and hamburgers. Such definition as I do now possess has its roots in nothing other than personal exigency. Every day, I have to redefine myself.²⁷

There are similar, significant differences of emphasis in the work of those Indo-Caribbean poets who left the Caribbean early and those who have stayed. The work of Jagdip Maraj, who left Trinidad in 1962, in many ways foreshadows Shiva Naipaul's The Chip-Chip Gatherers. Several of his poems use the image of the land's aridity as a metaphor for spiritual emptiness. In 'Old Woman', from The Flaming Circle (1966), the land can give no nourishment to those still attached to the past:

The ploughed parched earth
Groaned in his stomach, while
The powdered clods rasped
Dry leaves in the river bed.²⁸

In 'Los Gallos', the name of Maraj's own village, the activity of the beach-combing children suggests the pointlessness of investigating the past:

The stored shells are exhausted
And on the beach the children gather,²⁹
Dry sticks and hunt through garbage.

In 'Faded Beauty' Maraj relates these images more specifically to the condition of Indian rootlessness:

Severed by mercenary fate
They tried to suckle a new land
Breasts withered
Like the branches of a tree
Uprooted by a savage land.³⁰

In 'The Beauty's Gone Out of It', he describes the degeneration of the Tajah festival into a drunken, spiritless affair. The young men are no longer interested and the old men fake a frenzy in the gatka fighting

to hide their knowledge that the meaning has gone:

Old men with water in their knees
Stage a show of violence³¹
To pass the time in a new land.

In 'Scenes On A Wall', a contemplation of figures in a mural, the poet's eye is caught by one whose indecision of step symbolizes the Indian condition:

— a sad reluctance
Between the already arching left heel³²
And the firm denial of a flat right foot.

The Indo-Guyanese poet Arnold Itwaru, now living in Canada, explores similar images of aridity and alienation in his poetry. In 'Drought' the land is experienced more like a hell than a limbo:

This is a stagnant eternity
Thick with raw fumes;
A ceaseless ache beats
In waves of passion.³³

'Drought' is a poem which expresses no hope, heavy with words such as 'dead', 'barren', 'dying' and 'paralysed'. However, there is also in Itwaru's work of the early 1970s a tentative search for an alternative native tradition in the world of the sugar estate. It is a movement which finds fuller expression in the work of Rooplall Monar discussed below; in Itwaru's poems it remains only a possibility, and one denied him because he has been alienated from the estate by his education. In 'Individual Legends', for instance, Itwaru explores a simultaneous awareness that the estate landscape is inwoven into his sensibilities and that he cannot take possession of the experience. His own feelings are presented as aprt of a wider Indo-Guyanese ambivalence towards the land, which attracts by its beauty and repels by its constant associations with exploitation:

We are both products of this cane universe
there lies our meaning, our individual legends.
In some forgotten mule-walk,
some abandoned field
some lotus-run punt-canal,
A voice calls.
We feel it but do not understand.

That voice is difficult to attend to because there are still ancestral voices calling to a distant world. In 'I Will Call You Back', Itwaru

writes of the call of those other horizons:

I still muse on Egypt and India
 Within this sultry cell.
 I must go back to the beach
 And listen to the voices in me.³⁴

The same ancestral yearning which thwarts new attachments is the theme of Cyril Dabydeen's 'Poem To Your Own', in his first, Guyanese, collection, Poems in Recession (1972). The poem is addressed to all those :

...who dream perpetually
 Of meaning beyond the ocean
 Your longing, as great as the plunge
 Of a boulder into the sea.
 You who compare the cataract of you eye
 And the cascading passion of your heart
 With the foreigner's cold stare
 And his vaunted reasoning
 You are stuck!

The plunge of the boulder is, of course, not one which reaches across the ocean, but one which sinks in it; just as the 'cataract' of tears of the grief-stricken is also the clouding of the lens which prevents clear sight. The poem begs people in this state of limbo to listen to the inner voice which calls them:

To reach out into the jungle
 And mingle with the baboon's bark.

The alternatives are either to drown in the ocean of ancestral dreams or to struggle back to the land where meaning alone can be found:

You call for help with your hands above the ocean
 And drowning is your only saviour
 When your call is drowned by the waves.
 Now your heart beats like a dog's palpitation
 And you feel your way back
 Hungering for the lost pride in your own,
 The nugget gold glimmers in a lump of coal
 Of your own soil...³⁵

Dabydeen's poem asserts the necessary death of old sensibilities as the precondition for the birth of the new. In Cecil Prashad's 'The Rootless Ones', comfort is drawn from the prediction that those who have shed those ties, at present suffering the drought of rootlessness, will be those best adapted to 'drink of the land', to take possession of Guyana in the future:

The time is not now but it will come
 For us the rootless ones. Ours
 Is the mutant gene
 The errant child that must stray
 And be the hope of the world.³⁶

Each of these poems bears witness to the fact that their authors are probably no more than second or third generation Caribbean-born. India remains a very real background, not one such as Afro-Caribbeans must search for in broken, hidden links, but one whose influence still flows powerfully into the present. As such it has been seen in the poems discussed above as a distraction from the process of putting down real Caribbean roots.

However, in the work of the Trinidadian poet, Selwyn Bhajan, and the Guyanese Rooplall Monar, there is a conscious effort to come to grips with this stubborn survival. In his earlier collections, Season of Songs (1973), Quest (1975) and Whispers of Dawn (1978), Bhajan writes of the decay of tradition in a manner which echoes the work of Jagdip Maraj.³⁷ However, in the long title poem of his collection, Voyage (1981), Bhajan attempts a dual exploration of the voyage of the Indians to the Caribbean and his own personal voyage of spiritual self-discovery. It is a project which in some measure recalls Edward Brathwaite's trilogy The Arrivants (1967-1969) and Derek Walcott's record of his inner development in Another Life (1971). Though Bhajan's poem is on a smaller scale, lacks the philosophical depth and the skill with words of its models, it does have an impressive and subtle sense of structure. The two voyages are related both sequentially and homologously; Bhajan describes his own story both as a sequel to the experiences of his predecessors and as following the same pattern: separation from security, the pursuit of false dreams, bitter disillusion and growth towards a new vision of life. In his search through the rubble of the past, Bhajan does not pretend that the dislocation never occurred, but he does not dismiss the past as being without value.

From the start the Indian journey to the Caribbean is seen as vitiated by 'misdirected dreams' both in the sense that the emigrants had been deceived by the 'false utopian images' of the recruiters and because their voyage was exclusively materialistic in its motives, and

from such 'no rebirth in promised land ' can come. From that materialistic beginning and from separation comes the inevitable decay of rituals ('homeland rituals of awe/ Became but weakened chores'), particularly in the context of enforced labour. After awakening from the first false dream, a second deceiving one takes its place: the dream of return measured in slowly passing time, which prevents true settlement:

And in the mildewed
Dance of sighs
Summoned
Sand upon sand
A new dream.³⁹

However, alongside the stultifying dreams of return, Bhajan sees other ambivalent experiences: a growing attachment to the land which both binds to mindless labour and becomes the source of a new identity; exposure to new ideas which include both the cross of Christian brainwashing and, in the loss of old certainties, the challenge to a new positive search to 'know'. Bhajan portrays the origins of this sensibility in the image of a solitary Indian performing puja by a Trinidadian stream, who has grasped that what is important is not the ritual but the contemplation, and who, by performing his worship in the natural environment of his adopted land, opens himself to its influences:

Each silver-sliced daybreak
A half-naked pilgrim
Dew-dhotied slipped
To kneel beside this morning's monument,
Dipping his form
To wash
In home-land litany
A memory, a prayer,
'There are no beginnings
There are never any ends
And every day
Is just another ³⁹
Moment of eternity.

