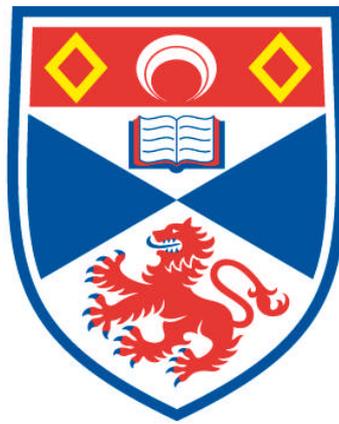


**THE CREATIVE WRITER AND WEST INDIAN SOCIETY :
JAMAICA 1900-1950**

Claudette Rhonda Cobham-Sander

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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JAMAICA 1900-1950

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THE CREATIVE WRITER AND WEST INDIAN SOCIETY: JAMAICA 1900-1950

Thesis Abstract

Literary surveys of the West Indies have usually tended to generalise about the region rather than concentrating on developments unique to specific islands or territories. Although these surveys are complemented by detailed studies of the life and work of individual authors, such studies tend to concentrate on writers whose major work has been produced since 1950. This thesis tries to correct some of the omissions and distortions these emphases have created by examining the creative writing produced in a single island, Jamaica, during the period 1900-1950.

Each chapter of the thesis is devoted to a special aspect of Jamaican creative writing before 1950, which either distinguishes it from writing in other parts of the West Indies, or helps to explain trends that have been put forward as typical of the region as a whole. In Chapter One the relationship between the creative writer and his society is discussed, and the conclusions drawn in the course of this chapter are used to account for characteristic features of Jamaican creative writing discussed in subsequent chapters. Chapter Two describes literary activity in Jamaica between 1900 and 1950. Attempts at establishing outlets for the publication of local creative writing are given special attention and publishing trends in local literary magazines and journals are analysed. In Chapter Three distinctive stylistic features in the work of Jamaican writers are discussed. Special emphasis is given to the writer's use of dialect and the way in which this has been influenced by social and political factors. Chapter Four concentrates on the presentation of women in early Jamaican literature. Patterns of development traced in Jamaican literature are used to rationalise typical characteristics of later West Indian writing about women. The Final Chapter of the thesis contrasts four fictional versions of the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion. The Jamaican writer's use of the past is compared with the treatment of history in the work of authors elsewhere in the Caribbean.

The Conclusion of the thesis attempts to bring together the various characteristics identified as "typically" Jamaican in the course of the study and to place Jamaican creative writing in the context of literary trends in the West Indies as a whole.



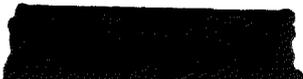
I hereby declare that the Ph.D. thesis on "The Creative Writer and West Indian Society: Jamaica 1900-1950" has been composed by myself, that the work of which it is a record has been done by myself, and that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a full-time Ph.D. candidate by the Faculty of Arts, University of St. Andrews, with effect from October 1975.



C. Rhonda Cobham-Sander

I hereby state as supervisor of this thesis that the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations (Ph.D.) have been fulfilled.



Professor Peter C. Bayley

To the Memory of My Father

and

for R. W. S.

THE CREATIVE WRITER AND WEST INDIAN SOCIETY:

JAMAICA 1900 - 1950

by

C. RHONDA COBHAM-SANDER

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of Arts of
the University of St. Andrews
in Fulfilment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

University of St. Andrews

October 1981

PREFACE

Like the writers whose work and attitudes this thesis discusses, I too have had my patrons. The funds which made this research possible came from the Sir James Irvine Trust, which is financed by Sir Harold Mitchell in memory of the part played by the Scotsman James Irvine in establishing the University of the West Indies. The scholarship provides for a graduate of the University of the West Indies to undertake postgraduate work at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. I would like to thank Mr. D.P. Dorward, Acting Secretary of the University of St. Andrews; Professor Roy Augier, Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies; and Mr. Maxwell Mair of the scholarship's Board of Trustees; each of them, in their different official capacities, has taken an interest in my welfare and ensured that all material problems connected with my support and research have been taken care of over the years.

At St. Andrews, my work was supervised first by Professor Alexander Falconer and then by Professor Peter Bayley. I am very grateful for their interest and assistance, and for their willingness to involve themselves in what must have seemed a rather obscure field of research.

The research on my thesis topic was mostly done in London and in Jamaica. I am particularly indebted to the librarians at the University of the West Indies and the Institute of Jamaica, who helped me to locate and copy hundreds of pages of newspaper articles and manuscripts. Since leaving Jamaica, their help has been supplemented by that of Mr. Mervyn Morris, Head of the Department of English at Mona, who has supplied me with material from the Institute and from his personal collection of research material on early Jamaican writing, often at his own expense and always at very short notice. To him, and to other members of the English Department who have assisted in various ways, I would like to say a special thank you.

The final draft of this thesis was written in Bayreuth. I would like to thank Frau Erika Duncanson for her careful typing

of the manuscript and Frau Ingeborg Schönfeldt, who gave generous help at the last minute with final changes and corrections.

Finally I would like to thank my husband and colleague Reinhard Sander, whose help and support at every stage of this project has been invaluable. We first met as a result of our mutual research interests and over the years the checking of quotations and footnotes has become a regular feature of our life together. Apart from allowing me to share his wide knowledge of West Indian literature, I am particularly indebted to Reinhard for his scrupulous attention to detail in helping me prepare my thesis for typing and submission.

My research has brought me into contact with many critics of West Indian literature as well as several West Indian creative writers. In spite of their busy schedules and established reputations, most of these writers and critics have taken time off to discuss my research and to help me work out approaches to the material. This help has been deeply appreciated and I only hope that the final product of my research will do justice to their investment of time and ideas.

Bayreuth

September, 1981

CONTENTS

Prefacev
Introduction1
Chapter I: Protest and Patronage in Jamaican Society: Social and Political Influences on Culture12
Chapter II: Publishing and Literary Activity in Jamaica64
Chapter III: Language and Style117
Chapter IV: Women in Jamaican Literature 1900-1950195
Chapter V: The Morant Bay Rebellion: History as the Basis for Fiction253
Conclusion301
Bibliography314

INTRODUCTION

In his pioneering study of The West Indian Novel and Its Background (1970) Kenneth Ramchand constructs a theory of West Indian society which has been frequently used by subsequent literary critics as a means of accounting for the emergence of West Indian literature and of explaining the society from which it arose. Ramchand starts from the premise that West Indian society was "anti-literary" and traces this hostility to literature to negative attitudes towards colonial life within the privileged classes and limited educational aims among the masses.¹ He sees the comparatively late development of a West Indian literary tradition as one product of these tendencies and rationalises the mass migration of creative writers to London after 1950 as a natural reaction to what he terms "life without fiction" in the English-speaking West Indies. While singling out early twentieth century novels like H.G. de Lisser's Jane's Career (1913), Alfred Mendes's Pitch Lake (1934) and C.L.R. James's Minty Alley (1936) as important because they "establish continuities between works from this period [1903-1945] and those better known ones that seemed to burst forth suddenly in the city of exile", a relatively small proportion of his study is devoted to this early writing.² Claude McKay, the one writer of this period whose work is treated in detail, is considered primarily within the American context where his prose fiction was produced. Though he acknowledges the importance of other Jamaican writers like Thomas MacDermot and H.G. de Lisser as precursors of later literary development, Ramchand dismisses the idea of a "school" of early Jamaican fiction.

Ramchand's estimate of early West Indian writing is reiterated in Lloyd Brown's study of West Indian Poetry (1978), which attempts to do for poetry what Ramchand's book has done for the West Indian novel. Brown dismisses the poetry of individuals such as MacDermot out of hand. In the sweeping generalisations of his opening chapter, "The Beginnings: 1760 to 1940"

only those writers whose ethnic origins and social concerns are established as bona fide (for example Claude McKay and Una Marson) are given sustained treatment. Brown's concern with ethnic identity and social commitment echoes the perspective on Jamaican literature taken in official circles in Jamaica where the co-incident emergence of the nationalist movement and a new generation of West Indian writers in 1940 is seen as evidence of a socio-cultural revolution within the island. Articles on Jamaican literature and society such as Mervyn Morris's "When a Freedom Was Released and the Desert Flowered'" and V.S. Reid's "The Cultural Revolution after 1938" project a view of West Indian literature which tends to present creative writing in Jamaica as only becoming worthy of its name after the change in political direction in the island from colony to self-governing nation.³ Such a view often seems to imply that the literature written after a certain date - 1938 or 1944 as the case may be - is different in tone and direction from the early writing as well as superior in quality.

While it is true, as Ramchand claims, that West Indian writing as a whole only established itself internationally between 1950 and 1970, and, as Brown claims, that West Indian poetry only acquired its distinctive original idiom as writers became aware of their racial origins and national identity, there are many dangers involved in transferring general statements about how these developments proceeded to the consideration of specific literatures within the English-speaking Caribbean. In the first place the application of such generalisations distorts the internal patterns of literary development unique to the individual territories: these range from the small but steady stream of poetry in Guyana during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries distinguished by its preoccupation with the Guyanese landscape and the region's history, to the isolated burst of achievement in prose fiction in Trinidad before the Second World War where the concern was with contemporary urban reality rather than landscape or history.

In addition, certain generalisations especially with respect to Jamaica are actually contrary to the facts. For example, though Jamaica has produced a number of competent poets and novelists

the most important writers occur in both the early and later periods. Indeed a close examination of the literary criticism available reveals that no post-1950s Jamaican writer is included in the list of 5 or 6 West Indian writers whose work has attained the status of West Indian classics.⁴ Among the next ten or twelve writers of achievement, the Jamaican novelists who figure most prominently are Claude McKay, Roger Mais and V.S. Reid, all of whom are considered important for work done before 1950 or, in the case of Mais, for work published before 1955. Instead of a pattern of literary dearth followed by a creative outpouring in the post-1950s period, a close examination of the Jamaican literary scene reveals a continuous tradition of literary activity which has had its peaks of achievement before and after 1950.

The pattern of migration away from a "life without fiction", postulated by Ramchand for the West Indies in general, is also unrepresentative in the case of Jamaica. While it is true that many Jamaican writers have spent periods of between two and five years abroad during their adult life, most of these writers returned home. The one major exception, Claude McKay, occurs in the pre-1950 period, and his migration took him to America rather than England. In the case of another long-term migrant - George Campbell - his departure from Jamaica rather than releasing his creative muse resulted in thirty years of almost unbroken silence as a published writer. Not only have Jamaican writers in general tended to stay at home or return to the island after short periods abroad, Jamaican society has also nurtured the talents of other West Indian writers since 1950. The list of non-Jamaican writers whose work has developed during residence in Jamaica includes such widely divergent figures as the poets Edward Brathwaite (Barbados), Derek Walcott (St. Lucia) and Wayne Brown (Trinidad), the dramatist Slade Hopkinson (Guyana) and the novelist Garth St. Omer (St. Lucia). For most of these writers the point of reference within Jamaica has been the University of the West Indies, but their work reflects in part a concern with specifically Jamaican issues.

It would seem therefore that Jamaica deviates from the general trends throughout the West Indies in certain important respects. Firstly, its best writing is spread over a period before and after the start of the nationalist movement in the 1940s; secondly, its writers have opted more often to stay within the society than to migrate; thirdly, though the quality of the writing in general improves after 1950, Jamaican writers have seldom achieved the virtuosity or acclaim accorded to such major West Indian writers as Edward Brathwaite, Derek Walcott, Wilson Harris, V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming or Jean Rhys. This thesis attempts to show that such deviation from the norm within Jamaica is not merely a geographical accident, but is actually a reflection of specific cultural and historical factors which, though not uniquely Jamaican, have worked together in the Jamaican situation to produce marked variations of the general pattern of literary development in the Caribbean as a whole. Each chapter of the thesis looks at a typical concern or influence which has been established as representative within the West Indian literary scene and attempts to assess the degree to which the Jamaican situation conforms to or deviates from the norm. The study covers the period 1900 to 1950 as it was during this time that most of the trends observed in the later literature were established. This chronological span also allows for a comparison between the early writing and the writing after 1938, which is the earliest date usually given for the emergence of modern Jamaican literature.

In Chapter One social and political influences on culture during the fifty years covered are discussed. The chapter's title "Protest and Patronage in Jamaican Society" opposes the two main socio-cultural currents by which I have tried to account for the writer's self-image and his relationship to his society. While the element of protest is something which Jamaican writing shares to a degree with writing in other parts of the Caribbean the extent to which personal patronage of aspiring writers by influential expatriates affected the development of attitudes to writing in Jamaica has often been overlooked.⁵ Consequently

most of the chapter is taken up with an examination of the relationship between patrons of the Arts in Jamaica and their protégés and an attempt is made to assess the degree to which this element of patronage influenced the society's attitudes towards its writers as well as the writer's attitudes towards his art and his society. The conclusions drawn in the course of this chapter are re-iterated and extended in the rest of the thesis and could be said to provide the hypothetical framework on which the argument of the thesis is constructed.

In each of the other chapters of the study an aspect of early Jamaican literature is examined. In Chapter Two the emphasis is bibliographical, and an attempt is made to establish a case for at least three distinct periods of significant literary activity in the period covered, each with its own claims to consideration at an ideological and aesthetic level. Details of local publishing experiments are given particular importance, especially where they seem to suggest that the writers saw themselves as operating within a particular tradition or felt that they had a specific mission with respect to their societies. Apart from my own reading of early newspapers and journals, this chapter draws on two bibliographical studies already in existence: Alvona Alleyne's paper on "Literary Publishing in the West Indies" and Judith Richards' "Literary Activity in Jamaica 1900-1950", which was submitted as a final-year Caribbean study towards a B.A. degree at the University of the West Indies in 1974. Both Alleyne and Richards approach their work primarily as librarians and do not attempt a detailed analysis of the material they list from a literary point of view. Richards does characterise some of the magazines and a number of the individuals on which her work touches, but I have tried to go beyond this and to use publication trends and aims to support my interpretation of literary trends within the groups discussed.

Chapter Three is perhaps the most crucial section of the study as it examines the use of language in the creative writing produced during the period under discussion. Here again three periods of writing, distinguished by the atti-

tudes of the writers to Jamaican society and their attitudes to Jamaican dialect are examined, and the achievement of the earlier writers is compared to that of the writers of the late 1930s and 1940s. While this chapter cannot hope to offer the kind of detailed analysis of the style of individual writers contained in such articles as Winnifred Grandison's "The Prose Style of Roger Mais" (1974), it does attempt to treat minor authors thoroughly and to place better known writers in the perspective of the stylistic concerns of their times so that their achievements and limitations can be seen as responses to problems they shared equally with their less well-known literary contemporaries. The conclusion of this chapter attempts to relate the discussion of various attitudes to language within Jamaican literary circles to literary developments in other parts of the Caribbean.

Whereas Chapters II and III concentrate on ways in which the pattern of development in Jamaica differs from that in the West Indies as a whole, Chapter IV looks at an aspect of Jamaican literature which, though superficially different from modern trends, is closely connected to developments elsewhere in the Caribbean. Post-1950s West Indian writing is characteristically centred around single male protagonists with female characters appearing in supporting roles and often being used as symbolic extensions of male characters. In early Jamaican literature it was the female rather than the male characters who provided the focus of attention in fiction as well as poetry. This chapter attempts to account for the movement away from the female protagonist in Jamaican literature and West Indian literature as a whole and to show why the custom of presenting male and female aspirations as irreconcilable became a feature of the writing.

Chapter V returns to a relatively unique feature of Jamaican literature - the concern with specific historical events rather than the general concern with history characteristic of West Indian writing. The treatment of the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 in the work of four Jamaican writers is considered. An

attempt is made to illustrate how each reworking of the historical event reflects a further stage in the development of typical Jamaican concerns and contributes to the creation of the society's self image. Unlike the other chapters in which most works are treated partially, depending on their relevance to the theme under discussion, Chapter V attempts a detailed analysis of a limited number of texts. It makes use of three pieces of work which have received very little critical attention to date: H.G. de Lisser's novel Revenge, Claude McKay's poem "Gordon to the Oppressed Natives" and Roger Mais's play George William Gordon, as well as the better known novel by V.S. Reid, New Day. A fifth treatment of the Morant Bay Rebellion by Arthur Nicholas has had to be omitted because of my inability to locate a copy of the text.

The conclusion of the thesis summarises the findings of each of the chapters and tries to piece together a comprehensive picture of the relationship between writer and society in Jamaica during the period 1900 to 1950. An attempt is made to postulate how the patterns of development noted during this period have continued to characterise Jamaican writing since the 1950s, and the extent to which the Jamaican situation in spite of its peculiarities remains consistent with the patterns of development noted in the region as a whole.

As its title suggests, this thesis confines itself to work written in Jamaica by Jamaicans between 1900 and 1950. These limits exclude for the most part the work of expatriate Jamaicans such as Walter Adolphe Roberts and Eric Walrond, except where their work offers useful comparisons to that produced by their contemporaries within Jamaica. Claude McKay's Jamaican short stories and his novel Banana Bottom written during his years in America, though treated in more detail, are also used predominantly to point the contrast between his approach and that of resident writers. However, McKay's early poetry, written before he left Jamaica, is treated in full. The only works from outside the period, chronologically, that are discussed in any detail are two of the novels of Roger Mais. Their inclusion is

justified because of the fact that most of Mais's writing was done during the 1940s, and his death in 1955 makes it more practical to deal with the entire body of his work. By contrast, the novelist V.S. Reid's later publications The Leopard (1958) and, even more so, The Jamaicans (1976) seem to belong to a different age and social context and are omitted accordingly. The chronological sequence of the material covered in each chapter has the disadvantage of encouraging repetition. However, I have attempted to confine my comments on a particular work or group of works to a single chapter rather than spreading them over a number of areas. In some instances this has not been possible, and the discussion of Reid's novel New Day, for example, is taken up at various points in three chapters, although in each a different aspect of the work has been dealt with. Whenever such overlaps occur I have tried to provide a certain amount of internal cross-referencing so that the discussion of the work is carried out in the thematic framework of the chapter as well as within the context of earlier or later comments on the work in the thesis as a whole.

Although the title of the thesis refers to all forms of creative writing, the emphasis is placed on poetry and fiction, and only one play - George William Gordon - is discussed in any depth though there are occasional references to others. Apart from the difficulty of finding reliable manuscripts the limited treatment of drama reflects my personal opinion that drama requires other tools for its analysis than those of the literary critic and, especially within the context of literary history, it seemed fruitless to attempt to discuss plays without including a description of the development of theatre during the period, which would have been outside the scope of the thesis. Short stories have also received relatively less attention as most of the points they could be used to illustrate were better dealt with in a discussion of major prose works or poems by the same writers.

One of the most important and rewarding aspects of my research was the discovery of the wealth of literary material con-

tained in Jamaican newspapers and occasional publications. In my opinion the study of the creative writing contained in these local publications and the analysis of the trends they suggest has been the most important aspect of original research undertaken in this thesis. The material covered includes in some cases work that has since been anthologised. By following through the patterns suggested by the timing and social context of the works' original appearance, however, it has been possible to gain a more accurate sense of the way in which trends were initiated or abandoned. In addition, a number of major works not formally considered have been included in the thesis as a result of my reading of local publications. Perhaps the most important of these are the novels by H.G. de Lisser which were only ever published in the pages of the annual magazine Planters' Punch. These refute conclusively the popular assumption that de Lisser ceased to write about contemporary Jamaican society after his first two novels. For example, the novel Myrtle and Money, published in 1941, three years before the death of the author, is as relevant and contemporaneous as de Lisser's first work, Jane's Career. While I concede that little of the material turned up in the course of my research deserves to be added to the canon of "Classic" West Indian Literature, an understanding of its concerns and techniques is, in my opinion, essential if the literary critic is fully to appreciate the trends that have contributed to the emergence of modern West Indian creative writing, as well as the unique factors which differentiate creative effort in the various parts of the English-speaking Caribbean. J.E. Clare McFarlane summarises this sentiment in one of his critical essays collected in The Challenge of Our Time:

Who has ever taken the trouble to study the verse which has appeared over a number of years in the periodical press? Who has cared to analyse it and assess any spiritual value it may possess? Who has had sufficient sympathy to understand its aspirations? It is a fact that the local press is not sufficiently interested to be critical of the verse it accepts for publication, with the result that good verse and bad verse - some execrably bad - appear side by side; but it is the critic's business to be discriminating.⁶

This is the challenge I attempt to take up in my thesis.

Notes

¹See Kenneth Ramchand, The West Indian Novel and Its Background (London: Faber & Faber, 1970). In Part I of his study which he calls "Life without Fiction", Ramchand discusses popular education in the West Indies in the Nineteenth Century (pp. 1-19), and traces the development of materialistic attitudes to learning among West Indians. He quotes passages from V.S. Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas and The Mystic Masseur which demonstrate the way in which educational accomplishment came to be seen as synonymous with the ability to use impressive sounding words, and describes the ways in which prize scholars were groomed like race horses for scholarship exams. In his chapter on "The Whites and Cultural Absenteeism" (pp. 23-39) he goes on to discuss the European's rejection of the colonies as a cultural base, and the development of habits of dependency on the mother country.

²Ibid., p. 13.

³Mervyn Morris, "The Arts in Jamaica: When 'a Freedom Was Released and the Desert Flowered'", in Commonwealth, April/May, 1975, pp. 9-11, and V.S. Reid, "The Cultural Revolution in Jamaica after 1938", an address delivered at the Institute of Jamaica, c. 1978. The title of Morris's essay is taken from the politician Norman Manley's introduction to the Three Novels of Roger Mais (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966) which also reiterates this characteristic view of Jamaican literary development. Although elsewhere Morris has written with careful insight about pre-1938 Jamaican literature (see my bibliography), his emphasis remains on the achievement of "recovery and redefinition" which he sees as resulting from the 1938 upheavals. My argument is not so much with the incontrovertible fact that the theme and mood of the post-1938 writing was different, but with the implied assumption that the literature written after 1938 was free of the limitations which characterised the earlier work. Perhaps Reid acknowledges a connection between old and new politics and literature in his address when he reminds his listeners, "Even those two best among our political and social awakeners, N.W. Manley and his cousin Alexander Bustamante, were not immune to matters of King and Empire" (p. 3).

⁴"Classic" status is not easily judged in an area of literature which is less than a century old, and in which the best known writers are still alive. Eulalee Singh's bibliography of theses and dissertations on Caribbean literature (a University of the West Indies Caribbean Studies project, 1980) shows that the West Indian writers whose work has most often been treated in full-length books or dissertations for higher degrees are Claude McKay, Derek Walcott, Wilson Harris, V.S. Naipaul and Jean Rhys. Rhys and McKay seem to owe their position in this list to their reputations outside of the field of West Indian literary criticism - Rhys as a feminist writer and McKay as a writer of the Harlem Renaissance in America. On the other hand, although the work of George Lamming and Edward Brathwaite has received a great deal of critical attention in articles and shorter studies, neither writer appears in this

list - probably because their best critics have still to publish full-length studies on their work, which have been in progress for some time. Perhaps a more accurate though equally mechanical way of assessing "classical" status may be to consider those writers whose work is most often included in literary surveys of the region. If we take the following surveys and critical anthologies as representative: Edward Baugh (ed.), Critics on Caribbean Literature (1979), Lloyd Brown, West Indian Poetry (1978), Louis James (ed.), The Islands in Between (1968), Bruce King (ed.), West Indian Literature (1979), Kenneth Ramchand, The West Indian Novel and Its Background (1970), and Kenneth Ramchand, An Introduction to the Study of West Indian Literature (1976), then George Lamming, Wilson Harris, V.S. Naipaul, Derek Walcott and Edward Brathwaite would seem to be the writers whose work is usually considered essential to a study of West Indian literature. Claude McKay, Roger Mais, V.S. Reid and Jean Rhys are most often included in addition, with Samuel Selvon, Martin Carter, Louise Bennett, John Hearne, Edgar Mittelholzer, Michael Anthony and H.G. de Lisser forming a third, less intensively treated, group. Whether the writers who have attracted the most critical attention are the ones who are most often read is another matter!

⁵Samuel Omo Asein's article, "The Protest Tradition in West Indian Poetry: From George Campbell to Martin Carter", Jamaica Journal, VI, 2 (June, 1972) gives a thorough treatment of this theme while an interest in protest writing is also a major concern of Lloyd Brown's West Indian Poetry. For Jamaica, Rupert Lewis's article on "Roger Mais' Work as Social Protest and Comment", The Gleaner, 26 (March, 1967) and Leo Oakley's essay on "Patriotism in Jamaican Writing", Jamaica Journal, IV, 3 (September, 1970) are particularly relevant.

⁶J.E. Clare McFarlane, "The Poetry of Jamaica - I", in The Challenge of Our Time: A Series of Essays and Addresses (Kingston: The New Dawn Press, 1945), p. 180.

CHAPTER I

PROTEST AND PATRONAGE IN JAMAICAN SOCIETY: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCES ON CULTURE

In The Arts of an Island Ivy Baxter has summarised the relationship between African and European elements in Jamaican society before Emancipation in terms of each group's attitude to power:

Both... were in the process of change and both... seemed to have one factor in common - an understanding of the value of personal power and of the effects of group power. This power was limited for one part of the population, so they grew to know the lack of it. It was unrestrained among another section of the population, who¹ wished to maintain it at that level at all costs.

During slavery each section of the community developed forms of cultural expression which reflected this relationship. The "dominant" culture was the culture of the Europeans in the West Indies. It was based ultimately on cultural assumptions current in Europe during the major periods of colonial expansion, but it differed from European cultures in its arch-conservative attitude to aesthetic innovation and intellectual debate. In post-Renaissance Europe the artist was typically a gifted individual whose work, while reflecting the cultural milieu of his time, was equally likely to attack or uphold the moral and aesthetic conventions of his community. The old ideal of the artist as the keeper of his community's traditions and the voice of its representative ideals had begun to weaken in the leading European nations during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as European explorers moved outside of the physical and spiritual confines of the Old World. New discoveries and scientific developments transformed the society's perception of itself and its potential for change, creating a new relationship between the creative writer and his society. By the end of the nineteenth century the writer was increasingly perceived as an individual isolated from the common herd whose work often challenged his society's beliefs and forms of self-

rationalisation. In spite of this subversive potential, the creative writer in Europe was tolerated and his work was sought after even when the ideas it expressed were at odds with mainstream opinion within his society.

By contrast the man of letters in West Indian society before Emancipation was perceived as a threat to the dominant culture. It was feared that any display of disunity would be interpreted by the slaves as a sign of weakness and upset the balance of power. Such fears were not groundless. The rhetoric of the French Revolution as expressed in the writing of Abbé Raynal had given the slaves in San Domingue the spark they needed to ignite their successful revolt against slavery in 1791.² The fact that in most colonies the white population was vastly outnumbered by its slaves gave the latter a physical advantage in the event of all-out confrontation. To avoid such an event it was necessary for the dominant culture to preserve a facade of unanimity and omnipotence at all times. Accordingly, dissenting cultural elements within the dominant group had to be suppressed. Among the colonials self-satire and social protest were practically unknown in any form, though outside the region plays like The West Indian, performed in Drury Lane during the eighteenth century satirised West Indian Creoles mercilessly.^{2a} Once in the West Indies even writers who were critical of the Creole lifestyle tended to suppress their criticism of slavery. Elsa Goveia shows in The Historiography of the West Indies how the pressure to conform influenced even the more open-minded colonial historians of the nineteenth century. She draws attention for example to the way in which the fairly liberal Monk Lewis, in his Journal of a West India Proprietor (1834), allows himself only mildly deprecatory remarks about the system of slavery so that his work ultimately becomes an apologia for the system.³ The negative attitude toward social criticism and intellectual debate extended to attitudes towards education within the dominant group. Describing attitudes to education in Jamaica in the eighteenth century, an English observer comments:

Learning here is at the lowest Ebb; there is no public school in the whole Island, neither do they seem fond of the Thing; several large Donations have been made for such Uses but have never taken Effect. The Office of a Teacher is look'd upon as contemptible, and no Gentleman keeps Company with one of their Character; to read, write and cast up Accounts is all the Education they desire, and these are scurvily taught. A Man of any Parts or Learning that would employ himself in that Business would be despised and starve.

For the creative writer in particular the insistence on conformity within the dominant culture made it practically impossible to write well or convincingly about slave society without infringing on local taboos. Consequently in pre-Emancipation society practically no one attempted to write poetry or prose fiction. In his introduction to Our Ancestral Heritage, the second volume of his "Bibliography of the Roots of Culture in the English-speaking Caribbean", the poet/historian Edward Brathwaite ascribes the dearth of creative activity to "the physical and metaphysical effects of totalitarian slavery":

A system of unnatural domination of man by man, in which the dominated - already of a different colour and culture - were conceived of as un/men or man/machines; a process and concept which had the feedback effect of de/humanising the de/nominators. The result is reflected in this section of our bibliography where intellectual expression, when it becomes evident, is almost exclusively confined to practical treatises of plantation management and tropical disease; where imaginative literature is either simplistically and/or wantonly imitative of unsuitable models of the homeland and (therefore) almost always blind to the reality of the plantation Caribbean; and where histories and descriptive accounts are largely if unconsciously taken up with descriptions/explanations of the European's chief concept and creation, the slave.

Under the heading "Literature" in this section of his bibliography Brathwaite lists only seven creative works actually published in the West Indies before 1900. They include one novel of anonymous authorship called Montgomery or the West Indian Adventurer, some sketches of English manners and a collection of Persian love elegies. The most noteworthy entry is James Grainger's long poem The Sugar Cane. Grainger attempts to

celebrate this rather unidyllic crop in the neo-classical style favoured by Thompson, the author of The Seasons.⁶

The few creative works written during this period by West Indian Creoles or immigrants that take a critical view of the dominant group within slave society were published outside the region. In Jamaica: A Poem in Three Parts an anonymous planter publishing in London in 1777 attempts to apply the humanist ideals of the Enlightenment to the Jamaican situation.⁷ He explains his attitude to his subject matter in his preface:

Having gone to our principal settlement in the West Indies, at a very early period, I was no less captivated with the beauty of the island, the verdure of the country, and the deliciousness of the fruits, than I was disgusted with the severity of the inhabitants, the cruelty of the planters, and the miseries of the slaves. The first I here endeavour to celebrate; the last to condemn.

In spite of his criticism of the attitude of the planters the author stops short in the poem itself of an outright condemnation of the slave system, stressing instead the need for reform:

But if my lays can chace one captive sigh
Care from his breast, a tear wipe from his eye
Dispel one gloomy woe-defected brow,
Make one full heart with kind compassion flow
Torture award from one desponding slave,
Or one poor wretch from fire or gibbet save;
This is my utmost wish - the envy'd prize;
Above wealth, fame and honour, this my choice!

The poet's reformist ideals, though based on sincere philanthropic notions, are further motivated by clear pragmatic factors. In the "Epistle to a Friend", with which the work closes, the poet draws attention to the harmful consequences of cruel or repressive policies for the plantation economy's ultimate survival:

At each new crime this labours in my breast
And this each night denies a quiet rest
Some Afric chief will rise, who, scorning chains
Racks, tortures, flames, - excruciating pains
Will lead his injur'd friends to bloody fight
And in the flooded carnage take delight
Then dear repay us in some vengeful war
And give us blood for blood, and scar for scar.

The mixture of self-interest and genuine concern which informs the work of this anonymous planter anticipates the establishment

attitude of patronage towards non-white Jamaican writers of a later generation. Though this section of the poem is dated "Kingston, Jamaica, 20th May 1776", the author made no attempt to publish it in the colonies. He seems to have anticipated strong criticism for his sentiments from his fellow Jamaican planters, claiming as his epitaph the proud boast:

When freedom fir'd he sung his virgin lay,
And scorned to flatter cruel savage sway.

More writing in this vein was to appear in England during the abolition controversy at the beginning of the nineteenth century and it is conceivable that the views of the author quoted above were shared by a significant minority within the colonies. However, no other West Indian planter of this period gives voice to such sentiments in literary form; an indication of the extent to which the dominant culture was successful in maintaining a united front culturally in its attitude to the slave system.

Rather than encouraging intellectual debate or aesthetic innovation, the emphasis in pre-Emancipation society was placed on cultural forms which reflected the material superiority of the dominant group in a manner which could be appreciated by those it sought to dominate. The planters built vast, fortress-like houses on prominent sites on their estates: their taste in furniture and clothing was expensive and ostentatious; they delighted in an abundance of attendants and paramours and were famed among travellers for their sumptuous masques and lavish tables. The established church in the British West Indies provided little opposition to such worldly traits. Like the creative writer, the conscientious clergyman was viewed with suspicion. Attempts to attack the lifestyle of the dominant culture from a religious or moral viewpoint were considered as subversive as creative or political writing which criticised the system of slavery. On the whole the clergy adjusted to the demands of the West Indian situation and were often as hedonistic as the planters. H.G. de Lisser gives a fictional insight into the process of accommodation among West Indian clergymen of this period in The White Witch of Rosehall (1929). In response to a friend's query as to why he remains in the tropics Rider, a debauched clergyman, explains:

I suppose I drifted along till it was too late. I had nothing to return to, you see; I feared that if I went back to England there would no longer be a place there that I could make for myself. Once here, I was in a sort of prison. Turn me out into the free world again, and I should be at my wits' end. It was all cowardice and weakness, of course; and something worse. The life here, for a man like me, was infinitely easier than it could be in England. My duties were light, my pay was sufficient to keep me, and I could do what I pleased to a great extent without being called to account for it. I liked the life, at first; I didn't realise what it was leading me to. I liked the drink; I didn't grasp that it was making me a drunkard. When I did, I was down. And here am I.⁸

Power, its privileges and dangers were important factors on the other side of the colour line as well. The potential strength of the slave community lay in its ability to unite against the domination of the planters. The slaves' origins in traditional African societies where communal cultural forms took precedence over individual creativity gave them a natural advantage over their masters, for whom the creation of a group mentality went against European traditions of diversity and individual initiative. In their new environment the transported Africans quickly developed hostile group responses to the dominant power which helped protect them psychologically from the worst effects of domination and created traditions of active and passive resistance to slavery. In an attempt to prevent the cultural reinforcement of these hostile attitudes, the planters went to great lengths to suppress the use of African languages and customs. Slaves from the same tribe or language area in Africa were kept during their first "seasoning" years in the West Indies, and forms of creative expression which the Europeans associated with African militancy like drumming and dancing were periodically banned. The slaves reacted by modifying their lifestyle and customs so that superficially these reflected the culture of the master. This made it difficult for the essential features of the slave culture to be isolated and destroyed. Thus, as discussed in Chapter III, the slaves lost the ability to use African languages, but much that was essential to their former world view was transferred into the Creole languages they acquired. European dances,

songs and folk tales were adapted and sometimes used to satirise the dominant group. African stories and traditions were also modified to reflect the new realities of the slaves' situation: imitation and guile, the cornerstones of survival within slavery, assumed more important functions in the stories transferred into the Creole context than they had held within traditional African cultures. Anancy the spider man, for example, a mythical figure within several West African cultures associated with trickery, became the central character in the stories told by the Jamaican slaves. His name and the stories with which he is connected remain current in Jamaica today long after the names of most African gods or mythical figures have ceased to be recognisable within the folk tradition.

Imitation, however, implied flattery and, if taken too far, could cease to act as a cover for hostility toward the dominant group and become instead the expression of the individual slave's respect for the superior power by which he was enslaved. There can be no doubt that such ultimate accommodation of the slave to his situation did occur during slavery. Historians have speculated that this subservient attitude was most common among house slaves who were not as directly exposed to harsh treatment as their counterparts in the fields. Such a distinction may be invidious as it tends to obscure the complex interaction between hate and respect, envy and admiration, that would seem to be a general feature of any group's response to domination by another. What is perhaps clearer is that given the choice of improving his condition by group action, aimed at radically undermining the dominant culture, or individual action, aimed at improving the relationship between one particular slave and his superiors, certain slaves chose individual amelioration above group liberation. West Indian history contains many examples of abortive slave revolts which failed because the group's actions were betrayed to the authorities by an individual slave. Often the most able members of the slave community in terms of European skills were the ones furthest removed from the traditions of hostility and resistance of the slave culture.

The movement away from a cultural position of group solidarity in an attempt to establish individual worth may be observed at a literary level in the work of Francis Williams. Williams, a free Negro, was born in Jamaica in 1700. He was sent to school in England by the Duke of Montagu as part of an experiment "to discover whether, by proper cultivation, and a regular course of tuition at school and university, a Negro might not be found as capable of literature as a white person." After studying Classics and Mathematics at Cambridge University, Williams returned to Jamaica, where he ultimately became a schoolmaster. Edward Long, in his History of Jamaica (1774) records that Williams often wrote poems welcoming new governors to Jamaica. Long has preserved one of these, a Latin ode addressed to Governor Haldane, in his account of Williams's life. The ode opens with stylised compliments to the Governor, extolling his prowess in war and prophesying for Jamaica an era of peace and plenty under his administration. This is followed by a conventional disclaimer in which the poet declares himself unworthy of singing the praises of so celebrated a figure. One of the reasons the poet cites for his difficulties in fulfilling his task is his colour:

Believe me, it is not my task, warrior dear to Mars!
Minerva forbids an Aethiop to extol the deeds of
generals.

However, the poet goes on to reject these restrictions, claiming that Virtue, Prudence and Art know no colour. Thus reassured, he addresses his muse:

Why fear, why hesitate, my Muse, though of the blackest
hue, to ascend the lofty home and palace of the Caesar
of the west? Go and greet him, nor let it be a source
of shame to you that you bear a white body in a black
skin.

Although he asserts that colour is of no importance in matters of art and morals, Williams still finds it necessary to justify his artistic endeavours by claiming to be "white". On the one hand, his assertion of his literary merits can be seen as an act of protest against his devaluation within the society. On the other hand, his assumption of an ultimate white standard against

which he could be measured suggests that the poet accepted the negative evaluation of the negro race as a whole put forward by the dominant group, seeing his personal situation as exceptional and therefore deserving of special consideration.

Using the examples of Francis Williams and the anonymous author of Jamaica, it is possible to postulate a series of relationships between the creative writer and his society in pre-Emancipation Jamaica. At both ends of the social scale there existed closely knit groups whose cultural forms were basically non-literary: the planters with their exaggerated displays of material wealth and physical power; and the slaves, with their dynamic traditions of music, dance and story, containing covert expressions of hostility toward the planter class. The writer, on the rare occasion when he did appear, occupied a middle ground which isolated him in certain respects from the cultural mainstream. In the case of the white writer this isolation was only superficial as, although he may have been willing to challenge his society's mores, this challenge seldom went further than a demand for limited reforms. His criticism of his peers was based on humanist notions current within Europe rather than on the profound hostility toward the dominant group present within the slave community. In the case of the writer from the black community, the act of writing not only separated him in terms of education from his group as a whole, it also tended to produce a movement away from the aspirations and cultural forms of the black community and towards the values and attitudes of the dominant group. Thus, while the ^{white} writer is prepared to criticise the dominant group and offer a degree of patronage or protection to the black community, the black writer, although he protests against personal discriminatory treatment, makes no attempt to speak on behalf of fellow blacks, and appeals for recognition and redress to the very system of values which discriminates against him. Both types of writers, much more than their European counterparts, allow their work to be circumscribed by the demands of the dominant group.

Williams and the anonymous author of Jamaica were both exceptional for their time, but after Emancipation similar individuals became recognisable types within Jamaican society. The end of slavery increased the number of expatriates in Jamaica whose views were similar to those of the anonymous planter. Many of these were non-conformist clergymen, products of the abolition movement in England, who were anxious to extend spiritual patronage to the former slaves. Like the Duke of Montagu, Williams's patron, they felt that the black man's claim to consideration within his society would be enhanced if it could be proven that he could absorb and benefit from a formal education. The non-conformist denominations controlled educational programmes among the former slaves and encouraged a movement away from slave-derived cultural practices.¹⁰ Whereas in other colonies divisions between Catholic and Protestant factions within the establishment or rivalries between the conformist and non-conformist sects were marked, the clergy in Jamaica by the end of the nineteenth century were united in their approaches to local problems and in their attitudes toward the black community. Several clergymen were among the founding members of the Institute of Jamaica and many of them took an enthusiastic interest in local artistic endeavour. Enos Nuttall, who became one of the first locally based clergymen to be appointed Archbishop of Jamaica, was one of the more prominent clergymen who took an interest in the Arts. Like most of his colleagues, his interest was restricted to those cultural forms which reflected the moral and cultural norms of the dominant group. Forms of expression associated with slavery were tolerated when they could be used to attract the local population to Christian standards and values. Nuttall's mixture of evangelical fervour and Eurocentric bias is expressed in his comments on the native religious sect based in August Town and led by Bedward at the turn of the century. While many members of the Jamaican establishment saw this re-emergence of African influenced religious practices as evil and seditious, Nuttall's attitude was one of benevolent concern:

Our methods of work are right in the main ... /but/ we may need to adapt them in points of detail to the needs of some of our people... What of the unreached and ignorant multitudes from whom, in the main, the occasional outbursts of superstition like August Town and Haddo and Moneague are fed? Are we going to do our duty by these outside multitudes and those other multitudes who are only on the fringes of our churches?¹¹

Men like Nuttall fought culturally hostile elements within the black community with benevolence rather than with brute force as the planters had formerly done, with the result that cultural forms associated with slavery came to be seen as evil because they were opposed to the efforts of such kind and considerate benefactors. The cultural limitations of this position, however, are noted by Sydney Olivier, who was Governor of Jamaica while Nuttall was Archbishop. In a letter to George Bernard Shaw, written while he was working on his documentary Jamaica the Blessed Island (1936), Olivier confides the difficulties with which he felt himself confronted in assessing the role of the church in contemporary Jamaica:

The ex-slaves were helped only by Christian missionaries, and with great profit to their development: but with the result that all the best people in such a community (for instance, the late Archbishop Nuttall, who was a really great man) are frightfully bigoted evangelical formalists, and indeed, practically fundamentalists: so that I find it very difficult to write honestly and conscientiously about civilisation in Jamaica as I am trying to do.¹²

The strength of conformist pressures within colonial society may be gauged when one considers that no hint of criticism of the church or the Archbishop comes over in Olivier's book, although within the context of English politics Olivier's progressive socialist ideals and agnostic leanings would have placed him on the opposite side of the political fence to a clergyman of Nuttall's ilk.

Olivier himself represented another influential minority within the Jamaican establishment which patronised the Arts and displayed a benevolent attitude toward the black population: the expatriate administration. The introduction of the Crown Colony system of Government after 1865 had limited the power of the

local plantocracy to control the financial affairs of the local assembly, thus giving the governor and his executive a freer hand in introducing reforms intended to benefit the former slaves. Between 1865 and 1882 Jamaica was administered by a series of "reconstruction" governors who were able to implement several reforms which redounded to the advantage of the black population. Men like Sir John Peter Grant, Sir Henry Blake and Sir Anthony Musgrave were able to improve communications within the colony, update the civil service machinery and increase the allocation of funds for the education of the black community. Unlike their counterparts in other less important West Indian colonies, where high officials were often drawn from the dregs of the manpower available to the Colonial Office in England, the Jamaican governors of this period were intellectually able men who took a lively interest in the Arts.¹³ It was Musgrave, for instance, who founded the Institute of Jamaica, while Governor Blake was responsible for the Great Exhibition of 1891 which encouraged literary effort by creating a sense of national pride among Jamaicans. Thomas MacDermot's poem, "Jamaica: A Song for 1891" was inspired by this event and is probably the first poem of the modern era by a Jamaican.

Sydney Olivier can be considered the last of these reconstruction governors though his terms of office, first as Colonial Secretary (1900-1904) and then Governor (1907-1913) are separated from those of the other governors mentioned by twenty years. Olivier had had wide experience of West Indian affairs before becoming governor. During the early 1890s he had spent the best part of a year in Honduras resolving a dispute between the Governor and the Assembly, as well as a similar period as Auditor General in the Leeward Islands. As Secretary of the Norman Commission into the state of the sugar industry during 1896 and 1897 he was able to gain a first-hand impression of the social and economic problems of the region, so that he came to the governorship in Jamaica with an intimate knowledge of West Indian affairs. One can trace the development of his ideas about the region, and its inhabitants from the early days in Honduras, when he wrote to his friend and colleague Sydney Webb:

This place is a nigger's paradise. He won't take his hands out of his pockets for less than six shillings a day, having no reason to do so; there are no poor. The mahogany and logwood cutters get a good margin¹⁴ of profit, the planters fail - one after another.

to his identification with the black peasant farmers against the interests of the planters seven years later; expressed in a letter to his wife:

I think we shall have to clear away the plantation system. It hinders development, and though sugar is the most valuable crop these places can produce ... it is rather too dangerous a crop under present circumstances for one to wish to see it remain in perpetuity to provide these recurrent crises; especially since for the negro and coolie to develop at all they must come out of the plantation system and become small owners and cultivators for themselves.¹⁵

Olivier's political and economic views were partly the result of his association with the Fabian Socialist movement in England which, with his friends Sydney Webb and George Bernard Shaw, he had helped to found near the end of the nineteenth century. It was a brand of Socialism that adapted well to the demands of a liberal conscience in dealing with colonialism. Olivier's application of the Fabian principle informs one of his earliest works, published soon after he had completed his first appointment in Jamaica as Colonial Secretary. In White Capital and Coloured Labour he compares the various forms of exploitation of black labour in Africa and the New World. Here as elsewhere he is extremely critical of British land policies in Kenya and of the system of Apartheid being developed in South Africa. His criticism of the function of White Capital in Africa leads him to exaggerate by contrast the rate at which social and economic integration was occurring in the West Indies. Though he did not credit the West Indian planters with purer motives than their African counterparts, he seemed to feel that with the partial collapse of the plantation system after Emancipation and the growth of a peasant proprietor class in Jamaica, the germ for the creation of a better society had been implanted. In advocating the typical Fabian Socialist ideal of small ownership however, Oliver loses sight of the fact that in many respects the old unequal distribu-

tion of power remained intact. The planters, now turned commercial entrepreneurs, still controlled the prices the small peasants could receive for their produce and they were as much at odds culturally and economically with the peasantry as they had been with their slaves before Emancipation.

The consequences of his limited analysis can be seen in Olivier's major work, Jamaica the Blessed Island (1936) which, though it contained penetrating and often damning criticism of the establishment, was hailed as a book which championed the cause of the plantocracy. Olivier himself was aware of the discrepancy, as he complained in a letter to H.G. Wells in 1942: "I wrote a book on Jamaica which no English reviewer understood, thinking it was a guide book."¹⁶ Much of the misunderstanding was probably due to Olivier's final assessment of the colonial system in Jamaica as an imperfect but useful and even necessary institution. He takes it for granted that the rising standards of education among the non-white population would eventually create a society in which "the African is fully capable of progressing ... to take his part in every vocation of a civilised European community." The possibility that the black Jamaican might wish to put his education to a different use, even one inimical to the interests of the "civilised European community", does not seem to have occurred to Olivier. Jamaica the Blessed Island was published only months before the outbreak of serious socio-political upheavals in the entire West Indian region, yet it betrays no awareness of the possibility of imminent confrontation.

Within the limits of his understanding of the contradictions inherent within the colonial system however, Olivier was a sympathetic and sincere champion of the Jamaican masses and an influential patron of the Arts. During his term of office as Colonial Secretary he scandalised the local establishment by giving public lectures on the Jamaican economy, in which he was often critical of official policy. On account of his forthright attitude he was lionised by a small articulate group of young Jamaicans of the upper and middle classes for whom his encouragement of intellectual debate was a heady new experience. Olivier's connections in the

literary world as well as his personal interest in creative writing - he once published a rather obscure novel under a pseudonym - made him an influential figure in local literary circles. He was one of the earliest critics to perceive the literary dearth within Jamaican society brought about by the insistence on forms of expression which denigrated the black population while vaunting the military strength and physical supremacy of the dominant group. Commenting in Jamaica the Blessed Island on writing about Jamaica, he characterises it as "superficial, conventional and barren of original insight":

/The writers/ too often indulge in an unbalanced habit of gushing eulogy ... a shallow, pictorial, ignorant and often vulgar and frivolous fashion of writing about the men and women who form the mass of the population and their reputed psychology, habits and superstitions, and in a recurrent unintelligent serving up of old dull legends and antiquarianisms, or references to the exploits of Rodney and Nelson, Henry Morgan, the Maroons, Mrs. Palmer of Rose Hall, and so on, which ceased long ago to have any tittle of significance in the consciousness of the island community. I do not know of any really completely truthful and unaffected book about Jamaica, either as a country or as a society. Mr. de Lisser's novels, a regrettably incomplete¹⁷ contribution, are much the best as far as they go.

During Olivier's years as Governor creative and literary activity began to take on a new direction within Jamaica and increasingly the writers involved were local rather than expatriate members of the community. There can be no doubt that the presence of this exceptionally gifted administrator was partly responsible for this development. It is worth noting that the two most important publications to come out of this era, de Lisser's Jane's Career (1913) and Claude McKay's Songs of Jamaica (1912) were both dedicated to Olivier.

Apart from the Church and the State, there were also individual expatriates who took an interest in the Arts in Jamaica before the First World War and helped foster local creative achievement. These included the journalist W.M. Livingstone, an important early influence on the writer Walter Adolphe Roberts, and the English journalist William Morrison whose encouragement of

MacDermot and members of the post-war Jamaica Poetry League is gratefully acknowledged in various League publications. The most important independent patron of this period was Walter Jekyll, an English folklorist who "discovered" and helped form the early poetic talent of Claude McKay. Jekyll was an eccentric English aristocrat who did not eat meat or believe in God. He had given up his comfortable life in England for a hermetic existence first in India, then in Jamaica where he collected folk songs, translated Schopenhauer from the German and wrote rationalist tracts. His friendship with the young McKay, who was the son of a black peasant proprietor, seems to have been based on the younger man's receptiveness to intellectual ideas, including agnosticism (McKay's older brother U. Theo McKay was a leading local unitarian and under his influence McKay had grown up a confirmed disbeliever). McKay was also what Jekyll considered an "unspoilt" peasant. On one occasion for example Jekyll, who considered Governor Sydney Olivier a middle-class upstart, was considerably annoyed when Olivier attempted to invite himself to stay overnight under Jekyll's roof. McKay recalls in his autobiographical essay My Green Hills of Jamaica how Jekyll's strongly stated upper-class bias on this occasion prompted him to ask:

"But Mr. Jekyll, how can you tolerate me? I am merely the son of a peasant." "Oh," said he, "English gentlemen have always liked their peasants, it's the ambitious middle class that we cannot tolerate."¹⁸

Jekyll's patronage of McKay extended to every aspect of the younger man's life and literary development during this time. It was he who first encouraged McKay to write in dialect and who arranged for the publication of McKay's first volume of poems in England. It was Jekyll's intercession which rescued McKay from his unhappy bond of service in the local police force, and Jekyll seems also to have influenced McKay's decision to migrate once his work became known abroad.