Bhajan also sees a stimulus towards a spiritual journeying in the peasant's contact with the land:

Longing to understand, to know
Each peasant soul
Searches itself in silent wish to
Consecrate existence.⁴⁰

It is a view, one feels, of one who contemplates the land rather than works it. Nevertheless, though Bhajan sees the Indian heritage in predominantly spiritual terms, and shorn of the forms which sustained the

lives of ordinary Indians in the Caribbean, he does not disown the material past, in particular drawing pride ~~from~~ the endurance of his ancestors, of his great grandmother, Persotanee, from whose 'womb of life' the seeds of the present have come. He portrays in her a parallel to his own mission to sow the seeds of 'tomorrow's imagery'. The poem ends in a note of quiet meditation on the beginnings of his ancestor's voyage; his own pilgrimage to India⁴¹ (a very different experience from V.S.Naipaul's) and his spiritual journey inwards to find the self 'as pure as the infinite'.

What 'Voyage' lacks is any expression of the conflicts out of which the journey out of limbo to self-discovery came. It is all a little too easy. The opposite is true of the anguished poetry of Rooplall Monar who, in his published collections, Meanings (1972), Patterns (1974, 1983) and his unpublished collection, Darling of The Rising Sun (c.1974), has made a deeply personal exploration of a psychic crisis which is the cultural crisis of Indians in the Caribbean. The theme of this crisis is expressed in three lines in 'Limbo' :

O who am I
between a dying consciousness
a growing vision.⁴²

Out of that conflict between an ancestral consciousness which he can never really declare is dead, and an Indo-Guyanese vision which he can never be sure has real roots, Monar has written half-a- dozen poems of genuine complexity and dramatic power.⁴³ They are not without faults. On occasions the attempt to pare away the central padding around the central images is inconsistently carried out and sometimes done at the expense of coherence. The poems came out of deep meditation and a heightened consciousness - 'Meanings', for instance, apparently announced itself complete and whole in his mind - but sometimes show a reluctance to work at their technical aspects, to cut out occasional slacknesses of diction, awkwardnesses of rhythm and unnecessary obscurities. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, these poems express a scrupulous honesty to his feelings. If one poem seems to work towards a false

resolution of conflict, in the next the resolution is undone and the essential conflict restored. In the best of the poems the tensions are held in dynamic balance. Thus in 'Dreams' in Meanings, he explores in turn the hitherto unarticulated desires of fisherman, rice-planter, sugar worker and poet for growth to a new consciousness. For each the pains of present sacrifice, the loss of the past, even uncertainty, is shown to nurture future hope. In 'Fisherman' :

To get away from this tide
Is the wish of all
but birth comes
after pain.

The drought which afflicts the rice-planter is also seen to be:

hardening bones
for the sacrifice
feeding the vision.

Each section follows a pattern from death to regeneration, and in this instance the poem ends in the imaginary resolution of the dream:

the sun will forever
germinate our crops
while granite stones will be fashioned
for our new God
Our new monument
Our Dream. 44

Then the very next poem, 'Drought', indicates how much a dream the former poem is. Preventing access to the new consciousness are two powerful counter-feelings. One is the ever-present evidence of the Indo-Guyanese worker's experience of oppression, an awareness which provokes Monar to a spirit of bitter protest, which he self-condemns as sterile and destructive of vision, but which cannot be denied:

I am still being plagued
so long coloured suns settled the sky
so long white scorpions contaminate
my breath.

The white scorpions are both the literal stinging creatures of the cane-field and the whole history of white oppression, the shame of subservient labour and the sexual humiliations suffered by Indian women. The other strong counter-feeling is a yearning for the ancestral mother:

I am still being plagued
divided by horizons edges, yet
telling me of no other worlds
but mine.

The poem ends hopefully, but with a pained recognition of the human cost. The drought ends in flood which both drowns and nourishes new roots, just as the new consciousness is born, but at the price of the ancestral mother's death. Monar's imagery is characteristically dense in tying together the two ideas in the first two lines of the quotation:

and all are washed
for the birth
she
my alien wife will die
for my origin is found -
my meaning
but I am dead.⁴⁵

The last line reminds that though some of these poems express the conviction that the ancestral traditions are dead and sterile, others indicate a continuing powerful attachment. On the one hand, 'Going For Lawah' describes the frenetic, despairing beating of the wedding drums by the:

Two haggard old men
torn by seasons and cane-scorpions

as a failure of the ancestral past to awaken any response in the listening women and the bride and groom:

Their wombs of fertility
caressed by alien spirits
for the drums
(native of far-away shores)
are reluctant to vibrate in them
passions of birth.⁴⁶

Again, in 'Darling of The Rising Sun', he berates a brahmin girl for wasting her piety:

on sterile soil
To a god far-away
A dumb god once buried in your
grandfather's copper trunk
A god whose potency reigns
in red-bamboo flags flying in our yards.

The girl's 'dark illusions' are to be replaced by the sacrament of sexual union and a creative attachment to the land:

I long to sacrifice that clay god
kissing your night sleep
and shape you in the likeness
of my own
God of the canefields.⁴⁷

That god is the democratic spirit of the Indo-creole, 'bung coolie' culture of the estate, a culture despised by those obsessed with ancest-

ral purity, but seen in these poems as the beginnings of a native tradition, albeit a broken one, capable of carrying the Indo-Guyanese out of their current state of limbo. Yet the call of the past remains strong. In several poems Monar affects a reconciliation between old and new, but then always comes back to a harsher truth. 'A Vision', for instance, suggests an easy harmony between the 'ancestral voices' (the sitar strings) and the Indo-creole image of the sprouting 'paddy sheaves'. The poem also softens and sentimentalises the pain of cultural change in the image of the raided, abandoned flower and the foraging bee which carries away its sweetness before the flower dies:

Like ancestral voices hovering my night sleep
 Like sprouting paddy sheaves in the wind.
 Like tender touches of the sitar strings
 Silently I hear O my buttercup mirth
 Mew tunes of my new birth

Can you see
 The crushed and forsaken flower;
 Can you see
 The sad-looking gardener ⁴⁸
 Listening to un-born bars of music?

The title of 'A Vision' recognises, of course, that this is a pleasing and soothing fiction. The reality is the 'infinite agony' expressed in 'Limbo' where the poet admits:

Ancestral blood still seeps in my veins
 generations...
 generations of gods cloud my eyes

In 'Limbo' he wonders whether there is anything in the Indo-Guyanese experience he can ever want to possess:

Were my great, great grandfather's lean, brown hands
 Eternally chained...
 My nannie's sagging breast
 Cruelly devoured by the eyes of another harsh world.

The death of the old is not transformed into euphonious metaphor as in 'A Vision' but felt as an impending personal death. There are no ancestral voices 'hovering' but the ominous jumbie birds:

Such black birds flapping, ⁴⁹
 flapping in the roof of my sleep.

The poem which brings together all these contraries and holds them in tension is 'Meanings'. It begins by declaring a commitment to the new landscapes and the traditions of the estate in opposition to the

illusions of brahminical piety and the sterile spirit of protest against past oppression:

One handful of ploughed earth
gives me deep communion
with meaningful clouds
mossy streams, flooded canals

Not of illusions
nor cries
that fruited these canefields
infested with white scorpions;

Not of that horizon
I am encompassed in midday heat
colliding punts ...tarred bridges

But then the next lines make it evident that this communion exists only in the moment of experiencing it and only by shutting out of his consciousness those other contrary feelings. He begs that the moment be fixed:

Let not my heart pulsate
though the factory bell rings
for evening hours are painful
as night descends over the plantation
breaking this communion
which is so sweet
so endless
so consciousnessless.

But then the possession of this new identity comes to seem elusive ('embryonic gods mock me') and the humiliations of the past return to fester and stir in him the desire for a regeneration of the ancestral heritage. In the last stanza of the poem, the confident statement of the opening is re-expressed as a wish, and the repetition of the last line becomes not a conclusion but an attempt at self-conviction:

This agony still reminds me
of a consciousness
a memory
making me primitive
seeking out a resurrection -
let me hug that culvert
birth comes in times of marriage
let the water bathe me
to commune
with flooded cane-fields
pregnant clouds...tarred bridges -
meanings are born here
meanings are born here⁵⁰

Monar's exploration of this conflict of identity does not end at this point; in subsequent poems he becomes more sceptical of the idea of the God of the canefields. In 'Question' he writes:

...little children have lost faith
in procreative ceremonies of the canefields.^{5'}

It is not really surprising that after this more public phase of Monar's writing he should have returned to the issue in more personal and religious terms. However, I believe that in the poems of Meanings, and others written in the same period, Monar makes a profound, if technically imperfect, contribution to the articulation of a break in Indo-Caribbean sensibility.

Chapter TenThe Construct Of Order and Energy in Indo-Caribbean
Fictional Portrayals of Indian and Creole Life-Styles.

Chapter Nine explored the way in which a number of Indo-Caribbean writers portrayed what they felt was a sudden break in the wholeness of the self-enclosed Indian world. Part of the experience of change was the increasing level of contact between Indians and Creoles. This chapter looks at how that contact has been explored as a theme in the work of a number of Indian writers mostly of Trinidadian background. In Chapter Thirteen, 'The Naipauls and The Blacks', the emphasis is on the changing image of the black West Indian person, an image which became more negative under the impact of ethnic-political conflict. The present chapter focusses on fiction which deals with an earlier, often more open, stage in the contact, when Indians began to look at the relationship between their own culture and that of the creole world.

In all of the stories and novels discussed, I see an interlinked set of contrasting relationships between the Indian world and the Creole (mainly Black Trinidadian world) and the construct of order and energy. The idea of the construct used in the chapter, the cognitive framework through which events or phenomena are perceived and interpreted, is borrowed from the American psychologist George Kelly. In particular, the chapter makes use of his argument that we interpret events by looking at them in terms of their similarities and differences from other events, so that a construct always has positive and negative poles.

What is meant specifically by 'order' and 'energy' is the kind of contrast symbolised at the mythological level by the Greek gods Apollo and Dionysius or, more appropriately, the Hindu gods Vishnu and Shiva. Apollo is, of course, associated with the establishment

of codes of law, moral and religious principles and ritual (especially matters of purification) whilst Dionysius was associated with ecstasy, abandon and the forces of life and fertility. That mythological contrast is paralleled at the psychological level by Freud's picture of the conflict within the human psyche: of the frail ego being importuned on the one side by the dynamic, gratification-seeking id and being hectored on the other by the restraining super-ego. This is to express the construct in archetypal and positive terms, but throughout the chapter I have argued that it can be seen in a host of variant or inverted forms. For instance, ideas connected with purity and pollution can be seen as part of the construct. The construct also inevitably carries contrary interpretations. Is it order or restriction? Energy or disorder? The interpretation clearly depends on personal, social and political interests. The order of the ruling class can be the repression of the ruled, whilst the energy of the masses is frequently seen as anarchic disorder by those who rule them. These differences of interpretation remind that though the contrast in the construct of order and energy may refer to real historical tendencies (to the way, for instance, that religions have swung between the poles of ritual forms and codified moral observance and ecstasy and inspiration) it is essentially a way of seeing with a deep trans-cultural and trans-historical appeal. As such, it will be argued, the construct has channelled writers into dealing with what may in reality be shades of difference as if they were dichotomies.

In Part Four, in the chapters dealing with V.S. Naipaul's The Mimic Men (1967) and George Lamming's Of Age and Innocence (1958), I argue that both writers have put archetypal expressions of the construct at the centre of their work. Significantly, in the light of the evidence of this chapter, it is Naipaul, the Indo-Trinidadian, whose novel expresses a pessimistic despair over the absence of

order in ex-colonial societies when their former rulers leave them, whereas Lamming portrays the 'Law' as repressive of the people's dynamic for personal and social liberation. Naipaul's characters are constantly seeking order and structure; for Lamming it is the spirit of rebellion against the 'mind-forg'd manacles' of Law which gives life meaning and defines the truly human spirit.

The present chapter is not so much concerned with such broad archetypal treatments of the theme, but with the way the construct has become attached to particular stereotyped images of the 'Indian' and 'creole' cultural systems. In other words, a construct which in other societies has been generated as an image of struggle between classes, or between reason and emotion or orthodoxy and inspiration, has in an ethnically plural society become attached to the perception of differences between the cultures and values of the two major ethnic groups. Thus the pole of order or its inversion, restriction, is invariably associated with the Indian world, whilst the pole of energy or its inversion, disorder, is associated with the black Creole world.

However, though the identification of the order-energy construct with the Indian-Creole contrast is shared by all the writers discussed in the chapter, individual writers have come to very different emphases, based on differences of cultural and religious background and different perspectives on the issue of ethnic identity. There is the despair expressed in Shiva Naipaul's work which portrays an Indian world where order has petrified into dead sterility and a disordered Afro-Creole world which is giving way to the most primitive impulses. On the other hand there are those like Sam Selvon and Ismith Khan who have seen order and energy, qualities symbolised by the Indian and Afro-Creole worlds, as existing in a necessary dialectic, making their agreement with William Blake's proverbs that 'Without Contraries is no progression' and 'Opposition is True Friendship'.²

Moreover, the fiction discussed in this chapter was written over a span of thirty years and I have tried to trace how actual changes in the social and political relationships between Indians and Afro-Creoles may be thought to have shaped the writer's response. I have made use of five approximate social and political phases which seem to me to relate to changes in the perspective of writers. Firstly, there is a phase of minimal contact prior to the 1940s; then an early phase of contact as a small but increasing number of Indians moved into Port of Spain and San Fernando; thirdly an overlapping post-war period during which adult suffrage brought Indians and Blacks into the same political framework, but before politics had polarised almost completely along religious and ethnic lines; fourthly, the phase of political separation and racial tension in the years just before independence; and finally the post-independence period of Afro-Creole domination.