Though it would be unfair to suggest that there was no genuine basis for mutual respect and friendship between the eccentric folklorist and his young protégé, Jekyll - like Olivier - also had his limitations when it came to his general assessment of black

Jamaican society. One of his most important contributions to Jamaican culture was his collection of folk material, published under the title of Jamaica Song and Story in 1907. In his introduction to the new edition of Jekyll's collection, the Jamaican historian Philip Sherlock praises Jekyll for having seen in the free black and brown peasant and small holder "the living roots of the future. He collected the stories and songs at a time when they were despised as 'Negro talk' and 'Old Time sayings'." Jekyll's own introduction to his collection, however, suggests that he saw the songs and stories he collected as reinforcing a romantic but ultimately racist view of the black man as a naive and therefore harmless child, whose greatest faults were an underdeveloped moral faculty and an imagination easily excited by simple pleasures:

When the hoes stop clicking and you hear peals of laughter from the field, you may know that somebody is telling an Anancy story. If you go out, you will find a group of Negroes round the narrator, punctuating all the good points with delighted chuckles. Their sunny faces are beaming, and at the recital of any special piece of knavery on Anancy's part ordinary means of expression fail, and they fling themselves on the ground and wriggle in convulsions of merriment.¹⁹

When Jekyll is not expressing his amusement at the antics of the black Jamaicans whose folk songs and stories he collects his attitude is often mildly disapproving. He is critical for example of most African-derived folk beliefs and superstitions although as an atheist he had no particular reason for wishing to see the black Jamaican converted to Christianity. His upper-class bias surfaces in his disapproval of the tendency within the Creole language to use hyperbole and violent imagery in everyday speech: In one of his rationalist publications, The Bible Untrustworthy, Jekyll associates this tendency within the language of the Jamaican peasant with the violent aspects of the language of Christ whom he considered lacking in "sweet reasonableness":

Jesus did not care about social order; he disliked the upper classes, and railed at them in words of astonishing rancour ... Obeying Christ's literal injunctions would lead to anarchy.²⁰

Whatever the limitations of their perspectives on Jamaican society, the attitudes of Jekyll, Olivier and the other expatriate patrons of the Arts in Jamaica at the turn of the century were radical for their time in comparison to the body of late Victorian opinion on non-white colonial peoples. They were certainly in advance of local sentiment within the dominant group in Jamaica. The presence of such patrons created an anomalous situation whereby literary effort within the society was often encouraged or inspired by prestigious members of the dominant group although the group as a whole remained hostile to all forms of cultural innovation or intellectual debate. Consequently, although in comparison to other West Indian islands Jamaican society seems to have been prepared to accord honour to its creative writers, this was often on account of the prestige of the writers' patrons rather than a sign of genuine intellectual or aesthetic appreciation. McKay takes note of this phenomenon in describing the response to his poetry within the Jamaican privileged classes:

Now that Mr. Jekyll was responsible for me and I had met the Governor, all the residents of the Blue Mountains wanted to know me and hear me read my poems. The wealthy near-whites and the American and British residents all wanted to know me. Mr. Jekyll trotted me out.^{2†}

Conversely, the desire to produce creative writing was often related to a wish to perform well in the eyes of such prestigious patrons rather than out of a sense of having something important to say or a wish to challenge the society on an important issue. As in the case of Francis Williams the desire to attract favourable attention was not in most cases cynically motivated. It stemmed rather from the old tendency to move toward the dominant culture as a means of establishing personal worth already noted among the slaves. In some cases it was even perceived as a form of protest against the negative cultural evaluation of the coloured man by the dominant group. The effects of patronage on the society's response to its creative writers and the response such patronage elicited from the writer remained important features of the literary scene in Jamaica throughout the first half

of the twentieth century. Indeed the interaction between patron and protégé becomes an important theme in the literature produced during this period, and from this source it is possible to reconstruct how the phenomenon of patronage affected the writer's response to his society and his art.

That this phenomenon of patronage was never as pronounced in the other West Indian territories would seem to be a reflection of the relative strength and cultural homogeneity of the coloured middle class, from which most of the early Jamaican writers were drawn. In colonies like Guyana and Trinidad for instance, the degree of racial and ethnic mixture within the intermediary group which separated the black and Indian masses from the white elite made it difficult to identify a single middle class. The petty traders and small businessmen who comprised the middle sector included francophone coloureds, whose cultural attitudes were basically hostile to the English administration; Chinese and Portuguese indentured labourers, who had risen to the status of shopkeepers and entrepreneurs and at this stage had little interest in intellectual pursuits; as well as a small number of educated blacks and Indians. The absence of interest in the Arts within these groups perpetuated the pre-Emancipation literary dearth in these colonies well into the twentieth century. And when the silence was broken, the literary work produced owed little to establishment patronage.²² In the smaller islands the white population consisted of a handful of planter families and government officials. The group between them and the black masses was often too small and too closely inter-related with both groups (many of the middle group were the illegitimate children of resident whites and their black mistresses) to be considered a separated class. Standards of literacy within the society were generally low, so that creative writing when it occurred in these islands was often the work of members of the dominant group who maintained contact with external literary traditions. Because the dominant group was relatively weak, the work of these writers was strongly influenced by the culture of the former slaves.^{22a}

In Jamaica by contrast, the middle class, composed of persons of mixed African and European descent, formed a distinct minority

group within the society from early in the nineteenth century. Originally many of the families within this group were the offspring of unions between masters and slaves, but it was not uncommon even in the nineteenth century for coloured Jamaicans to possess property and be relatively well educated. By the beginning of the twentieth century this group had become large enough to be self-perpetuating and to have definable group attitudes to social and political affairs. Socially, various ranks within the group could be distinguished according to differences in skin shade and hair texture, and at the lighter end of the shade continuum coloureds were occasionally assimilated into the dominant group. Culturally the members of this group were also oriented toward the dominant group. Most of them made a distinction between themselves and the black masses on the grounds that they were educated and had "white" blood. They also dissociated themselves from the cultural traditions of the masses. A passing acquaintance with European art and culture was considered an asset and the coloureds were often more knowledgeable about European cultural trends than the planter class.

Politically, the coloureds in Jamaica were an unpredictable quantity within the society. They were often at odds with the dominant group as they resented their position just outside the sphere of real political power. Protest against the system however had its problems: as a group the coloureds lacked the strength of numbers of the black masses, which they needed if they were to force their demands on the attention of the society. They also lacked the financial leverage of the planter class through which strategic pressure could be applied on an uncooperative government. The intermediary position of the coloured middle class and its tendency to exploit its connections with both blacks and whites as a means of furthering its own interests made this group the natural scapegoat for the rest of the society: the blacks distrusted the coloureds because they maintained an attitude of racial superiority and often represented the interests of the dominant group in business and professional matters. The whites blamed the coloureds for fomenting political discontent among

the masses and associated their mixed race with temperamental instability.

The most historic showdown between the coloured population and the planter class had occurred in 1865 when a coloured member of parliament, George William Gordon, had been implicated in a black uprising in the province of St. Thomas in the East. At the beginning of the twentieth century however, the coloureds to a large extent had aligned their interests with the old plantocracy who in the face of the continued deterioration of the sugar industry were becoming increasingly restive with their position vis-à-vis the Colonial Office in England. Members of the coloured middle class, which was well represented in the media, now became spokesmen for the move within the plantocracy to annex Jamaica to the United States of America or enter into a federal arrangement with Canada, moves which it was hoped would lessen the island's economic dependence on England without strengthening the political position of the black population.

Some of this secessionist sentiment was the result of the Cuban War of Independence which ended in 1898 when the U.S. intervened to defeat Spain and bring Cuba under American jurisdiction. Although the elation connected with this change of masters soon soured in Cuba itself, the event stirred up republican aspirations in Jamaica within the upper and middle classes. A sense of identification with the Cuban independence struggle is expressed in several early poems by Jamaicans including Thomas MacDermot's "Cuba", subtitled "what the heart of Jamaica said to the heart of Cuba in 1895", and Walter Adolphe Roberts' sonnet "On a Monument to Marti" which begins:

Cuba, dishevelled, naked to the waist,
Ssprings up erect from the dark earth and screams
Her joy in liberty. The metal gleams
Where her chains broke. Magnificent her haste
To charge into the battle and to taste
Revenge on the oppressor... 23

Though political opinion was divided on how radical a break with England was necessary in the interest of the Jamaican economy, there was a general mood of confidence and self-assertion

among the younger generation of white Creoles and coloured Jamaicans at the turn of the century. This new mood is communicated to the reader in H.G. de Lisser's documentary Twentieth Century Jamaica (1912), in which he predicts that the future of Jamaica lies with its coloured middle class and warns:

Some form of control over their own affairs the people of Jamaica will insist upon having, and any continued advance towards practically unlimited power and authority on the part of the Government will alienate the sympathy of the intelligent and educated classes from the Government, which, we must remember, largely represents the British connection... While no violent demonstrations are to be thought of even, there will certainly be much less contentment with the Government than there is today, and it will be asked whether Jamaica would not be better off politically, as well as economically and industrially, if connected with the United States.^{23a}

At a cultural level protest against Imperial domination was expressed in the new emphasis placed on creative effort which reflected the Jamaican reality. Newspapers like the Jamaica Times, whose literary role is discussed in Chapter II, were established to cater for the cultural and political interests of the growing middle class. The sense of communal identity thus produced created a feeling of alliance between the coloured Jamaicans and selected elements within the black petite bourgeoisie. Olivier's appointment as Governor in 1907 helped divert some of this energy and protest into more respectable channels: talk of secession now gave way to talk of constitutional reform while the desire on the part of the local elite for a greater say in the affairs of the island was partly satisfied after the Great Earthquake of 1907, when, led by Olivier, the local establishment threw itself into the task of rebuilding Kingston.

The three major creative writers to emerge from the coloured middle class during this period were Thomas MacDermot, Walter Adolphe Roberts and Herbert George de Lisser. All three men were influential journalists as well as creative writers and owed their reputations in part to the encouragement and support they received from expatriate patrons of the Arts at crucial points within their careers. Their positions as members of the coloured

middle class made them particularly susceptible to the kind of ambivalent relationship towards their society which the presence of external patrons of the Arts elicited. MacDermot, whose cultural activities are discussed in the following chapter, was probably the most naive of the three men politically. A deeply religious man whose life was a continuous struggle against genteel poverty, MacDermot seems to have been most directly influenced by members of the church in his attitudes to literature and society. Like Enos Nuttall, he combined a benevolent interest in the progress of the black man with unreserved loyalty to Empire and a respect of all things connected with the mother country. Unlike H.G. de Lisser, for whom the political aspirations of the masses were of little importance, MacDermot saw the future of Jamaica as lying in the hands of its black population. Writing in 1899 on "The Present Condition of Jamaica and Jamaicans" he maintains:

The 15,000 whites, and the Hinterland of brown men, are interesting mainly, in fact solely, because of their relation to their 600,000 black fellows. In every sense, save the conventional sense, we white men and our brown cousins are, all the earnest-minded among us, servants of the blacks. It is as our actions and opinions relate to them that they will stand applauded or condemned by the future historian. To-day we lead; tomorrow we advise; and on the day following²⁴ we are co-workers together with our black countrymen.

MacDermot's view of the white and coloured members of Jamaican society as the patrons and mentors of the black masses is a recurrent theme in his prose fiction. In his novelette Becka's Buckra Baby, the main incident around which the plot is built is the gift of a white doll to a small black girl, Becka, by her Sunday School teacher. The doll becomes a symbol of all the virtues and high ideals associated with whiteness to which Becka is encouraged to aspire. Becka's devotion to it is contrasted to her Aunt's pride in her real "Buckra" baby (the illegitimate offspring of a sexual affair with a white man) who Becka's aunt sees as giving her a special prestige. Becka's attachment to her toy eventually causes her death, and MacDermot seems in the story to suggest that Becka's devotion and tragic death can be seen as a symbol

of the frustrated efforts of one member of the black mass to assume the superior moral and cultural values of "whiteness."

MacDermot, like Olivier, betrays no awareness that the aspirations and attitudes of the black community could differ in any significant sense from those of the white and coloured population or from Imperial values in general. To the extent to which he himself experienced conflict between his Jamaican patriotism and his devotion to Britain it was a conflict of sentiment rather than ideology. In a facile but sincere poem, written near the close of his life when he was an invalid in England, MacDermot expresses this conflict:

O, little Green Island, in far away seas,
 Now the swift Tropic shadows stride over thy leas,
 The evening's Elf-bugles call over the land,
 And ocean's low lapping falls soft on the strand.
 Then down the far West, towards the portals of Night,
 Glean the glory of orange and rich chrysolite.
 Day endeth its splendour; the Night is at hand,
 My heart groweth tender, dear, far away land.

For England is England, the strong and the true,
 Whose word is her bond in her march through the blue;
 For England is England, who mothers my soul,
 Truth, bare in its glory, with her deep self-control.
 With red in her flag, the white and the blue.
 For England is England, brave, patient and true.

But my little Green Island, far over the sea,²⁵
 At eve-tide, Jamaica, my heart turns to thee.

The poem continues in this vein: Jamaica is characterised in terms of its natural beauty and homely memories while England is constantly associated with power, high ideals and, in one phrase, impersonality. The influence of the church and the language of the church can be seen in the movement of the poem's language.

It would seem therefore that, at a conscious level, MacDermot was unaware of conflict between his own aspirations and the aspirations of the masses and that he sensed no anomaly in his position as simultaneous champion of local artistic endeavour and Imperial cultural attitudes. However, conflicts seem to surface involuntarily in his own creative writing with respect to his attitudes toward the dialect which he uses in his poetry and prose, and in the implied moral judgements he makes of characters in his prose fiction whose attitudes do not coincide with those he felt

were desirable. In addition, it may be of significance that the illness which incapacitated MacDermot for work after 1922 and until his death in 1933 was a nervous breakdown. It occurred at a time when it was becoming more and more difficult in the society as a whole to reconcile the path mapped out for Jamaica by the colonial administration with the demands and aspirations of the black majority.

Most of the work of the writer Walter Adolphe Roberts falls outside the scope of this thesis as he left Jamaica as a young man in 1907 and wrote and published his poems and novels for the most part outside of Jamaican society. After 1937, however, he visited the island frequently and took an active part in the political struggle for self-government in the island. Before migrating from Jamaica, Roberts had been one of the members of the group of young men who were inspired by the ideas of Sydney Olivier. As a fledgling journalist he had also worked closely with W.M. Livingstone, another enthusiastic patron of local creative effort. Perhaps because he left Jamaica at a time when political initiative and feelings of independence were particularly strong, Roberts maintained an interest in Jamaican calls for self-government throughout his life and was able to identify with new political trends among black and coloured Jamaicans in America during the inter-war years. Of his three literary contemporaries in the coloured middle class, Roberts was the least dependent on local favour and his work shows a much wider range of literary influence than is the case in the work of MacDermot. Several of his novels are set in Latin America and his poems make use of literary techniques picked up in Europe and America. In his political writing and social documentaries he tends to take a broader perspective on West Indian issues than his Jamaican counterparts, seeing British Imperialism in the wider political context of the European struggle for power in the New World in the 16th and 17th centuries and relating the struggle among black and coloured West Indians for political autonomy to similar nationalist struggles in Latin America, and the former French colonies.²⁶

The effect of patronage on the Jamaican writer was not necessarily limiting as MacDermot's relative conservatism in comparison to Roberts may seem to imply. In the case of H.G. de Lisser, the wide political sympathies of his patron, Sydney Olivier, as well as Olivier's connection with modern English literary figures, had positive repercussions in de Lisser's early work. Whereas before his contact with Olivier, de Lisser had tended to dismiss as insignificant the black population's claims for social and political consideration during Olivier's periods of office in Jamaica, de Lisser's writing began to take a greater interest in the aspirations of the masses. Olivier seems to have influenced de Lisser's decision to concentrate on a black protagonist in his first novel, Jane's Career, and to have provided de Lisser with moral support while he was working on the novel. In dedicating the finished work to his patron, de Lisser recalls:

When this story was appearing in serial form in the Jamaica Gleaner, you wrote to me saying that you were glad that I had thought of writing it. Your praise was encouraging, and I need hardly say how greatly I appreciate it. I now dedicate the tale to you, who, during the many years you were connected with Jamaica, took a deep interest in every phase of the island's life and fortune, and have left upon it the impress of a personality at once striking, original, and truly sympathetic.²⁷

Ultimately, however, the most important result of the connection between de Lisser and Olivier was that it taught the young journalist and creative writer the importance of patronage to the individual's status within the society. It was this lesson, rather than any wider sympathies with the Jamaican masses, which was to stay with de Lisser over the years. Although in his creative writing he often tackled controversial issues or was the spokesman for protesting elements within the community, de Lisser invariably ensured that the position he took was backed by a prominent member of the community or by establishment opinion in the society as a whole. In the decades after Olivier's governorship, liberal elements within the dominant group ceased to be of significance and the positions which de Lisser defended during the

inter-war years were for the most part politically conservative ones, closer in spirit to the earlier, more elitist attitudes expressed in journalistic articles written before he came under the influence of Olivier.

The change in de Lisser's attitudes from one of fairly sincere commitment to political and social change in Jamaica to one of political opportunism and private cynicism is heralded in his novel Triumphant Squalitone. The novel follows the career of an impoverished minor political agitator, John Squalitone, who, by anticipating the swing away from republican sentiment in Jamaica to Imperial loyalties, is able to make a name for himself on the local political scene. Squalitone is the only one of de Lisser's novels which makes use of a first-person narrator. The narrator is not the character Squalitone himself, but a retired English gentleman called Crooks who boards with the Squalitones. By channelling Squalitone's arguments in defence of his political opportunism toward Crooks, and describing the steps by which Crooks's initial moral scruples about Squalitone's activities are replaced by rueful admiration for Squalitone's political cunning, de Lisser is able to argue a case for his own political attitudes while allowing his respectable narrator figure to give his arguments the seal of approval. At the same time, however, de Lisser is far too skilled a polemicist to allow the identification of his own views with those of Squalitone to be overt. Squalitone is clearly a rogue and there are several occasions on which the narrator's contempt for his methods is tempered by no tolerance or understanding. However, the reader is left with the impression that, given Squalitone's background and circumstances, his manipulation of patronage and public opinion is a far more honest and pragmatic approach than any attempt to set himself up as a martyr for altruistic causes or unpopular forms of protest.

Read as a rationalisation of de Lisser's own political and literary shifts, as a means of improving his standing with the dominant group, Squalitone's arguments and actions provide the reader with an insight into the classic dependent role of the

middle-class intellectual in Jamaican society. Early in the novel, Squalitone explains to Crooks what the chances of success for a "poor but respectable" Jamaican of his background are:

"In ordinary times, no matter how strenuously he toils, the life of a poor but respectable man in this country is a hard one. He begins by being born, and even that is a mistake... The average respectable youth of poor parentage is usually one of six or eight brothers and sisters, and so begins life upon short allowance as it were. During all the days of his life his parents maintain a desperate struggle with circumstances, and Johnny - we will call my illustration Johnny, my name being John - grows up in an atmosphere of compulsory fasting.

"The years pass and the struggle grows harder. The time comes for Johnny to go to something better than a ladies' school. He cannot be sent to a Government elementary school, for he is respectable and so must not mix with the lower classes; he is therefore sent to a small secondary school, the master of which is never properly paid. It is hoped that there he will receive some education and a grounding in the classics, not omitting algebra. But Johnny's life at school is marked by several prolonged absences. These absences have but one comprehensive explanation." Squalitone paused and looked mysteriously at me. Then he added impressively: "Boots!"

Squalitone proceeds to explain in his half ironical tone how "the problem of providing the required pairs of boots at the necessary periods has wrecked many a promising scholastic career in this country" and elaborates on the straitened circumstances that characterise all phases of the hypothetical Johnny's school life:

At the age of fourteen or fifteen he leaves school, not having acquired even the rudiments of the classics, to go and earn his own living.

"About this time Johnny's father dies. I have noticed that it is the custom of most poor but respectable fathers to die before their children are properly grown up. His mother is a weak, over-driven devoted woman, so Johnny at once becomes liberated from all parental control, and is fortunate indeed if he possesses sufficient character to keep him from going too much astray. Yielding to the solicitations of the boy's mother, someone employs him in a store or office, and this employer kindly agrees to give him five shillings a week to start on, and thinks he is a philanthropist. Thus Johnny is launched upon the waters of commercial life, to sink beneath its waves at a later date.

Johnny's progress to cigars and smart clothes bought on credit, through debonair days as a young buck, engagement to the sister of a friend and early marriage is charted:

"For almost a year everything goes well. The young couple are regularly at church on Sundays; they go to little entertainments, remarkable chiefly for their dulness, and they set a most pernicious example of domestic happiness to the unmarried youth of the community. Johnny's wife calls him duck in public. He calls her darling. Then a duckling is born and felicity has reached its height.

"But when felicity has reached its height, it begins to decline. The building society is obdurate and insists upon a regular payment of instalments. John's employer - I will now call him John, for he is a father - John's employer is unsympathetic and declares that salaries are already too high. Then other ducklings are born, and I am never surprised that after the birth of his third or fourth child, John loses his job. That is a painful experience that comes to respectable people at least once in a lifetime, and it deprives most of them of all independent feeling and manly sentiments in the future - I am an exception....

"I admit that there are some consolations. There are many beautiful illusions pleasing to a certain type of mind. The young parents know that their children are going to do wonderful things later on. The first boy is to be a doctor. The second will go in for law. The girls will all marry professional men... Of course the young father does not know that he also was destined to be a doctor. He doesn't know that everybody's eldest son in this country is going to be a doctor. But I tell you, when that man reaches the age of forty-five - if he ever reaches my age - he has had about enough of consolations. He has struggled like a hero and has failed. So he dies and goes to hell, for he has been too much worried all his life to think about his personal salvation. His only real consolation, so far as I can see, is his end."²⁸

This long monologue is quoted at such length (the entire passage from which these extracts are taken fills the better part of a chapter in the text) because in my opinion it provides a summary not only of Squalitone's life and the potential career of his creator, but also of the experience in the West Indies in general within that sector of the society that was attempting to pull itself out of poverty and into the new middle class during the early decades of the twentieth century. The passage finds resonances in such West Indian classics as A House for Mr. Biswas by V.S. Naipaul

and In The Castle of My Skin by George Lamming. The sense within this aspiring group of being "other" than the rest of the society by virtue of skin colour, educational achievement or religious exclusivity is cited frequently as an impetus toward accomplishment in the life histories of West Indian writers. In the case of de Lisser, a series of events similar to those he ascribes to Johnny had shaped his early years: Like Johnny's father de Lisser's father, a struggling journalist, had died when de Lisser was 14 and the young H.G.D. had had to leave school and attempt to earn a living. Luck (or perhaps his mother's intervention with sympathetic friends?) had brought him, after several other positions, a post as library assistant at the Institute of Jamaica. Here, by reading extensively, he was able to complete his education and obtain a junior position as a journalist. From this point on de Lisser moved swiftly upwards and in 1904, at the age of 25, he was appointed editor of the Gleaner newspaper and had reached about as far as someone of his colour and background could expect to go within local professional circles. His grasp of the limitations of his chances, conveyed in the multiple ironies of the extract quoted from Squalitone, suggest that de Lisser, by 1917, like his novel's protagonist, was determined to change the pre-ordained round of his existence by whatever means necessary. In the fictional situation, Squalitone decides to swallow his pride and become the middle man for a politician whom he inwardly despises and who is running for the post of President in the soon-to-be created Republic of Jamaica. By a series of clever moves, Squalitone manages to change sides whenever the popularity of his political patron seems to be declining. Eventually he wins the patronage of the expatriate Governor by persuading both contenders for the position of President to renounce their claims on the post and re-affirm their loyalty to the British Crown. As a result, both politicians are knighted, Squalitone receives a well-paid, pensionable position in the civil service and his daughters contract socially enviable marriages.

In real life de Lisser's course was even more unorthodox. Like Squalitone, he learnt to manipulate his influence within

official circles to his advantage. During the war he became the chief spokesman for the move to create a West Indian regiment and attracted much favourable notice for his promotion of Imperial sentiments in the Gleaner. At the same time he endeared himself to the local plantocracy by arranging with the Colonial Office that the sum voted in a fit of patriotic largesse by the local legislative council as Jamaica's contribution to the war effort should be transferred to help revive the ailing sugar industry. After the war however, de Lisser quickly dissociated himself from the problems encountered by returning soldiers and concentrated instead on attacking the policies of the new Governor, Probyn, who was attempting to continue with the kinds of reforms initiated by early reconstruction governors.²⁹ Probyn, according to the historian H.P. Jacobs was not an administrator of great strength. In an attempt to placate the powerful Gleaner editor, he arranged an award of C.B.E. for de Lisser in recognition of his literary and journalistic accomplishments.³⁰ De Lisser's skill as a polemicist and negotiator earned him after the war the position of roving representative of the Jamaica sugar manufacturers and secretary of the Jamaican Imperial Association. During the next twenty years he often travelled on behalf of these associations. In the 1920s and 1930s, when American investment in bananas was stepped up, de Lisser was able to win the trust of the United Fruit Company who were the leading American banana growers locally. When Unifruitco's interests clashed with those of the sugar producers, de Lisser shrewdly sided with the Americans who in his eyes were the stronger of the two parties economically. During the 1930s there were unconfirmed rumours that Unifruitco allowed de Lisser to live rent-free at their exclusive Myrtle Bank Hotel in Kingston. Since de Lisser did live permanently at this very expensive hotel, these rumours may have been true. De Lisser himself claimed to be financially independent of both his creative writing and his journalism, and he certainly enjoyed a much higher standard of living than other newspaper editors. After de Lisser's death, new rumours claimed that his wife had been left without adequate means of support and was reduced to visiting local businesses to collect outstanding royalties on her husband's novels to augment her income. This would seem to support the ear-

lier rumour that de Lisser's seeming affluence was based on hand-outs from rich patrons whose interests he was willing to serve. All that can be stated as incontrovertible is that after a very poor start as a working lad, de Lisser was able to move into the highest circles of Jamaican society without any visible means of support and that he had good friends in high places.³¹ Throughout all this political and social manoeuvring, de Lisser remained basically contemptuous of the intrigues in Jamaican society. Instead of involving himself in fight for political office, he identified the sources of real power in the community and made sure, that his creative writing and journalism, that their interests were well served.

Patronage, therefore, especially patronage which he had been able to attract through his adeptness as a journalist and creative writer, could be said to have "made" de Lisser as an individual both socially and in terms of business. It is hardly surprising therefore that he viewed the internal transition from a system of official patronage to one of democracy as a threat to his own interests and that of the class on whose behalf he spoke. During the late 1930s and 1940s de Lisser became spokesman for the most conservative political elements in the island. His most notorious statement was made shortly before the granting of the New Constitution in 1944 when in an editorial in the Gleaner he prayed:

From complete self-Government for Jamaica, Good Lord, deliver us. Not even full representative government can be considered at a time when, to use a colloquialism, the tail is wagging the dog, and tub-thumping is practically the order of the day... An advanced political constitution, particularly self-government, is entirely out of the question when but a few weeks ago, the capital of Jamaica was threatened by mob rule.³²

De Lisser's shift towards a more conservative position was made necessary because of new political trends within Jamaican society. Before World War I the upper and middle classes had begun to feel secure enough in their dominant role to pursue republican ideals and tolerate a certain amount of intellectual debate. Unnoticed by them, however, the black population had gradually become more and more restive with their position at the bottom of

the society. Barred from most of the more lucrative middle positions in the civil service and in business by the coloured middle class, educated black Jamaicans were beginning to find that there were ultimately few rewards to be gained in Jamaican society after the acquisition of so-called civilised skills. Whereas with the right connections an energetic young coloured man on the make like de Lisser could gain prestigious offices in the highest echelons of the local hierarchy, no such avenues were open to the black Jamaican before World War I, with or without the support of powerful patrons. Claude McKay's development provides a significant contrast to that of de Lisser. Like de Lisser he had supplemented his education by reading widely and like de Lisser he had a powerful patron within the dominant group in the person of Walter Jekyll. However, there were few professional alternatives open to him in Jamaica: Editorial posts in the established media had only passed from white to coloured hands during the first ten years of the twentieth century and a career as a journalist with one of the leading newspapers was hardly a possibility for an unmistakably black young man with peasant origins. Teaching, the profession most open to young blacks, was also the one most closely supervised by the church and McKay's agnostic tendencies made this an uncongenial direction. There remained the choices of acquiring a trade, remaining on the land or joining the lower ranks of official office, and McKay chose the last of these when on the spur of the moment he decided to enlist in the police force in 1911.

The police were among the most hated arms of the establishment among black Jamaicans and had a reputation for brutality in dealing with the common people. McKay remained in the force for eight months, during which time he was shocked and revolted by the cynicism of his fellow recruits and the way in which the force, comprised mostly of blacks in its lower ranks, was used to terrorise the rest of the black population.³³ In a quasi-autobiographical short story written in America, called "When I Pounded the Pavement", McKay describes the humiliation of a young recruit who is forced to arrest another young man caught sleeping

with a domestic servant on her employer's premises in order to prove that he can "make a case" to his superiors in the police force.³⁴ The poem "Street Woman to the Bobby", discussed in Chapter III, seems also to relate to a similar incident. According to the same short story another policeman resorted to arresting a prostitute with whom he was on intimate terms in order to impress his superiors. McKay was relieved of his bond of service in the police force through the good offices of his friend and protector Walter Jekyll, who seems to have been able to convince McKay's superiors that his talent as a poet was wasted in the police force. As a mark of gratitude McKay dedicated his second volume of verse, Constab Ballads, to Lieutenant A.E. Kershaw and Inspector W.E. Clark, his superior officers in the force. McKay's preface to the volume recalls the ambivalent protest of Francis Williams's "Ode to George Haldane" in its separation of considerations of individual worth from group attitudes and shortcomings:

Let me confess it at once. I had not in me the stuff that goes to the making of a good constable; for I am so constituted that imagination outruns discretion, and it is my misfortune to have a most improper sympathy with wrong-doers. I therefore never "made cases", but turning, like Nelson, a blind eye to what it was my manifest duty to see, tried to make peace, which seemed to me better.

Moreover, I am, by temperament, unadaptive; by which I mean that it is not in me to conform cheerfully to uncongenial usages. We blacks are all somewhat impatient of discipline, and to the natural impatience of my race there was added, in my particular case, a peculiar sensitiveness which made certain forms of discipline irksome, and a fierce hatred of injustice... To relieve my feelings, I wrote poems, and into them I poured my heart in its various moods. This volume consists of a selection from these poems...

As constituted by the authorities the Force is admirable, and it only remains for the men themselves, and especially the sub-officers, to make it what it should be, a harmonious band of brothers.³⁵

McKay's willingness to pass off some of the blame for an unjust system on supposed racial characteristics or the injustices of specific sub-officers tactfully plays down the inequalities within the social system which required the police to protect the privileged classes from the rest of the society. It is clear from

comments in his autobiography that McKay felt that certain laws were unjust and that the system of rewards within the force in particular encouraged brutality. His unwillingness openly to criticise members of the establishment who had shown themselves capable of making exceptions for him surfaces in several poems in Constab Ballads, in which the poet goes out of his way to modify his criticisms of conditions in the force.

Patronage could relieve McKay of an uncongenial job, but it could not find him more suitable employment. Once McKay's work had appeared in print he was encouraged to go abroad where he could hope to make something of himself, and he did so in 1912 when he left Jamaica to study at Tuskegee Institute. Without the restraints of politeness and deference occasioned by the desire not to offend individuals within the establishment who had shown him kindness, McKay's poems written in America became far more radical and militant in mood than they had been in Jamaica.

McKay's dilemma and the way out which he chose was typical of thousands of black Jamaicans of his time who migrated to Panama, Cuba, the Banana Republics, and the United States at the turn of the century rather than accepting the second-rate positions open to them at home. The mass migration of skilled Jamaicans reduced the numbers of blacks at home who were prepared to challenge the system. Perhaps this may explain why the relationship of patronage between the dominant group in Jamaica and the black masses remained cordial for so long. Life abroad, however, brought Jamaicans into contact with new manifestations of class and race prejudice. In Panama, where thousands of Jamaicans were engaged in building the Panama Canal, the blunt discriminatory practices of the Americans in charge of the programme, so different from the more paternalistic discriminatory attitudes within Jamaica, reinforced old feelings of group solidarity among blacks and led to the formation of the first trade unions in the West Indies.³⁶ In the United States of America the impossibility of entry into white mainstream society threw black and coloured Jamaicans together and created in retrospect a feeling of national

solidarity among exiled Jamaicans, who now felt doubly the injustice of being given second-rate treatment in their own homeland where they did not comprise a minority group. The First World War also produced changes in perspective. More than 10,000 Jamaicans signed up as volunteers for the army. The majority of these volunteers were black Jamaicans who had been educated to accept the concept of Imperial loyalty. One of the most treasured notions of the dominant culture at this period was that all men were equal under the British system, and this was re-inforced by local experience which had shown that expatriate whites in certain public positions were on the whole more benevolent in their attitudes towards black Jamaicans than the Creole whites of the planter class. Discrimination against coloured troops abroad shattered this notion and many Jamaicans returned from combat disillusioned with old concepts of Imperial loyalty.³⁷ The society which had waved them goodbye with encouraging shouts of approval received the ex-soldiers after the war with uneasiness. Several batches of returnees were hastily given funds to assist them to re-migrate in search of jobs, but in spite of this there were several angry demonstrations after the war by unemployed ex-soldiers in Jamaica. Fear of this new militancy now united the expatriate administration, local whites and members of the coloured middle class against the Jamaican masses. As the depression got underway and overseas workers of Jamaican origin began to return home, the mood in the society ceased to be one of benevolence and acquiescence between the masses and the establishment and became one of protest and confrontation.

Curiously, the group least willing to respond to the change in mood within the wider society was the new generation of creative writers. In spite of the economic hardship experienced by the mass of the population, the upward movement of a small group of educated blacks had gathered momentum after World War I. By the beginning of the 1930s most of the younger creative writers were drawn from this group, or came from the more negroid section of the coloured middle class. The new writers took as their literary mentor the late Thomas MacDermot, remembered by many of them as

the kindly editor of the Jamaica Times, who had encouraged their first literary experiments. MacDermot's influence extended to the group's attitude of socio-political myopia: What had been an understandable limitation in MacDermot's naive mixture of Imperial loyalty and Jamaican patriotism, caused by his lack of understanding of the sentiment behind the superficial acquiescence of the masses and his positive relations with benevolent members of the dominant group, became an affectation among his followers. Most of the new writers had been relatively successful in their careers and professions. They took this success and the limited social acceptability it brought as representing a position attainable by any black man once his attitudes to his superiors and his diligence were of the "right" sort. Social protest and the expression of racially motivated distrust of the establishment were seen as negative qualities, associated with an absence of social refinement or a lack of understanding of the importance of social order as dictated by the dominant group. The expression of anti-establishment sentiment in poetry was considered in "poor taste" among these writers, though it remained acceptable to call attention to the great advances toward civilisation made by the black man. Writing in the early 1930s for instance, J.E. Clare McFarlane, a leading local poet and one of the first blacks to gain executive office in the local civil service, criticises the protest writing of his countryman Claude McKay, produced in America. While acknowledging the technical accomplishment of McKay's socially realistic novels about life in the black ghettos of America, McFarlane insists:

Spritually Claude McKay is a pagan; in his work there is little or no acknowledgement of a moral government of the Universe; his appeal is based upon the senses, and the fires of his inspiration are kindled from an earthly, not a heavenly flame.³⁸

The emphasis on the writer's duty to reflect positive spiritual values, and the association of such spiritual values with a universal moral order, represented locally by the institution of Empire and the higher virtues expressed in European civilisation, were used during this period as a means of rejecting protest writing. Unlike the situation in Jamaica before World War I there

were no longer prestigious local figures within the dominant group with progressive ideas to sanction the creative writer's concern with social reform. The result was that the writers fell back on old, tested conformist attitudes passed on to them by the church or through the system of colonial education rather than attempting to confront immediate social issues. This conservative retreat was not completely uniform. Individual writers like Una Marson, whose work is discussed in Chapter IV, were able to maintain an independent line but such individuals were merely the exceptions who proved the rule.

As the decade of the 1930s progressed, instances of confrontation between the establishment and the black masses became more frequent and more intense. In 1929 Marcus Garvey, the charismatic Jamaican leader of the United Negro Improvement Association, returned to Jamaica. In America Garvey's movement with its doctrines of racial pride and self-sufficiency claimed a membership of approximately one million black Americans during its heyday, and the prospect of Garvey's brand of politics gaining a mass following in Jamaica united the Jamaican upper and middle classes solidly against Garvey's attempts to win a seat in the Legislative Council. Though the establishment was successful in limiting Garvey's involvement in official politics, his ideas left their mark within the Jamaican lower class and are credited as having been the primary inspiration for the Rastafarian movement. By 1938 the socio-political tension had reached its climax. The writer V.S. Reid has given this dramatic summary of events in an address at the Institute of Jamaica:

In 1938 came the first clearcut victory ever won by the working class; i.e., all the poor people of Jamaica. A new brand of loyalty emerged in which need stepped aside for principle. It was a general strike.

It was called by no union, yet it nevertheless could not have been more "general". The old seething anger at exploitation of every kind, political, social, cultural, flared at Frome at April's end on the sugar estates. It was put down with rifle fire in true colonial style. A few died. Other small outbreaks, like bush fires, sprang up and were put out with varying degrees of force. Then at the end of May the waterfront workers went out. The riots occurred. A few more were killed. Bustamante was arrested for inciting.

And then the minor miracle occurred. Need gave way to principle.

For the people voted with vociferous voice to stay away from work until their champion Bustamante was released from jail. Disorganised, broke and hungry, faced by British guns on land and a called-up British cruiser standing offshore, and a hostile employer class with the economic power to bring them to their knees, the small folk dug in, and won out.³⁹

Reid's eulogising of the events of 1938 reflects the change in mood among Jamaican writers which followed the event. New political alliances began to form between the black and coloured middle classes and the masses. Later that same year the first local political party to adopt a platform of political autonomy for Jamaica, the People's National Party, came into existence. The party was led by Norman Manley, a coloured barrister, and Alexander Bustamante, his near-white cousin whose arrest had sparked off the national strikes in May. Although their alliance was not to last for more than a few years, the combination of Bustamante's charisma and Manley's scholarship epitomised the elements within the middle class which now combined within the political sphere: The intellectual - formerly associated with "refined" cultural pursuits and political conservatism - and the professional political agitator, whom de Lisser in Triumphant Squalitone had associated with cynical opportunism and materialism. These characteristics were now overlaid by a benevolent and protective attitude towards the masses which imitated the paternalism of the earlier expatriate patrons of the folk: A renewed interest in the forms of cultural expression of the lower classes was evinced and politically the middle class set itself the task of guiding the development of the masses and articulating their demands. In a poem celebrating the launching of the People's National Party, George Campbell expresses the new mood:

We want to identify ourselves with
 Our people; come close to them and they
 Come close to us. People how goeth your
 World? Know you with pride in understanding
 Or are there hard words in the dark: are you
 Formless dust blown in the wind?
 Bullets answered your gesture for wages
 Sometime back; we give no cause for bullets
 We shall lead you to a freedom that will
 Elevate you from bullets, shall improve your
 Mind: ...⁴⁰

Now that it had found a popular base from which to put forward its long coveted goal of political power, the middle class moved quickly to assume political office. By 1944 a new Constitution had been negotiated with the Colonial Office, which guaranteed full adult suffrage and a degree of internal self-government. In 1958 the island became part of a West Indian Federation. However, after a few years Jamaica opted for full Independence outside the Federation, and this was granted in 1962.

Though the political movement toward national status was led by members of the Jamaican coloured middle class, the literary movement which was one of its offshoots still had as its patrons English expatriates, several of whom were English women married to Jamaicans or living independently within the island. Most of these women were part of the new post-World War I generation of English intellectuals whose liberated social and political attitudes made it possible for them to contemplate marriage with non-whites or careers as single women in the tropics. They included Joan Grant, an English dramatist, Marjorie Stewart, who worked in Jamaica first with the YMCA and then with the Jamaican Welfare programme organised by Norman Manley, and the more conservative Esther Chapman who edited the West Indian Review. The most important of these patrons was the English sculptress Edna Manley, wife and cousin of the political leader Norman Manley. Mrs. Manley was well known in Jamaica, even before her husband entered local politics, as an artist with an international reputation for her carvings of Jamaican subjects. Ironically, the Manleys' local prestige had been given its greatest boost after Norman Manley had acted as prosecutor in a case against Marcus Garvey in 1929.⁴¹ After Manley's successful prosecution of Garvey the Manleys had become a favoured couple in the estimate of the all-powerful Gleaner editor, de Lisser, and during the 1930s both Edna and Norman Manley feature prominently in Gleaner reports of social events. A personality sketch of Mrs. Manley appeared in de Lisser's prestigious annual magazine, Planters' Punch, and a move was started among correspondents to the Gleaner to have

Norman Manley created a Queen's Counsel.⁴² This attention established the Manleys as prestigious members of the Jamaican elite, and when in 1938 Norman Manley stepped in to negotiate the release of his cousin Bustamante and other leaders of the mass movement, it was as the trusted legal advisor of the Crown rather than as the champion of the people that his action was reported in the pages of the Gleaner.⁴³ Once Manley had become identified with anti-establishment politics his popularity with the Gleaner editor began to wane, but the mystique connected with the attractive and gifted Edna Manley continued to spread and the sculptress became the centre of a local cultural renaissance.

Like the earlier patrons before World War I, Mrs. Manley was able to provide the writers of the post-1939 period with pragmatic assistance in their literary endeavours. As one of the editors of a progressive new weekly called Public Opinion she encouraged local writers to present their work to the public. She was a friend of Robert Herring, editor of the English literary magazine Life and Letters, and in 1948 she was instrumental in arranging the publication of a special issue of the magazine devoted to Jamaican writing, which brought the work of the new generation of Jamaican poets and prose writers to the attention of the English public.⁴⁴ The talented sculptress also had an eye for hidden artistic potential. She was one of the first people locally to give attention and encouragement to the artist Albert Huie, while the writer Roger Mais, who belonged to the Public Opinion group, was encouraged to develop his talent as a painter at Mrs. Manley's suggestion.

Some idea of the extent of Mrs. Manley's personal influence on the Jamaican literary scene may be gauged from her influence over George Campbell one of the poets of this new movement, whose work was widely acclaimed in West Indian literary circles during the 1940s. Campbell, like McKay, did not really belong to the established Jamaican middle class, but had within it in the figure of Edna Manley a patron similar to McKay's mentor, Walter Jekyll. Campbell's aunt was the housekeeper at the Manley residence and through her Mrs. Manley got to know of the young Campbell's poetic

talents and aspirations. Campbell had turned to Edna Manley in the late 1930s after failing to graduate with a school certificate as he felt pedestrian school exams were a waste of his newly found poetic energies. Mrs. Manley had encouraged him to see the obtaining of certificates as neither here nor there, and in an effusive letter thanking her for her support Campbell expresses his appreciation for her encouragement of his attempts to write poetry:

You cannot imagine how much happier I feel now since you have spoken to me... Of all people you soothe me ever so much more when you speak to me... I feel so different now. I did not know you thought of an exam like that and all the time something was just burning up inside me and wearing me down...

I wished also to let you know that your praising my poetry did not make me "fancy" myself or think that whatever I wrote was absolutely superb. That I was deadly serious, ambitious, and showed my poetry to you since you were the one person I would wish to show it to. I know that without you I never could have continued writing poetry and all the feeling that welled up in me would have just disappeared as a fish that skims the surface of the sea and is gone. You it was who saw the first bit of poetry that I attempted, encouraged me, and released my poetic self...

I know that you have shown me the real life of an artist and that it is no velvet path along which I can whistle. You have revealed to me how you had to suffer ... if one day I can speak to the world even if it be in just faint whisperings I wish that I will do justice to your spirit.⁴⁵

In accepting wholesale Mrs. Manley's views and her definition of the artist's role as the one by which he wished to be guided, Campbell seems not to have considered that there could perhaps have been a discrepancy between what the talented English sculptress saw as artistic priorities and what he as a young black Jamaican should see as important. Edna Manley's biographer Wayne Brown suggests, for instance, that her encouragement of an "anti-certificate" attitude in her young protégé may have been a reflection of her own remembered impatience with dated and irrelevant conventions during her English childhood and adolescence.⁴⁶ Such contempt for qualifications was only really viable in a society such as England where the artist was recognised as an integral part of the economy and an exceptionally talented young woman

could look forward with a fair amount of certainty to selling enough of her work ultimately to establish a reputation and supplement the household budget. In Jamaica in the 1940s a black man with no qualifications could not hope to earn a living from his writing and did not stand a chance of getting a job that would allow him leisure time in which to write poetry. Claude McKay's uncomfortable eight months in the police force before World War I had quickly shown him that his only hope as a writer lay in migrating, and the desire for a "piece of paper" was understandably one of the most deeply held aspirations of most lower-class Jamaicans. Campbell himself gives poetic expression to this idea in "Me an' Me Gal", an early dialect poem written in 1933 before he came under Mrs. Manley's influence. The poem describes the awe of the peasant newly come to town for the bright lights and sophisticated lifestyle of the city:

Lisen ya wife here we mus' have we chile
 In a dis ya gran' place in a dis ya town.
 All the city shinin wid de 'lectric light.
 All de white man magic mek day from night.

The newcomer's initial mood of wonder and excitement changes in the course of the poem to one of confusion and fear as he discovers his inability to cope with the bustle and menace of city life. By the end of the poem the speaker has come to perceive his inadequacy as a function of his lack of education and city ways, as epitomised by the smartly dressed black men and women he sees around him who, as far as he can tell, are not harassed as he is by the police, or turned out of reserved pews in church. The rhythm of the poem's closing section echoes the jerky, mechanical movements of the city, while at the same time suggesting the fear of a hostile environment underlying the peasant speaker's urgency, as he fixes his hopes for the future on the achievement of his unborn son:

See yuh wife 'urry up ya quick
 Gwin' to edicate 'im
 Gwin' to mek 'im gran'
 Gwin' to mek 'im
 Lawd an' mastah⁴⁷
 In disyah lan'.

In his later rejection of such admittedly naive attitudes to qualifications, Campbell does not really deal with the social factors which made qualifications of so much more complex relevance to him than to Mrs. Manley. Though Campbell was fortunate in having as his mentor someone whose attitude towards Jamaican culture was possibly more liberal than that of McKay's patron, Jekyll, Campbell's worship of the talented Englishwoman seems in many respects to have been far less critical than McKay's attitude to Jekyll and contains elements of colonial dependence not very different from those expressed in the work of the Jamaica Poetry League.

Mrs. Manley's personal influence for better or worse on the poets and writers connected with the Public Opinion newspaper after 1938 cannot be too strongly stressed. The extent to which her role was understood and evaluated by the writers she influenced may be gauged from a short story written by the dramatist Frank Hill, which appeared in Public Opinion in 1939. Hill, a committed Marxist, had written a play earlier in the same year, which attempted to dramatise the riots of 1938 from the perspective of a black lower-class Jamaican family. The play, Upheaval, was ecstatically reviewed in Public Opinion and overnight Hill became something of a celebrity. A few months after the performance of Upheaval Hill's short story "The Chart" appeared. It seems to reconstruct imaginatively a real or possible conversation between the writer and his patron - probably Edna Manley, but perhaps a composite of Mrs. Manley and another of the resident Englishwomen involved in the Arts, the dramatist Joan Grant.⁴⁸ In the story, Victor Hall, a local writer, has just brought out his first novel. In the midst of the general congratulations he is swept away by an unnamed artist woman friend for a tête-à-tête in which she urges him to accept her approach to the artist's life:

She said "You're growing well, Victor" and a slight mental sigh escaped him. Sometimes he'd thought himself over-confident but now he felt that his self-criticism was just.

She said "There's a brutal candour about it. You'll hear it called vulgarity or bad taste. What they mean is that it's too true to be mentioned. And it goes down

to the - there's your confounded word 'soul' again - well, to the soul of the people. There's the authentic stamp on it."

And they fell to discussing the characters in the book...

She said "People like us who create live differently from other people. Not in the daily round. It's in our mental attitudes - how we think and feel about things." She told him passionately "Your little group - may I say our? - little group - they're very little and some of them are a trifle shoddy. You can't afford to have them pull you back."

Victor said "They're interested in humanity - like me. That's why they're important."

"But they're so obvious. They all slap each other on the back - right now they're slapping yours - and they tell each other what a wonderful bunch of people they are and how they're arrived. That's a handicap to any creative artist. You want at all costs to keep your senses alive. You want to keep the ability to learn and grow at your fingertips and you can't do these things with a lot of mucky praise thrown over you."

Victor bit his thumb and thought it over for a while. Finally he told her, rather slowly at first, "What you say is quite true. The moment we stop learning and growing we die, even if the undertaker's not called in till later. I've written a first novel - it's a good novel - and after I finished it I suddenly felt afraid. I still feel the same fear. I know it isn't cowardice. It's just the fear that I mightn't reach the standard of perfection that I see. Nothing can drive that fear away. I suppose it was there all the time. So I'm not afraid of losing it. That's why I'm not afraid of - our little group ... there's a lot of poverty and dirt in the world - in our own little country - and we've got to clean up the mess. Otherwise what's the use of us? We who see the truth - must expose the truth. We can't clothe our slackness with the thin cloak of respectability. And we can't lighten our conscience with a bunch of superstitious ordinances."

She broke in "Dear child, of course we can't do such preposterous things. But Christ on wheels, those aren't the only alternatives. I'm an artist and I'm a selfish pig - "

"But you weren't always a selfish pig. You learned and lived and grew and now you are what you are - whatever that may be. You charted your own course and sometimes you were side-tracked and had to double back but always it was your own course and you believed in it. Now you're reading to me out of the book of your own experiences - but you really don't expect me to live by your experiences? ... I see life in a certain way. I'm following that way. It may lead to all sorts of misunderstandings and conflicts. And even you may take up arms against me one day. But I can't help that. ... I know - well, you'll understand."

Her husky voice grew huskier and her eyes shone with a passionate glow. She told him "Keep on the way you're going. I'll try not to take up arms against you - but perhaps I'll fail."

Victor smiled, said, "If you do I'll know that it is the woman in you - not the artist."⁴⁹

This quasi-fictional anecdote is recounted at such length because it summarises so many of the important features of the relationship between artist and patron and is almost prophetic in its use of details. Ten years later the first novel by a member of this group was to be published by a "Victor" - by V.S. Reid - and it is worth noting that the uncritical acclaim it received at the time from fellow writers may have contributed to Reid's creative stagnation. He has published only two other major works since then, The Leopard (1958) and The Jamaicans (1976). The fictional artist's fears of the stultifying effect of a closed and mutually admiring circle on Jamaican creative effort were in a sense justified, as Chapter III of this thesis attempts to show. Ironically however, the real artist, Mrs. Manley, was at the centre of the post-1938 literary clique. The fictional novelist's premonition that ultimately his chosen way could bring him into conflict with his artist friend was fulfilled in real life in 1952 when the split between Norman Manley and the "Four H's", who composed the Left wing of the People's National Party, broke the party apart in 1952: a breach that lasted until after Norman Manley's death, and destroyed for the most part the friendship between Frank Hill and Edna Manley.

More important, however, are the two views of the artist's role put forward in the anecdote. The artist urges self-preservation, a cutting of ties with less gifted fellow writers and a sacrifice of all other loyalties in the interest of the artistic vocation. The novelist argues the importance of the writer's social responsibility to his community and fellow writers and the need to remain close to the human sources of his inspiration even where this placed great strain on his personal literary standards. The novelist's argument is that of the engaged or socially committed writer. The role he assigns the creative writer is one that has often been put forward in the Third World

as the only valid artistic position for the writer who, in a situation of social and economic deprivation, is almost inevitably drawn from an educated elite. The artist's argument by contrast is typical of the position of the artist within modern European culture where art is no longer a shared communal experience and the artist's achievement is judged pre-eminently on the extent to which he is able to create original symbols to express his personal vision or aesthetic ideals. These were certainly the positions taken in real life by Frank Hill and Edna Manley, and both are self-evidently valid within their appropriate social or aesthetic context. The way in which Mrs. Manley guarded her artistic privacy and ruthlessly pursued her interpretation of the Jamaican reality in her art is faithfully documented by her biographer Wayne Brown. It led to the successful synthesis of European and West Indian themes and materials in her work and earned her a well-deserved international reputation as an artist. The danger of such an approach for a Jamaican writer, however, was that within Jamaican society exclusivity in the Arts was never far removed from a yearning toward whiteness evidenced in the social remoteness of the Jamaica Poetry League or the plea for recognition of the pre-Emancipation writer Francis Williams: For the non-white writer artistic isolation from the rest of the black community continued to connote approximation to the dominant culture, and instead of leading to originality and innovation, more often than not it led to imitation and stagnation. In the renaissance of the post-1938 era, this tendency was merely exacerbated by the fact that the proponent of this individualistic artistic stance was herself an attractive, talented woman who enjoyed the adulation of the young men within the "little group" and was fond of taking up and dropping her protégés on aesthetic as well as personal whims. All the writers connected with this group are agreed in their assessment of Edna Manley's mercurial personality and dominating presence. Whether they are still on speaking terms with Mrs. Manley or not, they also all acknowledge her keen critical faculty when it came to assessing any form of creative work and the extent to which the writers of the group came to rely on her

judgement. In spite of her undoubtedly positive contribution to the development of local artistic endeavour, the question remains whether, given the nature of the relationship between writer and society in Jamaica, Mrs. Manley's presence may not have contributed involuntarily to an inhibition of artistic initiative of a more fundamentally indigenous sort because she herself epitomised so attractively a specific European approach to creativity.

Edna Manley was the last of the major expatriate patrons of the Arts in Jamaica who influenced the work produced in the island between 1900 and 1950. During this period the political and social perspective of black Jamaicans changed from one of relative acquiescence to the colonial system to one of militant nationalism which bore its first fruits in 1944 with the introduction of adult suffrage and the granting of internal self-government. The racial composition of the various classes in Jamaica also changed, with more black Jamaicans moving into the middle class and more coloured Jamaicans joining the ranks of the elite. These socio-political changes are reflected in the literary activity and creative writing discussed in the following chapters. Many things, however, remained the same: The writer continued to be drawn from the middle strata of the society, even after the racial composition of this group had been altered. Patronage of the Arts continued to come from expatriates within the community, even though the ideals and aesthetic values represented by these patrons changed. The writer in relation to his patrons remained relatively conservative, tending only to be drawn in to protest or anti-establishment activity when this was sanctioned by his patrons or if he moved outside of Jamaica. The degree of conformity implied by this assessment may be misleading, as at every stage there were individual writers whose work went beyond the positions suggested by their patrons. However, an even larger group of writers never achieved the wider vision of their patrons, or having once shared their views, retreated to positions of relative conservatism. How these various influences overlap and were reinforced by aesthetic developments in the writing produced in Jamaica between 1900 and 1950 is the subject of the following chapters.

Notes

¹Ivy Baxter, The Arts of an Island (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1970), p. ix.

²The influence of Abbé Raynal's Philosophical and Political History of the Establishments and Commerce of the Europeans in the Two Indies (1780) on the Haitian revolutionary leader Toussaint L'Ouverture is discussed by C.L.R. James in The Black Jacobins (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), p. 25.

^{2a}One major exception to this generalisation is the tradition of comic political satire which has a long history in Jamaica: Edward Brathwaite in "Creative Literature of the British West Indies during the Period of Slavery", Savacou, I, 1 (June, 1970) quotes an early eighteenth century poem on The Politicks and Patriots of Jamaica in which local political chicanery is satirised. Brathwaite sees the derisive tone of the poem ~~as~~ a sign that at this early date "the island was nearer in spirit to the Mother Country than it was to become under the incubus of slavery" (p. 57), but ditties lampooning local politicians or containing arch references to local scandals were popular in nineteenth century Jamaica as well (see Chapter II, note 3). During the early twentieth century the tradition of comic political satire was maintained in such novels as F.C. Tomlinson's The Helions, or the Deeds of Rio (1903) and H.G. de Lisser's Triumphant Squalitone (1917). However this kind of satire was directed at specific personalities, or internal disagreements, rather than wider social and political issues involving the slaves, and it posed no serious threat to the dominant group. An interesting study remains to be done on how this comic-satiric tradition - derived ultimately from the political satire of eighteenth century English writers like Pope and Swift - has in recent times been blended with African satirical traditions present in the folk culture by writers like Louise Bennett, Andrew Salkey and Alvin Bennett, and in the Jamaica pantomime.

³See Elsa Goveia, A Study of the Historiography of the British West Indies to the End of the Nineteenth Century (Mexico: Instituto Panamericano de Geographia y Historia, 1956).

⁴C. Leslie, A New and Exact Account of Jamaica (1740), pp. 36-37. Quoted by Kenneth Ramchand in The West Indian Novel and Its Background (London: Faber & Faber, 1970), p. 33.

⁵Edward Brathwaite, Our Ancestral Heritage: Bibliography of the Roots of Culture in the English-speaking Caribbean (Port of Spain: U.W.I. Extra-Mural Department, 1976), p. 93.

⁶In an article on "Creative Literature of the British West Indies During the Period of Slavery", Savacou, I, 1 (June, 1970), Brathwaite extends this list to include "poetry and prose fiction written within (the West Indian) context, by persons,

not necessarily native, but Creole to the extent that they had intimate knowledge of and were in some way committed by experience and/ or attachment to the West Indies" (p. 47). Using these criteria Brathwaite counts 27 works by persons resident in the West Indies and visitors to the region as well as an additional 30 odd works set in the region by people who had acquired their knowledge of the region at second hand.

⁷Extracts quoted from Jamaica, A poem in Three Parts (London: Milliam Nicoll, 1777): lines 124-140.

⁸H.G. de Lisser, The White Witch of Rosehall (London: Ernest Benn, 1929), pp. 192-193.

⁹Prose translation of Francis Williams's "Ode to Governor Haldane" by Locksley Lindo in "Francis Williams - A 'Free' Negro in a Slave World", Savacou, I, 1 (1970), p. 80. In his study of West Indian Poetry (Boston: Twayne, 1978) Lloyd Brown suggests that Williams's "self-deprecation is edged with irony" and anticipates the work of a later generation of "West Indian Calibans" who have linked "the satire of covert racial protest with a self-conscious emphasis on the duality of (their) language and Art" (p. 281). This is a valid idea but it does not cancel out the implied acceptance of the black race's cultural inferiority which the poem suggests.

¹⁰See for example J.B. Phillip's Jamaica, Its Past and Present State (London: John Snow, 1843). Phillip, a Baptist missionary, puts forward "proof of the claims of the great coloured family to intellectual and social equality with those of a more favoured skin" (p. 211). However his condemnation of "Obeah, Myalism, fetishism and most forms of entertainment observed during slavery" (pp. 239-252) is so sweeping as to suggest that culturally at least Phillip viewed the unregenerate black man as the incarnation of evil.

¹¹Quoted by Frank Cundall in The Life of Enos Nuttall (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1922). It is worth noting that Nuttall's first assignment when he came to Jamaica as a Methodist lay-preacher in 1862 was to help fight the elements of African religious practices that had begun to manifest themselves in local congregations after the Great Revival of 1862.

¹²Letter to Bernard Shaw, dated 10th December, 1932, quoted in Sydney Olivier: Letters and Selected Writings, ed. Margaret Olivier (London: Allen and Unwin, 1948), p. 14.

¹³See C.L.R. James, The Case for West Indian Self-Government (London: Hogarth Press, 1933). James argues that the difference in calibre between the colonial administrators sent to Trinidad and Jamaica contributed to the philistinism of much of Trinidad's middle and upper class during the early twentieth century.

¹⁴Letter to Sydney Webb from Belize, 21st November, 1896, in Olivier, Letters, p. 85.

¹⁵Letter to Margaret Olivier from Port of Spain, 4th May, 1897, in Olivier, Letters, p. 97.

¹⁶Letter to H. G. Wells, dated 28th August, 1942, in Olivier, Letters, p. 181. Towards the end of his life Olivier became more and more disillusioned about the possibilities of economic reform in the colonies within the capitalist system and resorted to recommending such extreme measures as the expropriation of sugar lands in the West Indies as the only solution to the region's social and economic problems. He also became very cynical about the ability of the Colonial Office to understand and react to crises within the West Indies and was a strong supporter of moves for self-government after 1938.

¹⁷Sydney Olivier, Jamaica the Blessed Island (London: Faber & Faber, 1936), p. 54. Elsewhere Olivier singles out for commendation de Lisser's first two novels, Jane's Career and Susan Proudleigh, as many of de Lisser's later novels fall squarely into the tradition criticised here by Olivier.

¹⁸Claude McKay, My Green Hills of Jamaica (Kingston: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1979), p. 71.

¹⁹Walter Jekyll, Jamaica Song and Story (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), p. 1.

²⁰Walter Jekyll, The Bible Untrustworthy (London: The Rationalist Press, 1904), p. 259.

²¹McKay, My Green Hills, pp. 76-77. A similar form of patronage was to help the dialect poet Louise Bennett in the 1930s when the wife of the Governor, Lady Richards, invited her to perform at a social function for which she was patron. Bennett's dialect poetry immediately came into vogue among the upper classes!

²²See Reinhard Sander, The Trinidad Awakening: West Indian Literature of the Nineteen-Thirties, Ph.D. thesis (University of Texas, 1979). The Guyanese situation varies somewhat from that in Trinidad, as a small coloured middle class with cultural pretensions did exist from fairly early (see Norman Cameron's introductory essay to Guianese Poetry: 1831-1931, Georgetown; Argosy, 1931); however this group was much weaker than the equivalent class in Jamaica and did not have as well defined attitudes to culture.

^{22a}The writers Jean Rhys and Phyllis Allfrey of Dominica are the best examples of this type of cultural development in the smaller islands. The strength of the figure of the black Nanny in Allfrey's The Orchid House (1953) and Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea (1966) reinforces the underlying community of culture and belief between black and white in these tiny societies.

²³Walter Adolphe Roberts, "On a Monument to Marti", in The Kyk-over-al Anthology of West Indian Poetry, ed. A.J. Seymour (Georgetown, B.G., 1957), 58.

^{23a}H.G. de Lisser, Twentieth Century Jamaica (Kingston: The Gleaner Co., Ltd., 1912), pp. 165-166. De Lisser's insight

into political discontent among Jamaicans did not extend to the black masses. In his other documentary, In Jamaica and Cuba (1910) he maintains: "The peasant does not really want to meddle in politics...He recognises that the Government of Jamaica is based on force and he does not trouble his mind with theories of representation and the effect of public opinion on governments. He leaves that sort of thing to the better educated class" (p. 114).

²⁴Thomas MacDermot, "The Present Condition of Jamaica and Jamaicans", The Canadian Magazine, October, 1899, pp. 503-504. Note that here MacDermot refers to himself as a white man though elsewhere he is described as "octaroon" (i.e. 1/8 black).

²⁵Thomas MacDermot, "O little Green Island", in Orange Valley and Other Poems by "Tom Redcam" (Kingston: Pioneer Press, 1951), p. 28.

²⁶See Walter Adolphe Roberts, The French in the West Indies (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1942).

²⁷H.G. de Lisser, Jane's Career (London: Heinemann, 1972): Dedication.

²⁸H.G. de Lisser, Triumphant Squalitone (Kingston: The Gleaner Co., 1917), pp. 24-28.

²⁹In an article called "Twenty Years After", in Public Opinion, 25th March, 1939, Leslie C. Gabey reminisces about his disillusionment after World War I when he and a group of concerned persons had approached H.G. de Lisser for assistance with a programme to help resettle returning Jamaican soldiers: "I approached Mr. de Lisser...knowing fully how convincingly and keenly he advocated the enlisting of these men for overseas service. He abruptly told me that he had his other affairs to consider, and had no time to worry about ex-soldiers. Imagine the shock I had. Without another word I retired, but greatly disappointed with a man who had been my journalistic idol." Gabey's article was prompted because of new attempts to whip up enthusiasm for war recruitment by the Gleaner editor on the eve of World War II.

³⁰See H. P. Jacobs, "Sir After the War", Public Opinion, 18th March, 1939, p. 3.

³¹See Ansell Hart, "Colour Prejudice in Jamaica", Jamaica Journal, IV, 4 (December, 1970). Hart claims that de Lisser's social prestige was sealed after he contracted a friendship with the English Viscount Burnham. It was this connection that gained him an entrée in social circles which would normally have been closed to brown Jamaicans. The reliance on rumour and hearsay in piecing together details about de Lisser's life is a reflection of the care which the Gleaner editor took to establish and maintain an aura of mystery about himself and his background. Who's Who entries of this period contain flippant remarks such as "Too well known to require an entry", which were obviously inserted by de Lisser himself. The only reliable source of information on de Lisser's early life is W. Adolphe Roberts' essay

in Six Great Jamaicans (Kingston: Pioneer Press, 1952), but many additional pieces of information mentioned here were related to me by Mr. and Mrs. H.P. Jacobs in an informal interview in 1978. There remains an urgent need for an official biography of this important public figure, as the research should be done while people who remember de Lisser are still alive.

³²Quoted by Ramchand in his Introduction to Jane's Career (Heinemann edition), p. v.

³³For a revealing account of conditions in the force from the perspective of a member of the establishment, see Herbert Thomas, The Story of a West Indian Policeman (Kingston: The Gleaner Co., 1927).

³⁴See McKay, "When I pounded the Pavement", in My Green Hills, p. 133.

³⁵McKay, Constab Ballads (New York: Black Heritage Library Edition, 1972), pp. 7-8.

³⁶The influence of the Panama migration on education and cultural attitudes among West Indians is examined in passing by F.A. Hoyos in his biography of the Barbadian politician Grantley Adams and the Social Revolution (London: Macmillan, 1974). Fictional accounts of conditions in the Canal Zone are to be found in Eric Walrond's short story collection Tropic Death (1927).

³⁷In an article first published in The Royalian in 1932 and reprinted in Tapia, 3 April, 1977, trade union leader Ralph Mentor describes how the exposure of West Indian troops to racial discrimination during World War I, as well as to new radical political ideas (e.g. nationalism in Egypt, and Bolshevism in Europe) resulted in a new militant mood of racial solidarity and national awareness among West Indians after the war.

³⁸J.E. Clare McFarlane, "The Poetry of Jamaica - I", in The Challenge of Our Time: A Series of Essays and Addresses (Kingston: The New Dawn Press, 1945), p. 191.

³⁹V.S. Reid, "The Cultural Revolution in Jamaica after 1938", address delivered at the Institute of Jamaica circa 1978, p. 4.

⁴⁰George Campbell, "On This Night", in First Poems (Kingston: City Printery, 1945), p. 67.

⁴¹For Norman Manley's own version of his involvement in the Garvey case, see "The Autobiography of Norman Washington Manley", Jamaica Journal, VII, nos. 1&2 (March-June, 1973).

⁴²See Carnegie, Some Aspects of Jamaica's Politics: 1918-1938 (Kingston: The Institute of Jamaica 1973); and Wayne Brown, Edna Manley: The Private Years 1900-1938 (London: AndréDeutsch, 1975) for details of this period in the Manleys' lives.

⁴³Brown, in Edna Manley, cites approving Gleaner reports of the part played by Manley in resolving the impasse between Bustamante and the union, which he claims could hardly have enhanced Manley's reputation with the striking workers (pp. 246ff).

⁴⁴See Robert Herring (ed.), Life and Letters, November, 1948 (Special Jamaican Issue).

⁴⁵Quoted by Wayne Brown in Edna Manley, p. 252.

⁴⁶See ibid.

⁴⁷George Campbell, "Me an' Me Gal", in First Poems, p. 41.

⁴⁸Joan Grant's influence on Frank Hill is mentioned in reviews of Upheaval (see issues of Public Opinion for July 1939). Grant's own review of the play, which appeared in Public Opinion, 15th July, 1939, p. 11, expresses attitudes and aesthetic goals similar to those given "the artist" in Hill's short story. However the style of "the artist's" speech resembles that of Mrs. Manley so closely that it is tempting to see her as the major inspiration behind this fictional character.

⁴⁹Frank Hill, "The Chart", Public Opinion, 9th December, 1939, p. 6.

CHAPTER II

PUBLISHING AND LITERARY ACTIVITY IN JAMAICA

The first printing press was introduced into Jamaica by the brothers William and Alexander Aikman in 1718 and by the end of the eighteenth century a number of small presses had been established to publish legal and official documents and the occasional scientific or literary monograph.¹ Longer works such as travel books, histories, tracts for and against the abolition of the slave trade and agricultural treatises continued to be published outside the colony for most of the nineteenth century, even when their authors were Jamaican residents. Books were supplied to the Jamaican public via book sellers or through the select subscription libraries which were formed during the nineteenth century.²

Local interest in creative writing during this period was channelled through local journals, some of which contained small sections devoted to the Arts. The Jamaica Quarterly Journal and Literary Gazette (1818-1819) contained a few poems, presumably written by local authors, while The Trifler (1822-26), a satirical weekly, often carried clever doggerel verses on topical issues.³ In 1889 York Castle School produced the York Castle Quarterly which featured a short historical romance written by one of the students.⁴ The first Jamaican magazine on record to devote serious attention to original creative work and literary appreciation was the Victorian Quarterly, published by the Victoria Institute in Jamaica during the 1890s.⁵ The two numbers of the magazine still extant contain poems by Rev. J. Radcliffe (Member of the Board of Governors at the Institute of Jamaica), Miss Lucy Heaven, "Tom Redcam", alias Thomas MacDermot, "W.R.W." and Jos. C. Ford, as well as critical articles on "Spencer and the Spencerian Philosophy" by A.M. Mould and "Byron and Wordsworth" by D.M. Panton. MacDermot's contribution, "A Song for 1891 - The Exhibition Year" was published in Vol. 3, No. 2. The opening stanza, subtitled "Jamaica" expresses the strong sense of patriotism characteristic of MacDermot's later work.

63

Dear land, sweet land, with mountains girt,
On which the fleecy clouds descend
With vaprous mantle floating wide
To hold communion, friend with friend;
The opening years upon me press,
New tides of feeling on me roll
Along the bases of my being
And beat old landmarks from my soul;
But, stronger through the flood of thought
And stronger through the opening years
My spirit reaches out to make
Thy hopes, my hopes, thy fears, my fears.

Apart from MacDermot none of the contributors to the Victorian Quarterly figures prominently in literary publications of the twentieth century, and his is the only contribution that is specifically Jamaican in its subject matter. Cundall reports that four volumes of this magazine appeared between 1889 and 1892, but without access to all of these it is difficult to assess how sustained the magazine's interest in creative writing was, or what success it had as a commercial venture.⁶ Like most West Indian magazines of this early period, however, the Quarterly probably had a limited circulation.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the demand for literary material of all types increased dramatically. Commenting on this phenomenon in Black Jamaica (1899), W.P Livingstone ascribes it to the increase in literacy among the emancipated black population:

There is as yet no popular literature in the country, but the taste for reading is spreading rapidly. At the reading room of the Institute of Jamaica during the four years ending 1896, the attendance was augmented by 200%. The circulation of the principal newspapers has recently been doubled, the new subscribers being largely those negroes who are rising up from the mass. The value of books imported in 1885 was £ 8,374. By 1894 it had risen to £ 20,651... The white community has been but slightly augmented, and the increase must, therefore, to a large extent be attributed to the growing intellectual appetite of the blacks.⁷

As early as 1884 the then Director of Education, Mr. M.M. Hicks, had begun to organise reading clubs among the families of peasant proprietors, and many of these groups paid the one shilling a year subscription for foreign magazines such as the British

Workman and the Band of Hope Review.⁸ Locally the demand for reading material was met by a plethora of local newspapers, many of which were published by small groups or individuals with specific religious or political views they wished to popularise. Walter Adolphe Roberts notes in Six Great Jamaicans that Dr. Robert Love, a black Bahamian who settled in Jamaica in 1889 and became a member of the Legislative Council in 1906, first made his presence felt locally by editing a small newspaper, The Jamaican Advocate, in which he popularised his anti-Papist religious views and his ideas for social reforms among black Jamaicans.⁹ Journalism could also be a lucrative sideline for owners/editors, many of whom used their earnings from journalism to subsidise or complement their regular occupations as teachers, ministers, politicians or impressarios.¹⁰ One of the most successful newspapers of this era was Gall's Newsletter, an advertising broadsheet and social diary founded in 1855, which survived well into the twentieth century. Its owner/editor, the Scotsman James Gall, was an organiser of public entertainments. He was probably the first entrepreneur in Jamaica to organise public sea-bathing facilities of the type popular in Victorian England, and was closely connected with the visits of theatre and dance troupes to the island. These and other cultural activities were advertised in his Newsletter, which only began to lose prominence at the turn of the century after it had been attacked for scandal-mongering in Robert Love's Advocate.

It was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that printing methods and communication systems in Jamaica became efficient enough to support the development of commercial newspapers with full-time editors and a staff of printers and journalists. Jacob de Cordova's Gleaner and Weekly Compendium of News, first established in 1834, became by 1900 under the editorship of W.P. Livingstone the leading daily on the island. In 1899 James Durie, a Scots shopkeeper and bookseller established the Jamaica Times. Though this newspaper did not have as wide a circulation as The Gleaner,¹¹ it became under

the editorship of Thomas MacDermot the leading promoter of local creative writing in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

In the absence of a local university the task of promoting and disseminating an interest in Letters and the Arts at the beginning of the twentieth century devolved officially on the Institute of Jamaica. The Institute had been established in 1874 by Sir Charles Musgrave, who was Governor of Jamaica at the time, with the aim of uplifting the cultural tone of the island and fostering an interest in "things Jamaican". In 1884 the Institute offered a prize of twenty guineas for the best bibliography of Jamaican books.¹² Under the direction of Frank Cundall, the Institute's librarian from 1891 to 1937, the Institute commenced its collection of Caribbeana, which remains one of the best of its kind to the present day. The award of the Musgrave medal was instituted in 1889 to recognise outstanding achievement in the field of literature, art and science. Until the First World War creative writing on local themes however tended to rank quite low in the Institute's estimate of outstanding achievement and during the nineteenth century the Musgrave Gold Medal was usually awarded for agricultural or scientific work.

Over the years the Institute's policies came to epitomise the conservative attitude of the dominant group toward the Arts to each new generation of local artists. At each juncture of change within the Jamaican literary scene the Institute was attacked and then infiltrated by its opponents, who eventually took over its policy-making machinery, but ultimately became the butt of fresh attacks from the next generation of artists and writers. This on-going process provides an interesting comment on the consistency with which the Jamaican establishment has been able to modify its cultural and political stance over the years to absorb and contain cultural elements which present a threat to the status quo.

As early as 1912, therefore, we find Thomas MacDermot, editor of the Jamaica Times and leading spokesman for local writers, responding angrily to the Institute's decision to pass over the recently published collection of poetry by Claude McKay, Songs of Jamaica, in favour of a scientific treatise by a Mr. Maxwell Hall in awarding the Musgrave Silver Medal. MacDermot's editorial on the subject gives some idea of the extent to which the Institute was perceived at the time to have neglected the development of local literature:

The Institute would have done well to make a break with the past spirit of a narrow and anaemic exclusiveness. There have been too many shortcomings in this direction in the past. Some years ago a gifted young lady, "Tropica", published a collection of her poems, following on a good deal of writing in the same direction which had won general praise and appreciation... Freely and generously this writer has contributed songs which are used today in our schools. The Institute never gave her the slightest public recognition. Then there is the work of Mr. H.G. de Lisser, the author of "Cuba and Jamaica." All Jamaica is proud of Mr. de Lisser's literary talent. The Institute has never taken any notice of it. His book is not even included in the list prepared by its secretary for its "Handbook". Again, to take only one more instance, with a little sympathetic encouragement what a fund of Jamaican lore might a man like Mr. Oscar Plummer have been induced to bring into the daylight of print. Such encouragement as he has received has come from the papers, not from the Institute.

MacDermot's claim that the newspapers gave more encouragement to local writers than the Institute did was fairly well founded. Not only did their pages feature the work of local writers, but their presses provided also an outlet for cheap local editions of poems and stories. The newspapers also provided jobs for aspiring writers as reporters or copy editors. Many of the major writers considered in this study worked as journalists for a considerable part of their adult lives. The list includes MacDermot himself, H.G. de Lisser, editor of The Gleaner from 1904-1944, and the poet and historian Walter Adolphe Roberts who worked with W.P. Livingstone first at The Gleaner, then at the short-lived Jamaica Standard (1904)

before migrating to the United States in 1907, where he edited a number of magazines, including Mumsey's Magazine, Photoplay, Movie Star and the Historic Review.

There were also a number of minor writers in the pre-1918 era for whom journalism and creative writing were important and complementary part-time activities. The Reverend William Raglan Phillips (b. 1855), for example, was a Salvation Army officer in Jamaica for many years and one of the earliest contributors of dialect verse to the Jamaica Times. He printed and published the Westmoreland Telegraph and contributed serialised stories to the Salvation Army's international paper, The War Cry. Another example was the St. Elizabeth lawyer and politician, Frederick Charles Tomlinson (b. 1867), whose satirical novel The Helions was published in 1903. Tomlinson was associated with a number of local newspapers, including The Sentinel (1916) and an earlier Public Opinion (1916-1917?).

Until the First World War, the Jamaica Times provided local authors with their best chance of appearing in print. Known locally as "the teacher's newspaper" or "the small man's newspaper," the Times aimed at a readership among the better educated members of the new black petite bourgeoisie and the teachers and ministers who supervised their education. It also had a wide readership among Jamaicans in Panama and the Banana Republics of Central America. Under the editorship of Thomas MacDermot the newspaper took a special interest in affairs relating to the advancement of coloured people all over the world. In 1912, for example, it carried an obituary article summarising the career of the part-Nigerian composer Samuel Coleridge Taylor, whose Hiawatha Cantata seems to have been well known in Jamaica.¹⁴ Over the years the Jamaica Times followed with interest the career of the black American educator Booker T. Washington, and at one time it led a move to establish in Jamaica a college along the lines of Washington's Tuskegee Institute.

The Jamaica Times often reported instances of racial and social discrimination against West Indians in Central America, and could occasionally be outspoken in its comments on racist attitudes in Jamaica as well. In the Jamaica Times for August 3rd, 1912, for example, MacDermot takes up the cudgels against Frank Cundall over remarks made about black Jamaicans in Jamaica in 1912, a handbook published by the Institute of Jamaica. In his chapter on "A People in the Making", Cundall had included the following observations about locally trained teachers:

Coming in some cases from the bush the brother of day labourers, but in others from the small-settler class, after serving probably an apprenticeship as a pupil teacher, he passes into a training college, and after two or three years, during which he has acquired much learning, and in a few instances a fondness for quasi-clerical attire and the use of long words, he returns to his country to be a teacher amongst his kinsmen, where he has it in his power to be an influence for much good.

MacDermot singles out this particular passage for criticism because of its awkward grammatical structure, but goes on to criticise its derogatory tone. He points out that such a characterisation of local teachers in an official source of information about the island could not fail to be considered as offensive by the teachers themselves, and adds:

If we take [this passage], extending to it every possible mercy as not intended to be insulting, then we must, so it seems to us, consider it the production of a man who when he talks of appreciation and sympathy means the sort of patronising condescending notice which an employer, strongly imbued with the master's feeling, exhibits towards the servant when he speaks of him as "this black boy of mine who has risen from the gutter."

As a promoter of culture the Jamaica Times seems to have seen its role as both pedagogical and inspirational. In the pre-World War I period, when literary activity in Jamaica was at a peak, the front page of each edition usually featured a new poem by a local author in its top left-hand corner, often on a subject of topical interest. Soon after the street car riots in 1912, during which Governor Olivier was struck by a stone while appealing

for calm, a ballad presenting the events in mock-heroic style was featured.¹⁵ Inside each issue there were articles of cultural and historical interest, for example Plummer's series on "The Buccaneers;" more poems; a serialised story and sometimes even a letter to the editor written in verse.¹⁶ On one occasion, a contributor sent in a dialect poem complaining about the price of pimento.¹⁷ Under the nom de plume of "The Celt" MacDermot ran a review column called "Book Here" in which he gave news of books and writers. As "Uncle Marcus" he organised the Jamaica Times Army for Junior Readers and in his avuncular role gave advice on how to choose suitable subjects, rhythms and meters in composing poetry. Competitions were run for the best poems on a particular theme and at Christmas there was also a short story contest. Altogether in the average sized weekly of between twenty and twenty-five pages, about two full pages - or their equivalent in column space - were usually devoted to matters of literary interest. Indeed the paper can be said to have functioned as a literary magazine, as most of the separate volumes of poetry published during the first two decades of the twentieth century - and for some time after - first appeared in fragments as individual pieces in the Jamaica Times.

One of the first writers to "graduate" from the pages of the Jamaica Times and have her work published in book form was Mary Wollcott, an American-born resident of Jamaica. Under the pseudonym "Tropica" she published a dainty miniature collection of verse in 1904 with a New York Vanity Press. The forty-odd poems were illustrated with photographs and drawings and almost all of them had Jamaican themes or settings. Another young lady, Clarine Stephenson, a Jamaican Creole, published a sentimental novel with the Broadway Publishing Co. in 1911, entitled Undine: An Experience. Stephenson's work is of less literary merit than "Tropica's", but the summary MacDermot gives of Stephenson's literary career provides a fair indication of the part which local newspapers played in fostering and publicising the talent of young writers.¹⁸ Her first poem about a young clergyman

labouring to "bring light into the dark places of Kingston" had appeared in Gall's Newsletter in the 1890s and was followed by other poems and articles in the newsletter and a prize-winning story, "The Slave Girl", in The Gleaner Christmas Number for 1896. Another of her stories had appeared in the first number of the Jamaica Times and subsequently this newspaper continued to publish Miss Stephenson's poems and short stories.

Both of these writers possessed the means to finance the publication of their work abroad, but between the appearance of "Tropica's" verse and Undine MacDermot had also attempted to provide a local press which could publish the work of other aspiring Jamaican authors. His All Jamaica Library survived for five years from 1904 to 1909 during which time it published four titles: Two by MacDermot himself - Becka's Buckra Baby (1904) and One Brown Girl^{And-} (1909) - Maroon Medicine (1905) by E.A. Dodd under the pseudonym "Snod", and W.A. Campbell's Marguerite, A Story of the Earthquake (1907). The library's aim was to present "to a Jamaican public at a price so small as to make each publication generally purchasable, a literary embodiment of Jamaican subjects," and it seems at the outset to have been well-received. MacDermot reports in his preface to One Brown Girl that the first edition of 1,000 copies of Becka's Buckra Baby was quickly sold out and a second edition of 1,000 copies was also nearly sold out. In spite of the popular success of Becka's Buckra Baby, MacDermot did not seek a foreign publisher for his second novel, noting in the same preface:

The chief ambition of the present writer in matters literary is to produce among his fellow Jamaicans, that which Jamaicans will care to read, and may find some small reason for taking pride in as the work of a Son of the Island... The second reason for local publication is that, to fit a local story for publication abroad, as experience teaches one, there must be sacrificed much in local colour, detail and dialect that seems to the unhampered judgement needed to render the picture as conceived by the writer a faithful one.

I clearly understand, of course, that the fullest possible success here, cannot give the reward in

money that would accompany even moderate success abroad. I am not so unreasonable as to expect this. But I do expect that, if I have produced something that merits success, Jamaicans can and will support it sufficiently to save its author from loss.

MacDermot may have had second thoughts about the reliability of his market however as he goes on to add:

All the fine talk in the world, and all the nice expressions of enthusiasm and regard, will avail little, if the enthusiasts do not buy the local publication that they declare so well deserves support.¹⁹

One Brown Girl was the last publication of the All Jamaica Library.

However poor MacDermot may have considered the public response to local publication there can be no doubt that Jamaican writers in the years immediately preceding the war were an enthusiastic and broadly based group. 1912 seems to have been a high point in publishing and creative activity among Jamaicans at home and abroad, as the literary columns of "Celt" in the Jamaica Times are filled with reports of new publications and cultural events. MacDermot was able to report with satisfaction that Walter Adolphe Roberts was having success in placing his stories in American magazines²⁰ and that one of Claude McKay's poems, "Gordon to the Oppressed Natives", had been awarded a prize in "T.P.'s Federal Band of Song", a competition run from England for young poets scattered throughout the British Empire.²¹ McKay's first collection of poems was issued in 1912 by a local printer, Aston W. Gardner, and MacDermot also mentions that McKay was to have musical settings for the poems, of his own composition, published later that year by the Augener Company.²² Albinia Catherine McKay (unrelated to Claude McKay) had a volume of poems published in the same year, and MacDermot features extracts from her collection in the Jamaica Times.²³ From Panama came news of the publication of the Jamaican James Stanley Gilbert's collection of poetry, Panama Patchwork.²⁴ The Jamaica Times for 28th September, 1912, announced the arrival of McKay's second volume, Constab Ballads, alongside an advance notice for H.G. de Lisser's Twentieth Century Jamaica which appeared early in the following year.²⁵ De Lisser's first novel, Jane, A Story of Jamaica, began to appear in serialised form in The Gleaner in November 1912.²⁶

During this period a number of locally written studies on Jamaican history and society were also published. Frank Cundall's controversial Jamaica in 1912 was one in a series of annual handbooks produced by the Institute of Jamaica from the beginning of the twentieth century which provided social and historical information about the island alongside trade and agricultural statistics. In 1913 Cundall collected a number of incidental publications on Jamaican history into a volume called Historic Jamaica. Another historical monograph on Western Jamaica entitled In Old St. James had been published by a Mr. Shore in 1912.²⁷ In the field of folklore, Jekyll's Jamaica Song and Story (1907) was followed in 1910 by Cundall's collection of proverbs and in 1912 by Sir Algernon Aspinall's West Indian Tales of Old. The cumulative effect of all these publications encouraged Oscar Plummer in 1913 to launch a magazine of purely cultural and historical interest. However, his publication, Plummer's Magazine, did not survive for more than a year.

In the years immediately preceding the First World War it must have seemed that Jamaican literature and literary publication were at last beginning to come into their own. Nowhere is this feeling of optimism stronger than in MacDermot's review of a unique cultural event held at the James Hill Literary Society in Clarendon during June 1912. At the suggestion of its secretary, Claude McKay, the society held a literary evening consisting of readings from the work of Jamaican writers. The programme included poems by MacDermot, McKay, Norman Palmer, Arabel Moulton Barrett, Clarine Stephenson, "Tropica", O'Shaughnessy and Raglan Phillips, all of whom were regular contributors of poetry to the Jamaica Times. There were humorous readings of extracts from de Lisser's In Jamaica and Cuba, and MacDermot's Becka's Buckra Baby and One Brown Girl, as well as from newspaper editorials on such leading local figures as Samuel Constantine Burke and the poet Lionel Robertson. Apart from the extracts from published works almost all the readings came from the pages of the Jamaica Times and other local newspapers. These ranged from dialect verses and nature poems to high-flown rhetor-

ical essays. In reviewing the event, MacDermot gives a full summary of the closing remarks of the club's president:

It was a great thing for Jamaica when such a fine literary treat could be given exclusively by her writers all ... /save Mr. Raglan Phillips and Miss O'Shaugnessy/ native born. The descendants of slaves and their masters equally taking their places in the field of literature... the work of Jamaican writers should be encouraged, /and/ the best way to do that was for every patriotic Jamaican to try to read their works...

The difficulties to bring out a volume in Jamaica were great and there was no pecuniary gain, so that the public should purchase books so that the bare cost of production could be paid and the authors encouraged to "go forward". Once Jamaican scenery, life and thought were inadequately painted by American and English visitors, but today we had in our midst natives who were better able to illustrate our customs and thoughts and for this we should be very thankful. Who could have thought that say about two decades aback, such an enjoyable time could be spent without going to English and American books for the necessary pieces?²⁸

MacDermot spends an unusually long time over his description of the James Hill literary evening. It is clear that he concurs wholeheartedly with the views expressed by the club's president. He seems to have seen in this event the beginning of the fulfillment of his dream that one day Jamaica would have a national literature of its own comparable to that of the mother country. The James Hill literary club was one of several which had sprung up in the island since the turn of the century.²⁹ Claude McKay has described its activities in My Green Hills of Jamaica:

We had a literary debating society where we discussed such things as Chinese and East Indian immigration into Jamaica and why these people were forced to leave their homes to work for so much less than the Jamaica native whose wages were just a pittance anyhow. We debated also about the British Empire and its role in the world comparing it to the Spanish Empire. Every school kid has some knowledge of the Spanish Armada. We also knew that Jamaica was Spanish before it was taken by the English.³⁰

The existence of such clubs, coupled with the increased production of creative writing and local publications were indicative

of the general feeling among Jamaicans at the time that their society had achieved a measure of maturity and was capable of directing its own cultural and political life. The writers who published their work in the Jamaica Times were not all connected with clubs of this nature however. There were also what McKay calls "Browning clubs where the poetry of Robert Browning was studied but not understood."³¹ This second type of group would probably have included among its members Arabel Moulton Barrett, a distant relative of the family of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and the Ormsby sisters Lena Kent and Constance Hollar, all of whom published work in the Jamaica Times and The Gleaner before the First World War and became members of the Jamaica Poetry League in the 1920s. The differences between the two kinds of groups however seem to have been over-ridden under the guidance of MacDermot by a common interest in the promotion of local themes and settings, and polarisation between the various groups, if it existed, is not reflected in the pages of the Jamaica Times. Thus it was the relatively exclusive de Lisser for example who is reported as having been given the task of nominating Claude McKay for the Musgrave Medal in 1912, while McKay asserts that he was often invited by "Browning clubs" to read from his work.³²

Like the writers connected with Public Opinion in the late 1930s and early 1940s the groups associated with the Jamaica Times seem to have seen themselves in terms of a national mission rather than as a collection of mutually exclusive concerns. Unlike the Public Opinion group they did not carry their cultural efforts to the point where they came into serious conflict with the dominant culture. For MacDermot in particular, cultural nationalism seems to have been an extension of loyalty to Empire, although his confrontation with Cundall and the Institute of Jamaica in 1912 tends to suggest that he may have been moving away from this conservative position. One can only speculate as to how long this uneasy alliance would have remained tenable if, as McKay implies, there were literary groups who in their political debates had reached the point of chal-

lenging the concept of Empire. In any event, the migration of several key writers and the outbreak of war brought an end to this artistic unanimity by 1915.

MacDermot himself seems to have sensed the end of an era when he wrote in the Jamaica Times a week after McKay's departure for America:

The last week of July is marked on the tablets of my memory because I bade good bye to Claude McKay. We parted in Kingston and our surroundings were dust, hot zinc roofs, noise and other city horrors. But I think we felt that we were away in the woods, listening to some quietly murmuring brooklet and catching the notes of the John to Whit concerning which that very week this paper printed a song, by McKay. He is off to a training centre in America to study agriculture, and he is not likely to be back within three years. My heart smites me at the thought. Change he must in some things, still, I feel pretty confident that the inner man of native modesty and simple beauty is going to defy "the world's coarse finger and thumb." He is a loveable disposition /sic/ and after we parted I felt that Jamaica was suddenly a lonely place.

The same touch of loneliness haunted me some weeks before when I watched the steamer bear H.G. de Lisser away from Jamaica. When I last heard of him he was in Montreal...³

De Lisser returned. McKay did not. Five years earlier another of the more promising poets, Walter Adolphe Roberts, had migrated to America. These three writers were probably the best of the pre-war Jamaican writers. Without the contributions of the two poets the quality and direction of the work published in the Times began to alter.

The outbreak of war in Europe produced a new wave of Imperialist sentiment in Jamaica that effectively squashed any liberal tendencies in the field of artistic endeavour which had begun to flourish under the relatively enlightened governorship of Sir Sydney Olivier. The new stress laid on Imperial patriotism divided the energies of men such as MacDermot who in the past had been able to combine a sincere loyalty to the British Crown with demands for greater political autonomy at home and a fierce dedication to the advancement of local writers. From being the champion of "the small man" the Jamaica

Times became obsessed with the concept of Empire and was constantly being drawn into controversies over the extent of Jamaica's contribution to the war effort.³⁴ Though some of the more gifted Times' writers, such as Arthur Nicholas, began to experiment with more sophisticated verse forms, and new writers, such as John E. Clare McFarlane began to replace those who had left the island, the range of creative writing featured in the Jamaica Times was diminished as odes to Empire replaced dialect verse and poems of social protest in the front page box. By the time that MacDermot succumbed to ill health and retired in 1922, the newspaper had ceased to play a dynamic role in the fostering and development of talent and ideas, and had become, like The Gleaner, merely a convenient medium for the publication of occasional poems.

The changed political and cultural attitudes that characterised the immediate post-war years are discussed in Chapter I. This era has been aptly summarised by H.P. Jacobs as a "truculent, self-seeking period", in which "the aspirations of MacDermot were out of place."³⁵ The new spirit of opportunism and exclusivity is reflected in the patterns of literary production that characterised the inter-war years. There were no further attempts^{at} establishing corporate bodies to print the work of promising young writers until the 1930s, and in the meantime the field was thrown open to individuals with personal ambition but little public-spiritedness -- factors which ironically made for greater publishing success. H.G. de Lisser was the first writer to capitalise on the new market trends. His first novel, Jane's Career, had conformed to the general pattern of pre-war publication, having appeared in serialised form in The Gleaner during 1912 before its publication as a book.³⁶ With Susan Proudleigh (1915) de Lisser endeavoured to go directly through an overseas publisher, but soon realised to his cost that expensive foreign books could only be sold to a limited home market. For the publication of Triumph and Squalitone (1917) de Lisser reverted to the earlier format used by MacDermot for the All Jamaica Library of having cheap editions run off a

local newspaper press. However he took the precaution of soliciting additional financial backing from a local rum merchant, Myers, whose products were advertised on the jacket of the book. His preface to Squalitone, in which he explains his reasons for reverting to local publication, may be contrasted with the preface to MacDermot's One Brown Girl, quoted from earlier:

There are many reasons for issuing local editions of my books. The best, from the Jamaican reader's point of view, is that he thus obtains the work much more cheaply than he otherwise could. The Colonial Editions of my previous stories, for instance, sell at half-a-crown per copy. And that is a price which, as experience has proved, very few Jamaicans can easily pay.

Now the only way in which a cheap edition of a book can be published in Jamaica is by making that book the medium of advertisements. The reading public of this country, therefore, who have bought my books, owe it entirely to the merchants and business houses of Kingston³⁷ that they have been able to do so at a low price.

Here, though the basic facts remain unchanged, the emphasis is placed on commercial considerations rather than on the somewhat romantic notion of establishing a local literary tradition. With the fine entrepreneurial instinct that was to mark all his publishing ventures, de Lisser chose to exploit in Triumphant Squalitone's theme the feelings of Imperial loyalty that were gaining currency at the time. The same combination of topicality and sponsorship was used to ensure the success of Revenge (1919), which played to the resurgence of anti-nationalist sentiment in its depiction of the leaders of the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion as anti-social trouble-makers similar to the political agitators on the post-World War I Jamaican scene.

By 1920 de Lisser had added to his personal influence as editor of The Gleaner by manoeuvring himself into the prestigious position of secretary of the newly-founded Jamaica Imperial Association, taking over the position of Chairman of the board of directors at the Institute of Jamaica, and accepting the award of C.B.E. for his literary work.³⁸ From this

position of formidable strength and influence, de Lisser was able to develop a fool-proof method of securing his literary endeavours against financial loss: Using his influence in the world of commerce to sell advertising space to local firms and the services of The Gleaner press, he established an annual magazine in which he regularly published a complete novel of his own authorship. Planters' Punch probably ranks as the first Jamaican "glossy". It was supposed to be the official magazine of the Jamaica Imperial Association, which was predominantly a businessman's club, but apart from its features on prominent local businessmen, it had no serious function as a trade magazine. De Lisser was shrewd enough to see from the outset that his magazine's major selling point would be its appeal to the women of the upper class and the growing Jamaican middle class. In one of the magazine's early issues he appeals directly to the sympathies of this group:

The people of Jamaica have often been represented as peasants merely, the women shown pictorially have mostly been women of the working classes: sturdy dames trudging it down to a market town, balancing great loads of provisions on their heads; laughing damsels washing clothes by the riverside; giggling servant girls saying eternally that "the heatment is greatment" - these have been shown again and again, and the outsider who has never been to Jamaica may well be excused for believing that the colony has no other women to show, can boast of no daughters to compare with those of northern countries. The pictorial representation of Jamaica life in the past has been largely in the direction of burlesque. The other side of the picture has hardly ever been seen. "Planters' Punch" in the future will emphasise it.

This statement is accompanied by a beauty page displaying portraits of finely turned out Jamaican "white" and "high brown" beauties. Pictorial displays of this sort featured regularly in the magazine, and it is clear that to be featured in Planters' Punch was considered a certain indication that one was part of the very best and most exclusive circles. Each issue opened with a full-page portrait of some visiting celebrity or leading local hostess. Other pages carried articles on local debutantes, and since, as the publicity organ of the JIA, Planter's Punch was also circulated among members of the West India Committee

in London, this may have been one way of presenting local belles to the eligible bachelors with West Indian connections in the Mother Country. Like other ladies' magazines before and since, Planters' Punch took a more than healthy interest in the private lives and social movements of members of the royal family. The visit of the Prince of Wales to Jamaica in 1931, for example, was fully covered, and a full front page portrait of the Jamaican young lady who had engaged the Prince's attention at the private ball given in his honour was published.⁴⁰

And yet Planters' Punch was much more than a ladies magazine. De Lisser used his access to rare documents in the West India Collection as a member of the executive of the Institute of Jamaica to create lively and informative articles about all aspects of Jamaican life and culture. There were historical articles on famous buildings, documentaries on small local groups such as the Chinese business community, and intriguing vignettes on such subjects as Jamaican dancing girls over the years and the history of Jamaican theatre. In this way Planters' Punch gained a readership among the new middle class for which the Jamaica Times had formerly catered, and for whom the dazzling portraits of society belles added a touch of fantasy to a lively and diverse source of information. Each of these annuals was between 100-130 pages long and each page of approximately 30 cm x 40 cm held three columns of newspaper print. De Lisser published a complete novel in the magazine almost every year.⁴¹ Some, like The Crocodiles, a fantastic tale of two old women with the power to transform themselves into crocodiles, are merely pot-boilers. Others, like The White Witch of Rosehall and Under the Sun, make excellent light reading. Through the initial magazine publication of these novels, de Lisser was able to gauge their popularity with his readership in Jamaica and overseas, and he only republished as separate books those works which he felt reasonably sure would be successful.⁴²

De Lisser's success in creating a magazine audience for locally written fiction has only ever really been equalled by

the Beacon group of the early 1930s in Trinidad in the history of West Indian literary publishing. In both cases the magazines were avidly taken up by the reading public, a circumstance which suggests that it is the absence of a regular supply of material rather than the apathy of the reading public that has militated against the popularity of local magazine fiction. Both magazines concentrated in their fiction on the issues which have attracted the majority of West Indian authors: the lifestyle of the barrack-yard, questions of race and class, events in West Indian history, and social satire. They differ from "serious" West Indian prose-fiction in their deliberate use of sensationalism and, in de Lisser's case, in the conservative attitude with which he approaches his material, and his brisk, attractive but fairly superficial narrative style. Even people who disagreed vehemently with his well-known political views seem to have read de Lisser's fiction avidly. His novels tend to be referred to today by persons who read them as youngsters in the 1920s and 1930s as "not much good" but "compulsive reading."⁴³

Whatever the literary merits of de Lisser's work, from a publishing perspective, it seems fair to say that de Lisser exploited the techniques used to advantage by such popular nineteenth century English periodicals as Dickens's Household Words: playing off light and serious material against each other in the magazine; carrying over particularly successful characters or situations from one fictional episode to the next, and packaging and marketing fiction like a regular consumer commodity. The release of Planters' Punch, for example, was always timed to coincide with Christmas when the average middle-class Jamaican who probably read little apart from the newspapers, could be more easily persuaded to fritter away one shilling on a magazine. The magazine's eye-catching red cover and large page size were never altered, even during the war when in response to the paper shortage de Lisser cut down on the number of pages in each issue rather than changing the traditional format. Though the magazine's appearance once a year made serialisation impractical,

popular characters from one de Lisser story often reappeared in another. For instance, the comic figure of Mr. Proudleigh, father of the heroine in Susan Proudleigh features in de Lisser's anti-Garvey novel, The Jamaica Nobility, as well as in The Sins of the Fathers. Jane of Jane's Career re-appears as the heroine's mother in Myrtle and Money, and the deeds of the descendants of Anacanoa, the Arawak girl, are followed through three successive novels published in Planters' Punch.