In the first phase there is no contemporary Indian writing which portrays Indians in relation to the Creole world. Seepersad Naipaul's fiction deals with an Indian community which is still self-contained. However, in the work of writers who looked backwards into the past, the beginnings of a perception of a contrastive relation can be found. Novels such as A House For Mr. Biswas (1961) or Sheik Sadeek's Bundarie Boy (1974) portray a time when there was real distance between the two worlds. In A House For Mr. Biswas the Afro-Creole world exists as a zone of unknown disorder outside the organised world of the Tulsis. Within the Tulsi world, black Trinidadians are either invisible like Miss Blackie, or appear only in specialised caste-like roles such as the carpenters or Theophile the blacksmith, or may only be spoken of in euphemisms. The errant Bandhat, for instance, is rumoured to be living with 'a woman of another race.' One of Biswas's minor acts of rebellion is to break the boundary of Hanuman House and, self-punishingly, eat peppery Creole foods

from the street stalls, a habit which the Tulsis considered 'feckless, negroid and unclean.' The sense of distance from the Creole world is portrayed as even greater in a novel set in a rural environment. In Sheik Sadeek's Bundarie Boy, Indian country and Creole town are brought into contact, but only to portray a sense of Indian estrangement from the latter. When Jubelall, a Huckleberry Finn character, is taken by his worthless 'blasted rumsuckah' of a father to Georgetown, the boy winces at the noisiness of the juke-boxes and is disturbed by the 'riff-raff' who haunt the bars, the unsavoury Black, Portuguese and Dougla characters his father consorts with. In Jube's eyes the Creole city pollutes. His father offers him pork and beef when they come to town. 'Religion crumbling, son,' he explains; but to Jube it is 'messy food' and he tells his pa, 'You livin ah rank racoon life.' (p.23)

However, during the 1940's, as an increasing number of Indians moved into the urban areas, attracted by the economic opportunities they provided, one finds both change and increasing elaboration in the expression of the Indian/Creole construct. V.S. Naipaul and Sadeek reconstructed the past, but some of Samuel Selvon's earliest stories express directly the ambivalence between attraction and repulsion which many Indians appear to have felt about their contact with the Creole world. Selvon went to Port of Spain in 1946 to work as a journalist, a job which brought him into contact for the first time with, in his own words, 'the seamier side of Creole life.'³ Although Selvon came from a Christian, creolised San Fernando background, in his first stories set in the urban Creole environment of working class Port of Spain, the viewpoint is critical and moralistic, stressing the disorder of that world. In 'Steelband'⁴ he dwells on the lawless violence of the black proletarian gangs; in 'Roy-Roy'⁵ the brutal and disorganised child-rearing practices of the yards and in 'Carnival Last-Lap'⁶ he takes a censorious view

of the amoral irresponsibility of carnival behaviour. Yet both in this story and in 'Murder Will Out',⁷ which deals with the fearful last hours of a petty hoodlum running from his enemies, Selvon, whilst stressing the ugliness of the milieu, also emphasises the vitality of the city, an energy which has made the hunted down victim incapable of leaving it.

There were though other Indian writers whose work suggests no such recoil from the creole city. One such was Daniel Samaroo Joseph, who between 1948-1950 wrote a string of dialogues and dramatic monologues that still read with great freshness. One piece, 'Taxi Mister',⁸ has appeared in several anthologies but there are several others equally as good which have never been reprinted.⁴ They portray, without moralisation or moral evasion, an archetypal Trinidadian anarchism, an unscrupulous 'intelligence', a disregard for the law and a disarming ability not to take oneself or any one else too seriously. They celebrate the art of giving 'fatigue', making poetry out of the rhythms and verbal extravagance of the hustlers and limers whose very lives are expressed in their style. In Guyana, the comic short stories of Basil Balgobin, mainly published between 1946-1952, show a similar 'at-homeness' with most areas of Afro-Creole life, without expressing any viewpoint on it.

By contrast with the image of Creole energy, another of Selvon's early short stories, 'Cane Is Bitter',¹⁰ portrays the Indian village as a place where energy is soon suppressed. Romesh, returning from the city, observes the brief freedom of the children:

Naked children splashed about in the pond, hitting the water with their hands and shouting when the water shot up into the air at different angles, and trying to make brief rainbows in the sunlight with the spray. (p.60)

He knows that they are destined to a life of ordered custom, of strangled desires and emotions. Rookmin, his mother, is described in a way which stresses just such a restraint of inner energy: 'But if she knew the light she threw from her eyes, she had a habit of shutting them.' When Romesh rails against Indians 'accepting our fate like animals', his family complain, 'Is the way of our

people, is we custom from long time. And you is Indian?' However, although Romesh will leave the village he feels both loss and a sense of unease about entering the Creole world.

The same sense of tentative attraction is expressed in one of V.S. Naipaul's early unpublished stories, 'Potatoes'¹¹ in which Mrs. Gobin attempts to escape from suffocation within her large, respectable and pious Hindu family by engaging in the retailing of potatoes. But escape means becoming part of Creole society. As her mother warns, 'Well, go ahead, and turn nigger.' And indeed, when Mrs Gobin begins her commercial venture she feels that it involves an 'intimate transgression.' If the Indian world is suffocating, the Negro world she enters is derelict and formless, full of unfenced lots and blacks who are as feckless and anti-Indian as the elder Mrs. Gobin has warned. Chastened, Mrs Gobin has to return to the stifling security of her family. In one of Selvon's early stories, 'Behind the Hummingbird',¹² the conflict between the two worlds is resolved in fairy-tale fashion. The story concerns a young Indian who has become restless with village life and quits it when he learns that his father has arranged a marriage for him. Via San Fernando, which is too provincial, he arrives in Port of Spain where he tries to adopt the speech-style and manners of his black Creole companions. But the world of whores and hustlers he finds himself in, so exciting at first, turns sour on him. He thinks:

Suddenly I want to get out of the city and back to the canefields and its open air and sun. (p.92)

He tries to sleep but, significantly, 'a steelband was practicing and they was making noise like hell.' Meanwhile he meets an Indian nursemaid and his feelings for her and the way he expresses them reflect his mixed-up state. He thinks of her in the language of the Creole hustlers as 'the nice piece of skin', yet considers that if it had been to a girl like Doolarie he would not have objected to an arranged marriage. Thinking of Doolarie he rejects the advances of the black

whore who has made him her sweet-man. Angered, she shops him to her pimp and he is beaten up and arrested. Conceding defeat, he sends for his father and accepts the conditions his father imposes, including the marriage. However, the wedding has to be postponed because the bride has also run away. She is recaptured and, of course, is revealed to be none other than Doolarie. They settle down 'in we own house', a significant independence from the joint family. The fairy-tale narrative is familiar from a couple of Seepersad Naipaul's stories,¹³ but Selvon uses the framework to deal with issues beyond Seepersad Naipaul's concern with individual/communal tensions. In particular Selvon brings the Creole world (an extreme version of it) and the traditional Indian village world into contrast. There are both oppositions and underlying similarities which can best be seen when set out schematically:

Village	vs.	City
Communal	vs.	Individual
Arranged marriage	vs.	Free choice
Social Chains	vs.	Social liberty

But then the youth discovers the negative contrasts:

Security	≠	Lawlessness
Predictability	≠	Hazard

and then the underlying similarities:

Arranged marriage as = Prostitution
a cash transaction.