De Lisser seems also to have conceived of his magazine as performing a "civilising" function within the Jamaican upper and middle classes. One of his most common approaches in presenting historical material in Planters' Punch was a "then and now" essay, comparing the amusements and social institutions of an earlier period in Jamaica with those of his time. These articles included "Hotels and Hostels of Jamaica", "Jamaican Hostesses and Entertainers Present and Past", surveys of transport such as "From Legs to Wings" and "Across the Seas, Today and Yesterday", as well as pieces on Jamaican restaurants and eating habits ("Eating Goes Modern"), the rum trade ("A Rumbustious Story") and Jamaican clergymen ("When Parsons were Pepper").⁴⁴ The comparisons were invariably to the disadvantage of the earlier time, and de Lisser seems by this to have been implying that the white and near-white groups within twentieth century Jamaica held their position at the top of the society by virtue of their good breeding and refinement rather than, like their predecessors, on account of their wealth or their power over slaves. At the same time he often seems to be urging his contemporaries in the upper-middle class not to forget their position and sink to the levels of their ancestors, and to maintain a correct distance socially between themselves and the less cultured members of the new black petite bourgeoisie. De Lisser's emphasis on social refinement as the natural heritage of the upper classes seems to have earned him the position of social arbiter of taste among all colour groups in the Jamaican middle class, who from their position of cultural insecurity were often uneasily aware of what they considered an instinct for style in

de Lisser's comments, which left them feeling uncomfortably underbred and anxious to laugh on the same side as de Lisser in his satirical sallies on Jamaican society. The novels de Lisser published in Planters' Punch often fulfilled a similar function, holding up to satire and ridicule the pretensions to greatness of the lower classes, but at the same time impressing on the middle-class reader the type of behaviour required of those who wished to join the ranks of the respectable.

While there can be little doubt that de Lisser's sense of cultural and intellectual superiority in comparison to his fellow Jamaicans contributed to the magazine's aura of conscious snobbery and, ultimately, to its success as a publishing venture, his attitude also had the effect of inhibiting other potential writers and retarding the development of local prose fiction. In the average length issue of Planters' Punch of over a hundred pages, no more than one or two pages were ever given to the work of other local creative writers, and de Lisser wrote all the regular non-fictional articles himself. Occasionally there were short pieces written by visiting celebrities or by Jamaicans who had been abroad. Planters' Punch for 1936/37, for instance, features two short essays written by Doris Evellyn, a Jamaican girl who had been sent to finish her education in Switzerland: one on Jonkonu, and the other on a holiday abroad. Once or twice poems by a local society belle appear, accompanied by the author's portrait. The only prose fiction contributors other than de Lisser however were invariably foreigners - usually minor English and American authors of historical romances with exotic tropical settings.⁴⁵ Their work seems mainly to have been used by de Lisser to provide "fillers" when he was unable to produce the full quota of material needed for a particular issue. Perhaps on account of de Lisser's exclusiveness very few Jamaican authors beside himself published prose fiction locally during the existence of Planters' Punch.

De Lisser's monopoly of the field may not only have been the result of his popularity or skill as a novelist: in 1936 the lawyer and politician-cum-novelist F.C. Tomlinson attacked de Lisser for refusing to publish the work of rival novelists at the Gleaner Publishing Company.⁴⁶ De Lisser's idiosyncratic style of writing did however inspire a few imitators in the local press. Essays by A.E.T. Henry published in Public Opinion in the early 1940s try to copy the tongue-in-cheek urbanity of de Lisser's "Random Jottings" column in The Gleaner, and Henry's first published collection of essays Sheets in the Wind, (several of which satirise de Lisser) is prefaced with a foreword written by the prestigious Gleaner editor. In their short stories both Henry and R.L.C. Aarons attempt, not always successfully, to emulate de Lisser's narrative posture as the amused, but slightly contemptuous observer of human weakness.

A more charitable explanation for de Lisser's predominance in the field of prose can perhaps be deduced from the high migration figures of skilled Jamaicans to America between the wars. Several of these migrants published books in their new home: Walter Adolphe Roberts, who before migrating had been a potential rival of de Lisser in the journalistic field, published a wide range of works in the United States, including poetry, historical novels, detective thrillers and sociological documentaries. Apart from The Single Star republished in Jamaica in 1956 by the Pioneer Press after Roberts returned to Jamaica to live, none of Roberts' prose fiction makes direct use of Jamaican issues or settings. Claude McKay's three novels, Home to Harlem (1928), Banjo (1929) and Banana Bottom (1933) together with his short-story collection, Ginger Town (1932) and a number of non-fictional works of varying length were all published in the United States between the wars. Another collection of short stories by the less well-known Jamaican writer Eric Walrond, entitled Tropic Death, was published in America during 1927. Walrond spent many years wandering around the Caribbean and Central America before settling for longer periods in New York, where he was associated with Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, and in London, where he died in 1966.

In spite of the narrowing of stylistic range and lack of interest in social issues which characterised post-war poetry, the years immediately succeeding the First World War were considered by many Jamaicans a cultural Golden Age. Poets who as children had contributed verses to the Jamaica Times Literary Army now formed as adults a tightly-knit group in which the pursuit of beauty through art was assiduously cultivated. J.E. Clare McFarlane records that during the decade 1912 to 1922, in spite of the comparative dearth in local publications, poetry continued to be published in the newspapers:

We could look forward to the pleasant surprise on any morning of a new poem from the pen of Tom Redcam, or H.S. Bunbury, or Arthur Nicholas, or Constance Hollar, among others; and the medium of publication would be the columns of The Gleaner or the Jamaica Times. One was aware of a ferment of creative thought which lent a measure of distinction to our community life. We were poor in many things but we were rich in a conscious delight in the creative efforts of our fellows. A new poem would, among the select few, be the topic of conversation for weeks and the subject of correspondence between those who lived at a distance from each other. Excellencies and defects would be discussed; and so there grew up, as a common possession, an appreciation of the distinctive characteristics of each writer, which heightened our enjoyment of every new work.⁴⁷

The passage quoted gives some idea of the extent to which the emphasis among post-war poets had shifted away from a concern with theme, or the presentation and interpretation of a specifically Jamaican reality, to a concern with technique and the cultivation of a "poetic" sensibility. In one respect this movement toward a more elitist interpretation of the function of art within the society was a response to the materialism which characterised the life-style of much of the growing post-war Jamaican middle class, satirised by de Lisser in his novels. However, the new aestheticism represented a premature institutionalisation of Jamaican creative effort. Instead of continuing to explore the artistic possibilities of their environment in the search for a truly authentic style, the Jamaican poets seem to have settled for a perfection of ornament in their work and the themes and techniques of the late English Romantics were polished

and repolished in their poetry.

The change from a spirit of thematic innovation to one of conservatism and narrow aestheticism is epitomised in the activities of the Jamaica Poetry League. Founded in 1923, the League's stated aims were to draw the literary centres of the world together; to promote social and intellectual intercourse among its members; to give guidance and encouragement to young and inexperienced writers; and to encourage and foster the teaching of poetry in schools.⁴⁸ The League saw itself as continuing the work started by MacDermot, whom they created posthumous Poet Laureate of Jamaica in 1933. The idea of the League seems to have arisen when Fowler S. Wright, president of the Empire Poetry League asked permission to include the work of some Jamaican writers in an anthology of Dominion and Colonial verse. His anthology, From Overseas (1924) contained the work of nine Jamaican authors and was favourably reviewed in the English Press. Jamaican writers subsequently contributed to two further anthologies edited by Wright. In 1929 the Jamaica Poetry League brought out its own anthology, Voices from Summerland, which was published in England by Fowler Wright and seems from its title and footnoting of local references to have been meant for an overseas readership. McFarlane quotes the comments of the Times Literary Supplement reviewer on the anthology in his summary of the League's history:

Criticism is worthwhile because the book has courage, enthusiasm and real vision, and witnesses to an English poetic tradition⁴⁹ kept alive where there can be little encouragement.

Spurred on by such praise from high places the Jamaica Poetry League produced between 1929 and 1933 a flurry of individual poetry collections, most of which were published locally with private funds at the Gleaner Publishing Company. Albinia Catherine Hutton (né McKay) followed up her 1912 collection with Hill Songs and Wayside Verses (1932). Lettice King, who wrote in The Gleaner under the pseudonym of "Lena Kent", published The Hills of St. Andrews in 1931. Constance Hollar

collected the group's patriotic verses and produced an anthology called Songs of Empire (1932) for use in Jamaican schools. In 1931 J.E. Clare McFarlane, founding president of the Jamaica Poetry League, and one of the first black Jamaicans to hold an executive position in the local civil service, published his long poem Daphne with Fowler Wright in England. Una Marson, who belonged to the League, in spite of certain significant differences in her attitude to poetry, published two collections with the Gleaner Company, Tropic Reveries (1930) and Heights and Depths (1931). The Moth and the Star (1937), which represented a significant departure in style and subject matter from her earlier work, was published with an introduction by P.M. Sherlock, a historian who belonged to the new progressive intellectual movement which ultimately replaced the League in the 1940s. By 1933 the members of the Jamaica Poetry League were considered the established leaders of culture in Jamaica.⁵⁰ Apart from declaring Thomas MacDermot Jamaica's Poet Laureate in this year, the League held a poetry exhibition at the Institute of Jamaica, organised by Astley Clerk, which contained over one thousand exhibits of individual poems, books and unpublished manuscripts by Jamaican writers. The work of members of the League had also begun to be used in Jamaican schools and the League's president, J.E. Clare McFarlane had become something of a local celebrity having been accepted as a fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts.

In July 1933 individuals connected with the League launched a cultural magazine called The Outlook which had as its aim the encouragement of intellectual activity and the promotion of a broader outlook on human affairs. The magazine's editorial board was headed by Oswald Horton and included J.E. Clare McFarlane, Constance Hollar and Amy Bailey (who was later connected with the founding of the Public Opinion newspaper). Though the editor's introductory comments characterise the members of the Poetry League as "operating capably efficiently and successfully ... without any gaudy show of ostentation or pomp," the magazine's table of contents is strewn with abbreviated versions of the degrees and honours held by its contributors. These range from "Eulalie Domingo, L.A.B." to the rather mystifying "V.P. Oswald Horton, M.J.I.". Several of the non-Jamaican contributors to the magazine

are expatriate clergymen and government officials stationed in Jamaica and there is even a contribution from a military man, Col. Henry H. Lin, presumably also of English origin. In this respect The Outlook may be compared to the contemporaneous Beacon magazine published in Trinidad between 1931 and 1933. Though The Beacon featured the work of resident expatriates frequently, they were usually liberals or scientists connected with the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture who considered themselves for the most part outside of local establishment circles.⁵¹ The Outlook is one of the few publications of the thirties in Jamaica to feature local prose fiction other than the work of H.G. de Lisser. Here again, however, the quality and direction of the short fiction is hardly comparable to that in The Beacon and even falls short of the standards set by de Lisser. In "Two's Company" by Lily Perkins an attempt is made to use an Anancy fable about the trickster being tricked as the framework for a short story about two Kingston slum children who steal their mother's wages to buy butter. The author's lack of familiarity with her subject matter can be gauged by the way in which she presents this fairly serious act (equivalent, perhaps to a middle-class child's theft of its parent's monthly salary to buy a bicycle) as merely a mischievous prank because the sum of money involved is so negligible.

Though the first issue of Outlook announces that the magazine is scheduled to appear once a month no further copies have survived. This suggests that the magazine went out of publication very quickly or that its circulation was limited. Indeed, by the end of 1933, most of the League's members seem to have exhausted their slender fund of inspiration. Their publications over the next few decades show a tendency to repeat and conserve old achievements rather than to continue publishing new and original work. During this period a number of anthologies of the work of older authors, or authors already dead, were published: In 1940 a volume of early poems by "Graeme" - Reverend William Graham - entitled In Memoriam was released. Posthumous memorial collections of MacDermot's work in Orange Valley and Other Poems and Arthur Nicholas' poems in Arcadia were issued in 1951 and 1949 respectively. Constance Hollar, a founding member of the League published her life's work under the title

Flaming June (1941) shortly before her death, and Albinia Catherine Hutton's Sonnets of Sorrow commemorating the death of her first husband was privately circulated in 1939.

At the end of the 1930s the League began to acquire new members of a younger generation and this produced a ripple of new publishing activity. The New Dawn Press was founded in 1938, and published as its inaugural work a collection of poems by one of the League's new members, Vivian Virtue's Wings of the Morning (1938). The Poetry League also used the press to publish The Yearbook of the Poetry League of Jamaica between 1939 and 1943 as well as the work of some of its older members. McFarlane's narrative poem The Magdalen, which appeared in 1957, seems to have been the last work issued by the New Dawn Press. The heightened social consciousness of the late 1930s had however produced its own cultural movement which, by the outbreak of the second World War, had begun to challenge the League's leadership in cultural matters. This development can be traced through the fortunes of the League's Yearbook: the first two numbers of the Yearbook contained material by a wide range of younger writers, including Roger Mais, H.D. Carberry and Louis Simpson. By 1940 the Yearbook had been replaced by the Public Opinion weekly newspaper as a forum for the work of "serious" poets. Early in 1940 Roger Mais launched a series of scathing attacks in Public Opinion on the pretensions of local poets, clearly aimed at writers of the sort represented in the Poetry League. In his comments he described their work inter alia as "fatuous and meandering", fit only to belong "to the reams of exercise book rhymes in which we more or less all indulge in one of those phases of adolescence, but which happily become mislaid even before we have grown old enough to regret them." The poets themselves he accused of "forming back-slapping societies," patronising their audiences and having minds which "stopped growing with the school syllabus."^{51a} In response to this attack McFarlane issued a resounding defence of the validity of the old forms and language of poetry as the true vehicles of ideal beauty in the 1941 Yearbook. His argument was reinforced by the inclusion in the Yearbook of his "Villanelle of Immortal Love", which states and

demonstrates through its theme and style exactly those sentiments for which McFarlane and the League stood:

Love will awaken all lovely things at last.
 One by one they shall come from the sleep of Time,
 Bearing in triumph the deathless dreams of the past.
 Hard on their fair designs came the wreck of the blast;
 Where they lie scattered in every land and clime,
 Love will awaken all lovely things at last
 Gathered from out the ages, a concourse vast,
 These shall return once more with arms sublime,
 Bearing in triumph the deathless dreams of the past,
 Lo, in what manifold moulds is their beauty cast!
 Ah, with what colours bedecked in the new Springtime,
 Love will awaken all lovely things at last!
 Now shall the Earth emerge from its wintry fast,
 And music flow again in powerful rhyme,
 Bearing in triumph the deathless dreams of the past.
 For out of the welter and dust of the holocaust
 Rises the promised glory of our prime:
 Love will awaken all lovely things at last,
 Bearing in triumph the deathless dreams of the past.⁵²

Notwithstanding the ring of sincerity in this assertion of a classic sense of order in the face of a rapidly changing local and international reality, the League was unable to re-establish its ascendancy in matters of aesthetic taste, though individual members such as McFarlane himself, who was a well-known public figure, continued to carry some literary clout. Most of the older members of the League, however, had already begun to withdraw into a private world, continuing their pursuit of truth and beauty in privately circulated manuscripts, such as Astley Clerk's Christmas Box, Mrs. Hutton's Sonnets of Sorrow, and The Singers Quarterly. As late as 1971 Judith Richards records the continued existence of the painstakingly handwritten and illustrated Singers Quarterly, and quotes from a letter from Albinia Catherine Davis (formerly Hutton), one of the founding members of the Poetry League:

The Quarterly to-day is a poor dying thing, for although a few have joined our band, many more have died. I do not pretend to understand modern "poetry" any more than I understand modern "art", and would not wish for the "poems" of any of the new writers in the Quarterly.⁵³ To me they have no beauty, no melody, no message.

The same note of deliberate withdrawal is sounded in some of the poems in the Quarterly, and perhaps these sentiments are best expressed in a carefully scripted contribution to the Singer's Quarterly about an album "such as were kept by nineteenth century young ladies:"

Old faded Album, wherefore was this scorn?
 Why do no water colours grace your page?
 Nor soft and plaintive verse your leaves adorn?
 (Something about "That day when love was born"
 Or "Lines about a Linnet in a cage.")

We know not. So forgive the modern touch
 Which cannot write about the "Dappled Doe",
 The stress and strain of life lie far too much
 Upon our souls for us to rise to such
 Rare heights as you knew in the long ago.

Old faded Album, grant us of your grace
 That, even as we write, we, too, may gain
 From crude modernity a breathing space
 To dream of crinolines, bob wigs and lace,
 And share your pang of gentle lyric grace.⁵⁴

The new intellectual movement that emerged in Jamaica during the period of social unrest immediately preceding the Second World War had the Public Opinion newspaper as its intellectual centre. Founded in 1937 under the editorship of O.T. Fairclough, the paper resembled the Jamaica Times, around which Thomas MacDermot had rallied an earlier generation of intellectuals in more than its compact size (12"x9") and weekly appearance. Like the Times the Public Opinion challenged the institutionalised leaders of culture of its day and gathered around itself a number of ideologically diverse groups and individuals who were held together by a common interest in Jamaica's political and cultural progress: Like the Times its period of greatest literary activity coincided with a period of social and political upheaval in the island. Like the Times its political offensive was dissipated by the outbreak of war in Europe; and like the Times it was ultimately superseded in its role as cultural coordinator by a smaller, more exclusively literary forum which institutionalised the creative efforts of the early Public Opinion writers, but did not go on to stimulate new literary experiments.

The newspaper's challenge to the cultural institutions of its day has already been mentioned in the discussion of the Poetry League of Jamaica. During the first year of its existence Public Opinion had little besides the efforts of the League's members to promote as indigenous literature, and until 1938 it occasionally featured the work of some of these writers in its columns. In 1938 one of the newspaper's reviewers, P.M. Sherlock, welcomed the launching of the League's New Dawn Press and gave an encouraging review to its inaugural publication, Vivian Virtue's Wings of the Morning. The reviewer was critical of Virtue's self-conscious and wordy "Ode on the Coronation of George VI", and of the author's tendency to imitate Keats and Shelley, but saw these faults as "only natural" and merely recommended the reading of T.S. Eliot as an antidote.⁵⁵ As late as February 1939 the newspaper was running J.E. Clare McFarlane's series on members of the Poetry League, "A Literature in the Making", which had first appeared in D.T. Wint's West Indian Critic & Review between 1929-31. In H.P. Jacobs' series on recent Jamaican history which ran for several months at the beginning of 1939, McFarlane is described as one of the progressive thinkers of the early 1930s on account of his sociological analysis, Jamaica in Crisis (1934).⁵⁶ The League's first Year-book was reviewed in September 1939 with only mild remonstrances against its "traditional poetic concept", and even Roger Mais in his earliest comments in the newspaper on contemporary Jamaican verse seems approving of their efforts.⁵⁷ The confrontation between old and new seems to have been begun as a passing jibe by Roger Mais at all things old-fashioned, but quickly escalated into a direct attack on the League after some of its members took up the defence of the legitimacy of their nineteenth century English models. At first the debate over acceptable literary standards was carried on in the correspondence columns of Public Opinion, with McFarlane insisting in response to Mais on the essential "Englishness" of Jamaican poetry, and Lettice King maintaining that she wished more Jamaicans would bring to the light of day their exercise books full of verse

that Mais had so peremptorily dismissed.⁵⁸ But eventually the League became the butt of attacks from all directions. After Albert Huie had compared McFarlane in a letter to the editor with the chimney sweep in Kingsley's Water Babies "travelling to the end of nowhere", and the newspaper's editors had printed an extract from an article on new trends in the American novel with the subtitle "Has its development a message for us, Mr. McFarlane?", the League seems to have withdrawn from the public debate.⁵⁹

One of Public Opinion's early targets was H.G. de Lisser, in his dual establishment roles as editor of The Gleaner and executive member of the Institute of Jamaica. During 1937 The Gleaner and Public Opinion clashed frequently over such issues as the report of the Nutrition Committee, which de Lisser felt exaggerated the scarcity of food among lower-class Jamaicans, and the need to improve domestic food production. De Lisser had finally to qualify his position, whereupon Public Opinion carried an ironic commentary on "The Awakening of H.G. de Lisser", attacking de Lisser's habitual practice of condemning out of hand any attempts at social reform before having studied them carefully, and of using his comic twin "H.G.D.", in his satirical "Random Jottings" column to trivialise serious issues already discredited in his editorials. In an article in Public Opinion analysing the Gleaner's editorial methods W. Adolphe Roberts comments:

I have quoted the "editor of the Gleaner," instead of Mr. H.G. de Lisser, because one cannot be legally sure about an unsigned article. But I am willing to wager that I know the professional, colourful style of H.G.D. when I see it.

To those in Jamaica who want to believe that the present regime is in no real danger of being disturbed, the editor of the Gleaner's technique of amiable ridicule must be soothing. The foreign reader with access to no other local opinion would assuredly gain the impression that the popular movement in this Island is a joke, or at the best is in an embryonic stage.^{59a}

Matters finally came to a head between de Lisser and the new intellectual movement at a meeting of the members of the Institute of Jamaica in March 1939 when de Lisser resigned from the board of the Institute in advance of the official date for the termination of his duties over what he considered a technical ploy to prevent his protégé Cosimo Pietersz from becoming chairman of the Institute's board. The usual vote of thanks to a retiring member was challenged from the floor by Norman Manley, and a long diatribe against de Lisser ensued from the younger members of the Institute. The issue was reported in the columns of Public Opinion with grim satisfaction. The furore the incident had caused was dismissed as "inevitable" and the columnist reports with obvious glee that the newspaper's detractors were saying that "henceforth there will only be 'leftist' books in the Institute/ of Jamaica/ and Mrs. Manley's works of art."⁶⁰

At no stage, however was Public Opinion a radical left-wing newspaper although some of its regular contributors were well-known for their Marxist views. Frank Hill, who ran a regular column in the newspaper called "The Worker", and who was connected with the local Left Book Club, was a Marxist, and so was W.A. McBean, who in a letter to the editor in 1939 upbraided another of the newspaper's regular contributors, Walter Adolphe Roberts for making misleading comments about Marxism.⁶¹ The majority of the contributors to the newspaper, however, were liberal socialists of various political shades, from the fairly conservative Fabian socialist Norman Manley; to the black nationalist Garveyite R.A. Levy, whose series on the Garvey movement was carried in Public Opinion during March 1942; to the middle-of-the-road liberal historian H.P. Jacobs, whose articles on local history were published regularly in the weekly. The Public Opinion circle also included a number of forceful Jamaican women with interests in a variety of social projects. Una Marson, who edited a woman's magazine called Cosmopolitan in the 1930s and had worked as Haile Selassie's personal secretary in England (accompanying him when he made his historic speech to the League of Nations on the occasion of Mussolini's invasion

of Abyssinia), was one of the original board members of Public Opinion. Another of its founding members was Amy Bailey whose fight for social welfare services involved her, with Marson, in the setting up of the "Save the Children Fund" in Jamaica. Apart from journalistic pieces Bailey occasionally published poems in Public Opinion. The newspaper also had close connections with a number of liberal expatriates based in Jamaica. Mrs. Edna Manley and H.P. Jacobs, both of whom were married to Jamaicans and had settled permanently in Jamaica, are the best-known members of this group, but other Jamaican-based expatriates such as E.P. Carter and the Jamaica College master W.H. Mittens also wrote for Public Opinion, and often their articles were on controversial topics.⁶² Articles by visiting artists and intellectuals such as Anthony Butts were also featured in Public Opinion, but on the whole the material published represented a broad spectrum of cultural and political interests within the local middle class. The newspaper debated possible social and political reforms within the society, but also kept its readers well-informed on international developments which bore a relationship to the domestic scene. The political crisis in Spain during the late 1930s was often a topic of discussion, as were the nationalist rumblings in Ireland and Kenya and the civil war in China. Books on regional issues were also given prominence. Macmillan's Warning from the West Indies and Calder-Marshall's Glory Dead, which concentrate on contemporaneous social conditions in Jamaica and Trinidad respectively, are both subjected to careful scrutiny. Calder-Marshall's book in particular is criticised for implying in the opinion of the reviewer that Trinidad's economic malaise was the consequence of inherent social decadence.⁶³

Original creative writing was featured in practically every issue of Public Opinion, with sometimes two or three pages devoted to the publication of a single short story. Poems were usually reproduced in bold, eye-catching print and placed in prominent positions on inside pages. There were annual short story competitions, but the magazine's editors tended to deplore

the competitive element in creative writing and poetry competitions were seldom held. Apart from original pieces the newspaper carried lengthy reviews of literary works and cultural events which give a fair indication of the range of interests among contributors. During September 1939, for instance, W.H. Mittens ran a series of articles on the modern novel, and Public Opinion for January 10th, 1940, carries an ecstatic review of Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath. Black American writing received special attention. There were long features on Richard Wright's Half a Million Black Voices and Zora Neale Hurston's Of Mules and Men (both sociological documentaries), as well as on Langston Hughes' collection The Dream Keeper and Other Poems.⁶⁴ Contemporary trends in English literature were followed in such articles as Louis Simpson's discussion of "Socialist Poetry in England" and Cicely Howland's critical analysis of T.S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral.⁶⁵ Articles on modern art and reviews of local and international art events were contributed by Edna Manley, E.P. Carter and the poet M.G. Smith, while Robert Verity contributed regular pieces on music appreciation and the state of music in Jamaica. All in all the newspaper's description of itself as a literary review seems an accurate one and it far outstrips the earlier Jamaica Times in its range and wealth of creative work and cultural information.

By 1941, however, the cultural scene, like the political scene, had become increasingly polarised between the so-called left and the right. This may have been a reflection of the strain put on liberal opinion by the continual harassment of individuals connected with Public Opinion by the Jamaican government which had begun to rely heavily on war-time censorship and internment measures as the means of controlling intellectual dissent. Apart from the differences of opinion that by now separated the Public Opinion writers from those connected with the Jamaica Poetry League, based mainly on different attitudes to language and form, the Public Opinion writers now came under attack from the Catholic Church for expressing blasphemous and morally improper views in their poetry. The publication of George

Campbell's poem "I dreamed /Jesus kissed Lenin on the lips/
For the Russian revolution" created a furore, and after another Campbell poem, "Flaming Directions", which expressed doubts about the hereafter was awarded the first prize in a Public Opinion poetry competition in February 1941, the monthly Catholic Opinion declared its intention to create an alternative literary forum in which poets who did not share the religious attitudes of the Public Opinion set could find expression. One poem published in the Catholic Opinion for May-June 1941, called "The Death of a Child" ("Surely the maker-man can send/Carpenter Joseph down to mend/With meltings of creative glue/ A little broken thing like you"), is prefaced with the defiant editorial aside:

Here is the sort of poem a Marxian Socialist would find rather difficult to write. But it comes easy to one who, like "Hastings", has kept the faith - and can express it.

1941 also saw the split within the nationalist movement between Alexander Bustamante's Labour Union and the People's National Party led by Norman Manley, after Bustamante was released from internment. This brought into the open one of the two main rifts within the nationalist movement, the other being the split between the left and center within the P.N.P. which came to a head in 1952 with the exclusion of the "Four H's" from the P.N.P. The immediate effect of the Manley-Bustamante split on the cultural scene was the transformation of the Public Opinion weekly from a broadly based liberal news and cultural magazine to a party newspaper. In April 1941 the newspaper officially altered its format and direction. Its magazine size and lay-out were changed for a more functional tabloid style, with larger pages and shorter articles. It dropped its description as a magazine and cut down the space devoted to cultural matters. Syndicated bridge columns and trivia from the international press agencies replaced the longer more discursive intellectual articles. Reviews of books became shorter, and the books reviewed now tended to be popular light fiction rather than theoretical works. Though the newspaper continued

to publish some poetry, the larger page size made the individual poems seem slighter and less significant. Short stories remained popular features however, with the work of new writers like K.J. Alexander, a Trinidadian journalist based in Jamaica, beginning to appear alongside the work of long-standing contributors such as Roger Mais and E.H.J. King.

During this period the role played by individuals connected with the newspaper also began to change. Norman Manley, who had originally been the weekly's music critic, now contributed almost exclusively as a political spokesman, though at no point were his journalistic efforts in the political arena as polemical or regular as those of writers such as W.A. Domingo or Walter Adolphe Roberts. H.P. Jacobs, one of the regular authors, within the group, of articles on local history and book reviews, now began to try his hand at satirical verse under the pseudonym "Y.O.Y". The most dramatic change however was in the writing of Roger Mais, who from being the enfant terrible of literary circles now turned to political issues in his Public Opinion articles, which as the war progressed became increasingly anti-Churchill and anti-Bustamante. Part of this general reshuffling of roles was due to the fact that between 1941 and 1944 several major political contributors to the newspaper had been interned under emergency war regulations as security risks on account of their political views. This meant that the individuals who remained were forced to spread themselves across a wider range of journalistic functions. In the case of Mais, who was eventually sent to prison on charges of sedition in 1944 as a result of an article published in Public Opinion, his identification with political issues enhanced his reputation as a creative writer, to the point where after his release from jail he felt confident enough to launch a literary-cum-polemical magazine of his own, called The People, using as its motto the title of his incriminating article, "Now We Know".⁶⁶ The three issues of his magazine extant contain material almost exclusively written by Mais, including poems, cartoons and editorials about local political issues.

100

Apart from Mais's magazine, a number of other magazines aimed at the burgeoning Jamaican middle-class readership began to appear in Jamaica during the 1940s, which like The People mixed occasional literary contributions with articles on current events and sketches on leading public figures. Spotlight magazine, published by the poet Evon Blake, appeared monthly during the 1940s, but apart from reviews of cultural events and articles on leading entertainers it contained very little material of literary significance. A greater interest in the Arts is apparent in The West Indian Review, which first appeared in 1937 and was edited by the Englishwoman Esther Chapman. Ivy Baxter describes this magazine as appealing to the same social class catered for by de Lisser's Planters' Punch, but draws attention to the emphasis the Review placed on regional cultural developments.⁶⁷ Such West Indian writers as Alfred H. Mendes of Trinidad and Edgar Mittelholzer of Guyana had short stories published in the magazine. Articles by local contributors were also featured, including pieces on local history by H.P. Jacobs. However, Chapman seems to have been disliked as an individual by most of the Public Opinion writers. Her two novels set in Jamaica, Study in Bronze (1928) and Too Much Summer (1953) reveal a conservative attitude to interracial social relationships, which must have been anathema to the Manley set.

If Blake's Spotlight could be said to represent the interests of the new black middle class, and Chapman's Review to cater for the white and near-white elite, magazines such as the monthly Madame (1946-50), edited by Mrs. Terry Burke, and the annual Pepperpot, edited by Elsie Benjamin, seem to have been aimed at a coloured middle-class readership. Madame, a ladies' magazine, took interest in creative writing but seems to have culled most of its material at second-hand from the pages of The West Indian Review, the Yearbooks of the Jamaica Poetry League and the columns of Public Opinion. Short stories by V.S. Reid appear cheek by jowl with pen portraits of the genteel Ormsby sisters of the Jamaica Poetry League and gossip about the royal family. Like de Lisser's earlier Planters' Punch, all

of these magazines depended on advertisements to subsidise their sales. A survey of the range and types of firms who advertised their products in each magazine gives an insight into the extent to which types of commercial enterprises were still divided between specific class and colour groups in Jamaican society of the 1940s and 1950s. Such nice social distinctions among the various cultural publications throw into relief the comparatively wide range of social and ideological groups from whom the Public Opinion newspaper drew its contributors during its first five years in existence.

Outside the new cultural magazines, local literature could also be read in The Daily Gleaner, or, after the war, heard over the air. The Gleaner newspaper occasionally featured the work of local writers, notably those connected with the Jamaica Poetry League, and in 1941 one of the League's most active members, Archie Lindo, had begun a regular "Poet's Corner" in the newspaper. In 1937 The Gleaner began to feature the dialect poems of Louise Bennett regularly. Since Bennett's work was considered popular entertainment rather than "serious" literature, its appearance in The Gleaner may indicate that the newspaper wished in this way to cater for its subscribers in rural dialect-speaking areas where the newspaper was still read out aloud to the community by one of its literate members. Certainly Miss Bennett's poems do not appear in Public Opinion or any of the cultural magazines aimed at a sophisticated readership, though Roger Mais does include a feature on her work in one issue of The People.⁶⁸ After the war, when a radio service was set up in Jamaica, Louise Bennett's poems could also be heard on the air, and by the time she left for England at the end of 1949 Bennett had established herself as a leading performer and scriptwriter in the Little Theatre movement's annual Jamaican pantomime and "Miss Lu" had become a household name for Jamaicans at all social levels.

From 1945 to 1958 the BBC short wave service broadcast a programme to the West Indies called London Calling which eventually developed into a one-hour weekly literary magazine

called the Caribbean Voices Programme. The programme was the brain-child of the Jamaican poet Una Marson, who had returned to England with the "Save the Children Fund" as a journalist in the mid-1940s where she worked with the BBC. The material used for the programme was pre-sorted in Jamaica by Mr. and Mrs. Cedric Lindo, then sent on to the BBC, but the programme featured writers from all over the English-speaking Caribbean, and in this way Jamaicans were made aware of cultural developments in other parts of the region. Though few Jamaican publications made use of material written in other islands, the work of Jamaican writers now began to appear in Frank Collymore's literary magazine Bim (1941-) published from Barbados and the Guyanese cultural magazine Kyk-over-al (1945-61) edited by A.J. Seymour.

By 1942, the consolidation phase of the literary movement centred around Public Opinion had begun, and the first collections of creative writing originally published in the newspaper were published as books. A.E.T. Henry's satirical sketches and short stories were issued in two volumes: Sheets in the Wind (1942) and Bats in the Belfry (1944). In both volumes the original date of publication of each of the individual pieces in Public Opinion is listed. Roger Mais's two short story collections, Face and Other Stories and And Most of All Man, both containing a considerable amount of previously unpublished material followed each other in quick succession in 1942. Reviewing the stories in Face for Public Opinion E.H.J. King comments on their "wholesome obscenity" and "crude effectiveness of style."⁶⁹ Other short story collections culled from the pages of Public Opinion include Claude Thompson's These My People (1943), R.L.C. Aarons' The Cow that Laughed (1944) and Cicely Howland's Rain for the Plains and Other Stories (1943). The first Focus anthology also appeared in 1943, published co-operatively by its contributors and edited by Edna Manley. The anthology contained poems, plays and short stories, most of which had first appeared in Public Opinion. George Campbell's First Poems (1945) was the only individual poetry

collection to be published before 1950 by a member of the group, which included such poets as M.G. Smith, H.D. Carberry, Vera Bell and P.M. Sherlock; however selections from the work of the other writers appeared in the second Focus anthology published in 1948. All of these collections were printed and published locally.

Other writers not directly connected with the Focus set also produced individual anthologies of their work during this period. Louise Bennett's first collection of dialect verse, compiled and published by George Bowen in 1942 was followed by a collection of Jamaica Humour in Dialect in 1944. Two further collections of dialect poems and stories by Bennett appeared in 1948 and 1949. Archie Lindo of the Jamaica Poetry League published two collections of short stories and poems with the College Press (his own publishing venture), entitled Bronze and My Heart Was Singing. John Figueroa, most of whose poetry had appeared in the Catholic Opinion, published his poetry and prose in a collection called Blue Mountain Peak in 1946. With the founding of The Pioneer Press in 1950, another literary enterprise in which Una Marson played an important role, the work contained in these smaller volumes was once more anthologised in local publications: This time the work of the Focus group was combined with the work of other Jamaican writers as well as with work produced in other Caribbean islands in volumes such as Caribbean Anthology of Short Stories (1953), Poetry for Children (1950) and Anancy Stories and Dialect Verse (1950), which contained folk tales by Public Opinion writers Una Wilson and Dorothy Clarke as well as dialect poems by Louise Bennett and Claude McKay.

During this period of renewed local publishing activity the focus of the literary movement moved more noticeably to the Manley home where Mrs. Manley continued to be at the social and aesthetic centre of the group as she had been earlier as one of the editors of Public Opinion. Several of the volumes which appeared during this period are dedicated to one or both of the Manleys and much of the fiction and poetry they contain

addresses itself directly or indirectly to Mrs. Manley's work as an artist and cultural leader or to her husband's role as a nationalist politician. At the same time, however, antipathies towards the group became stronger among old as well as younger writers as a clearly distinguishable Focus "set" with its sharply defined social and aesthetic attitudes began to emerge.

One of the consequences of the contraction of the Public Opinion group into the smaller, more exclusive Focus circle was that, like the Jamaica Times/Jamaica Poetry League transition of an earlier period, the artistic efforts of the group became prematurely institutionalised as representing a well-established "school" of poetry when in fact most of the writers involved had barely started to cut their teeth, metaphorically speaking, as artists. Writers concentrated on circulating and publishing work which had first been produced in the late 1930s, and after the first flood of anthologies based on Public Opinion contributions, new or truly original work began to appear less frequently. The contributions from Focus writers to the Caribbean Voices Programme between 1945 and 1958 for example, are almost identical with the material published in Public Opinion between 1937 and 1943. A typical case in point is R.L.C. Aarons' short story, "The Cow that Laughed", which was first published in Public Opinion as a prize-winning story in 1939. It subsequently appeared as the title piece in Aaron's short story collection, The Cow that Laughed and Other Stories (1944). In 1948 it was anthologised in Robert Herring's special Jamaican issue of Life and Letters, and it was read on the air on the Caribbean Voices Programme in 1958. Though it was not unusual during the 1940s and early 1950s for West Indian writers to contribute the same piece of work to more than one literary publication, the long time-span between the first and last submissions of the story as original work, its mediocrity as a piece of creative writing, and the absence in the intervening years of any real progress in the author's creative writing suggest a certain lack of critical judgement on the part of the writer and an absence of literary

progress among his peers. New writers, many of them students at the University College of the West Indies, which was opened in Jamaica in 1949, were featured in subsequent issues of Focus in 1956 and 1960, but few of the original Focus set seem to have avoided stagnation in their creative efforts after 1945.

The two writers of this generation who seem to have most successfully survived this creative impasse are Roger Mais and Louise Bennett. As has already been noted, Bennett's early work received little attention but once she had returned from England in the mid-1940s after studying drama on a British Council scholarship she was accorded a certain amount of recognition in Jamaican cultural circles. Such recognition however was aimed at incorporating her work into acceptable middle-class cultural channels and in the interview with her which Mais published in The People he quotes her as saying:

"I was keen on getting back... I thought there was so much I could do. I wanted to get started right away. But --"

But... all she has been able to do since her return is to accept polite invitation to "give a little help" with various church concerts and other charitable performances.

Through radio, pantomime and her own attempts to revive folk material and keep in touch with the dialect-speaking element within her society, Bennett was able to refine and extend the range of her creative writing. Though she did leave Jamaica at the end of 1949 for a five-year spell in Britain, Jamaica did not "lose Louise Bennett too" as Mais had feared it would, and her work has continued to be performed and published.

Mais's anxiety about Louise Bennett's prospects in Jamaica may have been a reflection of his own mounting impatience with the local scene. Of all the writers connected with Focus and Public Opinion he seems to have been most aware of the stultifying consequences of a premature "school" of writing in Jamaica and he addresses himself directly to this matter in an article written shortly before his departure for England in

1952 entitled "Why I Love and Leave Jamaica":

There is in this country, alas, a moated tower of mediocrity, close and unassailable, and it holds such sway, it has acquired such a body of mediocre opinion about it that it is useless to try to make a dent in its smugness and its exclusiveness and its indifference to anything that does not come entirely within its limited scope and compass and influence. ...I can say without hesitation that deep down my contempt is not for people, as such, but for their loss, or lack of values, and for the want of personal integrity, where this is manifest, and for the absence of spirit, or of a wholeness of spirit.⁷¹

His own work shows no tendency to stagnate as he continued to experiment with new literary styles and techniques until his death in 1955, and he seldom published the same material twice.

The decade of the 1940s closed with the publication of V.S. Reid's New Day (1949), the first full-length novel to be published by a member of the Focus group. It was also the first major work by a member of the group to be published outside Jamaica and marks the end of the predominance of local and regional presses over metropolitan publishing houses in the West Indies as a whole. Reid's novel was followed in 1953 by Roger Mais's The Hills Were Joyful Together. Mais's two other novels, Brother Man and Black Lightning, appeared in 1954 and 1955 respectively. These were the last major publications of the 1940s literary movement as by 1950 the old Public Opinion group had started to disperse, various key members leaving Jamaica to seek their literary fortunes abroad. George Campbell migrated to America in 1948 and Roger Mais, Una Marson, H.D. Carberry and M.G. Smith were all in London for extended periods in the late 1940s or early 1950s.

Literary publications in Jamaica before 1950 therefore can be linked with two broad groups: the Jamaica Times/Jamaica Poetry League group, with which such publishing ventures as the New Dawn Press and the All Jamaica Library are associated; and the Public Opinion/Focus group which produced the 1943 and 1948 Focus anthologies and helped to found the Pioneer Press. Members of both groups also produced independent publications run off on local printing presses and one or two members of each group

had their work published abroad. H.G. de Lisser's publications overlap with the activities of both groups, spanning the period between 1912 and his death in 1944. His work was published locally in The Daily Gleaner and in Planters' Punch and was brought out in England by Methuen & Co. and Ernest Benn. New editions of some of his novels continued to appear for some time after his death. The amount of material published locally by these groups far exceeds the total amount published in the rest of the English-speaking Caribbean during the same period. Although none of the writers belonging to these groups was able to make a living off their literary earnings in Jamaica, the high sales figures for early novels like de Lisser's Jane's Career and MacDermot's Becka's Buckra Baby indicate the existence of a literary market of sorts in Jamaica even before the First World War.

The Jamaican publishing scene before 1950 is also remarkable in the extent to which local literary activity was associated with reputable publications and institutions: The popular success of de Lisser's Planters' Punch implies that local themes and settings could appeal to the middle-class reading public as well as to the social elite if its tone was not too radical. Publications brought out by the Jamaica Poetry League and the Pioneer Press were quickly taken up by local school libraries, and even the Public Opinion newspaper, which was often at odds with the establishment, must have been able to muster a readership within the wider community large enough to support its format as a literary magazine during the first five years of its existence. Ultimately each group of writers was recognised and honoured by the Institute of Jamaica during the lifetimes of its members. This situation must be evaluated by contrast with the literary publishing scene elsewhere in the West Indies during the same period where literary periodicals were almost non-existent before the mid 1940s (Trinidad's Beacon magazine being a notable if short-lived exception), and individual writers pursued their vocation without public support or even awareness.

While Jamaican writers tend to describe themselves as struggling against all odds in a philistine society, they were hardly ever marginal to the community's social and political life. Writers like de Lisser and McFarlane were respected for reasons quite apart from their literary achievements and no doubt this influenced the acceptability of their work. The Public Opinion writers too must have owed some of their public esteem to their connection with the Manleys and the People's National Party. Even Roger Mais's imprisonment seems to have had a positive effect on his public image as a literary figure. Such social prominence affected writers in a number of ways: Because of their public reputations, Jamaican writers must often have been under indirect pressure to conform to their public images and to write the kind of material their public expected. This may have hastened the rate at which literary experiment in the newspapers gave way to conservatism and repetition in Jamaican literary circles. It may also have helped harden aesthetic preferences into entrenched positions: Once a writer like Roger Mais or J.E.C. McFarlane had committed himself in print, retraction or modification of a point of view could involve a loss of prestige. Critical reception of the work of local writers tended to be influenced by the social or political popularity of the author or his patrons when his work first appeared and this may have led to a relaxation of critical standards. Conversely however, individual writers have paid for their inflated reputations during their lifetimes by the total and at times unwarranted disregard of their work by the critics once the social issues with which they were connected fell into disrepute. It is perhaps not coincidental that the writers whose works have best withstood the vagaries of critical opinion are those who in one way or another managed to escape the limitations of their society: Claude McKay and Roger Mais by selling their work on the international publishing market, and Louise Bennett by going outside established local channels for her audience and material.

Notes

¹See Frank Cundall, A History of Printing in Jamaica from 1717 to 1834 (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1935). Cundall notes that one of the earliest pieces of creative writing published locally was the historian Bryan Edwards' Poems Written Chiefly in the West Indies (Kingston: Aikman, 1792).

²See Frank Cundall, "Library Work in Jamaica", in Transactions and Proceedings of the Second International Library Conference, 1897 (London: 1898). Cundall mentions among others the subscription library of the Athenaeum Club (founded in 1835 and eventually subsumed into the library of the Institute of Jamaica), and the library of the Jamaica Society (1827), known after 1850 as the Colonial History and Reading Society.

³The Jamaica Quarterly Journal and Literary Gazette, Conducted by a Society of Gentlemen (Kingston: Office of the Kingston Chronicle, 1818-1819). Vol. I (February 1818) to Vol. II (March 1819) on record at the West India Reference Library, Institute of Jamaica; Vol. II (July 1819) and Vol. III (September 1819) at the British Library. Contains extensive literary reviews and some original verse. - The Trifler (Kingston, 1822-26) also on record at the BL. After 1826 the magazine changed its name to The Gossip, "a literary, dramatic and useful publication," printed by A. Holmes for Francis Fiddlewood (see Cundall, History of Printing, p. 28). BL records indicate that this was complemented by a smaller, more outrageous satirical publication called the Buckaroo Journal (1823-1827) which aimed at giving "Beelzebub" competition.

⁴The York Castle Quarterly (Kingston: J.W. Kerr & Co., 1889). The historical romance mentioned was "In at the Breach" by "H.A.J." One copy on record at the BL. Other journals on record which paid passing attention to creative writing were The Jamaica Magazine (Kingston: Office of the Chronicle, 1812-1813) - Vols. I, 1 (February, 1812) to IV, 6 (December, 1813) still extant - and The Jamaica Journal (Kingston: Office of the Jamaica Courant, 1818), two numbers still extant, edited by Mr. Ripplingham.

⁵The Victorian Quarterly (Kingston: Mortimer de Souza, 1892?), ed. Jos. C. Ford. The two numbers I have seen bear no dates and have conflicting volume numbers on title pages and covers.

⁶See Frank Cundall, "Some Interesting Notes on Jamaican Magazines", Jamaica Times, 15th April, 1922, p. 8.

⁷W.P. Livingstone, Black Jamaica: A Study in Evolution (London: Sampson, Low Marston & Co. Ltd., 1899), p. 204.

⁸See Ivy Baxter, The Arts of an Island (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1970), pp. 79-80.

⁹See W. Adolph Roberts, Six Great Jamaicans (Kingston: The Pioneer Press, 1952), pp. 78ff.

¹⁰Oscar Plummer in Plummer's Magazine, I, 2 (November, 1913), p. 11, notes that often the methods of these small newspapers were less than honest. He refers to the nineteenth century editor of The Scorpion who made more money from the material he was paid not to publish than from the actual material printed. Plummer goes on to compare The Scorpion's methods with those of a contemporaneous newspaper called The Jamaican (c. 1913).

¹¹See James Carnegie, Some Aspects of Jamaica's Politics: 1918-1938 (Kingston: The Institute of Jamaica, 1973), p. 162. Carnegie quotes declared circulation figures for the two newspapers between the wars as 26,000 copies daily for The Gleaner and 5,000 copies weekly for the Jamaica Times.

¹²Baxter, Arts, p. 76, cites an advertisement which appeared in Gall's Newsletter, 22nd January, 1884, in which the Institute proposed to award 25 guineas for a successful method of pressing water particles out of the fibres and stems of the Banana and Plaintain and a prize of 20 guineas for the best listing of books for a bibliography of Jamaica.

¹³Thomas MacDermot, "The Musgrave Silver Medal", Jamaica Times, 9th March, 1912, p. 11.

¹⁴See the Jamaica Times, 5th October, 1912.

¹⁵See Raglan Phillips, "The Car Fight - A Parody", Jamaica Times, 16th March, 1912, p. 8.

¹⁶Serialisation, however, was rarely of the work of local authors. Stories were probably bought from international syndicates, and were, before the war, usually historical romances, e.g. The Kingdom of the Slender Swords, a Japanese romance first published in New York in 1910 and serialised in the Times for most of 1911 and 1912. After World War I war-related stories came into vogue, e.g. Bulldog Drummend: "The Adventures of a Demobilised Officer who Found Peace Dull", which ran during 1921 and 1922. Plummer's series on The Buccaneers began in the Times on 20th July, 1912.

¹⁷See Jamaica Times, 12th October, 1912, p. 4.

¹⁸See "Celt" in Jamaica Times, 20th January, 1912, p. 5.

¹⁹"Tom Redcam" (pseud. for MacDermot), "The Unusual Preface", in One Brown Girl And - (Kingston: Times Printery, 1909), p. i. For a discussion of all four titles published by the All Jamaica Library see Mervyn Morris, "The All Jamaica Library", Jamaica Journal, VI, 1 (March, 1972), pp. 47-49.

²⁰See Jamaica Times, 7th September, 1912, p. 9, where "Celt" reports that a short sketch by Roberts entitled "Method in His Madness" had been published in the August 11th edition of the Semi-Monthly Magazine.

²¹See Times, 4th May, 1912, p. 20. McKay's prize-winning poem is quoted in full.

²²McKay's Songs of Jamaica reviewed at length in the Times, 13th January, 1912, p. 12. Information about music for the poems given in the Times, 14th September, 1912, p. 14.

²³Selections from Albinia Catherine McKay's Poems (1912) featured in the Times, June 1st and June 8th, 1912.

²⁴Gilbert's Panama Patchwork reviewed by "Celt" in Times, 20th April, 1912, p. 5.

²⁵See Times, 28th September, 1912, p. 20. A propos of Twentieth Century Jamaica (1913) "Celt" notes that when W. P. Livingstone's Black Jamaica (1899) had first appeared, "Mr. de Lisser had told his friends that he would one day write a book about Jamaica", suggesting a possible influence of Livingstone's work on de Lisser's.

²⁶The first installment of Jane, A Story of Jamaica appeared in November 1912. See also Chapter II, note 36.

²⁷Joseph Shore, In Old St. James: A Book of Parish Chronicles (Kingston: Aston Gardner, 1907 and 1912). For details of literary activity during this period see H.P. Jacobs, "The Literary Movement", Public Opinion, 4th March, 1939, p. 3.

²⁸"An All Jamaican Entertainment" in Times, 15th June, 1912, p. 11. Redcam quotes the entire evening's programme in his review. A shortened version is given here. It gives an idea of the extent and range of the material used as well as what kind of literary material was popular at the time and which newspapers published creative writing:

Extracts from In Jamaica and Cuba by H.G. de Lisser: "Love Making in Cuba", "At the Payret Theatre, Havana", "Street Meeting in Kingston", "Description of a Practice Dance, Kingston", "On the Pier, Port Antonio", "The Decker" (these were all read by Claude McKay); recitation of "The Waterfall" by "Tropica"; extract from "Bem-Bem" by Miss Muriel Thompson (published in the Jamaica Times, 28th January, 1911); recitation of "The Cathedral - St. Jago de la Vega" by Miss Carrie Carver (published in the Jamaica Times, 28th January, 1911); reading of the two last paragraphs of "August the First in Its True Setting" by U. Theo McKay (published in the Jamaica Times, 21st August, 1909); reading of editorial on "Samuel Constantine Burke" (published in the Jamaica Daily News); recitation of "The Witch Man's Prophecy" by Clarine Stephenson (published in the Jamaica Times, 21st August, 1909); reading of an editorial on "A Jamaican Poet, Lionel Robertson" (published in the Daily

Telegraph, 21st November, 1908 - read by Claude McKay); recitation from "Florimel", part III, by Lionel Robertson; extract from "Farder Matney's Pigs" by E.A. Dodd (published in the Jamaica Times, 21st August, 1909); extract from One Brown Girl And - by Thomas MacDermot: "Coughing up Taxes"; recitation of "The Solitaire" by Miss O'Shaugnessy (published in the Jamaica Times Christmas Number, 1911); recitation of "The Nativity" by Miss Arabel Moulton-Barrett (published in The Gleaner Christmas Number, 1910); recitation of "Hard Times" by Claude McKay (published in Songs of Jamaica, 1912); extract from Becka's Buckra Baby by Thomas MacDermot; reading of the four last paragraphs of "Morant Bay Tragedy" by Oscar Plummer (published in the Jamaica Times, 22nd May, 1909); recitation of "Gordon to the Oppressed Natives" by Claude McKay (published in T.P.'s Federal Band of Song); recitation of "Muthos" by "H.C.B." (published in the Jamaica Times, 23rd March, 1912); reading of review of Miss Albinia McKay's poems from The Gleaner; recitation of "Monday Morning" by Norman Palmer (published in the Jamaica Times, 30th March, 1912); recitation of "De Tourist Dem" by Raglan Phillips (published in the Jamaica Times, 30th March, 1912); recitation of the last five verses of "An Island Song of Empire" by Tom Redcam; recitation of "Cudjoe Fresh from the Lecture" by Claude McKay (published in Songs of Jamaica); recitation of "Coronation Song" by Thomas MacDermot; sung version of "Pleading" by Claude McKay (text published in Songs of Jamaica).

²⁹Judith Richards, "Literary Efforts in Jamaica: 1900-1950" (unpublished Caribbean Studies Project, UWI Mona, 1972) mentions two other clubs active at the time whose aims and interests were similar to those of the James Hill Society: the St. Paul's Literary Society and the Coke Literary Guild.

³⁰Claude McKay, My Green Hills of Jamaica (Kingston: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979), ed. Mervyn Morris, p. 45.

³¹Ibid., p. 86.

³²See Times, 22nd January, 1912, which records that a motion to reconsider Claude McKay for the award of the Musgrave Silver Medal had to be postponed because of the absence of H.G. de Lisser who was down to move it. McKay was eventually awarded the medal later in 1912.

³³"Celt" on "Our Writers", Times, 10th August, 1912, p. 23.

³⁴Carnegie, Some Aspects, p. 164, notes for example that during the 1920s MacDermot so pestered the Education Department about the proper observance of Empire Day that he was invited to compose the Empire Day address to schools.

³⁵See H.P. Jacobs, "Sir After the War", Public Opinion, 18th March, 1939, p. 3.

³⁶Jane's Career first appeared in serialised form in The Gleaner as Jane: A Story of Jamaica late in 1912. Serialisation was stopped before the story was completed, and a local edition

of the story in book form was issued early in 1913 by the Gleaner Co. under the same title. A British edition appeared in 1914, published by Methuen & Co. with the title Jane's Career. During de Lisser's lifetime the book was re-issued a fourth time in the 1940-41 edition of Planters' Punch, and a sequel to the story, Myrtle and Money, appeared in the 1941-42 edition of Planters' Punch. Since then the book has been re-issued on several occasions. The current edition in use from Heinemann is prefaced with a critical introduction by Kenneth Ramchand.

³⁷H. G. de Lisser, Author's Note to Triumphant Squalitone (Kingston: The Gleaner Co., 1917).

³⁸De Lisser's tenure of these posts was as follows: Editor of Planters' Punch, 1920-1944; Secretary of the Jamaica Imperial Association, 1917-1944; Editor of The Daily Gleaner, 1904-1944; Member of the Board of Governors of the Institute of Jamaica, 1914-1918, 1920-1938. Between 1922 and 1937 de Lisser served continuously as Chairman of the Board, only retiring briefly between terms to comply with constitutional technicalities. W. Adalphe Roberts in Six Great Jamaicans credits de Lisser with raising the funds for financing and completing the Institute's science wing and supporting Cundall's efforts at establishing the Institute's West India Reference Library (see Roberts, p. 112).

³⁹Planters' Punch, I, 6 (1925-26), p. 4.

⁴⁰See Planters' Punch, II, 6 (1931-32). The name of the favoured young lady was Miss Hope Cahusac.

⁴¹De Lisser published the following novels/novelettes in Planters' Punch:

Volume I	No. 1 (1920): not extant
	No. 2 (1921): <u>The Rivals</u>
	No. 3 (1922-3): <u>The Devil's Mountain</u>
	Nos. 4 and 5: not extant
	No. 6 (1925-26): <u>The Jamaica Nobility</u>
	Volume II
No. 2 (1928): <u>The Sins of the Children</u>	
No. 3 (1929): <u>The White Witch of Rosehall</u>	
No. 4 (1929-30): <u>The Jamaica Bandits</u>	
No. 5 (1930-31): <u>Morgan's Daughter</u>	
No. 6 (1931-32): <u>The Cup and the Lip</u>	
Volume III	No. 1 (1932-33): <u>The Crocodiles</u>
	No. 2 (1933-34): <u>The Poltergeist</u>
	No. 3 (1934-35): <u>The Poltergeist</u> continued
	No. 4 (1935-36): <u>Under the Sun</u>
	No. 5 (1936-37): <u>Anacanoa</u> (republished as <u>The Arawak Girl</u>)
	No. 6 (1937-38): <u>Conquest</u> (sequel to <u>Anacanoa</u>)
Volume IV	No. 1 (1938-39): <u>The White Maroon</u> (sequel to <u>Conquest</u>)
	No. 2 (1939-40): <u>Haunted</u>
	No. 3 (1940-41): <u>Jane's Career</u>
	No. 4 (1941-42): <u>Myrtle and Money</u> (sequel to <u>Jane's Career</u>)
	No. 5 (1942-43): <u>Psyche</u>
	No. 6 (1943-44): <u>The Return</u>

⁴²The following novels were republished in book form during de Lisser's lifetime: Under the Sun (Ernest Benn, 1937), The White Witch of Rosehall (Ernest Benn, 1929). Ernest Benn went on to publish the following titles by de Lisser after his death: Psyche (1952), Morgan's Daughter (1953), The Cup and the Lip (1956). The Arawak Girl was issued in 1958 by the Pioneer Press.

⁴³Professor Aubrey Phillips of the Department of Education, U.W.I., Mona, whose comments are quoted here, also recalls that Planters' Punch became part of the Christmas tradition in his home, and that his father would read the novels out aloud for the rest of the family. The Focus poet Vera Bell (now Mrs. Montgomery) recalls similar group readings of installments of Jane's Career when it first appeared in serial form in The Gleaner.

⁴⁴The articles mentioned appeared in the following issues of Planters' Punch: "Hotels and Hostels of Jamaica" and "Jamaica Hostesses and Entertainers Present and Past" in II, 1 (1926-27); "From Legs to Wings" in III, 4 (1935-36); "Across the Seas, Today and Yesterday" in III, 6 (1937-38); "Eating Goes Modern" in IV, 3 (1940-41); and "When Parsons Were Pepper" in II, 4 (1929-30).

⁴⁵The following stories by foreign writers were published in Planters' Punch: I, 6 (1925): The Citadel, or The Ring of Dessalines by Joseph Husband; II, 1 (1927): Poor Little Life by Charles Rampini; and One Haytian Night by William P. Barron; II, 2 (1928): Yellow Magic by F. Britten; and The Shining Blade by John Webb; II, 3 (1929): Kruger's Millions by V.J. Turner; II, 4 (1929-30): The Tale-teller of Algiers by Hiram P. Bailey; and The Golden Galleons of Caribbee by Gordeon Hill Grahame; II, 5 (1930-31): Timber Laden by A. Halcrow; and The Dancing Dead by Robert McDonald; III, 3 (1934-35): Panama Is Burning by Phillip Lindsay; III, 6 (1937-38): The Fortunes of Captain Blood by Raphael Sabatini; and IV, 1 (1938-39): No Colour by Moonlight by E. Arnott Robinson.

⁴⁶F.C. Tomlinson in his pamphlet, The Case of the Rainbow Book (1935?) accuses the Jamaican establishment of conspiring to lose his novel, The Rainbow Book, in the mails because it contained criticism of the Jamaican establishment. Tomlinson also claims that de Lisser had refused to publish the novel at the Gleaner Company and that de Lisser had plagiarised sections of Tomlinson's earlier novel, The Helions, in Triumphant Squalitone.

⁴⁷J.E. Clare McFarlane, Introduction to Arcadia, poems by Arthur Nicholas (London: Books for Today, 1949), p. 5. Baxter, in Arts, also notes that several literary societies were formed during the 1920s, including groups at Black River, St. Ann's Bay, Montego Bay and Hagley Gap. She mentions especially the Frankfield Shakespearean Society founded by McKay's older brother, U. Theo McKay.

⁴⁸See The Yearbook of the Jamaica Poetry League (Kingston: The New Dawn Press, 1943), p. 26.

⁴⁹McFarlane in ibid., p. 27.

⁵⁰The following League Members received the Musgrave medal of the Institute of Jamaica for their literary achievements during the 1930s: Una Marsen (1930), Lettice King, alias "Lena Kent" (1931), J.E. Clare McFarlane (1935) and Astley Clerk (1937).

⁵¹For a close analysis of The Beacon and a discussion of the writers featured in this magazine, see Reinhard W. Sander, The Trinidad Awakening: West Indian Literature of the Nineteen-Thirties, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Texas, 1979).

^{51a}Roger Mais in Public Opinion, 3rd February, 7th February and 9th March, 1940.

⁵²McFarlane, "Villanelle of Immortal Love", Yearbook (1941), p. 5.

⁵³Quoted by Judith Richards, "Literary Efforts", p. 11.

⁵⁴"The Untouched Album" by "V.M.C." in Singers Quarterly, Vol. II (no date), at the Institute of Jamaica.

⁵⁵See P.M. Sherlock's review in Public Opinion, 2nd December, 1938, p. 8.

⁵⁶See H.P. Jacobs' article in Public Opinion, 4th March, 1939, p. 3.

⁵⁷See Public Opinion, 23rd September, 1939, p. 3. Mais's favourable comments appear on 4th November, 1939, p. 11.

⁵⁸See Lettice King's comment in Public Opinion, 10th February, 1940, p. 14.

⁵⁹See Albert Huie's comments in Public Opinion, 13th April, 1940, p. 14. The article on the American novel was published on 9th April, 1940, p. 12.

^{59a}W. Adolphe Roberts, "The Day of Battle", Public Opinion, February 18th, 1939, p. 10.

⁶⁰Public Opinion, 11th March, 1939, p. 2.

⁶¹See W.A. McBean's comments in Public Opinion, 26th August, 1939, p. 10.

⁶²See for example W. H. Mittens' controversial review of Charles Morgan's play, The Flashing Stream, in Public Opinion, 18th February, 1939, p. 3, in which he describes the work as a "breakthrough in sexual ethics". Carter's article on African art, Public Opinion, 21st January, 1939, p. 5, created a furore by suggesting that African art and civilisation were in some respects superior to their European counterparts.

⁶³MacMillan's Warning from the West Indies reviewed in Public Opinion, 28th January, 1939, p. 8, by H. P. Jacobs. Calder-Marshall's Glory Dead is reviewed in Public Opinion, 24th June, 1939.

⁶⁴Richard Wright's Half a Million Black Voices is reviewed in Public Opinion on 10th January, 1942; Zora Neale Hurston's Of Mules and Men on 3rd February, 1940; Langston Hughes' Dream Keeper and Other Poems on 9th March, 1940.

⁶⁵See Louis Simpson, "Socialist Poetry in England", Public Opinion, 24th May, 1941, p. 8. In her review of Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral on March 14th, 1942, Cicely Howland discusses the problems the play presents in theatre production.

⁶⁶See Roger Mais, "Now We Know", Public Opinion, 11th July, 1944. The three numbers of The People in my possession are among the few copies still extant. They are dated September, October, and Xmas, 1946. F.E. Fraser in an article published in The Gleaner, 15th June, 1957, claims that Mais attempted two magazine ventures, both of which failed because he was fleeced by unscrupulous partners, however he places these before Mais's imprisonment. Most of the material in The People is written by Mais himself. Other contributors included Allen Isaacs, H.S. Burns, Harry Dayes (Mais's brother-in-law), Clifton Neita and a Mrs. Aiken.

⁶⁷See Baxter, Arts, pp. 100-101.

⁶⁸This impression of neglect of Bennett's work, gained from my reading of 1940s newspapers and magazines, is born out by Bennett in an interview with Dennis Scott in Caribbean Quarterly, XIV, 1&2 (March-June, 1968), in which she says: "I have been set apart by other creative writers a long time ago because of the language I speak and work in...You know, I wasn't ever asked to a Jamaica Poetry League meeting. I was never thought good enough to be represented in that anthology FOCUS."

⁶⁹E.H.J. King's review in Public Opinion, 2nd May, 1942.

⁷⁰Mais's interview with Bennett entitled "Will Jamaica Lose Louise Bennett too?" appeared in The People, Xmas, 1946, p. 26.

⁷¹Roger Mais, "Why I love and Leave Jamaica", Public Opinion, 10th June, 1966 (reprinted from a 1950 edition).

CHAPTER III

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

The way in which attitudes to language have influenced the style of poets and novelists in the West Indies is one of the most crucial areas in which the peculiar nature of West Indian society has affected the development of the Arts. In the first place, language in the West Indies has always connoted more than merely a means of communication. During slavery the African languages spoken by the slaves were seen as a threat to established order as they were felt to constitute a secret code between groups of slaves from the same regions which excluded the master and could therefore be used to plot against him. As a result of this fear the use of African languages between slaves was deliberately suppressed, and during the period spent waiting for shipment, the Middle Passage, and the first few years in the West Indies most slaves acquired a form of pidgin speech which ultimately developed into a Creole language. Cassidy and Le Page in their summary of the historical phonology of Jamaican English characterise the particular form of Creole developed in Jamaica (also referred to in this thesis as Jamaican dialect) as being influenced by "established Caribbean usages of Amerindian, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French and English origin" during the first five hundred years of English colonial activity in Jamaica. From 1707 to 1808 this Creole language was further modified by "contact between constantly growing numbers of new slaves - of whom an increasing proportion came from the Bight of Benin, the Congo and Angola - and the by-now established Creole-speaking slave-society; with an ever-diminishing amount of contact on the part of individual slaves with native English speakers of whom, as the century wore on, a higher proportion tended to be Scots."¹

Though much of the vocabulary of Jamaican Creole was acquired from dialects of English, the world-view contained in the language continued to express an attitude to reality

in which the cultural framework of the African languages it had replaced played a vital role. Such stylistic and rhetorical devices connected with African oral tradition as the use of proverbs were transferred into the Creole, and traditional folk songs and religious rituals were translated into the new language and extended to accommodate the new cultural experiences of the Middle Passage and the New World. In this way the Creole language served as a cultural bridge which kept alive the memory of the African past while dealing with the reality of the West Indian present. In addition, a great deal of the covert resistance to slavery which the slave-owners had hoped to stamp out with the eradication of the slaves' native languages was preserved in the Creole culture, and here again the Creole language played a pivotal role. In his description of the folk culture of the slaves, the poet and historian Edward Brathwaite comments:

It was in language that the slave was perhaps most successfully imprisoned by his master; and it was in his (mis-) use of it that he perhaps most effectively rebelled. Within the folk tradition, language was (and is) a creative act in itself; the word was held to contain a secret power...²

He goes on to illustrate how the power of specific words was respected among the slaves, so that superficially meaningless words in English such as the names given to children were invested with the significance they would originally have carried in traditional society. In this way the connotation, and, in some cases, the denotation of specific words was altered, so that even the language of the master's religion could be used to express active resistance to the system. It is this ability of the Creole to transcend the semantic limitations of the languages it embraces which has led to its association by a later generation of West Indians with a protest tradition within West Indian writing.

Le Page and Cassidy also note in their description of the phonology of Jamaican English that Creole was used widely - often as a first language - at all levels in Jamaica during slavery:

During this period the Creole English became the accepted lingua franca of the island among the slaves, between Creole whites and slaves, in the growing community of free people of colour, and - in a less extreme form - among many of the Creole whites themselves. The use of metropolitan dialects of English was confined to expatriates, among whom the bookkeepers and artisans would soon get into the habit of using Creole.³

Lady Nugent's often quoted description of the language of a Jamaican lady in the early nineteenth century should serve to illustrate the point:

The Creole language is not confined to the negroes. Many of the ladies, who have not been educated in England, speak a sort of broken English, with an indolent drawling out of their words, that is very tiresome if not disgusting. I stood next to a lady one night, near a window, and, by way of saying something, remarked that the air was much cooler than usual; to which she answered, "Yes, Ma-am, him rail-ly too fra-ish."⁴

The use of Jamaican dialect by the island's white population meant that many of the latter also shared certain cultural attitudes common among the slaves, especially their belief in African-derived myths and ideas about the supernatural. H.G. de Lisser's treatment of the legend of The White Witch of Rosehall emphasises this community of belief. At the same time, Creole whites were also aware of the hostility towards them expressed in the language of the slaves, and they were often far more nervous about seemingly harmless remarks or stories in dialect than expatriate whites who spoke only Standard English. It was not unusual at moments of heightened tension between master and slave for all forms of communication or occasions for speech between the slaves to be prohibited. As a result of this practice criticism of the dominant culture in the dialect tended to be subtly expressed - through allegory or proverbs - rather than through explicit protest.

Though it is likely that the West Indian planter-class perceived Standard English as being superior to Jamaican dialect, the ability to speak Standard English would hardly have been a decisive factor in making social distinctions

before Emancipation: a black man who spoke perfect English would still have been a slave, while the dialect-speaking Creole lady could converse as an equal with the Governor's wife. It follows therefore that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it would not have been considered inappropriate for members of the dominant class to discuss affairs of business or politics in dialect. Perhaps in a different situation, as for example pertained among the Afrikaans-speaking population in South Africa or in the plantation society of the southern states in America, the Creole language or at least a heavily slave-influenced version of the Standard, could have become the official language of the dominant group. However the planter-class in Jamaica was never numerically or economically strong enough to sever its ties with the mother country so that the establishment of a distinctive Creole language which would separate or isolate the local white population from England was never a serious possibility.

The end of slavery in 1838 and the introduction of Crown Colony government in 1865 increased the presence and prestige of Standard English speakers in the Jamaican community. The new caste of expatriate teachers, missionaries and civil servants who now controlled the country's administration and development saw the language of both black and white Jamaicans as evidence of their unregenerate lifestyle, and associated the "crude" speech of the Creole whites with their desire to maintain the system of slavery and to prevent the black population from being converted to Christianity. At the same time the inculcation of a respect for the Standard language was part of the way that the new Victorian bureaucracy ensured the continuing acquiescence of colonial populations to Imperial rule, as it helped establish English culture and English loyalties as being desirable in colonial societies the cultures and economies of which were being undermined by Imperial expansion. If the Creole culture with its deeply rooted hostility to the dominant group could be neutralised as a form

of cultural resistance, the new colonials realised that half of the task of ensuring social order in the former slave colonies would have been achieved. They also recognised that the other half of their task would be to disabuse the local white population of their dread of African-derived beliefs and customs.

One of the ways in which the new colonial establishment attempted to efface the association of the Creole culture with hostile attitudes to the dominant group was by taking over the Creole language themselves and using it to express pious or acquiescent sentiments. For example, some of the earliest contributors of dialect verse to the Jamaica Times were expatriate clergymen: The dialect poems of Raglan Phillips, a Salvation Army officer, and the Reverend William Graham who wrote under the pseudonym "Graeme" are often technically skilful and entertaining. Though they often address themselves to inequalities between rich and poor, they usually end on a note of conciliation with the advice that social reform should be left in the hands of the Creator:

Me satisfy fe work an' wait: me satisfy
 fe pray--
 Me stickin' to me mudder's Book, an'
 nah go troe way!
 But dem is nyamin all de heaven, as
 dem will eber get--
 Me glad me no fool fool like dem! tank
 God, me no ded yet!⁵

Another method used by the establishment to undermine the subversive potential of the ex-slaves' language and culture was to treat them as artifacts, or objects of intellectual curiosity rather than as dynamic customs or forms of speech. One sees this idea operating, perhaps unconsciously, in one of Frank Cundall's contributions to the English journal Folklore in 1904. Cundall submitted a series of essays to the journal written by Jamaican student teachers at Mico College on the subject of "Signs, omens, myths and superstitions of Jamaica." The essays are submitted in their original form, a mixture of dialect and broken English,

and Cundall also includes the caveats which the student teachers put forward at the beginnings of their essays, deploring the beliefs they describe, and assuring the reader that such practices were on the wane:

There are lingering in Jamaica many false beliefs which are to be eradicated. It is very strange, indeed, that in such an enlightened land as Jamaica there are such beliefs, but we can safely say that they are dying out little by little. Some of the evils believed in these days are unpractised such as you shall see later on by this.

It is the great work of education and religion that diminished some of these evils, and within a few years of labour of these two principles all these beliefs will die out. Education and religion will be the chief agents to eradicate them.

By allowing his informant to present his own culture as practically extinct and inherently evil while at the same time presenting this informant's speech as in itself an object of curiosity, Cundall is able to create a double distance between the folk culture and the "real" world, and to suggest that both his informant and the culture he describes are of peripheral relevance to contemporary social issues.

Even where official patronage of the folk culture took the form of encouraging the use of dialect, such encouragement was often selective and tended to be used to re-inforce notions of racial inferiority. Walter Jekyll's association of Jamaican songs and folk tales with a stereotyped version of the laughing country bumpkin has already been noted in Chapter I, and his attitudes were probably much less contemptuous than that of the average member of the dominant group. The idea that the innocuous knavery of Anancy could conceal a sublimated urge on the part of the black community to undermine the establishment would probably have been considered far-fetched by Jekyll. Instead such tales and the language in which they were told came to be seen as symptomatic of the black man's

generic weaknesses - laziness, lack of foresight and a tendency to exaggerate.

These changes in attitude toward the dialect had repercussions within the white and coloured Jamaican communities. The use of dialect became a register of social class and those Jamaicans who could abandoned the Creole for a form of speech nearer to Standard English. H.G. de Lisser comments on this movement away from the Creole within the local upper classes in an article in Planters' Punch:

In former days the Jamaica girl spoke with a decided drawl, her accent was broad, flat, unpleasant to the ear. Amongst the better educated classes it is not so today. Of course there is a Jamaican accent. Jamaicans themselves may not notice it, but strangers do. Education in England or Canada, however, or frequent visits abroad, and association with those from other countries, have done much to modify this accent; what is unpleasant in it has been eliminated; it is, on the whole, free from strained affections. It is natural.

The ability to speak Standard English well was a matter of particular importance within the free coloured community of mixed race. Once the distinction between slave and freeman had been removed this group feared that they might be lumped socially with the former slaves and lose the prestige which as free persons of partially European stock they had formerly enjoyed so that for them, even more than for the white community, the use of Standard English became a mark of social distinction. As a result, Standard English came to be seen as synonymous with racially determined qualities of virtue and refinement

by contrast to the "generic" ignorance and coarseness of the dialect-speaking former slave. One sees the way in which this new social distinction began to operate in MacDermot's One Brown Girl which makes suggestive use of an image of genetic difference in describing the cultural gulf between the English educated Liberta Passley and her father:

To many an observer the one link between this sire and daughter was the fact that they were both brown and wealthy. Then came the divergences and they were prodigious. No insult meant to the dray horse; but he is a thing very different from the racer. No insult meant to the dray horse, but small wonder if the racer frets and fumes and eats its heart out, compelled if it be to time its steps to those of plodding patience. The divergences, I repeat, were prodigious between this father and daughter. Liberta suggested education, refinement, culture. Of these valuable things, Old Peter's form and face gave few hints; so few that even the many who delivered panegyrics on him in after dinner speeches intended to precipitate loans, or in newspaper articles intended to repay them, always looked nervously round when they lauded his "love of the learned arts," to see if any unregenerate wretch was allowing a smile to soak through... Shrewdness, honesty, sagacity and kindness are very good things in their way; but we are assured are not enough to compensate for the lack of grammar and drawing room manners; and had Old Peter Passley possessed only £500 instead of, as folks said he did, close on £500,000, he would very speedily have been made to know his place among the superior people, as a common and uneducated old brown man. As it was his deficiencies were termed peculiarities, his lapses from grammar were treated as quotations, and his company was sought after with zeal.

Though many white and coloured Jamaicans continued to use a creolised form of English privately, Standard English became the language of business, politics, and polite social intercourse. Eventually the dialect came to be perceived as a language in which it was not possible to carry on an intellectual conversation or a serious discussion. It is worth noting, however, that at times of heightened dissatisfaction with British direct rule within the local privileged classes, a certain amount

of nostalgia was often expressed by these classes for the language they had formerly shared with their slaves. This could take the form of raising popular support against government measures by addressing the lower class in dialect at political meetings, or of claiming in arguments with the Colonial Office that the planter-class was better capable of managing the country's affairs because they "spoke the people's language." At the literary level it is perhaps not accidental that the two periods of greatest interest in dialect as a literary medium, between 1900 and 1914 and again in the 1940s, coincide with periods of heightened discontent within the upper and middle classes with colonial rule. Walter Adolphe Roberts makes the connection between language and political attitudes explicit in his novel The Single Star, which is set in Jamaica at the turn of the century when Creole demands for political autonomy were particularly strident. In the following passage a group of upper-class Jamaicans are exchanging trivialities over drinks:

A series of crude jokes /not/ unrelated to sex was launched by Gerald Robinson, a lanky Jamaican with a toothbrush mustache who did his best always to look and talk as much like an Englishman as possible. The jokes were pretty pointless, and except for their subject matter might have been credited to one of the feebler London comic magazines. Four of them were all that old Dugald could stand.

"My God, Gerald, I can seldom laugh at Punch itself," he roared, "so why expect me to swallow imitations thought up in a W.C.?"

"I have no doubt that you prefer crude Yankee humour," said Robinson loftily.

"Rot. I prefer our own quacco humour, the kind you and I have been shaking our bellies over since we were boys."

"If you have a good story, go ahead and tell it." But Dugald for the moment, was not in the storytelling mood. The flatness of Robinson's jokes reminded him that he found the government inept, and he was off at a tangent. "You should run for the Legislative Council, Gerald. There's the place you could talk and talk to your heart's content without getting anywhere..."

"I give enough of my time as it is to public affairs. You are the man who should be in the Council."

"Me sit on a bench with the rest of Massa Governor's

schoolboys and make speeches he don't have to heed!" bellowed Dugald. "You will never see that day.... I want a home government that keeps the welfare of Jamaica in mind, and I want a local administration in which Jamaicans share the power. The old constitution shouldn't have been surrendered thirty years ago on account of the riots at Morant Bay."

"The change had to be."

"I've heard twenty reasons for it. Which is yours?"

"Coloured politicians were getting too saucy. The ignorant blacks would have run with them and turned this country into a second Haiti."

"Infernal nonsense. As if we weren't able then and aren't able now to control the Negroes better than a set of blasted Englishmen could."⁹

Though Dugald expresses a preference for "quacco" jokes and lapses into dialect in his arguments for political autonomy, the author makes it quite clear that this feeling for language does not represent an enlightened attitude towards black political aspirations. This distinction needs to be born in mind when assessing the use of dialect by Jamaican writers, as too often a facile equation between sympathetic attitudes to the dialect and positive attitudes to dialect speakers is assumed.

Among the former slaves, the consistent denigration of the Creole language by the dominant culture also had its effect. In the years immediately after Emancipation the demand for education within the black community had been high as the former slaves were eager to improve their economic situation through the acquisition of land and education. At first this had not automatically resulted in their abandoning their language or cultural values. The tendency then had been to incorporate aspects of the Christian religion and of formal education into the world view expressed in the Creole language. The rousing hymns of the 1862 Methodist revival, for example, were used as rallying cries against the establishment in the 1865 disturbances, and by the end of the nineteenth century a number of Christian sects had been "creolised" to the point where their European parent bodies hardly wished to own them. Claude McKay also recalls that education and a degree of prosperity did not result in his father's abandoning the Creole language and other cultural elements of his African past, but that in-

stead he combined these features with his "Anglo-Saxon sense of Justice":

My father was descended from West Africans. I think he was of the Ashanti nation. Sometimes when he became angry with us boys for any foolish practice he would say to us: "Your grandfather (meaning his father) was a slave and knew how cruel the white man could be. You boys don't know anything about life." My father was a wonderful teller of African stories and besides he would tell us about African customs.¹⁰

McKay's juxtaposition in this passage of his father's wary attitude to the representatives of the dominant culture and his African-oriented literary abilities suggests that among some black Jamaicans the association of the Creole language and culture with resistance against oppression remained intact. As the generation of black Jamaicans who could remember slavery died out, the conscious use of Creole as it had functioned during slavery as a link with the African past which helped to preserve a spirit of resistance to the dominant culture began to die out. Though the Creole language continued to be used it began to be seen by educated black Jamaicans as a drawback rather than a weapon in the struggle for social progress. The old stories continued to be told and to retain their allegorical levels of meaning among the peasantry, but for many educated Jamaicans their subversive potential was now hidden and the external view of the dialect speaker as a primitive, comic or even evil character came to be the accepted one. The extract from the black student teacher's essay quoted earlier gives an accurate picture of the extent to which by the turn of the century some educated Jamaicans had internalised the values and perspectives of the dominant culture in their anxiety to improve their social standing in the community.

During this period the Creole language itself also underwent changes as its speakers adjusted to the changing social realities. The biblical rhetoric absorbed through the missionaries was integrated into the dialect to produce what at times could be a richly bombastic form of speech in which biblical

allusions and turns of phrase were added to the traditional Creole proverbs. Among the better educated Jamaicans who nonetheless had acquired their Standard English locally, language was also biblically influenced, but together with biblical phrases, other "dead" forms of English usage were acquired, such as the stylised literary diction of eighteenth century England and the official language of the law courts. The result in terms of literary language was a very ornate style of writing which often made use of constructions no longer in common usage in the Received Standard as well as metaphors and allusions alien to the West Indian environment. Such language was inevitably loaded with cultural assumptions that belonged to Europe rather than the West Indies, so though educated black and coloured West Indians lost the ability to use the dialect as a language of protest, the language they acquired in its place contained limited resources for expressing dissatisfaction with a European-derived political and cultural system.

One sees the result of this contradiction in the work of the writer Thomas MacDermot, a near-white Jamaican who grew up and was educated in Jamaica and who supported the struggle for the social advancement of the black Jamaican. MacDermot saw the dialect as a vivid and vital form of speech which expressed much that was valuable and typical in Jamaican society. He encouraged the use of dialect among writers whose work he published in the Jamaica Times, and took the business of reproducing it accurately quite seriously. In a review of James Stanley Gilbert's collection of poetry, Panama Patchwork, for instance, he takes the writer to task for his inaccurate reproduction of dialect and quotes the following lines from one of Gilbert's poems to illustrate his point:

De sun's hangin' ovah de aidge of de worl',
 Li'l man, li'l man;
 An de clouds in him b'reat' all frizzle an' curl,
 Li'l Jamaica man.

MacDermot is well justified in choosing these lines as an example of inaccurate dialect as neither the sentiments expressed nor the grammatical construction used bear much relationship to the

Creole spoken in Jamaica. The poet's use of the idea of "the edge of the world" seems particularly out of place in a Creole context born out of the Middle Passage which probably would have destroyed any illusions about the world being confined by edges or borders, and the sentence "The sun's hanging over the edge of the world" stripped of its supposedly "Creole" spelling is a straight Standard English phrase in terms of grammatical construction.

MacDermot's own use of dialect displays a much better grasp of Creole grammar and is also sensitive to the variations of style possible within Creole speech. Two passages from his novel One Brown Girl should serve to illustrate this literary competence. In the first, Mr. White, one of the group of Kingston slum dwellers whose activities are described in one of the novel's many sub-plots, is defending the value of prayer. His language is somewhere half way along the continuum between Creole and Standard English and shows biblical influence; however his style of narrative is very close to the traditional Creole forms:

When I was a sizable boy, when me hair did kind a' begin to hold back and hold back, and yet to grow, on me topmost lip, and me voice did squeeze up and open out peculiar, as in de prognostication of dat ephemeral of life, where I did lib, dem did hab prayer meeting ebbery Monday night punctual and I nebber miss go to it. Well, once I and anodder young fellow did walk troo Running River pen, and right at de place which I remember to dis day, where a big Cedar and five cocoanut tree dah grow, we did tek two or tree cocoanut; not to say we did want dem, but sake a de way de cocoanut seem next door to talk and say "pick we, pick we, you is fool if you pass we."

Someone go tell lie 'pon we, and wid dat de Busha send Police after we. Now it was a Monday night when dem come fe we, and dem come 'trait a me house. Peter dem find, but me did deh a prayer meeting, and, before dem could find out dat and come for me, someone run an' tell me 'bout it. I fire meself troo de door and tek road same time fe trabbil go a' me aunt a' Clarendon. In due time all did blow ober, for you know sake of a few cocoanut, Policeman don't carry malice too long. You ax me what pray eber do fe me and I tell you dat story, which is a true story.

This passage contains most of the essential features of a traditional dialect story. It is framed by opening and closing formulae common to most Creole stories: In the opening sentence the time at which the story takes place is always suggested by a detail out of personal experience or some other natural phenomenon (e.g.: "the year after the hurricane when Mr X's house was blown over") which bears little relationship to European dates or times. In this case the author sets the time of the event by reference to a stage in his own growth ("when I began to grow a moustache and my voice began to change"). The story ends like most traditional stories with a rhetorical tag which tells us whether the story is true or not, or whether it is only to be taken as allegorical, as in the formulas "Jackmandora me no chose none" or "Who de cap fit let him wear it." In Mr White's case the story is meant to be seen as true. Though the narrator uses sophisticated words such as "prognostication" and "ephemeral" these are used for their sound rather than their meaning in much the same way that expressions such as "blow ober" and "I fire meself troo de door" are used to heighten dramatic effect rather than in a literal sense. Bible phrases like "In due time" and "Now it was a Monday (Cf. "Now it came to pass"), appear side by side with typical Creole grammatical constructions like "dem did hab a poyer meeting" which circumvents the Standard passive form "A prayer meeting was held" - a construction seldom used in Creole. The use of direct speech ascribed to an inanimate object as in "de cocoanut seem next door to talk and say "pick we, pick we, you is fool if you pass we", also circumvents the passive "we were tempted by the cocoanuts", and adds drama to the narrative. And in general, direct speech is often attributed to inanimate objects in Creole narratives without the clear marker provided in this text in the phrase "de cocoanut seem next door to talk".

The attitudes expressed to authority in the story are also characteristic of the old Creole tradition of disrespect for the status quo in a social system perceived as unjust. The act of reporting the theft is automatically seen as a lie while

the police are depicted as "Busha's" personal agents, whose actions against their fellow blacks can only be explained in terms of personal malice.

In the second example from MacDermot's novel, the narrator's style and language are even closer to "pure" Creole. Practically every detail which Liberta Passley's coachman puts forward in setting up a hypothetical situation in which a cable could be intercepted is expressed through a proverb, and in fact the messenger who carries the cable is only finally won over when he is unable to find a proverb with which to answer his would-be seducer. Once more the speaker circumvents the limited tenses available to him in Creole by using dialogue rather than reported speech or the subjunctive mood, and this technique heightens rather than limits the narrative's dramatic effect:

Put ten shilling in you pocket and meet de messenger. You say 'Morning', him say 'Morning'. You say 'Times maugre.' Him say 'I just finish fe count him rib.' You say 'I know where ten shilling is ripe fe pick.' Him say 'Only show me.' Den you introduce de business. Den you say 'You dry?' and him will say 'Worse dan when drought is down at St. Elizabeth Savanna.' Have a drink,' is what you say. 'Gots a messidge fe Telegraph Office fe delibber fust,' is fe him side a de story. Den you must say 'Drink will dry up by the time you come back.' 'Well,' says he, 'don't keep me too long. De man send me wid dis telegram and tell me must quick go and come, got a two-inch long patience and a two-foot long temper; also him got more cuss cuss words ina' him head dan when you see bees dem dah swarm.'

Den you introduce you business. Him will talk 'bout Backra law, and how it punish man fool wid telegram. You is to say 'Cho man, Big Massa gib Backra brains to mek law and gib Black man brains to find out to bruck it and poor Backra nebber know.' 'True,' him will say, 'a no lie', Den you got him.¹³

Here again the dialect almost unconsciously reveals a basic disregard for "buckra's" legal system, summarised in the final proverb "God gave the white man brains to make laws and the black man brains to break them." Such remarks in MacDermot's novels however are always associated with comic or roguish characters whose moral point of view we are not expected to take seriously, although it was just such language that best expressed

legitimate black opposition to an exploitative system. When MacDermot wishes to make a serious statement about social injustice on behalf of the black population, he switches to Standard English, even if the statement is made through a character who would normally speak dialect. One of the peripheral characters in One Brown Girl is Fidelia Stanton, a servant girl of "pure Coramantyn descent" who knocks out the teeth of her employer's son when he tries to make advances to her, and is as a result dismissed without a character reference. Though in other situations Fidelia is presented as speaking a modified form of dialect, when she comes to defend her honour in explaining her action to her employer she speaks in unadulterated Standard English:

"I am a woman," said the girl with passion. "I am not different to you or your daughter. I am flesh and blood, too. Is not my blood red like yours? Is not my flesh tender too?... What is shame for you is shame for me. If a man had spoken so to your daughter or to you, my God, would you not strike him?"¹⁴

While it is not impossible that MacDermot may have introduced this elevated rhetoric with its Shakespearean overtones as a stylistic device to heighten the emotion of the speech, the same defence could have been made even more tellingly in dialect. Perhaps MacDermot feared that the expression of such sentiments in the dialect would have been too overtly critical of the system, or that it would have been difficult to create real sympathy for his character if she spoke in dialect. At any rate, in spite of his occasionally brilliant ability to reproduce dialect, MacDermot fails to use it for characters whom he wishes the reader to see in a morally superior light, and this suggests that however wide his sympathies, he too had absorbed the attitude to the dialect encouraged by the dominant culture: that it was a language ultimately incapable of expressing serious moral values.

MacDermot's handling of Standard English by contrast is often clumsy or affected. He takes as his literary models the sentimental novelists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries whose style is ill-suited to the presentation of a realistic

picture of Jamaican society. The novel's opening paragraph, for instance, illustrates the tautological and somewhat histrionic language that the novelist uses when not reporting dialogue:

"I?" said Liberta Passley, "am the most unhappy woman in Kingston." She was not speaking aloud, but was silently building up with unspoken words a tabernacle for her thoughts. She considered now the very positive assertion in which she had housed this thought, went again through its very brief and emphatic terms, and then deliberately added the further words: "and in Jamaica." Thus she pushed a statement, already extreme, towards the precipice edge of the extravagant; but to Liberta herself the statement was one of simple level fact; it was in no wise extreme.
(my emphasis).¹⁵

For the rest of the first chapter the author takes us tortuously through all the reasons why Liberta is not unhappy, but never actually says that her unhappiness stems from the fact that she is coloured. We are left to infer this from clumsily inserted images such as: "To her this unique unhappiness of hers was as much a fact as was the white light of the electric bulb glowing then above her head, and etching the shadow of her profile like a black stain on the floor." The narrative style of One Brown Girl is particularly irritating as the novel forms the middle section of a trilogy which was made up of Becka's Buckra Baby, One Brown Girl and an unpublished third novel, The Man Who Came Back. None of the plots and sub-plots in the middle volume are satisfactorily resolved, leaving one with the general impression of the novel as an elaborate maze of narrative false starts and digressions. The more successful dialect sections of the work are never fully integrated thematically into the body of the work, and stand apart as brilliant splashes of local colour which contribute little that is essential to the novel's development.

Similar contradictions can be observed in the literary contributions to the Jamaica Times. One of the regular contributors of dialect poetry to the newspaper columns was a "Norman Palmer of Toll Gate." This writer's work was well enough known for it to be included in the James Hill Literary Society's poetry evening, but none of his poems are included in the 1929

Voices from Summerland anthology, and his name appears in none of the Who's Who publications before 1920. These factors suggest that he was probably a Jamaican of relatively humble background writing outside the circle of Kingston literati who later formed the Jamaica Poetry League. Palmer's dialect poetry is often similar to that written by Raglan Phillips and "Graeme": a strong protest statement about the conditions of black Jamaicans, rounded off by a plea for patience, or an assertion of ultimate divine justice. For example, in a poem criticising the arrogance of the European, Palmer's dramatis persona observes:

Bredda, backra wanderful:
 An' dem wicketness awful
 Dem we' soon try fe mek man;
 Den, dem we' see Jesus han'
 A hit mek eartquake destroy
 All dem riches an' dem joy.¹⁶

Occasionally, however, a less conservative note is sounded at the end of his dialect poems, when the poet makes use of dialect proverbs which express the resistance to the dominant culture inherent in the Creole world view. The poem "Bredda Warra Me Fe Do" which describes the impossible position of the black man who tries to improve his lot in a society where all is weighted in favour of "Buckra", concludes with the ambiguous proverb:

A' wha Congo wurrum say
 When him see de fowl foot claw
 "All ab we no mek same way;
 A gwine fasten in you craw."¹⁷

The proverb refers to the way in which the small "weak" worm overcomes its natural predator, the chicken, by becoming a parasite in the chicken's stomach and eventually killing it from the inside. Palmer seems here to be implying a solution to the social inequalities of the day by which the underdog turns his apparent weakness into a weapon against his oppressor. The poem is not explicit about what form such action should take, and in this way Palmer avoids the didacticism of the kind of dialect poems quoted earlier, which constantly suggest specific acqui-

escent responses to oppression. His use of the Creole proverb gives a whole new twist to the familiar catalogue of woes of the early dialect poem and demonstrates one of the ways in which the Creole language could function as a vehicle for serious social criticism.

Like MacDermot however, Palmer still differentiates between themes which can be treated in the dialect and themes which can only be approached through the medium of Standard English. In Palmer's case the distinction is made on cultural rather than moral grounds. Soon after the appearance of "Bredda Warra Me Fe Do", Palmer published a poem in Standard English in the Jamaica Times which began:

Carol, blithe musician
Soul chords divine
Music, soft, elysian
While man supine 18
Silent lists to thee.

The run-on of meaning across lines and rhymes and the conscious choice of "poetic" diction suggest that Palmer identified technical experiments and the ability to appreciate birdsong as belonging to a refined cultural ethos in which dialect or the dialect speaker was out of place. It is worth noting here that few early dialect poems are ever technically innovative in their use of rhyme and metre though the facile a b a b rhyme-scheme favoured by most dialect writers was not common in Jamaican folk songs or oral poetry but had been borrowed from the European ballad.

The most important user of dialect in creative writing before the First World War was Claude McKay. Most of the poems by McKay that were published before he left Jamaica in 1912 were written in dialect and not all of these deal with traditional dialect themes. However, the same uncertainty observed in the work of Palmer and MacDermot about the quality and range of dialect as a literary medium can be observed in McKay's work, and culturally the young poet's efforts often seem to fall between two stools. McKay himself, unlike MacDermot, came from a dialect-speaking peasant environment. This seems to have made his attitude to the Creole language even

more ambivalent than that of the middle-class MacDermot. McKay's earliest attempts at poetry had been written in Standard English and it was his friend and mentor, Walter Jekyll, who first encouraged him to write in dialect. McKay recalls the occasion in his autobiography My Green Hills of Jamaica:

He read my poetry one day. Then he laughed a lot, and I became angry at the laughing because I thought he was laughing at me. All these poems that I gave him to read had been done in straight English, but there was one short one about an ass that was laden for the market - laden with native vegetables - who suddenly sat down in the middle of the road and wouldn't get up. Its owner was talking to it in the Jamaican dialect, telling it to get up. That was the poem that Mr. Jekyll was laughing about. He then told me he did not like my poems in straight English - they were repetitious. "But this," said he, holding up the donkey poem, "this is the real thing. The Jamaican dialect has never been put into literary form except in my Anancy stories. Now is your chance as a native boy to put the Jamaica dialect into literary language. I am sure that your poems will sell."

McKay's own response to the suggestion was not enthusiastic.

As he goes on to explain:

To us who were getting an education in the English schools the Jamaican dialect was considered a vulgar tongue. It was the language of the peasants. All cultivated people spoke English, straight English.

However later on I began thinking seriously of what Mr. Jekyll had proposed and as I knew so many pieces in the dialect which were based on our local songs of the drayman, the sugar mills, and the farm land, I decided to do some poems in dialect.

Nevertheless, it must have been difficult for McKay as a young and inexperienced country lad to resign himself to the role put forward by his patron. On the one hand, Jekyll's advice, coming as it did from a prestigious and cultivated representative of the dominant culture must have counted for a great deal with the young poet, and it must have helped to reconcile him to the idea that there was something worthwhile in the language and stories of his own society. On the other hand, there remained the lingering desire to prove that in spite of his peasant origins he too could write good verse in elevated language. As McKay himself puts it, "I used to think I would show them something. Some day I would write poetry in straight English and amaze and confound them."²⁰

These conflicting aspirations find expression in the style and language of the poetry McKay published before leaving for America in 1912.²¹ His best pieces are the dramatic monologues spoken by a persona who is clearly not to be identified with the author himself. Here McKay is able to indulge his natural delight in the language and lifestyle of the dialect-speaking Jamaican without leaving the impression that he himself thinks or speaks as they do. In "A Midnight Woman to the Bobby" McKay reproduces the abuse that a Kingston prostitute heaps on a policeman who tries to make a pass at her:

No palm me up, you dutty brute,
You' jam mout' mash like ripe bread-fruit;

The woman "traces" the policeman in true Jamaican fashion, dragging out and ridiculing his lowly country origins which his smart policeman's uniform does not conceal:

An' when de pinch o' time you feel
A' pur you a you' chigger heel,
You lef' you' district, big an' coarse,
An' come join buccra Police Force.

An' now you don't wait fe you' glass,
But trouble me wid you' jam fas';
But wait, me frien', you' day wi' come,
I'll see you go same lak a some.

Say wha? - 'res' me? - you go to hell!
You t'ink judge don't know unno well?
You t'ink him gwin' go sentance me
Widout a soul fe witness i'?

The street woman's exuberant abuse has all the pungent realism that is missing in the elevated rhetoric of MacDermot's morally outraged Fidelia Stanton. In addition, it is worth noting that while MacDermot's heroine defends her honour by trying to prove her humanity, McKay's prostitute attacks her persecutor by showing up his brutality, taking her own sense of worth for granted. Elsewhere McKay uses the dramatic monologue to express some of the realities behind the outsider's facile picture of peasant life as carefree and idyllic. In "Quashie to Buccra" for example, the speaker, a market gardener, reminds the observer of the hard work that goes into the seemingly effortless task of rearing vegetables:

You tas'e petater an' you say it sweet,
But you no know how hard we wuk fe it.

In another poem, "Fetchin' Water", the parent of a Jamaican child comments on the tourists' delight at the sight of peasant children collecting water at the stream in the proverb:

'Nuff rock'tone in de sea, yet none
But those 'pon lan' know 'bouten sun.

This is an allusion to the Jamaican saying that the stones at the bottom of the river have no idea how hot the sun is for those on the land.

In his early poems McKay rarely sets out deliberately to write poems attacking the establishment, though many of his dialect poems express an inherent hostility to the dominant

culture. Most of the time, however McKay is more interested in giving an insider's view of the peasant lifestyle and this is not necessarily a catalogue of unrelieved woes. The water-carrying children, for instance, are shown enjoying their task when the weather is fine, and other poems such as "Me Banabees" and "Green Banana" celebrate favourite peasant foods, describing how they are prepared or the consequences of over-indulgence. Another group of poems which make use of dramatis personae recreate scenes at social events and meetings between lovers. In all these poems it is clear that the poet himself derives real pleasure from celebrating these familiar scenes of daily life even though he takes care to distance himself from the people he describes.