('The parents does offer you all kind of thing, cattle and house and money.')

Anonymity of the relationship. = Anonymity of the whore/
Client relationship.

('But the hurtful part is that the girl you going to married have she face cover up.')

Thematically there is no way out, but the narrative resolves the oppositions and permits the youth to have the best of both worlds. He returns to the village, but to an individual life; his marriage has been arranged but turns out to have the same end as his free choice and the cash basis is transformed into a romantic attachment.

Similar contrasts between the Indian and Creole worlds are to be found in the work of other Indian writers. In M.P. Alladin's Twelve Short Stories (published c1975, but written mainly between 1950-1960) the contrast is expressed in the relationship between stories

rather than within them. Thus the Indian stories tend to dwell on problems caused by rule-boundedness (for instance, resistance to arranged marriages) whereas the Creole stories stress the problems which stem from a lack of rules and the individual's attempt to impose some order on a formless situation. In 'Clark Gable',¹⁴ for instance, a brawling black virago tells her feckless man that she will not stand for his desertions any longer; the story ends as the rejected lover approaches the woman with an ice-pick.¹⁵ 'Jay-Gay' describes the attempt of a man to escape from the clutches of a woman who has put obeah on him to make him take responsibility for her seven children, none of whom are his. There are many similar stories written during this period which make use of the same Indian/Creole cultural construct, but which focus only on the Creole element leaving the Indian contrast pole implicit. Thus V.S. Naipaul's Miguel Street (1959), although light-heartedly tolerant in tone, nevertheless portays the lives of the inhabitants, whether blacks or wholly creolised Indians, within a by now familiar stereotyped cultural framework. The males of the street are no more than overgrown boys whose lives revolve around liming, drinking and cutting a style. Their greatest failure would be to have to take on 'responsibility and obligations'.¹⁶ Others of the stories such as 'The Maternal Instinct'¹⁷ and 'Until the Soldiers Came' dwell on the stereotype of female sexual irresponsibility and the absence of family ties in the lower class creole world.

Stories such as those described above reflect the growing involvement of Indians in the Creole world during the 1940's and 1950's. At the same time there were also changes in the political framework in Trinidad which encouraged the growth of competing Afro-Creole and Indian nationalisms. Although no real power was to be won until at least 1956, adult suffrage in 1946 and an increase in elected representation in the legislature brought both communities increasingly within

the same frame of reference. Although in The Suffrage of Elvira (1958) V.S. Naipaul portrays the participants as having little awareness that they were involved in a national process, there is one feeling which ominously underlies all the intra-communal antagonisms amongst the Indian electorate: their instinctive opposition to the Negro candidate. The novel effectively satirises one aspect of colonial electoral politics, but it does not tell the whole story. In reality there was genuine debate about political status, economic control and national identity. Above all, Trinidadian Indians had to consider the likelihood of a future of political domination by the Afro-Trinidadian majority, and a national culture defined in Creole terms. There was no way the Indian political leadership could avoid thinking about their community's relationship with the Black creoles. The choice was whether their interests were best met in alliance with Creole politicians or as a separate ethnic bloc to compete for political advantage. The elections of 1946 and 1950 illustrate the divisions within the Indian elite over this question. Some fought as candidates in preponderantly Creole parties, some made temporary alliances with Creole politicians and others fought on ethnically chauvinist platforms. The Indian voters were in general not confused: they voted for those Indian candidates who were most influential in the local ethnic power structure. Those Indians who were elected were mainly political conservatives, particularly on constitutional reforms. However, there was a minority of educated middle-class Indians, mainly Christians, who favoured constitutional advance and opposed Indian separatism. They had little influence on the mass of the Indian population; the one area where they made any significant intervention was in journalism. The most important voice of this group was The Spectator, edited by Dennis Mahabir, member of a long established and prominent Christian Indian family. On ethnic relations The Spectator took a highly utopian position:

It is time these diverse forces cease to be centrifugal and be centripetal instead, Trinidadians first, Negroes, Chinese, Indians second...¹⁹

There are considerable similarities between this position and that expressed in Samuel Selvon's first novel, A Brighter Sun (1952), discussed at greater length in Chapter Thirteen. The basic paradigm of the novel is the contrast between Indian culture, which is portrayed as over-determined and rigid, and urban Creole culture which is shown as under-determined and chaotic. In A Brighter Sun Selvon attempts to resolve the contrasts not through fairy-tale as in 'Behind The Hummingbird', but by exploring a third way which lies inbetween the Indian world represented by Tiger's family and the urban Creole world represented by Tiger's neighbour, Joe Martin. In this novel the order/energy construct is expressed in terms of the conflict Tiger has to resolve, between trying to impose a pattern on his life and recognising that there are occasions when he must move with the flux of life itself. A Brighter Sun expresses the hope that the kind of existential balance and cultural eclecticism which Tiger seeks is possible on a wider social basis. Nevertheless Selvon was realistic enough to show at various points in the novel that in comparison to ethnic loyalty, the idea of Trinidad as an evolving multi-cultural society was still vague.

Selvon's caution was, of course, well justified by what actually happened in the period leading up to independence. As is outlined in more detail in Chapter Fourteen, politics polarised along ethnic lines so that it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that during the elections of 1961 Trinidad had been at the brink of racial war. Even before that time those in the Indian community who had enthusiastically advocated integration began to defend Indian culture and criticise the attempts of leading Creole politicians to impose creole culture as the only true national culture.

The Spectator, for instance, complained:

Gomes says no more Gandhi celebrations, no more Independence Observations; no more Divali, no more roti. Substitute a West Indian National Day for West Indian heroes - Gomes etc.; steel band music with riots and bottle throwing, pudding and souse.²⁰

The evidence that ethnicity was the primary loyalty of the majority of Trinidadians had a marked effect on the way Indo-Trinidadian writers treated the order/energy, Indian/Creole construct. Although only V.S. Naipaul in The Mimic Men dealt explicitly with racial violence, consciousness of the polarization of Blacks and Indians permeates several of the novels written from the 1950s onwards.