A problem arises however when McKay attempts to express sentiments he considers dignified enough to associate with himself, or to write poems which make use of ideas he has acquired through his colonial education. Here the poet often seems to feel uncomfortable with the dialect, as if he feels there is some incongruity between language and theme. This extends even to attempts to describe the landscape or commemorate a friendship. In a poem like "To Clarendon Hills and H.A.H." the language so strains against the kind of sentiment McKay wishes to express that by the third stanza the poet abandons any serious attempt to use the dialect:

Loved Clarendon Hills,
 Dear Clarendon Hills,
 Oh! I feel de chills,
 Yes, I feel de chills
 Coursin' t'rough me frame
 When I call your name,
 Dear Clarendon Hills,
 Loved Clarendon Hills.

Wand'rin', wand'rin' far,
 Weary, wand'rin' far.
 'Douten guidin' star,
 Not a guidin' star,
 Still my love's for you
 Ever, ever true,
 Though I wander far,
 Weary wander far.

H.A.H., my frien',
 Ever cherished frien',
 I'll return again,
 Yes, return again:
 Think, O think of me
 Tossed on life's dark sea,
 H.A.H., my frien',
 Dearest, fondest frien'.

This poem is certainly no better than Gilbert's lullaby criticised by MacDermot in his review of Panama Patchwork. Not only is the sentiment maudlin and the dialect artificial, but the author also makes no attempt to assess the sentiments expressed by his persona with any degree of detachment, and the result is a wholesale takeover of the trappings of a certain type of trite romantic sentimentality into the dialect that gives no hint that the poet is capable of original thought or expression.

And yet, when McKay is working with peasant personae whom he considers naive, he is often able to manipulate the words he puts into their mouths to produce ironic effects which suggest that he could in certain situations be shrewdly observant. A poem such as "Cudjoe Fresh from de Lecture" with its sly combination of peasant gullibility and satirical thrust has no equivalent among the poems written in the dialect in which the poetic persona is identifiable as McKay. "Cudjoe" describes the response of a peasant Jamaican to a lecture on evolution, and in the course of the dramatic monologue, McKay manages to poke fun at the establishment as well as his peasant figure:

Say, parson do de same? Yes, in a diff'rent way,
 For parson tell us how de whole o' we are clay;
 An' lookin' close at t'ings, we hab to pray quite hard
 Fe swaller wha' him say an' don't t'ink bad o' Gahd.

Though Cudjoe is impressed by the idea of evolutionary advance of the human species, McKay uses his simple acceptance of the view of the African race as somehow lower in the scale of evolutionary development before its contact with Europe to comment ironically on the actual changes which contact with Europe did bring about; Cudjoe refers to Africans as "uncibilise", but describes this condition as being "half naked - all day dribe buccra cow", terms more suited to the African's situation in

the West Indies than before his contact with Europe. The poem's final twist is Cudjoe's sense that there is after all little to choose from for the black man in the two European versions of the creation story:

Yet both horse partly runnin' in de selfsame gallop,
 For it is nearly so de way de buccra pull up:
 Him say, how de wul' stan', dat right will neber be,
 But wrong will eber gwon till dis wul' en' fe we.

When the young McKay comes to write poems in his own voice about the issues which concern him as an individual, this quality of ironic detachment is often missing from his work. Instead of vivid metaphors and an original point of view we are often treated to trite Standard English verse thinly disguised as dialect, expressing conventional late Romantic postures. The poem "The Hermit" is an example of this kind of writing:

Far in de country let me hide myself
 From life's sad pleasures an' de greed of pelf,
 Dwellin' wid nature primitive an' rude,
 Livin' a peaceful life of solitude.

Dere by de woodland let me build my home
 Where tropic roses ever are in bloom,
 An' t'rough de wild cane growin' thick and tall
 Rushes in gleeful mood de waterfall

Roof strong enough to keep out season rain,
 Under whose eaves loved swallows will be fain
 To build deir nests, an' deir young birdlings rear
 Widouten have de least lee t'ought of fear.

An' in my study I shall view de wul',
 An' learn of all its doin's to de full;
 List to de woodland creature's music sweet -
 Sad, yet contented in my lone retreat.

It seems hardly credible that the same poet who in "Fetchin' Water" and "Quashie to Buckra" wrote with such realism about country life could in the next breath express exactly those idealised sentiments about the peasant existence which his other dialect poems attempt to deflate. Jekyll's pessimistic philosophy of withdrawal, derived from the German agnostic Schopenhauer, is clearly the major influence behind "The Hermit". Elsewhere, McKay "lifts" sentiments from Robert Burns, Tennyson, Wordsworth and other English lyrical poets, and transfers them into dialect without any attempt at rationalising form and theme. One such

lyric, "Ione", becomes almost a burlesque because of the unsuitability of the English meter to the rhythm of the dialect words:

Where calalu grows, an' yonder brook flows,
 Ione, Ione,
 I held a dog-rose under your l'il nose
 Ione, Ione.

In the poems written during his last year in Jamaica, while he was a member of the police force, which were collected in the volume Constab Ballads, McKay begins to move towards a solution of some of these stylistic and thematic problems.²² Few of the poems in this second collection are spoken by peasant personae, though all of them are written in some form of dialect. The issue of language, however, has been subordinated to the expression of the poet's response to city life, and though some of the sentiments he has acquired through his reading and his friendship with Jekyll are still present they seem now to have been more fully integrated into McKay's personal philosophy of life. In "A Labourer's Life Give Me" for example, McKay returns to the theme of withdrawal from civilisation expressed in "The Hermit", but here the withdrawal is from city life as he has experienced it in his disillusioning period of duty in the police force rather than from the abstract "greed of pelf" of the earlier poem. The dialect speaker is a homesick police recruit, who in response to the threat of a superior to "send him back to the bush" declares:

"Sen me back to the cutliss an' hoe!"
 I don't mind, Sir, a wud dat you say,
 For little, it seems, you do know
 Of de thing dat you sneer at to-day.
 If I'd followed a peasant's career,
 I would now be a happier lad;
 You would not be abusing me here,
 An' mekin' me sorry an' sad...
 Oh! a labourer's life's my desire
 In de hot sun an' pure season rains,
 When de glow o' de dark-red bush fire
 Sends a new blood a-flow'n' t'rough me veins.

Though the dialect used here is hardly more than a perfunctory convention, the poem represents a genuine response to his environ-

ment on the poet's part. It was written at a time when McKay had begun to discover that his fame as a poet had created a rift between him and his former peasant community. Rather than trying to maintain a distance between himself and his dialect-speaking persona therefore, we see the poet struggling to make contact with the society he has left behind. The stylisation of the dialect and the idealisation of peasant life in this poem express the poet's desire to ascribe all that is best in what he has learnt through his exposure to Standard English and European philosophy to the peasant existence. In lines such as "de glow of de dark red bush fire", one can already recognise the characteristic images of warmth and vivid colour that McKay associates with his homeland in such nostalgic pieces as "Flame Heart" and "I Shall Return" written during his years of self-imposed exile:

I shall return again. I shall return
To laugh and love and watch with wonder-eyes
At golden noon the forest fires burn,
Wafting their blue-black smoke to sapphire skies.²³

In those poems in Constab Ballads in which McKay still uses dialect characters whom he distances from himself, he seems less interested in merely reproducing familiar figures and scenes. Instead, he uses the difference between himself and his persona to express his growing sense of alienation from the dialect-speaking community. In "Me Whoppin' Big-Tree Boy", a "tracing" incident similar to that recorded in "Midnight Woman to the Bobby" is presented involving a Syrian peddler and the "big-tree boy" he has engaged to carry his wares. The boy suddenly goes on strike and turns on his employer:

"Nummo wuk at all fe me is my determination still;
Me no care damn wha' you say, an' you can jes' do
wha' you will;
Me deh go right back to to'n, yah, underneath' me old
big-tree;
All dem boys wid eboe-light dem, dem is waitin' deh
fe me.

The boy goes on to say exactly what he thinks of his employer's hawkish business habits which trick poor people into buying worthless goods on installment for more than twice their actual value. The boy's

outburst however is framed by McKay's presentation of himself, the frustrated policeman on duty, who finds that he almost grudges the "big-tree boy" his lack of inhibition in dealing with authority:

Ah! I wish I knew a little, jes' a little of de joy
Dat nature has bestowed on you, my whoppin' big-tree boy.

In spite of their self-conscious note of patronage, these lines indicate a recognition on the part of the poet of the spirit of cultural resistance contained in the dialect which because of his colonial education he had not formerly appreciated and which he is at this stage no longer able to exploit in his own voice. Once out of Jamaica and within the cultural context of black America, McKay gradually learned to use features of this dialect-based resistance to the dominant culture in his poems in "straight" English. In a sonnet like "If We Must Die", for all the traditional formality of its structure and rhetoric, McKay is once more able to express defiance of the status quo which seems to have been present unconsciously in his early dramatic monologues in the dialect, but which, as he grew further away from the dialect-speaking community he found more and more difficult to express.

In retrospect therefore it would be accurate to say that though most Jamaicans before World War I could speak dialect and did use it privately even if they spoke Standard English in public, the Jamaican creative writer, whatever his social background, was only prepared to use dialect in poems or narratives relating directly to "peasant" or "lower-class" experiences. Though these pieces often expressed in passing a sense of social injustice, serious criticism of the society was reserved with a few exceptions for work in Standard English, as were

morally superior themes or refined sentiments.

Sometimes, as in the case of MacDermot's honourable servant girl, the shift from Creole to Standard occurs in the language of a single character, depending on the nature of the sentiment the writer wishes his character to express. The same sort of division between "folk" and "educated" themes occurs in the work of individual poets such as the Jamaican Norman Palmer, and the

expatriates "Graeme" and Raglan Phillips. Only McKay attempts to bridge the gap and express ideas defined as sophisticated by the dominant culture in dialect, but on the whole he fails to integrate theme and form and ends up writing a stylised dialect robbed of its instinctive challenge to the status quo but containing only the most trite and artificial concepts borrowed from European culture.

Frantz Fanon in his study of the psychology of colonised peoples claims that one of the important early stages of pre-nationalist cultural development is the colonial's attempt to use the language of the coloniser as well as or better than his colonial master.²⁴ This is the attitude to language expressed by McKay when as a young man he vowed to write poetry in "straight" English, which his society would have to take seriously. In Jamaica after the First World War this attitude to language became the dominant one as more black Jamaicans began to join the literary circles which at the beginning of the twentieth century had been dominated by racially mixed writers. That it was the black Jamaican writer who most overtly rejected the use of dialect as a literary language is not as illogical a notion as it may at first appear. A great deal of the encouragement for dialect writing had been aimed at perpetuating the notion of black West Indians as culturally distinct from and (by implication) inferior to white members of the society. For the middle-class black writers of post-war Jamaica, confining their literary efforts to a form of speech they had been educated to consider inferior would have meant admitting a political and intellectual inferiority they did not feel. Thus, while as has been noted, it was not uncommon for white and coloured Jamaicans to express their desire for political power by reverting to the dialect, the black Jamaican sought to proclaim his right to political consideration through his use of Standard English. Commenting on the response of the British press to the Jamaica Poetry League's anthology, Voices

from Summerland, from which all dialect poetry had been carefully excluded, the League's president J.E. Clare McFarlane draws particular attention to the Times Literary Supplement's comment that "Voices from Summerland suggests that the canon of 'Dominions' will not be finally made up even when India and Burma are added to it," and sees this as a sign that Jamaica's claim for self-government had at last been taken seriously.^{24a}

The post-war poets' desire to use English however, went further than a legitimate demand to establish their right to use the language of their choice. Their work shows a tendency to imitate not only the language but also the sentiments, themes and even the imagery of the English poets they knew best without regard for the suitability of the material they took over to the Jamaican experience or environment. Like the black person who attempts to approximate to a European ideal of beauty by using skin-lightening cosmetics, the Jamaican post-war poets sought to express in their language and imagery an aesthetic ideal which by its very rootedness in English culture they could never fully possess. The technical effort which these poets put into attempts to reproduce their English romantic models can be gauged in the following poem written by Arthur Nicholas and entitled, appropriately enough "September", in which the imitation of Keats's "Ode to Autumn:"

Month of the tinted leaf -
 The year's sure warning of the ending day;
 An emblem, thou, of glories passed away -
 Of passion faded into coming grief.
 And in thy mellowness of form and face
 The hectic beauty of decay shines bright -

...

modulates in the second stanza to the language of Hyperion:

Deep in the silent glade
 I seek from human company a rest,
 And breathe in sacred solitude so blest,
 'Mid scenes that watched strong August's manhood fade.

Or, again, in McFarlane's even more technically accomplished imitation of Wordsworth in "My Country":

unto thee I owe
 All the imaginings of beauty sown
 Deep in my soul, and unto thee I bring
 What thou hast given. While on thy breast I lay

In helpless childhood, I have felt thy breath,
 Moist with the mountain-dew, and seen thy face,
 Aflush with Eden's earliest dawn; have heard
 Thy whispers 'midst vast silences, when Noon
 Held breathless Earth and Sea.

And thou hast nursed me
 From season unto season, year to year,
 Till dawning consciousness in me revealed
 The graces of thy form.²⁵

This rigid adherence to a style fixed by other writers at another time and place was justified in literary debate by an appeal to the tenets of late Victorian criticism. Matthew Arnold's perception of the Modern Age as devoid of truly "poetic" qualities was applied to the local situation and used to justify the Jamaican poet's refusal to come to terms with what he perceived as the cultural limitations of his environment. In one of his essays written in defence of the Poetry League in the 1940s McFarlane compares the situation of the Jamaican poet to that of the late Victorian poet, William Watson, who in McFarlane's view was not a great poet only because he had no great message to deliver.

But he had the heart of a true poet. The finely attuned instrument was there, the master musician was there, only the great theme was lacking.

A study of Watson's work reveals his superb craftsmanship, his fine appreciation of words and sound patterns, his wistful yearning after ideal beauty and the pathos attendant on its elusiveness. He was smitten with "the torment of the difference" between the matter-of-fact round of existence and that ideal world of the spirit which seemed just out of reach.²⁶

Elsewhere McFarlane defends the Poetry League's refusal to address its poetry to specifically Jamaican themes by referring to the responsibility imposed on the Jamaican poet in making use of the English language:

I have often wondered whether these iconoclasts... have not thought what a serious obstacle is language, with its roots embedded in a dim but unchangeable past. The language of a people has been shaped to express the experience of a people. It may and does lend itself to expressing universal human values; all great languages have a large element of universality about them. On the other hand they are only with great difficulty forced into expressing the circumscribed values of an alien race-group. Any attempt therefore to use this vehicle of thought for the expression of exclusive race ideas foreign to it is doomed to disappointment. It certainly cannot be used in this way to create art of

any permanent value. There is only one outlet from the citadel of language in which we have been placed by Providence, and it is upward into the universal.²⁷

This remarkable description of the contradictions inherent in the Poetry League's approach to language demonstrates the extent to which the League's failure to develop a Jamaican idiom was the result of a deliberately adopted aesthetic policy. It is ironic that McFarlane's argument for keeping English free of "the circumscribed values of an alien race group" because of its roots in the experience of the English people could easily have been used as an argument in favour of the Jamaican writer's use of the indigenous Creole language which certainly had "its roots embedded in a dim but unchangeable past" of slavery, and which had been "shaped to express the experience of the Jamaican people!"

These two statements by McFarlane were both written at a point in time when the Poetry League felt itself to be under attack and its members were on the defensive. Earlier theory and practice reveal that certain accommodations to the local reality had been made and were encouraged. Writing in 1936 for example, on the type of poetry produced in Jamaica, Astley Clerk, another stalwart of the League comments:

There is a little too much of the "violet" type of poetry and song in our schools and not enough of the "poinciana", and this is reflected in adult poetic effort in Jamaica where writers continue to try to write about an English environment about which they know nothing, to the neglect of their own country which teems with romantic historical incident and beauty of the most moving kind.²⁸

Practically every member of the Poetry League attempted to celebrate the Jamaican landscape. The natural beauty of the island seemed to lend itself to the language and sentiments of the English pastoral and the writers made a point of emphasising all that was exotic and mysterious about their environment. However their language is weighted down with images of colour and sound that seem to have no function other than the purely descriptive: In Astley Clerk's "The 'God-Bird'":

The mock-bird's throat is a golden sea,
 Where harbours olde Indian boats
 With strange cargoes, straight from Coyaba's shores,
 Of rare jewels and rarer notes.
 Captain he, as high on his leafless twig
 He stands pouring out his measure,
 Compelling all to take the message that he trills
 Of Ancient treasure.

And again in Constance Hollar's rather better "Flaming June"

June has come to Kingston,
 Flaming June!
 And the hot, white noon
 Has become a scarlet poppy;
 While the night, a silver moth,
 Sleeps beneath the moon
 Of Flaming June.
 June has come to Kingston
 In a sun-red car
 Scatt'ring petals far;
 Every street a carnival,
 Every day a festival
 In Flaming June.
 Like a red Venetian glass
 Twined with gold: like a gipsy lass
 I have seen her pass.²⁹

emphasis on bright colour and romantic associations seems gratuitous. Apart from dropping specific names, such as "Kingston" or "God-bird" no clear picture emerges of the scene being described. The poems seem lacking in substance when compared with such Jamaican nature poems as Claude McKay's "Flame Heart":

I still recall the honey-fever grass,
 But cannot recollect the high days when
 We rooted them out of the ping-wing path
 To stop the mad bees in the rabbit pen.
 I often try to think in what sweet month
 The languid painted ladies used to dapple
 The yellow by-road mazing from the main,
 Sweet with the golden threads of the rose-apple.
 I have forgotten - strange - but quite remember
 The poinsettia's red, blood-red, in warm December.³⁰

Here, although the poet's language is derived from the same romantic tradition of the celebration of nature, and lavish use is made of colour images, the poem succeeds in recreating specific remembered scenes and activities, and justifies its emphasis on warmth and colour by setting its celebration of Nature within an implied framework of nostalgia experienced in an environment where neither Decembers nor human relationships seem warm: The idyllic descrip-

tion of nature becomes a symbol of the poet's deeply felt isolation from his homeland rather than a poetic exercise in brilliant landscape painting.

Those nature poets who do attempt to use their descriptions of nature to say something about themselves or about ideas they consider important tend to rely so heavily on well-worn phrases that their poems have a limited impact. The celebration of childhood innocence in Lena Kent's "The Hills of St. Andrew", for example, recalls the conventionally expressed sentiments of McKay's dialect poem "To Clarendon Hills and H.A.H": Winds are "fragrant", hours are "happy" and flowers are "unforgotten":

St. Andrew's Hills, St. Andrew's Hills,
 What happy, happy hours
 My childhood knew, among your rills,
 Your unforgotten flowers!
 Those cool and fragrant winds still blow,
 Among the mountain passes,
 But far the feet that long ago
 Sped o'er your flow'ring grasses. ³¹

Another aspect of the effect of social attitudes on literary style in Jamaica between the wars was the Poetry League's insistence on the importance of traditional ideas about rhyme and metre in the production of good poetry. Much of the League's work appeared simultaneously with the inter-war poetry written in England in which dissonance and a prosaic style were cultivated in response to the spiritual dislocation experienced in Europe in the wake of the Great War and the sense that the mechanisation and proletarianisation of society in the twentieth century had created a new audience for art and demanded new approaches on the part of the artist. The Jamaica Poetry League seems to have been untouched by such developments. Indeed the war produced a new enthusiasm for Empire and reinforced Victorian cultural values within the middle class although for lower-class West Indians who actually served in North Africa during the fighting, it had been a bitterly disillusioning experience. One sees this insistence on formal poetic structures at its most overt in the patriotic poems written during the war by Jamaican authors, many of which were collected in Constance Hollar's anthology, Songs of Empire. Albinia

Give me wide spaces, Lord; -
 To mount on sweep of eagle's wing,
 To soar where cascades leap and sing,
 And in glad spaces joy in Thee, 33
 Who made Thy children to be free.

The most enervating consequence of this rigid adherence among the inter-war poets to fixed poetic forms and borrowed sentiments was the restriction it placed on the writer's freedom to create authentic metaphors. As has been noted in the discussion of McKay's poetry, this was also a problem in the work of earlier Jamaican writers. However, the total suppression of Creole as a subsidiary, albeit inferior, poetic language after the war meant that not even the stylistic schizophrenia of pre-war Creole writing remained as an option to the Poetry League for expressing those ideas which could not be accommodated within the framework of English romantic traditions. Mais puts his finger on the problem in responding to McFarlane's argument that the English language could not, or should not be manipulated to express a non-English world view:

Of course if one persists in assuming that every Jamaican or most Jamaicans are Englishmen with subtle differences of race, etc., any theory about English speech producing English poetry must be right. Greater depths of self-ignorance and wilful at that, cannot exist. If poetry is an art, and outside of Jamaica it plainly is, then it must express whatever is unique and personal in the experience of a given people at a given time. Twentieth century attempts in Jamaica to revive the romantic age of English poetry of the early nineties, is the chosen farcial attempt of our local effusionists. We exclude a few, a very few, of our younger writers. 34

Mais's last sentence probably refers to the group of younger writers whose work had begun to appear in Public Opinion during the early 1940s, a group which included such writers as Philip Sherlock, George Campbell, H.D. Carberry, Claude Thompson, V.S. Reid, Mais himself and one or two female writers, notably Vera Bell and Cicely Howland. These writers were all closely associated with the Public Opinion newspaper and saw their art as providing the cultural basis for the new nationalist movement. This is not to say that they were all politically active, but their poetry reflects the typical ideals and sentiments of the nation-

alist movement: its mystical affirmation of the brotherhood of all men; its romanticising of the history and character of the black and brown Jamaican, and the sense of being in the vanguard of a movement towards a brave new world. Though their poetry makes frequent use of local scenes and issues, very little of it is written in dialect, as by now the idea that English was the language of Jamaican poetry had begun to be taken for granted and the emphasis began to be placed on finding suitable metaphors and style for the Jamaican experience within the Standard. The major literary influences on the language and style of the poetry produced by the group tended to be contemporary though external and included the techniques of black and white American writers of the 1930s as well as new developments within modern English poetry.

In retrospect it is difficult to estimate the extent to which the poetry the Public Opinion writers as a whole represented in its use of language an advance over the imitative style of the Jamaica Poetry League. Without a doubt the group's members produced individual poems of a high standard which express that "unique and personal" experience of a given people which Mais puts forward as the hallmark of great art. But the later group had also been socialised within a colonial situation which encouraged the individual to apply cultural values external to the society to attempts at self-expression. While the models they chose were contemporary ones that had more relevance to the Jamaican situation, there remains in their work a tendency to concentrate on ideas or experiences in their society for which words or images had already been coined in other aesthetic milieus. This relatively conservative approach to style is matched by a tendency in much of their poetry to evade areas of potential conflict. Their poems often assert either positive or strongly negative attitudes to reality rather than trying to explore the subtle nuances in the individual's perception of self and/or society.

These characteristics are perhaps best illustrated by an examination of the poetry of George Campbell, whose work was wide-

ly acclaimed in Jamaica during this period.³⁵ Campbell's dependence on Edna Manley has already been discussed in Chapter One. At times this dependence extended to a takeover of ideas and symbols from Mrs. Manley's work. For example ideas of racial and political assertion suggested by Edna Manley's carving "Negro Aroused" are taken over in Campbell's poem of the same name in a manner which suggests the poet felt it was important to express these ideas in his work but had not yet really come to terms with their implications at a personal level. Campbell uses the posture in which the statue is carved as well as the qualities associated with the material from which the carving is made to express aspects of the mood which he feels the work evokes.

I lift my head and cry to heaven defiance,
Freedom! Let them beat down this house,
Muscle built, stifle this screaming voice,
Let them! We are aroused! Fear made us shut our eyes
Once; Made us give up Freedom to save our flesh
But my eyes now flash to the very heavens defiance; and
My skin is hard; lash it, O world, and
Bring your battering-rams of insults and discomforts
You that hate others to live!

The histrionic tone of Campbell's poem suggests that he is creating a drama to fit the figure portrayed in the carving. There is no real identification between the poet and his persona as the personal pronoun is used rhetorically, and suggests Campbell's romantic notions of a mass of aroused negroes rather than any sense of himself as one of that mass. While it is true that many of the best works of art have been created in response to other works of art rather than by the direct experience or involvement of the artist in the mood which he expresses in his work, Campbell seems to bring no additional insights to the subject other than those he thinks Mrs. Manley is trying to express in her carving. Perhaps the point is better made by comparing this poem with Philip Sherlock's "Tomorrow" written in response to the same piece of sculpture: Here the poet uses his personal admiration

of Mrs. Manley overtly as the framework within which he evokes the artist's act of creation. The carving's subject is not directly mentioned, but Sherlock's use of the idea of the rough tree acquiring under the artist's "chipping chisel" a "leaping life" and "lifting hope" becomes a metaphor for the slowly awakening consciousness of the aroused negro. In spite of the poem's unadorned language and careful understatement, a sense of excitement and anticipation is conveyed through the constant shifts of stress and line arrangement, an excitement which in the course of the poem comes to be identified with the mood of the artist, the free/negro of her carving and the poet's dawning understanding of the work of art which he imagines taking shape before him:

You
 With your hands so exquisitely carved
 Head tilted back
 (That angle so exactly judged)
 How many days
 With patient chisel chipping
 Heart beating fast
 Breath held so fearfully
 Damn! there's a visitor
 'And do you take two lumps or one?'
 Wrought forth perfection from the answering wood,
 Heart beating fearfully -
 (Playing the mid-wife to this tree in labour)

And who that saw this tree aspire
 Toward the heaven's silver fire
 Had ever thought that from its heart
 (So quite content, so proudly master
 of its heart it seemed)
 Such leaping life could start
 And who that saw
 the dead trees fall
 The foliage fall
 (Quite dead
 its pride and life with yesterday)
 Could ever know
 That deep within the dead, dead tree
 Such leaping life could be,
 And such aspiring grace?
 The lifting hope
 The tenuous force
 Its flash and gleam
 The sculptor saw

And underneath that chipping chisel
 More beautifully than in green life past
 The dead tree flowered
 Broke forth its single bloom
 Tomorrow. ³⁶

What makes this poem a more satisfying artistic response to the carving is that it brings into focus the poet's own movement toward discovery through the work of art and acknowledges the incongruity between the artist's social setting (summarised in the parenthesis "Do you take two lumps or one") and that other world which she is able through imagination to enter and interpret. Campbell's poem rings false because it attempts to speak for the artist, for the work of art, and for the aroused negro without really dealing with the work's significance for him as a fellow-artist or as a negro. The language in which he apostrophises is so often a rhetorical flourish that holds up his fellow Jamaican as an object lesson to the reader that it is difficult to discover any real affinity between writer and subject, in much the same way that McKay's use of the dialect in his early dramatic monologues preserves what he at that time considered the correct distance between himself and his peasant persona. In poems such as Campbell's "Market Women" which begins with the distancing epithet, "These people.." one is uncomfortably aware that Campbell sees himself as distinct from other black Jamaicans, and that this sense of being a spectator to their life and experiences is never openly acknowledged as it ultimately was by McKay in a poem like "My Whopping Big-Tree Boy", or transformed into metaphor as it is in Sherlock's poem.

Campbell's best poems are his shorter lyrical pieces which express in simple language and fresh metaphors some of his "first impressions" of life as a young man growing up at an exciting moment in Jamaican history. Several of these poems imitate the language and style of prayers, as if by associating his ideas with the language of the church Campbell means to reinforce his own feeling of reverence and mysticism for the world he is in the process of discovering. "Litany" celebrates the quality of the light in the Jamaican landscape:

I hold the splendid daylight in my hands
 Inwardly grateful for a lovely day.
 Thank you life.
 Daylight like a fine fan spread from my hands
 Daylight like a scarlet poinsettia
 Daylight like yellow cassia flowers
 Daylight like clean water

Daylight like green cacti
 Daylight like sea sparkling with white horses
 Daylight like sunstrained blue sky
 Daylight like tropic hills
 Daylight like a sacrament in my hands. Amen

While "Holy" expresses the notion of the oneness of all races which was an integral part of West Indian attempts to establish a nationalist consciousness in a region of great racial diversity -

Holy be the white head of a Negro.
 Sacred be the black flax of a black child.
 Holy be
 The golden down
 That will stream in the waves of the winds
 And will thin like dispersing cloud.

Traditional associations are deliberately inverted in the juxtaposition of white/negro, Black/flax, reinforcing the paradoxical use of religious forms to consecrate secular ideas. The poem "To the Men in the Internment Camp" shares the mood of religious solemnity of the poems already quoted in its use of a hymn meter and its association of the nationalist struggle with the life-giving pain of childbirth:

Our country is in labour now
 For her no rest, no hiding shawl
 For her dark aeons woman's thrall.

Most of Campbell's poems are spoilt by weak lines, and overwriting, a mark not only of his inexperience as a writer at this stage but also of the problems encountered by Jamaican poets of his generation in their attempts to develop a way of writing in Standard English that could express what they wanted to say about their society and experiences. Interesting new techniques or metaphors tend to be worked over repeatedly in different poems - for example Campbell's various experiments with religious forms - or tried out by several writers - for example the use of the same carving in poems by Campbell and Sherlock. In their search for a distinctive style the Public Opinion poets produced incredibly bad poems as well as the occasional work of genius. Campbell's "History Makers" for instance (discussed in Chapter IV), which makes use of the rhythm of women breaking stones to mend the roads as a symbol of the economic struggle of the Jamaican working class as well as a symbol of strength can probably be con-

sidered a West Indian classic. Another poem which achieves a degree of success is "Trees", which seems to concern the complex relationship between Campbell and his patron. In spite of a lingering tendency toward self-dramatisation, Campbell manages to avoid the temptation of the rhetorical flourish and allows a single controlled metaphor to carry the meaning of the work. The poem suggests the sense of shared artistic and political goals between patron and protégé as well as the young man's uncertainty about his role in relation to an older, more experienced woman and his sense of her greater cultural rootedness as part of a well-established artistic tradition:

You and I trees planted far apart
 Trying to touch one another. You trying
 To understand, and I the wind pleading through
 My leaves; what keeps the distance?
 And mark, you have been planted centuries
 Before me, and are strong. While I so
 Sudden in your life surviving the strength
 That vanquished others, and now worried to death
 How peacefully to whisper under your shade
 Embracing your leaves and mine - to win together.

Campbell migrated to America in 1948, three years after the publication of his collected First Poems. Though he continued to write poetry, and his work features in subsequent Focus anthologies, Campbell seems to have made no impression on the American literary scene. Perhaps his work was too rooted in the context of the Jamaican nationalist movement to survive the change of environment. The poem "Worker", with its strict adherence to iambic pentameter ("Why praise him lightly when he turns to die?") and the poem "The Sun" with its image of "the blood dark sun of the tropics," both of which appeared after Campbell's departure, suggest that Campbell may have consciously attempted to imitate the style of Claude McKay, whose path into exile he had followed. There are however few new stylistic developments in the poems by Campbell which appear in the 1948 and 1956 issues of Focus.

As far as the language of "serious" poetry was concerned, therefore, the Public Opinion poets by 1940 had decided firmly in favour of Standard English though an awareness of the need to create a Jamaican idiom within the Standard was acknowledged, and

occasional attempts to write in dialect continued to be made. In the field of folklore however, a new wave of interest in the dialect from an etymological and cultural perspective had begun to develop when historians like P.M. Sherlock and H.P. Jacobs began to use the Creole language and literature which was already on record to interpret West Indian history and to establish links between the Creole culture and the traditional civilisations of Africa. Attempts were made by Sherlock and such Public Opinion contributors as Una Wilson and Dorothy Clarke to popularise Anancy stories and other indigenous folk tales, often by translating them into Standard English so that they acquired the prestige of the folk tales and fairy stories of other cultures which were commonly regarded as suitable reading for children. Interest in the origins of Creole words and stories also helped to encourage the view among Jamaican intellectuals that from a historical point of view the Creole language possessed intrinsic merit. Ironically, this interest came at a time when the prestige of the dialect as a spoken language was possibly at a lower ebb than at any other point within the twentieth century. Indeed, it is arguable that the Jamaican intellectual's willingness to tolerate the idea of Creole language and literature meriting serious study, albeit as historical artifacts, was only possible because they had ceased to feel threatened by the Creole culture after the popular protests of the late 1930s had been taken over and used to support middle-class nationalist goals. It now became fashionable for progressive members of the Jamaican middle class to see themselves as the patrons of the masses and to play down the areas of potential conflict between their aspirations and the aspirations of the dialect-speaking community. Thus, in his introduction to a collection of Anancy Stories and Dialect Verse published in 1950, Philip Sherlock fails to see anything profound or relevant to contemporary society in the Jamaican folk material which he contrasts with the American Negro spiritual and the Trinidad Calypso:

The Negro spirituals belong to the world of poetry. They are the longings and sighs and consolation of a suffering people finding utterance in song. They are poems of great spiritual power. They belong to the ages. The Trinidad calypsos belong to the present.

They are a satirical and witty comment on the happenings of today. They sparkle with satire, they are full of innuendo and suggestion, are of the head and not of the heart, are sophisticated and self-conscious rather than spontaneous and poetic.

The Jamaica folk-songs are nearer to calypsos, and yet they differ essentially from them. They are less sophisticated; more of the earth and the country, less of the asphalt and the city. There is no poetry in them but sometimes they come near to it in the melody and mood of a song like "Carry me ackee..." With much of the dialect verse in this little book, they share the qualities that are to be found in the proverbs.³⁷

Sherlock's statement seems to rob the dialect of the ability to express pathos and poetic sensibility or to reflect changing lifestyles and points of view. Such a view was possible from an essentially sympathetic commentator because by 1950 the dominant culture had made such in-roads into the dialect-speaker's world view and perception of self that many dialect-speaking Jamaicans, like the educated black middle class of the 1920s and 1930s, sincerely believed the myths perpetuated by the dominant culture about the moral and artistic poverty of the Creole language as it survived in Jamaica. Louise Bennett recalls in an interview that when she first started to write and perform in the dialect the people who expressed the greatest horror were the lower-class dialect speakers among whom she lived:

What your mother send you to school for?...
 What kind of foolishness is this?... better³⁸
 you send her to the hospital to turn nurse.

Although Louise Bennett is well known for her re-telling of Anancy stories and traditional folk tales, her major achievement has been the creation of a tradition of popular verse in the dialect which makes use of language as it was actually spoken at the time when her poems were written.³⁹ Her performance of oral poems in the dialect about current topics to local audiences had significance therefore not only within a select circle of middle-class intellectuals interested in refurbishing the cultural image of their slave ancestors, but also for members of the contemporaneous dialect-speaking community who for the first time in many decades were able to hear their language in the context of creative wri-

ting and consciously to assess their own lifestyle through a recognised artistic medium. Bennett's poems can be considered under three major headings: those in which the technical versatility of the Creole is the major preoccupation; those which concern topical matters, and those which contain an implied comment on values or aspirations within the community. These distinctions are useful for analysis, but most of Bennett's poems contain all three features to a greater or lesser degree. Bennett's dramatic monologues evoking familiar scenes of everyday life belong to the first group. Here the listener's attention focuses on the poet's ability to reproduce the language of the street. "South Parade Peddler", which dramatises the speech and actions of a downtown higgler hawking her wares, is one example of this type of work:

Hairnet, scissors, fine teeth comb!
 Wey de nice lady dey?
 Buy a scissors from me noh lady?
 Hair pin? Toot' pase? Goh wey!
 Me say go-wey aready, ef
 Yuh doan like it see me.
 Yuh dah-swell like bombin' plane fun'
 Yuh soon bus up like Graff Spe.
 Yuh fava - shoelace, powder puff!
 Clothes hanger, belt, penknife!

As in McKay's "Midnight Woman to the Bobby" the poem is essentially dramatic, and stage directions for tone of voice and body movements are built into the text or indicated in the punctuation marks (e.g. "Yuh fava - shoelace, powder puff!" which only makes sense on the page if we interpret the dash as indicating a shift in the speaker's attention from the unwilling customer on whom she has been heaping uncomplimentary war-time comparisons, to a prospective new client.) The listener's delight stems from anticipating shifts in the monologue between the persona's crying of her wares and her alternate cajoling and abuse of the people who pass her by. Bennett is able to manipulate the rhyme scheme and line arrangement in such a way that they complement rather than control the changes, thus heightening the surprise effect of each shift in the speaker's attention. The poet achieves maximum comic effect by juxtaposing the most incongruous items offered by the higgler (shoelace, powder puff/Clothes hanger, belt, penknife) or by combining un-

likely items and customers ("Toot-brush? Ah beg yuh pardon sah,/ Me never see you mout'"). Similar techniques are used in "Candy Seller", which also dramatises the higgler's art, and "Cuss-cuss" which pits two women against each other in a "tracing" match:

Goh wey, yuh kean bwile sof egg
 But still yuh want get ring,
 Noh man na gwine fe married yuh
 Wen yuh kean do a ting.

The pleasure, as in a real-life "tracing" derives from the dexterity with which the speaker turns the insult she has received against her attacker:

Is grudge yuh grudgeful, me kean cook
 But me ben goh dah good school,
 Me got intelligency yuh
 Illiterate fool!

The relationship between language and metre in Bennett's poetry is one of the most significant features of her style. Like McKay and Palmer, Bennett makes use of a basic ballad form. Nettleford suggests in his introduction to Jamaica Labrish that she may have been influenced in her choice originally by the fact that most of the poems recited in Jamaican schools were English ballads, or poems that made use of the ballad form, like Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Bennett varies the basic ballad rhyme-scheme of abab to abcb, thus relieving some of the monotony of the form. She also varies the metre considerably in individual lines though preserving the basic pattern of eight and six syllables in alternating lines. The rhythms of dialect speech work in counterpoint with the ballad metre, leaving an impression of a regular beat without disrupting the natural flow of language. Lines such as these from "South Parade Peddlar" scan in this way on the page:

Mē sāy gō-wēy āréady, éf
 Yū doan like it sēe mé

but in this way in Creole speech

Mē sāy gō-wēy āréady, / ēf
 Yū doan like it / sēe mē

(/ indicates natural pauses)

In other poems, Bennett switches the iambic metre with the dactyl and anapest to convey shifts in tone and meaning.

Such linguistic versatility is also a feature of Bennett's topical poems, many of which like "South Parade Peddlar" coin their metaphors out of the language associated with other current events. Mervyn Morris in his article "On Reading Louise Bennett Seriously" suggests that this constant cross-referencing to topical events contributes to making the poems "dated", but a poem such as "New Govanah" which uses the occasion of the arrival of Sir John Higgins as governor of the colony in 1943 to comment on the way in which scarce foodstuffs tended to be restricted to the privileged members of the society during the war hardly seems irrelevant in modern-day Jamaica where spot shortages of sought-after essentials are still endemic; and visiting celebrities are often swept past the waiting crowds:⁴⁰

Wat a wey dem gwan bout new Govanah;
 Jus a-meck whole heap o'fus,
 Dem a-gwan like him is rear steak,
 Or any t'ree month war bonus.

Dem jus haffe dah-pick and choose
 Who fe goh dung go meet him,
 Like him is any white rice an
 Anybody gwine eat him.

The speaker's overt grudge is that she is not allowed to get close to the Governor, implying that the Governor is well-liked and popular, but at another level in the poem there is an ironic commentary on the irrelevance of public officers like colonial governors to the actual conditions of hardship under which the poor in Jamaica live. This is expressed almost proverbially in the speaker's naive disappointment that though the Governor has been photographed posing with Jamaican farm workers in the United States (who were in great demand on account of war-time shortages of labour in America), he does not seem to have brought any personal messages or gifts from the farm workers for relatives in Jamaica. The poem ends with the observation:

Me glad fe know him come at las',
 Me hope him feel happy,
 But it hooda meck me gladder ef
 Him bring someting fe me.

Bennett's topical poems are particularly interesting from a stylistic point of view. Like Palmer and McKay, she often uses local proverbs to carry home the point of her satirical observations. In "Dutty Tough" for example, she summarises the paradox of inflation causing higher pay packages to buy less with the proverb, "Rain a-fall but dutty tuff" (the rain falls but the ground is still hard). "My Dream", which criticises Britain's lack of enthusiasm in carrying through legislative changes in preparation for internal self-government, contains a similar paradox expressed in the proverbs "Dog a-sweat but long hair hide i', / Mout a-laugh, but heart a-leap!" Here the proverbs warn obliquely that the Jamaican public will eventually run out of patience even though they seem to be accepting all the legislative delays without demur. Bennett goes beyond the early dialect poets in the use she makes of traditional folk narratives in her poems commenting on current events. In "Crab and Mare" an animal fable is used to describe the election rivalry between two Kingston politicians, while in "Bad Foot" a rumour that a leading politician had a syphilitic foot is reworked under the cover of an Anancy story. There are actually two poems recorded about the politician's foot. In the first one, "Show yuh Foot", the story of how the politician actually displayed one of his naked legs in public to disprove the rumour is gleefully recounted with only the sly comments of the final stanza to undermine the politician's credibility.

But is ongle one foot him show
 So rumour can be true.
 Fe teck doubt out o' people mine
 Him shoulda show de two.

In "Bad Foot" by contrast, the satire cuts much deeper under the cover of the innocuous tale of Takooma's fight with Anancy. The lines scanned in the first two stanzas quoted below demonstrate incidentally Bennett's technique of shifting between various metres to dramatise changes in perspective within the monologue though the basic pattern of four stresses followed by three is retained:

But lawd! Takooma purpose sah!
 Jimima, come yah quick,
 It look like say him, hut up Nancy,
 Sore-foot wid a kick!

Hear how po' Nancy dah-halla!
 Koo hōw y'eye wata dah flow
 Lawd hā massi Aunt Jimima
 Is de bad foot get de blow!

Po' Bra Nancy, cool yuh tempa,
 Dry yuh y'eye Massah noh mine;
 Is a hutful ting fe smaddy
 Kick yuh sudden from behine.

But me blame yuh Bredda Nancy
 After yuh noh got noh right
 Since yuh know yuh got a bad foot
 Fe go start up any fight.

For yuh know how people wicked,
 Wen yuh is dem enemy
 An dem know yuh got a weak spot,
 Dem gwine pop yuh eena i!

Yuh sey yuh noh got no weak spot!
 Den how yuh collapse so quick?
 Massa sinting wrong wid dat deh foot
 Before it get de kick.

Here the satire proceeds at every level: apart from the connotations of sexual incontinence implicit in the original "sore-foot" story, the poem becomes a proverbial fable directed at the politician's claims of infallibility. The person in question was none other than the Premier Alexander Bustamante, and his reputation as a trickster had already earned him the popular sobriquet "Anancy" so that Bennett is hitting very close to the bone in a poem like this. The poem goes on to describe Anancy's tendency to pick a fight (Takooma claims he only kicked Anancy because Anancy had threatened to kick him) and satirises Anancy's unwillingness to admit the truth about himself. As the poem hints Bustamante was renowned for his quick uncontrollable temper and his tendency to take personal revenge on those who opposed him in office - traits which are satirised in another topical poem, "Is Me". Louise Bennett may therefore have been taking a personal risk in making this kind of critical statement about a leading politician, and it is more than symbolically appropriate that she takes the stylistic precaution of clothing her critical comments in the disguises used formerly by the slaves for criticising the dominant culture. Had this poem been written at a historically earlier time, it might today have existed in the folk tradition and been the subject of learned dis-

putations on "the nature of the physical characteristics acquired by the Anancy figure as it survives in the New world", when both the dialect community and the establishment had forgotten the original characters satirised.

In poems which comment on values and aspirations within the community, Bennett, like McKay, is able to suggest a range of emotions and cultural attitudes that leave an impression of a many-sided Creole world view. Her use of proverbs and local allusions to comment on attitudes within the dialect-speaking community itself allows her to criticise what she considers limiting or mean-spirited within the Creole culture without resorting to Standard English. In this way she avoids the suggestion implicit in the work of other users of the dialect that serious moral insights could only be presented in Standard English. In "Noh Lickle Twang!" for instance Bennett satirises dialect speakers' tendency to denigrate their own form of speech by comparison with Standard English in her presentation of a Jamaican parent who is dismayed by her son's failure to acquire an American accent after a brief stay abroad:

Yuh mean yuh goh dah 'Merica
An spen six whole mont' deh,
An come back not a piece betta
Dan how yuh did goh wey?

Bwoy yuh noh shame? Is soh you come?
Afta yuh tan soh lang!
Not even lickle language bwoy?
Not even little twang?

Bennett probably had in mind the attitudes of cultural inferiority that had militated against her own determination to write in dialect. Elsewhere however Bennett records other forms of adulation of the establishment within the dialect-speaking community with hardly a comment. Some of her poems celebrating the arrival and departure of colonial officials seem generous to the point of being totally uncritical. And one of her most unequivocally happy poems is "300 Christmas", which celebrates three hundred years of British rule in Jamaica. While it is one of the contradictions of most colonial societies that the lower classes are seldom enthusiastic about political autonomy which from their perspective merely

passes power from an expatriate elite to a local one, there is nevertheless an element of self-doubt in a refusal to accept responsibility for one's own society. This hint of self-depreciation can be felt at moments in some of the dramatic monologues written about Independence and Federation after 1950 and is a sign of one of the weaknesses inherent in Bennett's technique of speaking through a "naive" persona whose point of view was often more circumscribed than that of the author herself. To strain after inspiring sentiments of national and racial solidarity in the manner of George Campbell's poetry however would have been out of character in the type of dialect poetry Louise Bennett writes, and she is therefore obliged to follow rather than lead popular opinion in certain respects. As the attitudes of Jamaicans to their language and culture have altered over the years Bennett has been able to incorporate new perspectives into her writing, but only where a critical apparatus already exists in the Creole can her satire work effectively. In addition, Bennett restricts her dramatic personae almost exclusively to a comic stereotype not very different from the naive bumpkin of Jekyll's introduction to Jamaica Song and Story. Although her work demonstrates convincingly that laughter need not be synonymous with ignorance or moral superficiality, Bennett's concentration on comic satire deprives her work of the resources of other registers of dialect speech, approached obliquely in poems like "My Dream" but only fully exploited by more recent dialect writers who have been influenced by the changes in the Jamaican language associated with the Rastafarian sect.

Bennett's poetry demonstrates one of the ways in which Jamaican writers were able to use a portion of the language resources available to them before 1950. It emphasises however the extent to which dialect themes and language remained distinct from writing in Standard English within the genre of poetry. Later years were to bring further linguistic experiments which attempted to link the two forms of language. However, the fact that the dialect-speaking community before 1950 was in the main functionally illiterate, and literate Jamaicans still prided themselves on their ability to use Standard English, made it difficult for in-

dividual Jamaican writers to conceive of mixing the two styles and/or perspectives. Dialect poems remained works meant for oral delivery, expressing a lower-class world view, while introspective, or "sophisticated" poetry was invariably written in the Standard. In prose the situation had from the outset been different as the social realism of the Jamaican novel compelled a closer adherence to the language generally spoken within the community. H.G. de Lisser for example makes extensive use of dialect in the novels he produced between 1912 and 1944. His work provides the standard against which later prose writers compared their own work, as it demonstrates and reinforces the typical attitudes to language that were given currency by the dominant culture.

Because of his prolific and forthright journalist articles, de Lisser's attitudes to dialect and dialect speakers are fairly well documented. His comments on the language of the Jamaican lady already quoted imply a bias toward Standard English as the form of speech most closely associated with intelligence and good breeding. As a young man de Lisser's attitudes toward the non-Standard English speakers in the community had been influenced by the writing of J.H. Froude who had portrayed West Indians, especially those of African descent, as being politically immature and incapable of creative originality. De Lisser echoes Froude's views in an early newspaper article in which he characterises the Jamaican negro as:

good humoured and impulsive, an admirable imitator when well taught but with no inventive faculty whatever. His political and social organisation is of the most primitive type, his cities are collections of huts which cannot withstand a season's rains. He has no literature, and no art. His music is of the rudest. He is sometimes brave, to recklessness and sometimes a deplorable coward.⁴¹

Throughout his long public career, de Lisser altered his attitude to the negro race as a whole very little, though being himself a man of colour and a self-made man, he always admired the individual black or coloured Jamaican who through cunning, application or judicious social alliances managed to extricate himself from the mass and achieve a measure of individual success. For de Lisser such upward movement meant that

successful individuals automatically cut ties with the language and cultural habits of their class or ethnic group, and there is never any question of him portraying a Jamaican who continues to speak dialect after achieving social status as worthy of serious attention. It is not surprising therefore to find that dialect speakers in de Lisser's work are often portrayed as primitives, buffoons, or individuals with dangerously misguided notions of self-worth. On the other hand de Lisser's lowly origins had made him familiar with the Creole language. He had an excellent ear for different levels of speech which he enjoyed exploiting in his writing and he never hesitated to use dialect-speaking characters in his novels. His own narrative style is on the whole free from the archaic influences which mar MacDermot's prose and from the studied literary effects favoured by the Jamaica Poetry League. As an admirer and protégé of the Fabian socialist Governor, Sir Sydney Olivier, he had modelled his style after the urbane modern prose of other English socialists such as H.G. Wells, and George Bernard Shaw whom he had met when Shaw came to Jamaica as Olivier's personal guest. Though his style is heavily influenced by Shaw's it seldom seems incongruous, and de Lisser made this arch-ironic posture the distinctive trade mark of his fiction and journalism. The colonial insecurity implicit in his tendency to ridicule all things Jamaican is given a veneer of cultivated snobbery that is not offensive because of de Lisser's ability to appear detached from all the issues that he satirises. At times he even pokes fun at his own public image: In The Jamaica Bandits, one of the novels published in Planters' Punch, de Lisser responds to persistent rumours that he accepted handouts from the United Fruit Company in exchange for his journalistic support of their aggressive economic policies in Jamaica with this description of the Chinese gambling game of peaka peow, popular in Jamaica between the wars, which he puts into the mouth of a police inspector:

"It is a Chinese game of chance", explained the inspector; "a gambling game much denounced by those who secretly take part in it; that is, by almost everybody. I have heard that a man in this city generally known as H.G.D. carries on in private a branch of the peaka peow business and makes a large part of his² very suspicious income by that. If only I catch him."

De Lisser's use of dialect in his novels represents in some respects a distinct advance on MacDermot's handling of the folk language and his dialect passages are seldom digressive or merely ornamental. Rather than literally reproducing whole chunks of authentic dialogue, de Lisser concentrates on suggesting in a few deft strokes a variety of ranges within the Creole language and manipulates levels of speech to complement his development of typical characters. Jane's Career, for instance, opens with Jane being given her final benediction before leaving for the city by Daddy Buckram, a character whose language is similar to that of Mr. White in One Brown Girl. De Lisser preserves only those aspects of Daddy Buckram's range within the dialect that are relevant to his characterisation:

"Jane", he continued impressively after a pause, "Kingston is a very big an' wicked city, an' a young girl like you, who de Lord has blessed wid' a good figure an' a face, must be careful not to keep bad company. Satan goeth about like a roaring lion in Kingston; seeking who he may devour. He will devour you if you do not take him to the Lord in prayer. Do you' work well. Write to you' moder often, for a chile who don't remember her parent cannot prosper. Don't stay out in de street in de night, go to church whenever you' employer allow you..Now, tell me what I say to you."

Jane hesitated a while, then answered.

"You say I mus' behave meself, sah, an' go to church, an don't keep bad company, an' dat de devil is a roarin' lion. An' ...an' dat I must write Mumma.⁴³

In a word for word analysis of the speaker's style in this passage there can be no question that MacDermot's Mr. White speaks a far more authentic form of Creole. But the speech of de Lisser's character tells us all that the author wishes us to know about Daddy Buckram: that he is vain, longwinded and given to sermonising. Jane's summary of his speech in three short sentences emphasises these points. At the same time, the reader familiar with the Jamaican dialect is conscious of an underlying nuance or intonation in the passage that makes it seem to the ear to be spoken in Creole even though comparatively little of the grammar or spelling has been altered from the Standard.

Since de Lisser equates dialect with a lifestyle which he considers inferior to an implied civilised norm, he does not have

MacDermot's problem of seeming to contradict his own logic when he modifies the speech of an individual character in the direction of Standard English in order to indicate a superior intellect or sensibility. Rachel, Paul Bogle's daughter in Revenge, is occasionally allowed to speak almost Standard English when the author wishes to differentiate her from the other peasant characters who want to create trouble, while the switch from Standard to Creole in the language of another character, Mr. Mace, is deliberately manipulated to give the lie to the impressive-sounding sentiments he voices in the Standard. His preference for words over action in the political confrontation for example is satirised when someone asks him if he intends to take part personally in the Morant Bay demonstrations he has been writing about:

"No," replied Mr. Mace. "My duty keeps me pinned to the point of action. From here I address the people and bring to their keen understanding a sense of the existing conditions that exist. That is purely constitutional." As usual with the editor, after he had balanced himself for some time on the dizzy heights of the Queen's English, he immediately dropped to the colloquial. "Not me, me brother." He added, "I don't want policeman to put hand 'pon me. Coward man keep sound bones, an' my bones don't too strong already."⁴⁴

In addition, de Lisser is able to ridicule political sentiments expressed by his dialect-speaking characters which the reader normally may have considered taking seriously by giving such spokesmen a particularly bombastic version of the dialect containing just enough that is recognisably authentic to create the illusion that we are hearing the view as it would actually be expressed by such a dialect speaker. De Lisser presents such a stereotype in his description of Samuel Josiah Jones, one of the heroine's suitors in Susan Proudleigh who becomes involved in protest against social conditions in Panama. Even before Jones emigrates to Panama we are prepared to see him as blustering and illogical by the style of his arguments. On one occasion, for instance, he refuses to accept Mr. Proudleigh's stories about prejudices against Jamaicans in the Canal Zone:

"That don't frighten me," said Jones. "No American man is going to shoot Samuel Josiah. I can do my work, an' when the work is done, I go about me own business, an' leave the Americans to themselves. Besides, I hear that

all y'u have to do is to tell an American you are a British subject, an' he wouldn't put a finger on you."...

Now Mr. Proudleigh, although not gifted with particular quickness of wit, could perceive that there was something lacking in Jones's reply. "Not reburting you, Mr. Jones," he said, "but even ef it wasn't de Americans who half-murder the Jamaica mens, it was somebody. An' those people didn't seem to mind that Jamaica people was British subjects."...

Jones, however, was not one to allow himself to be easily beaten in an argument.

"The Jamaica people couldn't have been Jamaica people at all," he answered, "For a British subject can't be touched."

"I don't see how dat can be," said Mr. Proudleigh doubtfully, "for those Jamaica people did really born in Jamaica."

"Then they were a set of fools," replied Jones shortly. "Most Jamaica people is foolish; they have no cranium whatsoever. I bet you those men never told they were British subjects. Now, if it was me, I would have made everybody to understand that I was an Anglo-Saxon, an' that if they touch a hair of me head, war would be declared. That's the way to talk in a foreign country. I wouldn't make a man bluff me out. No, sir!"⁴⁵

Jones's linguistic confusion of legal status and racial status, his bravado and his false understanding of the actual problems in Panama are emphasised by his blustering style of argument, thus preparing the reader to see Jones's bitterness about conditions in Panama as the predictable over-reaction of an ill-informed and self-opinionated malcontent. His later diatribes against poor housing conditions and the absence of industrial protection for workers are stated quite lucidly at one point in the narrative:

I am a British subject, but it's no use a man going to the British Consul here, for he don't even want to listen to you... A man can't get a good job in his own country, an' when he come to a God-forsaken foreign land he has no protection at all. In Jamaica you have to die of starvation, an' here you lucky if you don't die of neglect.

But immediately after this statement the author allows Joe to be side-tracked by a drinking companion who suggests that the exclusion of common law wives from the Canal Zone (one of the inconveniences experienced by many West Indian labourers in Panama) is "conducive to immorality":

"You know, you are right!" exclaimed Jones, staring at him with semi-drunken gravity. This aspect of the situation had apparently not occurred to him before. Now, however, it began to loom large in his muddled brain. He

grew indignant. He voiced an imaginary wrong. "Fancy," he cried, "just fancy a man working hard all day an' supporting a female in comfort an' proficiency, and another man goin' to the house in the daytime an' enjoying himself at my expense!" He foresaw himself being wronged, all through the neglect of the British Government and the faulty methods of the Canal Administration.⁴⁶

Jones's maladroit use of Standard English words like "proficiency", an aspect of the Creole language's ability to transcend the semantic limitations of the languages from which it borrowed that is positively evaluated in Edward Brathwaite's remarks about the slaves' use of language, quoted earlier, is introduced here negatively to reinforce the impression of intellectual confusion given in this passage.

When de Lisser indulges himself satirically at the expense of the lower class, his language stereotyping is sometimes heavy-handed. It is in his manipulation of levels of language in his satire of his own class, the coloured middle class, that his versatility with dialect as a satirical weapon can be seen at its most entertaining. Starting from the premise that the true mark of gentility within the Jamaican community was the ability to speak Standard English, de Lisser uses dialect in his social comedies about the upper-middle class as a register of spitefulness or ill-breeding. In The Rivals for instance, de Lisser presents us with a cross-section of levels of refinement within the Jamaican upper-middle class by using the idea of the "language continuum" in reproducing the conversation of a single Jamaican family. Such facility with levels of Creole is quite rare among West Indian novelists who, with the possible exception of V.S. Naipaul and Samuel Selvon, tend to polarise their language between Standard English and "pure" Creole, neglecting as a result the type of mixture which middle-class West Indians use most of the time. The James family in this extract have just said good-bye to two female acquaintances who they think have designs on Willie James, the son of the family who has recently returned from England:

They had no sooner left the house than Mrs. James began a commentary on the purpose of their visit. She was a large, quick-tempered woman, with a shrewish tongue and an amazing command of invective.

"I never see two girls run after a young man like these two," she protested. "They are absolutely shameless."

"I guessed as much that they were going to come round here to-day," sneered her daughter. "I wonder if Marie think I didn't see her this morning in church! She couldn't take her eyes off Willie. She wanted to come up to shake hands, but I just gave her a nod and turned away. My father! I wonder if Willie could ever look twice at her!"

Willie, who was at that moment arranging his tie with the aid of a small ornamental mirror hung against the wall, offered no comment on these words. But his uncle, with the look of a man making arithmetical calculations asked: "They have anything?"

"Not one penny to rub against another," asserted Mrs. James scornfully. "It is only the other day we come to know them, and they couldn't even pay their rent. Now that the father get a job, they forming like they are somebody, and they bore into me 'ouse as if it belonged to them; but I don't want them to come back here again, for I may say something to them they wouldn't like to hear."

"The elder one isn't bad looking, though," put in her son at this juncture, his tie being adjusted to his satisfaction.

"You call her good looking?" questioned Evangelina, "What part of her face?"

"Well the whole of it," replied Mr. James /Willie/, "What's the matter with it?"⁴⁷ /emphasis mine/

In this exchange de Lisser gives each speaker a different proportion of Creole to Standard in their speech and the level of Creole becomes a barometer for their ill-breeding and spite. Willie James, with his English education speaks Standard English, only the position of the colloquial "though" at the end of his second comment (see my emphasis above) giving his words a characteristic Jamaican lilt. His comment and preoccupation with his reflection indicate a fairly vain young man who, however, has none of the malice of his mother and sister. Willie's uncle's contribution to the discussion takes the typical form of the West Indian Creole question, in which subject and verb are not inverted and the sound of the speaker's voice alone indicates that a question has been asked. In this context this structure implies crude materialism.

The language used by Evangelina and her mother, whose comments are the most spiteful, is also the most heavily influenced by Creole expressions. For anyone who has ever overheard the gossip on a Jamaican verandah this dialogue is absolutely authentic. De Lisser manipulates the exchange only by making the least malicious figure the one whose English is most refined, making his point in

this way about levels of language and levels of breeding without distorting the facts to any considerable extent. The implied authorial comment on the scene is that the Jameses are hardly in a position to criticise the breeding of others. The result is a genuinely funny satirical comment on class attitudes at a certain level in the Jamaican middle class, as expressed in their use of language. When from a scene such as this de Lisser moves on to the dialogue of characters whom he wishes us to see as truly well bred and makes them speak Standard English we automatically associate the absence of dialect with the absence of bad manners and the switch seems natural, or even inevitable.

De Lisser's various uses of the levels of language within Jamaican society could provide material for an entire study. In general it can be summarised as follows: since de Lisser saw no need to present the attitudes of dialect speakers in a favourable light he had no problem in using dialect in his work with the associations which had accrued to it as a result of the perception in the wider Jamaican society of Creole as a debased form of speech. His reproduction of dialect is very stylised but usually manages to preserve as much of the Creole idiom as is necessary to create the illusion of verisimilitude. Creole is also used selectively in his work as a means of re-inforcing particularly negative characteristics in specific fictional figures - to suggest spite and ill-breeding in the case of the James family, pomposity in the case of Daddy Buckram, intellectual confusion in the case of Samuel Josiah Jones, and hypocrisy in the case of the journalist Mr. Mace. Because these were stereotypes of the dialect speaker commonly accepted by the Jamaican public de Lisser seldom has to force the language to carry his negative associations, but can rely on the local reader to fill out the picture he suggests in a few deft strokes.

When in the late 1930s a new generation of prose-writers came to challenge these stereotypes about Jamaican language they were faced with the existence of a well-defined literary tradition which ensured that no character who was made to speak in any of the stylised written versions of dialect that by then existed

would be taken seriously. To change the inbuilt associations connected with the dialect meant going back to its spoken form and listening to what was actually there apart from the features which had previously been picked out and caricatured in the work of a writer like de Lisser. For the novelist Vic Reid the parts of dialect speech most conducive to a favourable reception were those parts closest to the Standard; its use of biblical language and metaphor and the features it shared with certain British dialects. Thus the narrator of Reid's quasi-historical novel New Day is made to speak something which on the whole resembles a stylised Scots dialect with heavy biblical overtones:

I remember one Sabbath morning after Pa John had put on his beaver hat, I saw him go to the buttery-room and take out our mule whip. When mother looked on his face, she saw there was bad in his eyes, so she sent us young ones to wait bottomside the hill meanwhile she spoke to him. Afterwards, when they came down to meet us, sorry, I was sorry, for I saw my father had not got the whip in his hand. For is nice and no' nice to see someone else get a whipping, and Bro' Aaron Dacre would ha' got the whip this Sunday-day.⁴⁸

The language of this passage has superficially little in common with the Creole passages already quoted. However Reid is able to suggest a Jamaican flavour by using stylised forms of certain Creole constructions, such as the habit of using repetition as a form of emphasis in "sorry, I was sorry". Other Creole expressions used by Reid's narrator include "A good", to indicate emphatic approval, and "Cho man", which the narrator's older brother often uses to make his little brother feel at ease. Creole words such as "pickney", for child, and "Wayah", as an expression of surprise, are repeated and local names for animals and plants are also used. Though the final result bears little resemblance to Creole as it is actually spoken the author is able to suggest a world view and attitude to language which is recognisably West Indian. Reid's boldest step is to put this stylised Creole into the mouth of his first-person narrator, thereby leaving the impression that the entire narrative is being related from a peasant perspective, rather than through the consciousness of a middle-class speaker of Standard English. Here the use of Creole proverbs as the basis for metaphor is of particular importance. Though many of the pro-

verbal allusions are given in modified form, one gets the impression that the narrator perceives reality through concrete images derived from his environment. The narrator's negative response to the Custos of Morant Bay, for example, is compared to the feeling one gets "when night time come and you must pass Ma Cruickshank's burying ground," while Pa Campbell's moods of anger and frustration are described as his "thunder" voice and his "how long O Lord" voice. Many of the key ideas in the novel are expressed through proverbs, such as the justification for middle-class involvement in the working-class struggle, expressed in Davie's words to the Commissioners at Morant Bay: "Your honours, hunger came to my door and I was not blind," or the view of Jamaican history as a controlled progression towards political autonomy expressed in the analogy: "Steam train would soon blow up and destroy all if men had no pipes to lead the steam."

At times, however, there is an obvious strain between what traditional and biblical proverbs mean in their Creole context, and what the author, whose personal ideology rests ultimately on an acceptance of the status quo, would like these proverbs to mean. The author tries to influence our interpretation of proverbs and Creole expressions by playing off the more hostile attitudes toward the establishment present within the Creole cultural context against the stated opinions of his narrator or of characters who clearly share the narrator's perspective, for while Reid wishes to celebrate a romantic notion of the vitality of Creole speech and culture he is not prepared to be taken along by the logic that informs the language. This contradiction surfaces explicitly early in the story when Davie, the narrator's brother, hints at a communication gap between Gordon, the mulatto politician, and Bogle, the black leader of a native baptist sect:

Davie said: "Mr. Gordon took his text from the Psalm what says: By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept; we hanged our harps in the middle of the valleys thereof - and what a sermon was there! He said the time was coming when we would take down our harps and the voice o' the people would be heard in the land. Said that no more nakedness would show our backs, nor hunger would ride our mouth corners with white bridles. Said that the voice o' the people is the voice of God, that the heathen would hear and shake with fright.

"Same time, Deacon Bogle called out: 'Amen, the English heathen!' But Mr. Gordon shook his head and said: 'Stand to, there!' and I believed he was no' pleased."⁴⁹

In this passage and in the arguments between the narrator and his more radical friend, Timothy, Reid seems to be facing the old problem identified by Jekyll when he compared the threat to the status quo implicit in Christ's teachings with the language of the Jamaican peasant. Taken to its logical conclusion, the Creole language expressed so fundamental a challenge to the dominant culture and, by extension, to the Jamaican middle class, that for Reid to allow his Creole characters to "speak for themselves" would be tantamount to sanctioning what he considered social anarchy. The political implications of Reid's dilemma are taken up in Chapter IV. Stylistically however, the author's reluctance in New Day to allow full rein to the ideology expressed in the Creole language creates a hiatus between his narrator and the tale he tells: while Reid's use of a dialect-speaking first-person narrator invites us to sympathise with the sentiments expressed in dialect in the novel, and to see these sentiments as deserving serious attention, his narrator is constantly being used to draw us back from total immersion in the dialect-speaker's world view. It is these conflicting pulls on the narrative's direction which limit the success of Reid's language experiment rather than his stylisation of the Creole language itself. Reid's sympathies with his peasant characters are too real to allow him to distort the logic behind their language in the way that de Lisser does in his novels. At the same time Reid is too much a part of the establishment to allow Creole proverbs he uses to explain themselves as they do in the dialect poems of Palmer or Bennett. His authorial intrusions through his narrator create all kinds of anomalies. One could compare the cryptic comment in the closing proverb of Palmer's "Bredda Warra Me Fe Do":

A' wha Congo wurrum say
When he see de fowl foot claw
"All hab we no mek same way
A gwine fasten in you craw."

with its stark imagery of predator and parasite to Reid's clumsy attempts to express proverbially the relationship between colony and mother country:

"The scene is changing, Uncle. We are growing up. We are getting out of the chrysalis."

"We? We who?"

"The Colonial Empire. Once it was the British Empire, now it is the British Commonwealth and the Colonial Empire. Soon it will only be the British Commonwealth - each of us with our own pair of wings, but flying together."

"And how will we get our wings?"

"We will ask for them, but first we must learn how to use them."

I listen to tree toads and think on what my boy has said.

"We had them once, you know, Uncle."

I nod me head. "Yes, true that."

"We lost them. We flapped too heavily, so mother bird clipped them. For our own good, she said. She was probably right. They would have flapped us into trouble." 50

The problem here is not so much whether we agree with the speakers' point of view or not but that the author finds it necessary to spell out every stage of his long and rather mixed metaphor, an expedient which would not have been necessary if the whole analogy did not strain so much against the point of view usually expressed in Creole proverbs characterising master/slave, or dominant/dependent relationships.

Reid's achievement and failure with his language experiment suggest that though by 1950 the Jamaican creative writer had given his intellectual assent to the idea that the Creole language had a unique symbolic value in the struggle for cultural and political independence, the average Jamaican intellectual was still emotionally and psychologically tied to the cultural norms which he had been educated to accept by the colonial establishment. Reid gives the Creole language a new literary prominence in his work but remains ambivalent to the world view expressed in the language. In the final analysis his use of dialect becomes another example of "local colour" similar to the dialect in Redcam's novels, as he constantly baulks at allowing the dialect world view to carry the "serious" message of his work.

The only two writers working before 1950 who manage to go beyond Reid in their development of an indigenous style are Roger Mais and Louise Bennett: Bennett, as has been shown, by immersing

her art in the dialect and Mais by his extremely selective use of dialect as a vehicle for metaphor. Much of the work Mais published before 1950 was poetry similar in many respects to the poetry of Campbell and the other Public Opinion writers. However, Mais's personality is so strongly stamped on his work that even when he writes within the Standard one gets the impression of a strong individual character who, because his poetic response to his environment is genuine, hardly needs to decorate his work by overt attempts to use any uniquely Jamaican literary language. One senses this quality of authentic experience immediately in the following nature poem, predictably celebrating Jamaica's hills:

All men come to the hills
Finally ...

Men from the deeps of the plains of the sea --
Where a wind-in-the-sail is hope,
That long desire, and long weariness fulfills --
Come again to the hills.

And men with dusty, broken feet;
Proud men, lone men like me,
Seeking again the soul's deeds --
Or a shallow grave
Far from the tumult of the wave --
Where a bird's note motions the silence in...
The white kiss of silence that the spirit stills
Still as a cloud of windless sail horizon-hung
 above the blue glass of the sea --
Come again to the hills...
Come ever, finally.⁵¹

In such a poem there is clearly no need for the poet to tell us that his hills are the hills of St. Andrew or Clarendon. The dark brooding Jamaican mountains rising up from the sea that Mais uses as a symbol for his restlessness and world weariness are evoked in a few striking images. Mais is aware of the hills as real places encompassing "men with dusty broken feet" as well as the artist himself, but he sees no need in the poem to announce his awareness of the real environment or to apologise for the people or associations it contains.

This same quality of acceptance of his society and its language can be observed in Mais's second published novel Brother Man, which appropriates dialect as a vehicle for metaphor to express

Mais's sense of human destiny and suffering without attempting to justify his choice by claiming to speak "on the people's behalf."

Behind the pocked visage and the toothless grin, behind the wrinkled skin gathered and seamed around the lips and under the eyes, behind the facade of haltness and haleness and cursing and laughter, slander lurks in ambush to take the weakest and the hindmost, and the tongues clack upon every chance. —

- Cordy's man get tek-up fo' ganga...
- Bra' Man show de gospel way...
- Me-gal still wi' hold wid Bra' Ambo...
- Coal-price gone up since todder day...
- Lawd Jesus, poor Mis' Brody...
- No mind, God is over all...
- Hush yaw ma', you' mout'-lip favour...
- No God do dem t'ing de at all... 52

This passage is taken from the "Chorus of the People in the Lane", with which the novel opens. The author intersperses passages of descriptive prose in the Standard between the overheard snatches of dialect conversation which he arranges into a type of rhyme scheme. Together the Standard and dialect passages express the most important themes and events around which the novel is built - the imprisonment of Cordelia's man and the problems of loneliness and separation it causes, the spiritual rivalry between Bra' Man and Bra' Ambo, the harshness of economic conditions and the author's sense of the inscrutability of a divine will, which seems to take pleasure in the suffering of humanity. There is no attempt in this passage to "type" the dialect-speaking chorus at the level of celebrating their view of life or way of speech or distinguishing the chorus from the narrator. Mais treats the words of the crowd as expressing "the burden of the tale of man's woes" as well as revealing the personal story of the life of a specific community, so that the dialect is used here realistically as well as metaphorically.

Paradoxically, Mais's actual reproduction of dialect in his novel is often inaccurate or inconsistent. At times his dialogue reads like the sound track of a second-rate American gangster movie, as for example in this conversation between Papacita, who is manufacturing fake money and a policeman he meets unexpectedly:

Suddenly he recognised the man with a little stab of fear. It was Corporal Jennings in plain clothes, as usual.

He said, smiling pleasantly: "Hello!"

A little perspiration pricked on Papacita's forehead, and his hands felt clammy. He took out a silk handkerchief and mopped his brow. He put it away in his pocket again.

"Hello!" he said, but he wasn't smiling.

Bravado made him say, "Jus' dropped in for a milkshake, you have one with me?"

Jennings looked at him, seemed to hesitate a moment, smiled: "Yeh. Thanks, I will," he said.

They went over to the soda counter and sat down at a couple of high stools.

Jennings said, turning towards him affably: "How's the bwoy?"

"Eh? Oh fine, fine. Bit hot in here, eh? Heh! heh!"

"Yeh. Heh! heh! A bit hot is right. You figurin' on takin' some air?"

"Eh? What that you say?"

"Nothin' much, jus' one of my jokes. Seen any of the stuff around of late?"

"What's that?"

"Aw, come on, you know what I mean. The weed."

He laughed suddenly, boisterously, his mind at ease.

"Aw, Sarge," he said, with a wave of his hand, "Ah don' mess wid dat stuff. You know Ah'm on de straight."

Jennings laughed. He said: "Was jus' kiddin' you, bwoy, no need to be scared, jus' havin' a little joke."

He said, his bravado coming to the forefront again:

"Me, I ain't scared, nutt'in to be scared 'bout."

They finished their milk-shakes and Jennings said: "Who pays, you or me?"

"Hey, this is on me, Sarge. Heh! heh! I asked you, didn't I?" ⁵³

The artificial American style of this dialogue may owe something to the fact that for many years before his novels were published Mais had tried to write magazine stories and pot-boiler romances which he considered would be marketable in America. As Ramchand notes in his essay on Brother Man, such Americanisms are not used selectively in the novel, to indicate false bravado on the part of a particular character, but seem to be genuine, if misguided, attempts by Mais to produce "exciting" dialogue.⁵⁴ Taken out of its context however, this type of writing seems more phony than it does within the novel where our attention at this point is focussed on whether or not Jennings will be able to catch Papacita in the act of passing counterfeit money, and it is Mais's use of short exchanges and shorter sentences as a whole which is stylistically effective here, as elsewhere in the narrative.

In Brother Man Mais also makes use of overt biblical language at certain points in the narrative to emphasise the links between his mystic quasi-Rastafarian hero and Christ:

It came night, and a man named Nathaniel, the same who wanted to put away his woman because of the child she had had while he was in prison, came to him.

They sat in the front room and talked.

Nathaniel took his cap between his hands, and turned it inside out, and put it right again. He sucked his teeth a little, and set the cap down on the bench beside him, and then he took it up again, and he scratched the side of his leg with one naked great toe, and stared down at the bit of floor between his feet.

"What is troubling you man?" said Brother Man, quietly, trying to set him at his ease.

Nathaniel looked up and said: "You have enemies."

"There are people who do not love you," he said.

And as he said it he glanced over his shoulder at the shadows that had gathered at the other end of the room, as though he was afraid an enemy was lurking there.⁵⁵

Mais's deliberate use of biblical phrases and imagery is so pronounced in Brother Man and in the Samson allegory of Black Lightning, in which the author actually quotes whole chunks of the Old Testament, that he has been panned for it by literary critics. One needs to keep in mind, however, Mais's early acculturation as the member of a family which belonged to a small fundamental Christian sect, the Plymouth Brethren, among whom the use of biblical language in ordinary conversation is not uncommon, in much the same way as the language of the King James version of the Bible was used by Puritans and Quakers in everyday speech. Indeed, in many ways, Mais's use of biblical language and Americanisms is similar to Reid's use of Scots and biblical phrases in New Day and points to the eclectic nature of West Indian language in general and the way in which eccentric styles of speech are often assumed to complement an individual's self-image in actual life. In contemporary Jamaica both the American jargon of the "rude bwoy" and the biblical language of the Rastafarian have become familiar forms of speech. Mais seems to stumble on such forms of speech without conscious artistic purpose in much the same way that MacDermot involuntarily slips into archaisms in his use of Standard English, but it can also be argued that Mais more than Reid or even Louise Bennett was aware of the new currents of influence

within dialect speech introduced by the growth of the American cinema industry in the 1940s and the increasing significance of religious withdrawal as a way of dealing with social injustice among the lower class - also anticipated by the author in his creation of a Rastafarian-type figure as the hero in Brother Man.

Underpinning Mais's use of Creole, Standard English, American slang and biblical rhetoric, is his use of rhythmic stress patterns in prose which one would normally associate with poetry. Sections of Brother Man are stylistically very near to the poetic choruses in Mais's play George William Gordon (discussed in Chapter V). His reliance on rhythmically balanced sentence constructions, and his tendency to switch between intense observation of minute physical details - Papacita's silk handkerchief, Nathaniel's hat - and broad philosophical statement is reminiscent of T.S. Eliot's literary technique, and indeed Mais seems to have borrowed consciously from Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral in his use of the chorus in Brother Man and George William Gordon. Mais's style has also been compared to the jazz rhythms of black American music because of its use of recurrent motifs and the way in which Mais tends to alter the pace and pattern of his language to accommodate different scenes or characters.⁵⁶

Mais is perhaps the first Jamaican writer to transcend the "ideological trap" of language and to use Creole or Standard without any sense of being obliged to copy or react against the stereotypes associated with either form. This freedom allows him to move between idioms at will in a way which at times seems to create startling anomalies - as in the sudden surfacing of American gangsters or the sermon on the mount in Brother Man - but which is also capable of producing poetic effects in his prose that complement the working out of his themes. In the course of his literary career Mais experimented with any number of literary styles without in my opinion ever managing to develop one that was able to carry the full complexity of his artistic vision, but his refusal to allow himself to settle into a creative rut merely because he had in one particular piece of writing discovered a style that worked, makes him at once the most fascinating and most elusive writer in terms of style to emerge from the Public Opinion group.

Attempts to characterise changing patterns of language and style chronologically run the risk of introducing artificial distinctions which imply the existence of mutually exclusive "schools" of writing. The periods 1900-1918, 1919-1937 and 1938-1950 have been dealt with separately, and most attempts to describe literary effort between 1900 and 1950 assume a watershed in 1938. In practice however, the styles of writing discussed in this chapter were developed during overlapping historical periods, a fact which is supported by the continued production in contemporary Jamaica of dialect poems in the style of McKay, nature poems which sound like McFarlane's and protest poems which echo Campbell's rhetoric. Even if we see the 1930s as introducing a new general trend in literary styles the two periods have much more in common than one group's preference for Wordsworth and the other group's preference for Eliot might at first suggest.

In the first case, both generations of writers remain Anglo-centric in their orientation to language and form. This can be seen in the tendency of most of the writers discussed to imitate consciously the styles of English and American writers, whether it be the dialect poets' use of the ballad form, de Lisser's emulation of George Bernard Shaw or Mais's lapses into American jargon. Such conscious imitation points to a shared assumption that an external literary standard existed, against which the style of Jamaican writers could ultimately be assessed. Apart from the French villanelle introduced to the writers of the Jamaica Poetry League via the work of Walter Adolphe Roberts, few writers show an awareness of literary experiments outside the English-speaking world, even when these occurred contemporaneously or in geographically adjacent regions, for example the post-World War I Haitian school of Indigenism or Latin American attempts to combine ideological and aesthetic goals in an "engaged" literature.

At the same time the style of all writers during this period is influenced by the Jamaican environment and social realities, either consciously as in attempts to suppress or reproduce dialect speech in poetry, or unconsciously in specific stylistic influences: Campbell's absorption of the political rhetoric of the

nationalist movement; the symbolic importance of religious forms and biblical language in the work of Reid, Mais and the Poetry League. In general, conscious use of ideas associated with the Creole culture was reserved for work in the dialect while aspects of the Jamaican reality which the society shared with England, or which were considered "universal" or sophisticated, were approached through Standard English. The two significant attempts to mix these styles occur in V.S. Reid's novel New Day and in McKay's dialect poems, where attempts are made to express complex political ideas and "cultivated" sentiments in the dialect. Experiment in the other direction - that is, attempts to transfer the Creole world view into writing in Standard English are even rarer and tend, as in the case of Campbell's poem "Negro Aroused", to be less successful.

Whatever the direction of the attempted combinations, few writers are able to achieve synthesis at a metaphorical level between their West Indian consciousness and their Anglophile influences. A poem like H.D. Carberry's poem "I shall Remember", which begins

And so I leave this island -
 This island that I have loved.
 This people that I have loved.

 But I shall remember always
 The beauty of my people
 And the beauty of my land.

 And in strange lands
 Where the fog presses down
 And even the street lamps are faint and misty,
 I shall remember
 The beauty of our nights,
 With stars so near
 That one could almost stretch and touch them,
 Stars - winking and flashing
 Magnificently - in a sky of velvet blue. ⁵⁷

is a considerable advance over McFarlane's Wordsworthian "My Country", but neither makes creative use of its bringing together of English and Jamaican landscapes in the sense that the Trinidadian poet Harold Telemaque does in the following poem written in the 1940s:

In our land,
 Poppies do not spring
 From atoms of young blood,
 so gaudily where men have died:

In our land,
 Stiletto cane blades
 Sink into our hearts,
 And drink our blood.

In our land,
 Sin is not deep.
 And bends before the truth,
 Asking repentantly for pardon:
 In our land,
 The ugly stain
 That blotted Eden garden
 Is skin deep only.

In our land,
 Storms do not strike
 For territory's fences,
 Elbow room, nor breathing spaces:
 In our land,
 The hurricane
 Of clashes break our ranks
 For tint of eye.

In our land,
 We do not breed
 That taloned king, the eagle,
 Nor make emblazonry of lions:
 In our land,
 The black birds
 And the chickens of our mountains
 Speak our dreams.⁵⁸

Here the awareness of contradiction is neither sublimated, as in MacFarlane's poem, through the subordination of the Jamaican landscape to the English poetic idiom, nor rejected, as in Carberry's celebration of one setting at the expense of the other. Instead the complex relationship between good and evil in each environment is used to set off related aspects in the other. Even the colonial's awe of the mother country's symbolic grandeur, overt in McFarlane's poetry and implicit in Carberry's dread and longing to experience the fog and street lamps of England, is used here creatively in Telemaque's balance of the heraldic English eagle and lion against the local black bird and mountain chicken (a kind of edible frog). This combination of images suggests a sense of inferiority as well as leaping aspiration. The poet's search for metaphors to express his sense of his society's contradictions becomes at once the theme and technical pivot of his poem.

Creative writers in Jamaica before 1950 achieve such complexity only rarely. Louise Bennett makes use of balance and paradox

to connect her view of topical events with traditional Creole concepts, while P.M. Sherlock is able to use the search for authentic metaphors as a means of ordering perception in some of his poems. Most other writers, however, tend to concentrate on creating "finished" works of art, in which the problems involved in creating a particular mood or exploring a specific idea are smoothed over in the way that obtrusive building skeletons are covered over with plaster. The result stylistically is a facile surface smoothness which calls attention to the work of art as a static object presenting its finished face to the audience, when in reality the whole problem of Jamaican writing during the entire fifty year period under discussion was its sense of an absence of inherent tradition and its search for a truly authentic idiom. The result is often an assumption of roles on the part of the writer aimed at concealing unresolved conflicts from the reader. This can be seen in the dialect poets' preference for dramatic monologue, George Campbell's role playing as the messianic politician or the aroused negro, and perhaps most consummately in de Lisser's use of the obtrusive omniscient narrator who assumes the role de Lisser had invented for himself in real life as "H.G.D.", as the amused but slightly contemptuous observer of human folly.

It is part of the paradox of Jamaican literary history that though the society gave active support to the idea of a local literary tradition the writers themselves seem to have felt insecure about their artistic claims and appear to have felt the need to assume masks which helped re-inforce the popular stereotypes of what a writer should be, and what attitudes towards reality he should express. In the smaller islands such as Barbados, St. Lucia and Trinidad the comparatively tiny groups of creative writers working in the 1930s and 1940s seem in the absence of a public image to have been less self-conscious about personal inadequacies or conflicts and more willing as a result to explore these in their poetry than was the case in Jamaica. Introspection and ambiguity are early hallmarks of the St. Lucian Derek Walcott's style, and the language of George Lamming's early poetry and prose is if

anything too dense in its attempt to reflect and resolve the complexity of his relationship to his art and to his Barbadian society.⁵⁹

The Jamaican writers' tendency to assume roles has its positive consequences in the writers' willingness to experiment; to try on the clothes of other writers, to turn the hems up and let out the seams. The results could be burlesque costume as in McKay's "Ione" or could lead to the development of new styles as with Bennett's modification of the ballad rhyme-scheme and metre. Roger Mais, with his restless shifting between genres, styles, accents and even art-forms (he became a tolerably accomplished painter toward the end of his life) epitomises this positive aspect of the Jamaican writers' pre-occupation with masks. It has been suggested in Chapter II that both "schools" of Jamaican writers tended to exhaust their inspiration prematurely. During their most productive creative periods however, several individual writers produced an impressive array of poetry and fiction which made use of a wide variety of stylistic and linguistic features.

Notes

¹F. G. Cassidy and R.B. Le Page, "The Historical Phonology of Jamaican English", in Dictionary of Jamaican English, ed. Cassidy & Le Page (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. xli-xlii.

²Edward Brathwaite, Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica (London: New Beacon Books, 1970), p. 17.

³Cassidy and Le Page, Dictionary, p. xlii.

⁴Lady Nugent's Journal, ed. Philip Wright (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1966), p. 98.

⁵Raglan Phillips, "De Touris' Dem", Jamaica Times, 30th March, 1912, p. 3.

⁶"Signs, Omens, Myths and Superstitions of Jamaica", Folklore, Vol. 15(1904), p. 81. Cundall selects his material from work done by students at Mico Teacher's College, Jamaica, written in 1896. The names of the individual students whose work is used are not given.

⁷H.G. de Lisser, in Planters' Punch, I, 6 (1925-26), p. 10.

⁸Thomas MacDermot, One Brown Girl And - (Kingston: All Jamaica Library, 1909), pp. 4 and 5.

⁹W. Adolphe Roberts, The Single Star (Kingston: The Pioneer Press, 1956), p. 50.

¹⁰Claude McKay, My Green Hills of Jamaica (Kingston: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979), p. 61.

¹¹Quoted by MacDermot in a review of Panama Patchwork, Jamaica Times, 20th April, 1912, p. 5.

¹²MacDermot, One Brown Girl, p. 36.

¹³Ibid., pp. 109-110.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 48. In his study of West Indian Poetry (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), Lloyd Brown comments on similar limitations in MacDermot's use of dialect in his poetry. He concludes that "apart from hearing and attempting to reproduce folk language the poet could say little or nothing about these people or on their behalf. And in the final analysis he can tell his readers nothing about market women except as (verbally) colorful accessories that link the city with his perennially pastoral, eternally idyllic countryside" (p. 31). Brown's dismissal of MacDermot's dialect however seems too rigorous when applied to MacDermot's prose work as it does not explain why MacDermot felt it necessary to write about the peasantry in the first place, or why, in creating a figure like Fidelia Stanton, he thought it important to rationalise her responses to her treatment at the hands of the elite.

- ¹⁵MacDermot, One Brown Girl, p. 1.
- ¹⁶Norman Palmer, "Monday Morning", Jamaica Times, 30th March, 1912, p. 1.
- ¹⁷Palmer, "Bredda Warra Me Fe D0", Jamaica Times, 3rd February, 1912, p. 17.
- ¹⁸Palmer, "The Nightingale's Song", Jamaica Times, 9th March, 1912, p. 1.
- ¹⁹Claude McKay, My Green Hills, pp. 66-67.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 87.
- ²¹The following poems from Claude McKay's Songs of Jamaica (New York: Black Heritage Library Collection, 1972) are quoted: "A Midnight Woman to the Bobby", p. 74; "Quashie to Buccra", p. 13; "Fetchin' Water", p. 42; "To Clarendon Hills and H.A.H.", p. 106; "Cudjoe Fresh from de Lecture", p. 56; "The Hermit", p. 41; "Ione", p. 81.
- ²²The following poems from McKay's Constab Ballads (New York: Black Heritage Library Collection, 1972) are quoted: "A Labourer's Life Give Me", p. 71; and "Me Whoppin' Big-Tree Boy", p. 48.
- ²³"I Shall Return", in Selected Poems of Claude McKay (New York: Bookman Associates, 1953), p. 32.
- ²⁴See Frantz Fanon, "On National Culture", in The Wretched of the Earth (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 178-179.
- ^{24a}J.E. Clare McFarlane, "The Poetry of Jamaica - II", in The Challenge of Our Time: A Series of Essays and Addresses (Kingston: The New Dawn Press, 1945), pp. 198-199. The relationship between early nationalist sentiments and the insistence on English literary models has often been disregarded by literary critics who tend to equate imitative writing with strong Imperialist sentiment. Thus Lloyd Brown in West Indian Poetry is hard put to account for McFarlane's poem "The Black Peril" which he describes as "an unusual poem for McFarlane in that it is preoccupied with racial identity and black pride" (p. 32). My reading of McFarlane's work suggests however that like the pre-World War I poets he was usually willing to express feelings of national or racial pride once these did not conflict with local establishment and Imperial ideals. Going from the assumption that Britain had the interests of the colonial world at heart and wished to see the black race taking an equal part in international affairs it would have been easy for McFarlane to reconcile his loyalty to Empire with a defence of Ethiopia against racial slurs. It was not as easy, however, for him to see the need for similar defences on the local scene, where, between the wars, calls for ethnic or national unity were increasingly associated with anti-establishment groups and individuals.
- ²⁵Arthur Nicholas, "September", and J.E. Clare McFarlane, "My Country", in Voices from Summerland: An Anthology of Jamaican Poetry (London: Fowler Wright Ltd., 1929), pp. 203 and 135.

- ²⁶J.E. Clare McFarlane, "Foreword" to The Yearbook of the Poetry League of Jamaica (Kingston: The New Dawn Press, 1943), p. 1.
- ²⁷McFarlane, "The Poetry of Jamaica - II", in The Challenge, p. 200.
- ²⁸Astley Clerk, in Jamaica Times, 15th August, 1936, p. 34.
- ²⁹Astley Clerk, "The God-bird", and Constance Hollar, "Flaming June", in A Treasury of Jamaica Poetry, ed. J.E. Clare McFarlane (London: University of London Press, 1949), pp. 51 and 41.
- ³⁰Claude McKay, "Flame Heart", in Selected Poems, p. 13.
- ³¹"Lena Kent", "The Hills of St. Andrews", in Treasury, p. 39.
- ³²Albinia Catherine Hutton, "The Empire's Flag", in Summerland, p. 91.
- ³³Constance Hollar, "Wide Spaces", in Summerland, p. 80.
- ³⁴Roger Mais in an unsigned article, in Public Opinion, 10th March, 1940, p. 13.
- ³⁵The following poems from George Campbell's First Poems (Kingston: City Printery, 1945) are quoted: "Negro Aroused", p. 28; "Litany", p. 14; "To the Men in the Internment Camp", p. 74; and "Trees", p. 6.
- ³⁶P.M. Sherlock, "Tomorrow", Public Opinion, 14th January, 1939, p. 4. Note however that Sherlock's poetry too comes in for criticism in R.J. Owens' article on "West Indian Poetry", Caribbean Quarterly, VII, 3 (December, 1961). Discussing the poetry of pre- and post-1938 Jamaican writers, Owens comments on the element of self-consciousness noticeable in much of the poetry: "It is as if the poet were all the time aware of himself being a poet, with one eye on his performance, one eye on his audience's reaction, and none to spare for whatever it is he is trying to express... Too often they want to write a poem rather than having a poem to write. This leads them to an attempt to react to their own experience in terms of someone else's sensibility..." (p. 120). Owens demonstrates these features chiefly by reference to the work of McFarlane and other earlier writers, but goes on to comment on the work of the writers who were part of the later nationalist movement: "All too frequently the emotional response is over-insistent and lacks corresponding substance in verse. In poem after poem the poet's emotion generates rhetoric at the expense of any core of refining actuality, and feeling drowns thought... A poet's job is to communicate his lived experience with the maximum fulness and complexity, and not merely to assert rhetorically. The justice or injustice of the events provoking the poet's emotion is altogether beside the point in poetry. What is essentially the point is the width and depth with which he explores the experiences

he lives through, an exploration which must clearly be concerned with the expressive qualities of language and its creative relationship to the total truth of experience" (p. 122). Both passages quoted could in my opinion be applied to the work of George Campbell as well as to that of M.G. Smith (whom Owens in this article exonerates from the worst of these faults). Owens' judgement is made on the strength of the poems by each writer included in the Kyk-over-al Anthology of West Indian Poetry (1957) and the Caribbean Quarterly Anthology of West Indian Poetry (1958), so that his assessment of the range of individual writers can only be limited. The problems he identifies however are typical of the range of work produced in Jamaica between 1930 and 1950.

³⁷P.M. Sherlock, "Intoduction" to Anancy Stories and Dialect Verse by Louise Bennett, Dorothy Clarke, Una Wilson, and Others (Kingston: The Pioneer Press, 1950), p. 14.

³⁸"Rooting for Jamaica", an interview with Louise Bennett by Naseem Khan, The Guardian, Friday, October 13, 1978.

³⁹The following poems from Jamaica Labrish: Jamaican Dialect Poems by Louise Bennett, ed. Rex Nettleford (Kingston: Sangsters Ltd., 1966) are quoted: "South Parade Peddlar", p. 27; "Cuss-Cuss", p. 188; "New Govanah", p. 125; "Dutty Tough", p. 120; "My Dream", p. 155; "Show Yuh Foot", p. 57; "Bad Foot", p. 59; and "Noh Lickle Twang", p. 209.

⁴⁰See Mervyn Morris, "On Reading Louise Bennett Seriously", Jamaica Journal, I, 1 (December, 1967). Morris concedes however that certain of the topical poems have weathered better than others.

⁴¹H.G. de Lisser, "Marriage", Jamaica Times, 25th August, 1900, p. 8.

⁴²H.G. de Lisser, The Jamaica Bandits, in Planters' Punch, II, 4 (1929-30), p. 51. A similar case of self-satire occurs in de Lisser's sketch on Sir Henry Isaac Close, to whom his documentary, Twentieth Century Jamaica was dedicated, in Planters' Punch, III, 3 (1934-35). Referring to the dedication, he comments, "It was before he became judge that I published that most excellent and admirable work, Twentieth Century Jamaica, a book of such classic merit that no one seems to read it these days" (p. 18).

⁴³H. G. de Lisser, Jane's Career (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 2.

⁴⁴H.G. de Lisser, Revenge, A Tale of Old Jamaica (Kingston: The Gleaner Co., 1919), p. 45.

⁴⁵H. G. de Lisser, Susan Proudleigh (London: Methuen, 1915), pp. 101-102.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 180-181.

⁴⁷H.G. de Lisser, The Rivals, in Planters' Punch, I, 2 (1921), p. 9.

- ⁴⁸V.S. Reid, New Day (Kingston: Heinemann/Sangsters, 1970), p. 31.
- ⁴⁹Ibid., p. 27.
- ⁵⁰Ibid., p. 311.
- ⁵¹Roger Mais, "All Men Come to the Hills", in Treasury, p. 49.
- ⁵²Roger Mais, Brother Man, in The Three Novels of Roger Mais (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), pp. 7-8.
- ⁵³Ibid., pp. 152-153.
- ⁵⁴See Kenneth Ramchand, An Introduction to the Study of West Indian Literature (London: Thomas Nelson, 1976), p. 25.
- ⁵⁵Mais, Brother Man, p. 176.
- ⁵⁶See Edward Brathwaite, "Jazz and the West Indian Novel - III", Bim, XII, 46 (Jan.-June, 1968).
- ⁵⁷H.D. Carberry, "I Shall Remember", in Focus (City Printery, 1948), p. 167.
- ⁵⁸Harold Telemaque, "In Our Tand", in Caribbean Voices, Vol. I (London: Evans, 1966), p. 58.
- ⁵⁹For a discussion of George Lamming's early poetry and prose, see Ian Munro, "The Early Work of George Lamming: Poetry and Short Prose, 1946-1951", in Neo-African Literature and Culture: Essays in Memory of Janheinz Jahn, ed. Bernth Lindfors and Ulla Schild (Wiesbaden: B. Heymann, 1976), pp. 327-345.

CHAPTER FOUR
WOMEN IN JAMAICAN LITERATURE 1900-1950

Writing in 1899, W.P. Livingstone, editor at the time of The Gleaner newspaper, singles out the independent spirit of the black Jamaican woman, and the persistence of the practice of obeah as the two main obstacles in the path of Christian missionaries attempting to "civilise" the former slaves:

The women earned their livelihood, and lived their own robust, independent life. There was no wooing and winning, and permanent companionship thereafter; they gave themselves to each other as they pleased. To be married was, to a woman, to become a slave, and slavery, with its dark associations, was as yet a stone's throw in the past. She preferred her freedom, and accepted its greater responsibilities with equanimity. It was this unconscious sensuality which proved the greatest obstacle to the development of their character.

Even his strong moral censure of such a lifestyle cannot disguise Livingstone's grudging admiration of the independent spirit of the black women who chose to live in this way. His ambivalence is characteristic of educated opinion in Jamaica at the turn of the century: On the one hand the woman's independence and resourcefulness was admired and often contrasted favourably with the apparent laziness of the black man; on the other hand, her sexual freedom was seen as something dangerous and evil, which it was in the interest of the dominant culture to suppress.

That Jamaican women in the early part of the twentieth century were, in comparison to their counterparts in post-Victorian England, both economically and sexually independent is a historical fact. Their lifestyle had its origins in the social patterns evolved during slavery. Rhoda Reddock, in a paper on "Women and Slavery," makes the point that for most of the time during which slavery was practiced in the West Indies, slave-owners had a vested interest in disregarding the traditional secondary role of women in the productive sector.² Women worked as hard as men and were punished as severely, and in many cases they proved better able to withstand their harsh working condi-

tions. Stable sexual unions were discouraged on the estates, as they made it difficult for individual slaves to be sold or transferred. Female slaves were also not encouraged to have children as this reduced the woman's effectiveness at the workplace, and it was considered cheaper to import a full-grown slave than to have to bear the expense of feeding and clothing a slave child until it was old enough to work. These attitudes to family life were internalised by many slave women, who came to prefer not to have the encumbrances of husband and children. There was a high rate of infanticide and abortion among slave mothers, some of whom claimed they would rather kill their children than sentence them to a life of slavery.

With the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 it became necessary to increase the slave population by natural means instead of through new imports, and slave women were encouraged to bear children. In order to facilitate their roles as producers of labour, women were now taken off some of the more strenuous jobs in the fields. Apart from any distaste they may have felt in being used as slave breeders, however, women stood to lose economically if they were not allowed to work in the fields, as by the nineteenth century the slaves had become the market gardeners for the rest of the community and were allowed to sell their surplus vegetables for cash. Unless a woman was the mistress of a white man, or held a privileged position in the Great House the move away from the fields was unlikely to be in her interest, and many women continued to resist attempts to limit their sphere of activities and their competitiveness with men on the labour market.

After 1838 the pattern persisted with only minor changes. Though Emancipation produced a wave of marriages and a greater desire on the part of black women to have and rear children, it also allowed the ex-slave to chose the kind of lifestyle best suited to her aspirations. As a whole both single and married women chose to remain financially independent from men, accepting money for the upkeep of their children but continuing to work as well. Favoured jobs tended to be forms of self-employ-

ment: as higglers, cultivators or seamstresses. When these were not possible most women sought jobs which were extensions of their domestic roles - as domestic servants, task workers on estates or, toward the end of the nineteenth century, as factory hands in the small light-industry sector which had just come into existence, making straw goods or cigarettes.

By the turn of the century when Livingstone writes, a well established female lifestyle had emerged among the second generation of free black women. In her analysis of the life histories of a sample of such women, Erna Brodber summarises their distinctive traits as "emotional accommodation" (the ability to adjust without trauma to changing domestic units and/or relationships), independence and authority. She sees their preferred self-image as that of the successful small business woman, living independently within a closely knit community, or at the head of an extended family which could include her own children as well as those of other relations or even strangers, and in which the presence of a joint permanent male head of household was often not desirable and by no means essential.³ Between 1881 and 1921 this matriarchal pattern was reinforced by the absence of thousands of Jamaican men overseas as contract labourers in Panama or Central America because of high rates of unemployment at home. Since the majority of lower-class women were self-employed or worked in service industries the shortage of wage labour locally did not affect them in the same manner as it did the men. It was not uncommon for women to be visibly the sole financial mainstay of the family as their men often worked far away, returning to the home only between contracts to idle away the time until another job opportunity arose. This arrangement preserved for the women a degree of sexual and economic independence, and men who did not maintain contact with their families while they were employed abroad were likely to find on their return that they had been displaced by someone else in their women's affections.