In Selvon's work,²¹ for instance, one finds an increasing pessimism about the possibility of a new national sensibility growing out of the contact between Indian and Creole. There is, on the contrary, a revaluation, though still an ambivalent one, of the importance of the order pole of the construct, symbolised by those Indians who try to lead traditional lives. In An Island Is A World (1955), although the hope for a restoration of pure Indianness is portrayed as a chimerical fantasy, and though in this and in a later novel such as I Hear Thunder (1963), Indian culture is portrayed as static, restrictive and racialist, those who have abandoned that culture are shown to be rootless, empty and irresponsible. In Turn Again Tiger (1958), Selvon appears to suggest that it might be necessary for Indians to draw back to evaluate their roots before they entered the mainstream of Trinidadian society. In this novel it is possible to see the order/energy construct expressed in Tiger's preoccupation with time, with his attempt to reconcile the past, which has always been associated with Indianness and a determined order of things, with the present, which is associated with the loose Creole attitude towards time (summed up in the motto, 'What is to is, must is').

A second, more despairing kind of response is to be found in Shiva Naipaul's fiction. The central image of his novel, Fireflies (1970), of fireflies trapped in a bottle, is a metaphor for energy suffocated within the constrictions of the Hindu family. Once, the Hindu world had possessed both energy and order, as Ram Lutchman glimpses on his visit to a village in South Trinidad where, for all

its poverty, he gets an impression of its 'completeness and self-sufficiency' and watches the fireflies flying free, 'wheeling in the air, tiny flakes of coloured light.' But the Hindu world of the Khojas has lost its energy; they are people whose response to life have become ritualised. The Khoja women talk in 'formulae' and ritually beat their children, and when Ram Lutchman's father dies, his grief is routine: 'Mr. Lutchman, grief-stricken, wept, paid for the announcement on the radio and made the arrangements for the funeral. He drank heavily at the wake.'²² There is once last moment at the Cattha where Mr. Khoja bares his chest to beat the family's sacred drum, and the sisters dance with 'energy and conviction', when the Hindu world still represents an 'intelligible whole', but as its roots wither it becomes a world of lifeless sterility, symbolised by the dolls the barren Mrs Khoja keeps. But it is a world whose structures still imprison, like the bowl lampshade which Bhaskar begs his mother to discard: 'But look at all the insects that does die in it, Ma.' (p. 48) Even Ram Lutchman, one of the fireflies, is trapped: 'Ultimately, he could never meaningfully question the code on which he had been raised...' (p. 51)

For Shiva Naipaul's characters there is no escape from the collapsing communal order of the Hindu world into a vital world of Creole individualism. When the Khoja clan finally disintegrates, Naipaul permits his characters only two equally hopeless responses. There are those who stiffen into an exaggerated kind of order, like Bhaskar's 'mechanical rigidity' and his passion for copying by rote, or Rudranath's catatonic paralysis. On the other side there are the rebels, Romesh and Renouka, whose exaggerated energy and spirit of revolt is merely a symptom of a feverish sickness. Both use the Creole world as a stage to enact their protest, but they never belong to it and the script they perform is written purely as a sterile negation of their Khoja family experience. Renouka breaks the sexual and racial rules of the clan by having an affair with a

travelling salesman, a 'copper-skinned negro'. It is not to be seen as a pleasing example of racial harmony, but part of her psychic disorder:

During this time Renouka had allowed herself to be ruled by the frenzy that had been threatening to overwhelm her ever since her father had gone mad. Unable to weep, it was with a kind of delicious, mocking self-hatred that night after night she unburdened herself to this astonished and ingratiating stranger.... (p.262)

For the negro salesman Renouka is a special sexual prize, 'an Indian girl ('and no ordinary BATEE either')... He had stormed a barrier he always believed to be impregnable...', and when she breaks from him he is provoked into revealing his underlying racial feelings. Again, if Romesh breaks out of Indian sterility it is only into an equally sterile and worthless black 'badjohnism'. When Romesh flees Trinidad and marries a black Puerto Rican girl in New York, the way Naipaul presents the responses to his action is neatly ambivalent. For his black friend who brings the news to Mrs Lutchman it is a matter of great pride: 'That boy was true to the last,' he said. 'Christ! What a guy! One of the originals!' The Khojas, Naipaul laconically reports, were 'duly scandalised.' (p.326).

In The Chip-Chip Gatherers an escape of even Romesh's dubious kind is impossible. Wilbert Ramsaran is trapped in a life of total futility. He has seen the aridity of his father's 'Indian' world of business success and self-punishing ambition. The only alternative he is offered in the novel is the example of his Uncle Chinese, who has abandoned his Indian wife to live with his Chinese mistress in the squalor of the black George Street area. As the mistress points out, with considerable understatement, 'The same wont suit everybody,' and to make the point even clearer Shiva Naipaul has Wilbert nearly faint on his way back through the market area, overwhelmed by the stench of rotting food and 'the stench of rotting humanity, vermin-ridden and covered with festering sores.' It is a Hogarthian moralisation on the consequences of lives lead without order or economic goal. Wilbert's hope that Uncle Chinese offers a creole alternative

is shattered and he rejects the 'siren songs in praise of fruitless ease and indolence.'²³ It is a crude caricature of proletarian creole values and typical of the ideological closure of the novel that the only aspect of creole life that Wilbert contacts is its sordid underbelly. Later Wilbert is taken to visit a Port of Spain brothel, an episode written in a way which would not have disgraced a Victorian religious tract. He is attracted by the tales his work-mates tell of the sexual uninhibitedness of the black whores, but once there Wilbert is revolted by the crudity of the black girl he buys. Afterwards he reflects on his apparent lack of real choice:

Where was he to flee next to seek refuge from that insistent clamour of dead voices? To the Bird of Paradise and the fevered funereal embraces...? (p.300)

A third kind of response to the ethnic conflicts of the early 1960s is to be found, I believe, in Ismith Khan's The Obeah Man (1964). In it there is an explicit exploration of the meaning for Trinidadian society of behaviour dominated by personal self-control and willingness to defer gratification on the one hand, and ruled by instinctual energies and the urge for instant gratification on the other. As I have shown, these are widely recognised stereotypes of Indian and Creole life-styles, but Khan, deliberately, I believe, sets out to prevent the identification of the poles of the order/energy construct with the Indian / Creole contrast by making his major characters of mixed race. There seem to me to be two possible reasons for doing this. Firstly, it bypasses the apparent contradiction between the novel's optimistic message and the social fact of ethnic conflict and, secondly, it enables Khan to avoid the accusation that his novel expresses an ethnic bias. Nevertheless, Khan is too honest an observer not to recognise the deficiencies of Creole society, and too much an Indo-Trinidadian not to see those deficiencies from an Indian point of view.

The main character, Zampi, the obeah man, is thus created as:

One of the breeds of the island that had no race, no caste, no colour; he was the end of masses of assimilations and mixtures, having the eyes of the East Indian, the build of the Negro, the skin of the Chinese, and some of the colour of all.²⁴

His rival, Massahood, also bears in his face the 'questionmark of lost races and cultures', whilst Zolda, the woman they both pursue is also of a 'lost race', part Indian, part White. Only Hop-and -Drop, the cripple appears to be preponderantly Negro. Between each of these characters there is a fundamental contrast. Massahood is the physical, instinctual man, whilst Hop-and Drop is the rational man who spends his life in pursuit of knowledge. The two represent the extremes of Zampi's own inner conflict, reflected in his alternating attractions to and repulsions from the black people life of the city. For him obeah is the search for power over disorder and for the self-awareness which leads to self-control. In this search he stands aloof from the mass of the people he wants to help. During the creole feast of carnival in particular, Zampi feels that there was 'something ugly, something cruel about people ... He wondered if this ugliness was not buried in them all along.'^(p.6) He sees Carnival as an occasion when control is abandoned to the power of the instinctual. In the Trinidadian context this is a quite frequently expressed Indian point of view. Yet though this urge to purify himself keeps him for several years in rural isolation, Zampi cannot keep away from Zolda and the city. When he returns though he is haunted by the fear 'that his feet might slip into the quick and easy rhythm of the life about him,' and he tells Zolda, '... I 'fraid, I 'fraid people like you. You livin' from day to day like if you goin' dead tomorrow.'^(p.65) He hopes he can rescue Zolda from 'all this fete fete fete day in day out...' Zolda, however, resists, conscious that there is something incomplete and unbalanced about Zampi's 'melancholy brooding', 'something weak, something evil about the way he allowed himself to slip into this mood.'^(p.65) In Zampi's absence Zolda's sympathies are shared between the stick-man, Massahood, and the cripple; in Zampi's presence, when he and Massahood fight, Zolda's sympathies flow back and forwards between the two. It is only after Zola has seen for herself the need

for responsibility and seen that Zampi is moving towards the acceptance of the instinctual in himself that she can give herself to the obeah man. Zampi's conviction that control, sacrifice and self-awareness are essential if life is to have meaning is confirmed at two crucial points in the novel, but it is only gradually that he sees that denying the instincts is as dangerous to the healthy self as abandonment to them. However, there comes a moment which both confirms his belief in order, and begins to make him recognise other needs. It occurs during carnival when a man playing the traditional masque figure of the beast who dances at the ends of ropes held by attendant dragons becomes separated from the dragons and has become so drunken and confused that he believes that he is the beast he plays. He returns to the Scorpion Tail club screaming in agony and searching for the dragons. Yet when they reappear and attempt to re-attach their hooks to him he resists ferociously. Zampi reproves the beast, recognising that it resists the restraints that it needs, and that without the restraints the self is too weak to resist the forces which have possessed the befuddled reveller:

'Why do you come here to make trouble?' Zampi asked. 'You come with you own two foot. You want them to catch you. Now they catch you you want to make all kind of noise and fight. Significantly, Massahood, the instinctual man, sides with the beast (p. 125) and curses the dragons:

'Worthless scamps...they ain't nuttin' without him!' And though Zampi insists on an equality between instinct and restraint ('You can't see that he need them, just so much as they need he...that without one another neither of them is worth a damn?') he has not yet fully accepted the import of his own words. Massahood's retort has some truth: 'You make yourself a stranger to everybody...even to yourself. Is you who need people, boy...'. Nevertheless, in the fight that follows it is Zampi who subdues Massahood and, as he leaves the Scorpion Tail Club, Zampi who heals the sick masquer of his delusion.

When the climax of the novel comes, it appears to represent precisely that abandonment of control which Zampi has feared. First

Hop-and -Drop knifes Massahood when the latter is attempting to rape Zolda; then Massahood kills the cripple in a rage and finally the dwellers of La Basse stone Massahood to death. Yet there is another message in the events which Zampi only gradually realises. He recognises that the cripple's attack on Massahood has occurred because neither he himself, or Zolda or Massahood has been aware of the cripple's repressed desires for Zolda. When Hop-and -Drop knifes the stickman he aims at his genitals and bowels, the symbolic seats of the instincts. Afterwards Zampi recognises how similar his own pursuit of control has been to the cripple's one-sided pursuit of knowledge. He had 'hungered for learning, for enlightenment' but each piece of knowledge the cripple has collected exists only as a fragment of a jig-saw puzzle:

He had not found that adhesive, that single thread on which he could string the billion-beaded boxfuls of information he possessed. (p.185)

The novel ends with Zampi's admission to himself of his need for Zolda and the life of the instincts, and Zolda's parallel acceptance of the need for order and control.

The Obeah Man clearly aims to be read at a number of levels. At one level it is a Freudian psychodrama in which the fragile self struggles for balance between the instinctual id and the restraining super-ego. At another, through the metaphor of the Obeah man's dedication to his 'science', his necessary isolation and power to influence people, Khan explores the relationship between the artist and his society. Obeah, like art, requires 'practice and resignation and sacrifice...discovery of oneself,' a necessary dedication which removes the artist/obeah man from the concerns of a society which seeks immediate rewards and instinctual release. Zampi defines his task as to act 'like a sounding board...like a conch shell that people could just put their ears to to find out what thing they have to do. A third level of significance, an Indian critique of Creole society is also, I believe, present, hidden in the structure

and the themes of the novel. It is, of course, impossible to be certain about Khan's intentions, and it is certainly not a critique which is given an explicit emphasis. Indeed, as I have suggested, it seems to me that Khan deliberately disguised the ethnic identities of the major characters so that the Indian/ Creole contrast is not explicit. Nevertheless, there are certain passages in the novel which seem to me to support this reading, though my proofs relate less to intrinsic evidence than to the relationship of such passages to the larger social text. For instance, at one point Khan records an anonymous voice which stands for everything Zampi opposes:

Once a year fete like fire and you could haul your ass with all your talk 'bout tomorrow...Tell me when I wake from all my long, long sleep that the world make this way and that, but don't talk ass now. (p.172-173)

That voice would be identified by the vast majority of Trinidadian readers as a black Creole voice; it is certainly a stereotype of the creole value system which has been strongly criticised in Indian writing. Similarly, the description of Hop-and -Drop's concern with ritual, his 'meticulousness with his body', his emphasis on the future and on 'saving, collecting, storing...' would be readily recognised in Trinidad as a stereotype of the Indian. On the one level, the character of Hop-and- Drop simply warns of the sterility of lives based wholly on order and restraint, but the fact that he is black cannot really disguise the fact that what Khan says about him is essentially his comment on the fate of the Indians in Trinidad if they cling solely to the past:

...as time passes all of life becomes illusion and the little man was left with the hollow shell of ritual only, which, although it did not strengthen him as was believed, protected him in some strange way as if compensating for the vague nostalgia of parting with part of his very being. (p.100)

It is possible then to read the novel as a parable which points out the contrasting deficiencies, in Khan's view, of Indian and Creole cultural systems and indicates that they need aspects of each other. The achievement of balance in the lives of Zampi and Zolda is surely to be seen as a symbol of wider social possibility

which the contemporary polarization of Indians and Blacks in Trinidad would have appeared to deny. For this reason, as I have suggested, Khan deliberately removes his novel from an explicit Afro-Indian framework.

By contrast, Dennis Mahabir's novel, The Cutlass Is Not For Killing (1971), makes an identification between the poles of the order/energy construct and Indians and Blacks of an astonishingly brazen kind. Mahabir also makes use of Freudian psychological concepts, but in an altogether one-sided and ethnocentric treatment of the Creole/disorder pole of the construct. Here Freudian ideas are used in a crude, pseudo-scientific way to support negrophobic stereotypes of a kind familiar in the work of such nineteenth century writers as Carlyle, Froude and Trollope, filtered through the medium of Indian prejudices. Whereas the two main Indian characters, Hartley and Errol Karmarkar, have an over-riding sense of principled moral responsibility (Hartley willingly goes to the scaffold as a willing scape-goat to purge society of its racism), the behaviour of Blacks in the novel is equated with the hedonistic, unbridled urges of the id. Hartley is a leading member of St. Clair McVorrán's mainly black party, but when they win the election he is horrified by the party members' behaviour at their victory ball, an orgy of eating, drinking and sexual abandon. Corruption and squandermania mark McVorrán's government, the latter seen by Errol, a journalist, as typical of a Creole urge to spend and show off. In time Hartley becomes convinced that McVorrán is a psychopath, but his moral infirmities are carefully identified as the products of black cultural life. The novel concludes:

In McVorrán and the Negroes authority consisted of the policeman around the corner. So long as the policeman is around the corner and out of sight, the adult will feel free to steal, or lie or commit adultery... He is self-centred, has no capacity for life, but is capable of casual fondness, likes and dislikes. Nothing prevents the immediate gratification of his instinctive appetites and lusts...²⁵

As Trollope had written, 'I do not deny their family attachments; but it is the attachment of a dog.'²⁶

The persistence of the construct in Indo-Caribbean writing over the thirty year period which separates the earliest from the most recently published fiction might be taken as evidence of the persistence of the social phenomena the construct 'describes'. On the contrary, it seems to me far more plausible to see it as the persistence of a way of seeing. It is clear that both Indian and Black lifestyles have changed in the period under discussion. For instance, in the fiction discussed there is a consistent image of Afro-Creole culture as being unconcerned with the past and lacking in pride in ethnic identity. These are historical images which no longer relate to changes in the actual culture of substantial sections of the Black population, and, as I have shown in Chapter Fourteen, writers such as V.S. and Shiva Naipaul have given a good deal of emphasis to what Shiva Naipaul has called a 'sea-change' in the black persona. In theory, then, one might have expected that the connection between the 'new' Afro-Caribbean person and the negative disorder pole of the construct would be broken. However, Shiva Naipaul's A Hot Country (1983), indicates that though the surface features of the construct might have changed slightly, its underlying dimensions scarcely changed at all.

In A Hot Country, Indian culture is implied to have once possessed both order and energy, but for the Indian characters in the novel the process of cultural deracination is total. Now the identification of 'Indian' with order is made negatively: Dina Mallingham, daughter of an Indian father and Portuguese mother, complains that she is 'nothing but a mongrelised ghost of a human being' and thinks that she is 'formless, lacking in geometry, concocted out of primal dust upon which no god had ever stamped its imprint.' Her formlessness is clearly linked to her loss of Indian racial purity.

On the other side of the construct, Naipaul recognises the change from Creole to Afro-Caribbean, but sees it in pseudo-psychological terms as a 'primitive regression'. Describing Guyana in his journ-

alistic Black and White (1978) Naipaul had argued that:

As imperial ties and restraints dissolved, one reality, one self was lost. Something snapped. Wild dreams rushed in to fill the vacuum.

The wild dreams, 'the primitive impulses seething through the lower reaches of society' are the attempts to emphasise an African dimension to Caribbean life. Once the imperial superego has gone, the savage id rushes back to seize the reins.

That process is already underway in Naipaul's fictitious but barely disguised state of Cuyama. Dina Mallingham fears that:

...in a place like this we may, in some distant future, be permanently taken over, permanently possessed. Evolution in reverse, if you like. In a hundred years we might all be stamping and pawing the ground, biting off the heads of live chickens...

The other part of the novel where the African presence is equated with the collapse of restraint is that which deals with Dina's visits to 'Madame' the black spiritualist. At one level they represent Dina's own temptation to give way to the atavism which she fears is Cuyama's fate, though as I have argued in Chapter Twelve, it is also possible to see Dina's contact with Madame as a positive attempt to restore contact with a painfully repressed id or libido, strangled by her father's struggle to impose order and respectability on his family, a struggle symbolised by his change of name on conversion from Mahalingam (literally great phallus) to Mallingham with its upper-class English associations of staid respectability. However, there is little else in the novel that even hints at the possibility that the individual or a society can achieve wholeness, that superego and id, the principles of order and energy or the cultures of Indians and Afro-Caribbeans can come into a state of creative interplay or balance.

How can the attraction and the persistence of this construct in Indo-Caribbean writing be explained? Clearly no one explanation is likely to be adequate. The construct itself, as I argued at the beginning of the chapter, has deep significance across human cult-

ures and through time. All complex societies are concerned with the relationship between order and stability on the one hand and energy and fluidity on the other. In a society such as Trinidad their relationship is particularly acute when order and structure can be seen in origin to be externally imposed and repressive, but where development requires social responsibility and a willingness to defer immediate satisfactions. If it is accepted that such concerns have set the agenda for the way writers have looked at society, then it is not difficult to see why the construct has seemed so pertinent.

Secondly, in a period when Indians and Blacks have been in a competitive relationship, and where each group's stereotype of itself and the ethnic other have served to maintain political boundaries, the association between the construct and the ethnic contrast is scarcely surprising.

Thirdly, it is possible to argue that even if the kind of descriptions of rural Indian life or urban Afro-Creole life to be found respectively in such studies as Morton Klass's East Indians in Trinidad (1961)³⁰ and Martin Lieber's Street Scenes: Afro-American Culture in Urban Trinidad (1981)³¹, do not apply to more than a minority of Indians and Blacks, they can be held to represent 'ideal types' which relate to opposite ends of the construct. Klass's work describes a highly structured world with strongly defined internal and external boundaries; Lieber's a fluid world in which process and action is much more important than structure. To the extent that Indo-Trinidadian writers have perceived their relationship to both cultures in these terms, it is again not surprising that they should have made the identification of Indian culture with order or restriction and of Creole culture with energy or disorder.

Fourthly, it would be generally true to say that Indo-Trinidadian political culture has tended to be conservative, certainly in

comparison to the more radical Indo-Guyanese political tradition. Some of the reasons for this difference are suggested in Chapter Seven. It would not seem remarkable then that whereas Indo-Trinidadian writing has tended to view society through the perspective of the construct of order and focussed on ethnic difference, Indo-Guyanese writing, as discussed in Chapter Fifteen, has tended to stress the need for both radical change and ethnic unity.

However, what the fiction discussed in this chapter shows very clearly is that it is virtually impossible for any Indo-Caribbean writer to define an 'Indian' identity except in relationship to that of the Black creole population. This has had both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand it has led to the kind of contrastive stereotyping described in this chapter, in which each group is mistakenly seen as being at opposite ends of a static contrast. Thus, it can be argued that Indo-Caribbean writers have, for instance, failed to see the Dionysian elements within their own culture. On the other hand, the need to compare can be seen as part of a more positive outward-looking impulse. Ismith Khan, in particular, shows that comparison need not be invidious, that it can reveal the possibility of mutual need.