Given the background it is not difficult to surmise how the Jamaican lower-class woman came to be perceived by the

rest of the society as both unusually industrious and sexually promiscuous. The bourgeois role of the woman as wife and mother, removed from the productive sector of the economy and bound by economic necessity rather than choice to sexual fidelity to a single man and a subsidiary role within the family unit, was not only unattractive but also totally impractical for the Jamaican lower-class woman who had to find a mate within a constantly shifting and often unemployed male population. Such a lifestyle was considered unchaste and sinful by the dominant culture in which the Victorian ideal of family life was revered. On the other hand it was these very women who appeared to work hardest, and hard work was perhaps only second to chastity in the Victorian hierarchy of values. For the dominant culture these traits presented a contradiction in terms and it is not overstating the case to say that nearly all Jamaican creative writing before 1920 is taken up with trying to resolve this contradiction in a way that would rationalise the position of women in Jamaican society in terms acceptable to the dominant culture.

The preoccupation with the position of women can be gauged by the titles of most of the early novels which made use of social realism: Becka's Buckra Baby, Marguerite, the Story of the Earthquake, One Brown Girl, Jane's Career and Susan Proudleigh. Each of these novels describes the lifestyle of at least one lower-class female character, and the woman's independent spirit is generally played off against her sexual and economic needs. Dialect poems and poems about the lower class tend also to use female personae more often than male ones and in both types of poem the woman is usually presented in her working environment rather than a domestic setting. One of the earliest poems on record of this nature is "Tropica's" "Nana", a tribute to the faithful old-fashioned Nanny to whom during slavery the upbringing of the master's children was almost wholly entrusted. "Tropica" evades the necessity of dealing with the servant's personal economic situation or sexual proclivities by concentrating exclusively on Nana's usefulness to her employers. The poem opens with an "ubi sunt" motif in which the poet recalls

Nana as a relic of an age in which all things were better and more enjoyable:

With the old homes are going
 The Nanas of past days,
 With their gay stiff-starched kerchiefs
 And dear old-fashioned ways;
 They disappeared with other
 Quaint things too good to last;
 And seldom now we see them
 Those pictures of the past!

Throughout the poem there is a tendency to equate the faithful servant with quaint things rather than with people, and to see her as an object within a particular setting. This is summed up in the poem's closing stanza in which Nana's absorption in the lives of her charges, as story teller, nurse, protector and admiring observer from the kitchen of "young missis'" social triumphs, culminates in her beatification as a signpost:

While all else changed around her
 She kept the same old place,
 Till like some faithful guide-post
 Became the kindly face
 For to "Ole Massa's fam'ly"
 Her life was rooted fast;
 In fancy we can see her $\frac{1}{4}$ -
 The Nana of the past.

Not all attempts to describe and account for the woman in her role as worker in early Jamaican literature show such disregard for the individuality of the women they portray. H.G. de Lisser for example in Jane's Career gives an insight into the situation as it actually existed for those women who attempted to assert their individuality from their subservient position as domestic servants. The first part of the novel deals with Jane's life as a "schoolgirl" or apprentice servant with a Kingston woman called Mrs. Mason. Mrs. Mason's dictatorial attitudes to her employees and her unreasonable demands are satirised by the author as typical characteristics of the Jamaican coloured middle class. At one point, for instance, when Amanda, another of Mrs. Mason's servants, begins to argue back at her employer and Mrs. Mason's niece mentions that she thinks Amanda has recently received money from her migrant-worker husband, Mrs. Mason remarks:

When them have husbands you can't say a word to them, though I really don't see why they bother married, for they are always leaving their 'usbands, or their 'usbands leaving them. Just as well they don't get married.

The narrator qualifies Mrs. Mason's remarks by commenting on their perversity:

As she invariably condemned the illicit relationships of the working classes most vigorously, it was difficult to see how she could reconcile with such condemnation her general attitude towards their marriages. It seemed that her ideal for them was that they should all be celibate, religious without going too often to church, and hard-working without any expectation of liberal pay. As no domestic she had ever known had ever accepted that ideal, or appeared at all willing to do so, the servant problem was to her mind insoluble, and servants were a race of beings who had come into the world for the purpose of tormenting the lives of persons of a better class.

Rather than portraying Jane and the other domestic servants, whose lives he describes in the novel, merely as victims of exploitation, de Lisser emphasises the extent to which such women fought back against their employers and the system in general. Jane is exploited by Mrs. Mason and seduced by Mrs. Mason's newpew, Cecil, but when she leaves the Mason household she does so in a calculated manner which leaves Mrs. Mason discomfited and Cecil out of pocket. At several points in the novel de Lisser describes verbal battles between working women and their employers on which at the level of language the workers often come out the victors. Jane's personal sufferings at Mrs. Mason's are ultimately the experiences which change her from a naive country girl to a determined and independent city woman, and at no point does the novel descend to sentimental protest writing in which women are portrayed as cowed or defenceless.

The stress on the verbal ability of working women to defend themselves as well as the tools of their trade can also be seen in early dialect poems presenting women in their working environment: whether it be the prostitute's defence of her right to choose her own customers in McKay's "Midnight Woman to the Bobby"; or the peasant woman's defence of her right to sit with her goods in the street car in MacDermot's "Market

Basket in the Car".

Why? doan't I pay me car-fare?
 Tuppence -- same fe we two?
 What you da mek up you face for?
 You tink I is frighten' fe you?

Or the fruit vendor's defence of her right to a spot on the pavement in McKay's "Apple Woman's Complaint":

Ef me no wuk, me boun' fe tief;
 S'pose dat will please de pólíce chief!
 De prison dem mus' be wan' full,
 Mek dem's 'pon we like ravin' bull.

In each of these dramatic monologues, the woman's ability to give as good as she can take is stressed.⁶

In poems describing women at work, rather than reproducing their speech there is a tendency to associate the female figure with "masculine" images of strength or aggressiveness: in McKay's "Pay-day" for example, we are given vignettes of the various women owed money for their services by the police waiting to be paid off. There is the mess cook, who waits,

Wid a lee piece of old clot'
 'Pon her curly glossy hair,
 Print frock an' old bulldog boots
 Tatters all t'rough wear an' tear.

As well as the prostitute:

See de waitin' midnight girl
 Wid her saucy cock-up lips,
 An' her strongly-built black hands
 pressed against her rounded hips.

The references to the strength of the girl's hands and the mess cook's "bulldog boots" leave an impression of physical strength rather than sexuality in the former or succour in the latter. One of the few early poems on working women to make use of traditionally "feminine" images in its description of women at work is MacDermot's "Mothers of the City" in which the market women trekking through the early dawn to bring their produce into the town are represented as earth mothers:

To cherish a son, does a mother
 Give the milk from her life-pulse drawn;
 Behold where the City Mothers,
 Mud-daubed, in the ghost grey morn,
 Pour forth for the City's hunger
 The milk from the Country's breast;
 Like a mother who toils and labours
 That her baby may feed, and rest.

But even here the metaphor is mixed, as traditionally it is the father who is represented as toiling and labouring for his children's welfare. Elsewhere in the poem MacDermot uses the military image of the women marshalling rows of escallion to suggest the women's daily fight with the elements to produce the foodstuffs they sell.⁷

When the early Jamaican writers come to treat the sexuality of the working woman and its relationship to their economic position, there is less unanimity in their use of imagery and their implied moral position. Claude McKay, in his Jamaican short stories in Ginger Town, written after he left Jamaica, sees the strength and industry as well as the free sexual appetites of the Jamaican women he portrays as natural and wholesome aspects of the rural Jamaican setting. He associates their lifestyle with a sort of primal innocence, shattered only by the intrusion of the values and morals of the dominant culture.^{7a} In "The Strange Burial of Sue" the story centres around the death from overwork and (it is implied) a possible miscarriage of a "strong brown peasant woman", Sue. Sue's free-loving ways are overlooked by her husband and tolerated by the rest of the community until a young loon whom Sue has helped through his first sexual experiences turns sour and slanders Sue's reputation openly. This forces Sue, her husband and the local church to take^a public stand on her private life. Though her husband stands by her and takes out a lawsuit against her defamer, Sue is read out of the church. Her spirit fails, and she becomes obsessed with a sense of guilt for having brought her husband into disrepute on account of her actions:

During the interval before the time fixed for the hearing of the case Sue was strangely restless. She developed a mania for toting heavy loads on her head, although there were Turner's mules and horses to do that, and a girl who stayed and worked with them for her keep. She would bring in heavy logs of firewood from the forest and insist on chopping and splitting them herself. She heaved upon her head baskets of yams and bunches of bananas as if they were the weight of a feather pillow. She rode the vicious kicking mule down and over the hills from the local market until he sweated white. She worked in the fields as never before, digging and planting like a

farm-loving man. Sue used to place bets sometimes to demonstrate that she could equal or even surpass a man's work, but the way she carried on now seemed a little mad. As if she wanted to burn up all her splendid strength.

The comparison between Sue's behaviour now and earlier descriptions of her working and helping others to work draws the parallel between Sue's earlier joyful sexuality compared to her new feelings of guilt and the fanatical attitudes of the local parson towards what he considers her sexual aberration. When Sue finally dies from guilt and overwork the parson refuses to bury her from the church and tries to use her graveside funeral as the excuse for a sermon on hell fire and damnation. Instead Sue's husband takes over the service and turns it into a community testimony meeting in which Sue's virtues of generosity and strength are recounted by her friends. Thus in death Sue's good name is redeemed and she is returned in the communal memory to the state of pre-lapsarian innocence in which she had lived and loved before the intervention of the church.

In "Crazy Mary", McKay returns to the theme of sexual repression leading ultimately to death in his story of the young seamstress who "keeps herself up" for the middle-class respectability of marriage to the local schoolmaster only to be deserted when a scandal about her beau and a promiscuous young female pupil known as "Freshy" breaks. Freshy comes through unscathed by her rumoured deflowering and goes on to produce three bastards before she is nineteen, but the seamstress has a nervous breakdown and finally commits suicide after exposing herself obscenely on the steps of the church when her former lover returns years later with a new bride. Here again the intervention of church morals is seen as an insidious and destructive force within the tolerant life of the community, and the peasant woman's capacity for work and sex are portrayed as natural qualities.

In his novels H.G. de Lisser also satirises the moral values which the dominant culture tried to impose on working-class women but here the satire is double-edged as he sees both middle-

class values and lower-class morals as signs of the imitativeness and inferiority of colonial society. In an article called "Marriage" published in the Jamaica Times in 1900, de Lisser expounds his views on the inferiority of the black race and points to the folly of attempts by well-intentioned reformers to insist upon legal unions within the lower classes when they were so patently content with their own debased lifestyle.⁹ He makes the same point fictionally in Jane's Career in describing an argument between Jane and Sathyra as they pass the brightly lit houses of the well-to-do in the tram car.:

"It must be nice to be a white lady", Jane observed to Sathyra, "an' to have white gentlemen to take care of you an' give you whatever y'u want. Then you doan't have to work, an' you can put on a new dress every day, an' eat what you like. An' when you go to church you doan't have to walk, but can drive in a carora buggy. Doan't you wish you was white?"

"Of course," replied Sathyra, "though some of de white ladies is as ugly as sin, an' them doan't all so happy as you wants to believe. I know them quarrel with them husban's, an' cry an' fret; and as them is married an' have to keep up them positions, them can't do as them like, as we can. If a lady husband beat her, she have to stand it, for if she leave him everybody will talk about it, an' she won't like dat. But if our "friend" beat us, we can send him 'bout his business, though I know some gurl that put up wid anything. It wouldn't be me, though! I am independent, an' I wouldn't meck any man do what him choose wid me. But if I was a white lady I suppose I would have to put up wid it, so it is better I am what I am."^a

The debate continues with Jane maintaining that there are after all compensations in being beaten by one's own husband rather than ^{by} a casual friend who recognises no responsibilities towards one, and Sathyra pointing out that most of the advantages Jane sees in marriage could be gained through a judicious alliance with a white man as a lover. Though it is evident that de Lisser enjoys the opportunity of shocking and satirising his middle-class readership under the guise of demonstrating his characters' point of view, something of his underlying contempt for the lower class comes through in his reduction of the argument between Sathyra and Jane over marriage to the level of whether it is better for a woman to be beaten by her husband or her lover.

MacDermot's attempt to defend the morality of the lower-class woman by presenting her as more sinned against than sinning has already been mentioned in the discussion of the language of his "honourable servant girl" Fidelia Stanton in Chapter II. However his characteristic ambivalence with respect to the language and morals of the lower classes surfaces again in his inability to see any positive aspects in the lifestyle of those of his characters who do not share Fidelia Stanton's preference for chastity. In One Brown Girl sexual permissiveness tends to be associated with other vices such as laziness, vain ambition (for example Becka's aunt's pride in the "Buckra" baby she has had for a white man) and, curiously, racial impurity - suggested in his emphasis on Fidelia Stanton's "pure Coramantyn descent" and his portrayal of brown women in One Brown Girl as particularly susceptible to seductive advances.¹⁰

Both MacDermot and de Lisser imply that lower-class women see sexual relationships purely in terms of their financial benefits, and that they would rather live as kept mistresses than work for a living. For example MacDermot portrays Ada in One Brown Girl, a former lady's maid, as seeing no alternative, given her degree of education and relatively fair complexion, other than to become the mistress of one of two men who can afford to keep her in the style she considers her social right. This partial vision of the lifestyle and aspirations of working women may have been one of the ways in which the creative writer rationalised the threat to socially approved standards of behaviour which the independent spirit of the lower-class women presented. If the woman's sexual alliances could be shown to be merely a debased form of the marital contract rather than an aspect of her greater economic self-reliance, then assumptions about her moral and cultural limitations remained intact. De Lisser's Jane's Career, for all its sympathy for Jane and satire of the Jamaican middle class, ends with the author distancing himself from his heroine as he describes with heavy irony the imitation white wedding that she finally succeeds in achieving after living with Vincent Broglie for several years. This gives Jane an entré into the self-same middle class which

the novel has already satirised as petty and exploitative in its presentation of Jane's first employer Mrs. Mason. Our penultimate picture of Jane in the novel, just before she and Vincent decide to marry, deliberately parodies Jane's earlier vision of "real" high society, seen through brightly lit windows as she and Sathyra ride by in the street car:

Anyone passing along the main street of this desirable and respectable suburb on a certain Saturday night some two years ago would have noticed in one of the little houses there an unusual display of light. Had the passer-by paused to discover the reason of this, he would easily have seen, by simply looking into the house, that a celebration of some sort was in progress.

Jane's guests are described as well-dressed and well-fed, and Jane herself is shown as already metamorphosed into a respectable member of the middle class:

It is Jane transformed. In her white muslin dress, with her hair done up with ribbons, wearing high-heeled shoes and looking as though she had been born to entertaining guests, Jane is not very like the little girl we saw sitting mute and frightened as she drove into Kingston with Mrs. Mason. She is not much like the girl we saw sharing apartments with Sathyra. She looks very much tonight as if she has kept herself up; her body is now fully developed; she has the lover she cares for, and in the other room lies "the kid" whom all the women declare to be the "dead image" of his father, while all the men see the mother chiefly in his lineaments. It is Jane perfectly contented at last, and dreaming of no higher fortune. It is Jane, who now herself employs a schoolgirl, who submissively calls her Miss Jane, and obeys her slightest command.¹¹

Kenneth Ramchand in his introduction to the 1971 edition of Jane's Career comments on the implicit irony in de Lisser's observations at this point in Jane's story and tries to account for this satiric distancing, coming as it does after the reader's - and presumably the author's - close involvement in Jane's struggle to make a life. According to Ramchand:

The imitative dead-end to which de Lisser ironically drives Jane is the same dead-end now being explored by writers like V.S. Naipaul (The Mimic Men, 1967) Garth St. Omer (Shades of Grey, 1968) and Orlando Patterson (An Absence of Ruins, 1966). De Lisser can hardly be blamed for failing to initiate the search for an alternative tradition that is to be found in the differing works of Wilson Harris and L. Edward Brathwaite.¹²

But this dead-end socially on closer examination is one of the author's making as it is he who has created the fictional society in which his character's only form of salvation lies in the financial security and social ostentation of a middle-class marriage. De Lissier's contemporary Claude McKay from his different social and ideological perspective is able to suggest a different quality of experience in his presentation of lower-class aspirations towards social security in "The Strange Burial of Sue" where Sue's marriage to Turner after a life of economic independence and sexual freedom is explained in the following terms:

He was such a sure prop to her. Surely she would never dream of comparing much less measuring him with any of the bucks with whom she dallied. Who else on that mountain top would have given her the solid security and freedom that Turner did? She knew the history of her mother and of her own girlhood. Turner had taken her child by Sam Bryan as his own. He was going to educate her a little, and how proud she would be to see her daughter become a postmistress or a school mistress. ¹³

Here the desire for social and economic security goes further than a mere wish for pretty clothes or respectability and the author stresses the freedom which Sue maintains within the relationship as something of equal value with any social benefits that accrue to her illegitimate daughter as the result of Sue's marriage. Elsewhere ^{he} emphasises the distinction the villagers make between Sue's sexual generosity and the promiscuity of the indiscriminating village whore "Stinky-sweetie" as if to underline the existence of personal values within the community which recognise limits on personal freedom even if these do not coincide with those preached by the parson. The fact that Sue is not "kept" by Turner, but works as an equal partner with him in the fields suggests the existence of a relationship which is mutually rewarding from an economic as well as an emotional point of view.

De Lissier, by contrast, uses the sexual freedom of his female lower-class characters and their independence of spirit as qualities which work against the interests of their men-folk. One of the most consummate achievements in his first two novels

Jane's Career and Susan Proudleigh is the way in which the women play their various suitors off against each other to win the greatest financial security. In the process the women's limited social aspirations are used by the author as foils for his presentation of what he considered the misguided political aspirations of the lower-class Jamaican man. De Lisser may have acquired this particular technique from his reading of J.H. Froude's The English in the West Indies or The Bow of Ulysses (1888) which he quotes extensively in early journalistic articles written at the turn of the century. The English historian Froude in this work had argued against the handing over of greater political power to West Indian local governments on the grounds that the climatic and racial defects of the region had unfitted its inhabitants to draw "the bow of Ulysses". While indulging his full contempt for the political aspirations of both white and black Jamaican men in this work, Froude has only praise for the beauty and grace of the black woman, and opens his study with a panegyric on the black woman's elegance which later twentieth century black-power writers would probably find difficult to rival.¹⁴ In his novels de Lisser manipulates sexual roles in a similar manner: while constantly harping on the industry, resourcefulness and physical attraction of the black woman, he portrays her male partners as lazy, confused or unnecessarily aggressive by contrast. He also uses the woman's desire for social security at a personal, individual level to thwart the attempts of the men to organise politically or industrially at a group or class level. In Jane's Career, Jane's lover Vincent Broglie is faced with the choice of either losing Jane to the factory manager at her place of work, who has been trying to force Jane to become his mistress, or breaking the strike at the newspaper printery where he works in order to offer Jane protection and financial security. De Lisser bases this fictional event on an actual strike organised at The Gleaner by Marcus Garvey in 1907. In the fictional version Broglie's decision to break the strike is vindicated when, shortly after he returns to work, the treasurer of the fledgling union runs off with the members' subscriptions. Broglie's ac-

tion gains him a raise in pay and the confidence of his employers, and as a result he wins Jane and eventually marries her. The reader is encouraged to associate Jane's advice to Broglie to break the strike with her superior good sense. In one of the novel's final scenes, for example, Jane is portrayed gently hinting to Vincent that he is drinking recklessly.

"You are right," observes Vincent, with semi-sober gravity. "I won't take any more wine. Since you advise me about that strike, I always take your advice when you are right. But mark, boys, I never follow her when she is wrong. No, sir, I say a man must rule his household, or he is not a man. Jane, I don't think another glass would hurt me?"

Jane says nothing to this, but keeps the wine away from him.¹⁵

De Lisser's Tory radicalism which emphasised individual resourcefulness and survival above class organisation for better social conditions finds symbolic expression here in his presentation of the battle of the sexes. In Susan Proudleigh, the pattern is repeated and elaborated as we follow the heroine through two marriages and three affairs. In each case the prize of Susan's attentions goes to the man who shows the least inclination to challenge the system. Our identification with the attractive and courageous heroine deflects our attention from de Lisser's anti-working class perspective. By making common-sense and the ability to work hard feminine traits as opposed to the "male" trait of going on strike, de Lisser is able to denigrate the attempts of black men to organise themselves politically and at the work place without seeming to write negatively about the black race as a whole. In reality lower-class West Indian women were often at the forefront of political action and the labour movement, but as most of them were self-employed or engaged as servants, there were few opportunities for them to use industrial strike action on their own behalf, and it was therefore easy to interpret industrial unrest as a uniquely male aberration.

Both de Lisser and MacDermot tend to concentrate on lower-class women whose economic activities bring them directly into contact with the upper and middle classes, for example domestic servants and market women. Only McKay portrays self-sufficient

black women - cultivators, village seamstresses, etc. In addition McKay's women are usually placed in rural rather than urban settings, where, it could be argued, a different system of social and moral values pertained than in the City. These differences in perspective reflect the three authors' differing social origins which would have brought them into contact with lower-class women in different ways. They also point to the shifting patterns of female employment and migration at the beginning of the twentieth century. McKay, who left Jamaica in 1912, recreates in his stories the rural peasant villages of his childhood. MacDermot, who lived and worked both in the town and the country, tends to concentrate on market women and domestic servants who move between both settings. De Lisser's family moved from Trelawny to Kingston when de Lisser was a youth. His novel Jane's Career which opens with Jane's migration to the city is the first novel that really deals with the new urban proletariat, while Susan Proudleigh extends the migratory pattern and documents the beginnings of the movement of Jamaican women abroad with their men. At the end of the novel Susan returns to Kingston with her second husband, and hereafter de Lisser's portrayal of women in his novels concentrates on the rising class of black women married to skilled workers and artisans in the city who belong to the inter-war period.

With the emergence of a black middle class after the First World War, whose social values were derived from the dominant culture, the "good life" for the Jamaican woman came to be seen as one of so-called leisure, and the Jamaican woman was encouraged to see herself as being fulfilled in the role of wife and mother, or, if she could not marry, in chastity and good deeds. Instead of writing about women as workers and free sexual agents, the writers in post-war Jamaica portrayed women in domestic settings, as ideal figures whose conflicts were likely to be between marriage and the service of God rather than a choice of lovers. Such ideal women had been described in MacDermot's pre-war novels in figures like Becka's Creole white Sunday School teacher who makes Becka the present of a "Buckra" doll, and the

English salvation army Major who rescues Ada from moral disgrace in One Brown Girl. As with the language question, the desire of the new post-war writers to present their women in the same terms that MacDermot used for white women was not merely an attempt on their part to separate themselves from the aspirations of their race, but was meant to prove that the black man - or woman - was capable of "refined" moral sentiments, which it was implied in the typical stereotype of Creole culture he or she did not possess.

One of the familiar concepts of ideal womanhood celebrated by writers of this period was the idea of the Virgin Madonna. This paradox is central to Astley Clerk's poem "The Queen Mother", which he dedicates to his wife:

Never a babe of her love has she,
Nor boy, nor girl of her own,
But, storing her sweetness from hour to hour,
Like bees which sip from the honey'd flower,
The little ones flock to her throne.

The poem pays homage to the childless wife, who fulfills nevertheless the ideal role of motherhood on account of her love for all children, and is apotheosised to the status of "Queen Mother" in heaven:

Glitt'ring the crown that they place on her head,
Rich, gleaming with jewels rare;
For each gem is the love of a child's pure heart,
A setting fair of the love-god's art,
Fit symbol for her to wear.

Other poems of this period extend the ideal of woman as mother to include the celebration of woman as the protector of all vulnerable life. Another of Clerk's poems, "The Lady of the Birds", is dedicated to fellow-poet Arabella Moulton Barrett. In it, the poet is led intuitively, like the Magi to the birthplace of Christ, to the lady of the birds in her garden where she is surrounded by living things. The lady is described as:

.., beautiful in word and thought,
And deed; whose soul is mirrored in a wealth
Of tenderness she gives to God's dumb things,
And pictured in the Beauty, rich and full,
Hung round about her doors by Nature's hands. ¹⁶

A similar self-image can be observed in the work of the female poets who belonged to the Jamaica Poetry League. Constance Hollar expresses her abhorrence of cruelty to animals in many of the poems in her collection Flaming June. In "The Caged Mongoose" the death throes of a trapped mongoose are described with a wealth of sentimental detail:

I turned aside - I could not bear
 To see him drowned - to see the light
 Go out from those bright eyes -
 But, fascinated, turned and looked
 Just as he went beneath the pool -
 And saw two forefeet
 High uplifted, clenched
 As if in prayer

...
 Beneath the Bamboo tree
 His brown mate waited till the dusk:
 She and her little ones...

Here the ideal of the family unit headed by the provident father figure is transferred to the animal world. Another poem called "The Little Goat" is foot-noted "Why oh why? May the day come when the civilised world will revolt against flesh-eating!"¹⁷

Few of the poems of this period portray women working or even engaging in domestic tasks. In another of Hollar's poems, for example, she celebrates the saintliness of her grandmother, portraying her in a static, rapt posture which gives no hint of her occupation or household virtues:

Hair brushed on either side her face
 And such a look of quiet grace
 In liquid eyes of brown
 A bible open on her knee
 It is thus I often see
 My grandmother
 My lovely little grandmother

Mother love and love to God replace passion or sexual desire as themes and love poems concentrate on abstract concepts and the unattainability of the loved object. J.E. Clare McFarlane writes, for example, of Beauty:

To me thou seemest a thing divine,
 Moulded for reverence, not desire;
 Kindling within my Being's shrine
 The flame of an aspiring fire,
 Seeking to reach a purer air;
 That leapeth upward, leapeth higher,

From sordid longing's dull-red flare
And smould'ring confines of despair.

And love for M.M. Ormsby is

Life-music; not the noise of market-place,
Or sullen silence, but the sweet bird-songs,
And whispering leaves, the wave-wash on the shore,
The sigh and scent of flowers, the floating clouds,
And all that makes for perfect harmony.

While her sister, Stephanie Ormsby, warns of desire:

Children cry for the moon.
Yet ... if the moon itself were given?
Shines forever the unattained;
But oh! the dark of Desire gained
At cost of the light that showed us Heaven
... Too soon!

One of the consequences of the emergence of this new chaste idealised female figure in Jamaican literature is the transference of overtly sexual references from poems dealing with human love to poems dealing with sensations not directly related to women. McFarlane, for instance, personifies Dawn as a woman and lover:

Softly she crept beside my couch,
My love of other years;
I trembled at her gentle touch,
And heard, as one who hears
In dreams, familiar accents tell
Of ways I loved full well.

Sexually charged imagery is also to be found in poems dealing with spiritual ecstasy, for example Joan Richmond's "What Hast Thou Done?" One senses in such poems, however, an element of sublimated desire:

What hast thou done to me dear heart that I no more
have power
To shield my naked quiv'ring soul from mortal eyes
but fore
Thy searching gaze I must lay bare
All in me that's divine:
Why does my spirit roam afar from its accustomed place?
When through the silence thou dost come to woo it face
to face
And then it seems a glorious¹⁹ thing
To merge my life with thine.

Such explicit, albeit unconscious sexual imagery invites speculation as to the consequences of the new standards of morality within Jamaican society for those women whom it affected most

directly - the black and coloured women who did not marry and whose moral conditioning prevented them from seeking sexual fulfilment outside of marriage as their mothers and grandmothers had done. Social studies of Jamaican middle-class society between the wars and after often draw attention to the disproportionate number of unmarried black women within the Jamaican middle class. The sociologist Fernando Henriques, for example, takes note of this trend in Family and Colour in Jamaica and ascribes it to the tendency of Jamaican men to marry upward on the colour scale, rejecting well-educated women of their own shade or darker in preference to fairer-complexioned women or foreign white women through whom they could increase their social prestige in Jamaican circles.²⁰ De Lisser's novel Under the Sun explores the social consequences of many such marriages in his satiric portrayal of the cockney English girl who marries a near-white Jamaican man without realising the social implications of such a match in shade-conscious Jamaican society, then proceeds to move into circles where her husband cannot follow by embellishing her family history. Although few literary works deal directly with the problems of those "left on the shelf", there is one fascinating social document from this period, written by the poet J.E. Clare McFarlane which addresses itself to this phenomenon. In a full-length study entitled Sex and Christianity (1932) which was republished in England two years later as The Case for Polygamy, McFarlane puts forward the rather startling proposal that in Christian societies like Jamaica and England where women outnumber men, a man should be allowed the legal option of having more than one wife, so that no woman on account of the shortage of available spouses should be deprived of the God-given blessing of bearing children or be left to fend for herself economically in the world, thus risking the temptation of falling into sin.

Under the old Mosaic law it would have been impossible for such to go unmated and uncared for; must it then be supposed that the Law founded on justice is more righteous and merciful than that founded on love?

The author is however unable to find any biblical sanction for polyandry. Indeed he makes a point of emphasising the extent

to which multiple sexual relations in the case of a woman pervert the laws of nature and of man:

When a woman commits adultery she does not sin against her husband, who really has no "rights" in the matter, except it be an economic one, but against her own body and that of her possible offspring... This is not so far-fetched as it sounds; a woman does become biologically "one flesh" with her husband; her blood is mixed with his; so that a child conceived in her by another man would still have its body built up partly from the blood of her husband... In the light of this knowledge we may begin to see why the just old law, which, however, was not merciful, commanded that a woman taken in adultery should be stoned to death; she had forfeited her right to bear children.²¹

McFarlane's preoccupation with female faithfulness within marriage and abstinence outside of it finds expression in each of his three major narrative poems, Beatrice (1918), Daphne (1931) and The Magdalen (1957). Beatrice opens on an impassioned diatribe by Beatrice's father who suspects his wife of having been unfaithful:

"What hast thou done! - O Dora, love of my boyhood,
 Dream of my wasted youth, and joy of my manhood,
 What hast thou done! with deepest bond of affection,
 Bound to my heart and cherished with fond adoration.
 Hast thou to jealousy bartered my love? - Oh my darling
 What hast thou done! - How can I ever forgive thee!
 Over my pride the mask of shame is now falling.
 Over my name the hideous shroud of Dishonour
 Falling from hands I loved forever is resting;
 Over my life the burning east-wind is blowing,
 Blasting my love, my pride, my name and my honour.
 Dora, never on Earth canst thou have my forgiveness
 Save in the hour of Death" - the last words so awful
 Wrung from his heart a cry of bitterest anguish.
 One last look of compassion he gave to his darling,
 Then with hurrying feet sped down the pathway.²²

And the poem ends with Beatrice's death by drowning after she has confessed her unfaithfulness to her childhood sweetheart during his long absence overseas. Her death brings about the tearful reunification of her estranged parents. In Daphne the emphasis is placed on "spiritual" rather than physical faithfulness between man and wife. Daphne's devotion to and moral support of her husband during his service to his country as a soldier is held up as an example of ideal virtue. Even after her death her example remains to protect her husband from spiritual despair.

In The Magdalen McFarlane reconstructs a chaste love affair between Christ and Mary Magdalen, citing scriptural evidence for his interpretation of the gospel story. In the poem's opening movement we are given this description of the Magdalen:

Men called her fair; she was a flame that drew them
 As lighted candles draw the moths at evening;
 In the warm, intimate dusk of that short hour
 They spent their little lives. Men called her bad;
 She was a flame that seared their souls, a bane
 Of wholesome things turned to unwholesome use.
 They had wantoned with her beauty, the fair shell
 Of her far fairer spirit; what miseries
 She knew! Who among men could read her soul
 And fathom its deep need! Her lot, it seemed,
 To be mocked by life, to miss, to lose the prize
 Which only could lend meaning to the gifts
 Bestowed by nature....

Once she has become a disciple of Christ, Mary's moment of greatest temptation comes during Jesus' long absence at the time of her brother Lazarus' death, when she is taunted by the devil:

Well, what have you gained,
 Casting your beauty at his feet? Thought you
 His stuff was like the troops Magdala knew?
 All women are his loves; he must find room
 For all the hearts that hunger after him.
 What then will be your portion? You, a queen,
 Whose slightest wish was law to those you ruled,
 Are you become a slave to one man's will?

This rather heady feminist propaganda is ultimately resisted by the Magdalen, and the poem ends on the morning of the resurrection with Mary and Jesus finally united and looking forward to the heavenly consummation of their love.²³

The Magdalen is one of McFarlane's least successful poems from a technical point of view as his concern with maintaining the decorum of his theme and at the same time expounding polemically his ideas about female virtue overburden the poem with verbal and aesthetic clichés which are not redeemed by any sense of profundity as they are at moments in other poems by McFarlane such as his "Villanelle of Immortal Love" and his long Wordsworthian pastoral, "Daphne". However, his pre-occupation with female characters and sexual purity, though usually worked out in poems which make use of biblical, classical or fictional settings, seems as much a symptom of his age as de Lissier's pre-

occupation at an earlier date with the illicit sexual unions of lower-class women.

The poet who approaches the question of the status of women in Jamaican society most directly and most originally during this period is Una Marson. Marson's literary and professional careers overlap with the activities of both the Jamaica Poetry League and the Public Opinion writers. She was an active member of both groups as well as a moving force behind a wide number of literary publishing experiments involving West Indian literature in Jamaica and England. Her work is probably best considered in the context of the changing social situation at the end of the 1930s rather than in the context of the work of older members of the League, many of whom had grown to maturity before the First World War. One of the side effects of the large numbers of unmarried Jamaican middle-class women at this period was an increase in the number of black women in professions and careers. Standards of education for women in Jamaica had taken rapid strides between the wars with the founding of a number of well-staffed schools for girls in various parts of the island. De Lisser makes a point, for instance, in several of his inter-war novels including Haunted and The Sins of the Children of giving his heroines the benefit of an education at well renowned local girls schools like St. Hilda's.²⁴ While top civil service jobs for men tended before 1950 to go to expatriates, few English women were interested in careers in the rigorous climatic conditions of the tropics and administrative posts for women were "Jamaicanised" at a comparatively faster rate than the equivalent posts for men. Marriage removed a large number of women, especially the light-complexioned ones, from the job market by the time they were thirty, so that the women who stayed on to reach the tops of their professions were often dark-skinned women or coloured women from comparatively poor families. In addition male prejudice against brilliant women was rife and some of the best known professional women of this period of all shades never married, or were involved in marriages which ended in divorce.

The poet Una Marson is a typical case in point. Educated at Hampton Girls School she was one of several sisters well known for their intellectual capabilities. During the 1930s she had attempted to found a magazine for women aimed at encouraging local stenographers and female clerical employees to take a wider interest in cultural matters. Some of Marson's earliest poems, published in her first collection Tropic Reveries (1930) give an idea of how distasteful the role mapped out for the average Jamaican middle-class woman must have seemed to an ambitious and spirited girl:²⁵

To wed, or not to wed: that is the question:
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
 The fret and loneliness of spinsterhood
 Or to take arms against the single state
 And by marrying, end it? To wed; to match,
 No more; yet by this match to say we end
 The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to; 'tis a consummation
 Devoutly to be wish'd. To wed, to match;
 To match, perchance mismatch: aye there's the rub;
 For in that match what dread mishaps may come,
 When we have shuffled off this single state
 For wedded bliss....

In another light-hearted parody, this time of Kipling's "If" Marson elaborates on some of the "rubs" attendant on marriage:

If you can love and not make love your master,
 If you can serve yet do not be his slave,
 If you can hear bright tales and quit them faster,
 And, for your piece of mind, think him no knave;
 If you can bear to hear the truth you tell him
 Twisted around to make you seem a fool,
 Or see the Capstan on your bureau burning
 And move the noxious weed and still keep cool.

Such poems are of slight literary merit but their use of other literary sources is indicative of the wider scope of women's education during this period. Indeed the poems, like most parodies of this nature, were probably written while Marson was still at school for the entertainment of school friends who would have been familiar with her literary sources as well as appreciative of her poetry's theme.

In a more serious vein, several of the poems in Tropic Reveries attempt to deal with the problems of loneliness and frustrations experienced by single women, well enough educated

to converse as equals with men but unlikely to be considered suitable candidates for more permanent relationships. "Illusion" describes a familiar crisis within a platonic friendship. The poem's bland almost banal rhyme scheme reflects the triviality of the every-day conversation which goes on while underneath quite different emotions are concealed:

My heart was sore with anguish,
 But what was that to you?
 We talked of other matters
 Of things we had to do.

You said 'twas lovely weather
 I said 'twas lovely too,
 But I thought of your beauty
 Tell me, of what thought you?

In "The Waves" the poet uses the relentless beating of the sea against the shore as a symbol of frustrated physical desire:

I sit and idly wonder as the waves
 beat on the shore,
 If the surging waves of passion will
 beat for evermore;
 Will call in vain for answer from the
 dawn of day to night
 And call again till day breaks with her
 glorious purple light.

The constant repetition of this kind of theme in many of the poems in this early collection, often in works of negligible poetic achievement, suggests that Marson herself was still very close to the experiences of loneliness and frustration she describes.

In the poems in Marson's later collection, The Moth and the Star, published in 1937 with an introduction by Philip Sherlock, the poet seems more firmly in control of her art technically and achieves a greater degree of detachment from and emotional control over her themes.²⁶ Many of these poems were written during or after her first extended stay in England where she worked for the exiled Haile Selassie and the League of Coloured People, and the poems show a new awareness of the relationship between "feminist" issues and questions of black identity in West Indian society. In "Kinky Hair Blues" one of a number of poems in the collection which make use of dialect (a rare phenomenon at this date), Marson uses the rhythms of the American blues to describe

the dilemma of a black girl who finds herself unable to make an impression on the men of her circle without distorting her self-image by straightening her "kinky" hair:

Gwine find a beauty shop
Cause I ain't a lovely belle.
The boys pass me by,
They say I's not so swell.

See oder young gals
So slick and smart.
See those oder young gals
So slick and smart.
I jes' gwine die on de shelf
If I don't mek a start.

I hatedat ironed hair
And dat bleaching skin.
Hate dat ironed hair
And dat bleaching skin.
But I'll be all alone
If I don't fall in.

The poem catches the metre, the patterns of repetition, and even the minor key of the blues - a form traditionally associated with a sublimation of social impotence through artistic virtuosity, even though the story the blues-song tells rarely has a happy ending or is able to assert the triumph of "good" over "evil". Like a blues lyric Marson's poem also ends on an ironical note of false assurance as the speaker gives in to social pressures and decides to "press me hair and bleach me skin". The poem's combination of Jamaican dialect with black American rhythms suggests a connection between the problems of the black Jamaican and Marson's new awareness of the wider racial struggle to which she had been exposed during her involvement with the League of Coloured Peoples. Similar sentiments are expressed in poems like "Black Burden" which begins "I am black/ And so I must be/ More clever than white folks" and "Cinema Eyes" in which a mother tries to warn her daughter against repeating her mistakes and identifying with white ideals of beauty seen on the screen to the point where the alien values distort her personal sense of identity:

My ideal man would be a Cinema type -
No kinky haired man for me,
No black face, no black children for me.
I would take care
Not to get sun burnt,
To care my half indian hair
To look like my cinema stars.

Though several poems in this collection carry on the themes of loneliness and frustration of the earlier collections, new poems such as "Repose", "The Heart's Strength" and "Fulfillment" assert the positive values of self-reliance and platonic love^{which,} when she was younger, had not been able to compensate for the pain of being "left on the shelf". Una Marson's best known poem is probably "Confession", a defiant statement of her independence of spirit which drew the censure of McFarlane when it appeared as manifesting "the spirit of post-war Jamaica with its feverish search for sensation."²⁷ Like much of her poetry, "Confession" suffers from stylistic defects which suggest that though the mood and reality had changed Marson, like George Campbell a few years later, was still searching for an idiom which could complement the new spirit of the age:

I regret nothing -
 I have lived
 I have loved
 I have known laughter
 And dance and song,
 I have wept,
 I have sighed
 I have prayed,
 I have soared
 On fleecy clouds
 To the gates
 Of heaven,
 I have sunk
 Deep down
 In the pit
 Of Hell.

Even in this bold opening stanza where the surprise quality of the unconventional line arrangement is fresh and well suited to the mood of defiance and self-assertion expressed, one senses that the word patterning runs the risk of becoming a gimmick if it is not used by the poet for any reason other than as a reaction against the traditional verse it rejects. The tendency to use trite adjectives such as "fleecy" for clouds which at first glance seems itself a parody of conventional poetic sentiments becomes obtrusive in succeeding stanzas in which sunsets are described as "exquisite" and the sea is referred to as "Neptune's Court". In spite of their stylistic limitations, however, Marson's poems remain important as early evidence of a new phase of con-

scious feminist awareness within Jamaican society, which, as the decade of the 1940s progressed and a new, male-dominated nationalist literature emerged, was often only tenuously maintained in Jamaican creative writing.

What Una Marson expresses in her poetry about the new middle-class West Indian woman, de Lisser portrays in his novel Myrtle and Money (1942). The work is conceived as a sequel to Jane's Career and takes up the story of Jane and her family thirty years on, by which time Jane is the mother of three children and a well-established member of the Jamaican middle class. The novel contains a series of cameos of female figures, each of which represents a type within the middle class accurately observed by de Lisser. There is first of all Emma Mason, one of the nieces of the tyrannical Mrs. Mason for whom Jane had worked in Jane's Career. As a result of an imprudent fling with a visiting Cuban, Emma Mason has spoiled her chances of contracting a respectable marriage within the coloured middle class. Spurned by her own sister after the birth and death of her illegitimate child, Emma turns to her former servant Jane for companionship, and the two develop a friendship, through which they help bolster each other's self-esteem: Emma Mason subscribes to Jane's fictitious story that she had lived with the Mason family as a boarder rather than as a domestic servant, while Jane continues to use the deferential form "Miss Mason" in speaking to her former employee's niece and keeps the secret of Emma Mason's pregnancy and the subsequent death of her child.

De Lisser's portrayal of Jane in middle age is one of the novel's most intriguing studies, though from a stylistic point of view too many of the changes he notes are described rather than illustrated and the novel does not fully exploit this potentially significant theme. The Jane we see is an individual hedged in by social insecurity and considerations of respectability that have reduced her to a shadow of her former self: She is now ashamed of her early years of co-habitation with Vincent and has hidden this fact and the details of her lowly origins as a domestic servant and a Kingston slum dweller from

her children. Her subservience to her crass and rather stupid husband, assumed for diplomatic reasons in Jane's Career, is now real and she is also cowed by the self-assurance and elitist notions of her youngest daughter, Myrtle, whose contemptuous behaviour towards her mother is accepted meekly. Jane's only vestige of her former zest for life is her feeling of empathy with the mountains that surround the new middle-class suburb in which she now lives:

She had been born and reared in the country, in a setting of hills. She had first come to Kingston from a village named Mount Malus. Now, in her advanced middle-age - for she was nearly fifty - she was living again with the mountains towering about her; and early in the mornings, when she went out into the garden, she could see the sun rising over the summits of these, and the skies changing from soft pink and pearl to crimson and gold, and the land lighting up in golden splendour, and the trees on lofty heights swaying to the breeze that passed through them. Then the avenue would wake and come to life and another day would begin, and Jane would thank God for all his blessings.²⁸

The novel's pièce de resistance however is its presentation of the Broglie's youngest daughter, Myrtle. Myrtle is confident of her good looks and her ability to attract men. She mixes socially with a much broader spectrum of people within the black and coloured middle class than her parents do, as she shares with her privileged friends a common educational background at one of the city's leading girls' schools. De Lisser comments on the more liberal attitudes of this younger set in comparison to their parents, when one of the girls becomes pregnant and her friends help her to arrange an abortion in an unnamed Latin American country:

They felt that they all had something of a really interesting nature to do, or at any rate to participate in. One of their group of intimate friends was in difficulties: They should be able to save her from what they considered would be the worst consequences of her indiscretion. Not for a moment did any of them dream of dropping her, or of turning their backs upon her. Her situation was unfortunate, it might even be grave. But it was not one which they regarded as carrying such terrible moral stigma or²⁹ taunt with it as to warrant their desertion of her.

Such liberal attitudes however are a sign of the girls' greater self-assurance as established members of the middle class and do not extend to their treatment of the less privileged members of society for whom illicit relationships were increasingly becoming a form of exploitation rather than a measure of financial independence. Myrtle's uncle, Mr. Burrell, a brother of Jane's who has become a prosperous banana grower, settles his entire fortune on his sophisticated niece and de Lisser mentions ironically in passing that no one seems to see this as in any way discriminating against his common-law wife and illegitimate son who live as virtual servants on his country property.

Above all, de Lisser endows his heroine with his favourite "feminine" virtues: ambition, a cool head and a well-developed sense of self-interest which prevent her from making the same mistake as her less prudent friend. She exploits the adoration of her mother's friend Miss Mason to enforce her co-operation in one of her clandestine affairs, manipulates one would-be admirer into buying her a car and wins over her uncle, after at first dismissing him as coarse and beneath her notice, when she learns that he is looking for someone to settle his money on. Myrtle finally marries her uncle's young assistant who, though not particularly well off, is light-complexioned and has good prospects within the family business and whom, it is implied, she confidently looks forward to managing with the same ease that she has tyrannised her parents all her life. De Lisser manages to create a degree of sympathy for this wilful and manipulative heroine in much the same way that Jane Austen holds our sympathies for her leading lady in Emma: by emphasising her fearlessness and vivacity; by placing her among other characters who are patently her inferiors in terms of wit and common sense; and by allowing Myrtle to experience a degree of contrition and self-knowledge after she has acted in a particularly cruel or selfish manner. Attempts at reforming her character are not taken very far, however, as de Lisser's main thrust is satirical and he takes a perverse delight in putting the most conservative notions into the mouths of the characters in the novel

in order to demonstrate his belief that the "average" black Jamaican of means was at least as conservative in his or her attitude to social reform as the author himself had been at any stage. Reviewing the novel in Public Opinion when it first appeared, H.P. Jacobs hails it as a shrewd and sympathetic satire of one section of the Jamaican middle class.

We have here an interpretation of one portion of /the middle class/ - the part which is on the make, moving higher up in St. Andrew, buying better cars, and bleaching out its colour. These people, sharp, self-assertive, acquisitive, without a spark of public spirit, are shown on the brink of the world catastrophe of Sept. 1939 - the action of the story covers the outbreak of war, which is rightly shown as a matter of little moment, to them. They are concerned about safeguarding their financial position, but they are blind to the significance of what is happening, just as they have no inkling of the significance of the changes already taking place in Jamaica....

The picture is not a fair one of the whole class, and it is perhaps already out of date. But it is admirably typical of that section of the middle class which the author professes to deal with, as it stood in September of 1939. It is difficult to be convinced³⁰ that the author writes the editorials of the Gleaner.

H.P. Jacobs' sense of confusion of perspective in the last sentence quoted echoes Ramchand's comments on the seeming contradictions in de Lisser's presentation of Jane in Jane's Career, and is based on a similar misunderstanding of the author's purpose. Here, as in Jane's Career, the author is not writing satire in the sense of holding up an implied ideal against which his characters are to be measured and towards which the society he satirises should aspire. He is more interested in ridiculing the pretensions to greatness of a social class, for which he sees no real hope of improvement, and he only deals sympathetically with those characters whose attitudes towards reality co-incide with his own - a form of cynical self-interest detached enough to be above the follies of one's class but involved to the extent of learning how to manipulate such foibles for personal profit. Even the portrayal of Myrtle as a bright, emancipated female possessing the education and intellectual acuity to hold her own in a male-dominated society is ultimately undermined near the end of the novel. Myrtle's uncle is ill and his two assistants

have promised to keep his business turning over while he is out of action, when Myrtle chips in:

"I am going to make your business my business."

"You see, gentlemen," laughed Mr. Burrell, "that I get a boss in my old age, a female boss too, and that's the worst kind. How do you like it Joe?"

"Men let women think they are running the show," said Joe pleasantly, "that's best for peace sake."

"Think!" exclaimed Myrtle scornfully. "Why can't women run a show as well as men?"

"Look at that mouse," cried Crisman suddenly, and Myrtle shrieked and ran.

"That's perhaps why," answered Joe, with a laugh, and Myrtle realised that she had³¹ been mocked. She tossed her head and walked away.

In the context of the narrative, Joe Crisman's cheap trick gives Myrtle her well deserved "come-uppance" for her manipulating ways and airs of omnipotence, but in the context of the view of women presented in the novel the comic re-establishing of traditional sexual roles undercuts any serious re-assessment of the changing role of women in Jamaican society which Myrtle's general presentation may have suggested. De Lisser's old ploy of using the personal and material interests of his typical woman as foils for the class and industrial interests of his men is now turned against his female characters, whose limited absorption in material things is satirised in the novel's title, Myrtle and Money.

Once again it is Claude McKay's work which best demonstrates the limitations of de Lisser's view of his society. In Banana Bottom (1933) McKay also makes use of an educated liberal young heroine who sees through many of the social foibles of her class and no longer accepts without question the moral assumptions of the dominant culture. Like the Ginger Town short stories, the novel Banana Bottom was written during McKay's years of self-imposed exile and must be read in the context of his experiences within black American society and as an itinerant resident in Europe and North Africa. McKay's earlier novels, Home to Harlem (1928) and Banjo (1929) both have male figures as their protagonists and in each work the author's search for a sense of cultural wholeness is expressed through his portrayal of the schizo-

phrenic inter-relationship between two black men who represent the forces of intellect on the one hand, and emotion on the other.³² Jake in Home to Harlem is the man of sensation, moving breezily from one woman to the next in his search for the "sweet-loving yellow woman" he had met fleetingly on his first night back in Harlem, who seemed to him to be the perfect lover. The semi-autobiographical figure Ray is a writer from the West Indies - in this case a Haitian - whom hard times have reduced to the status of a waiter on the American railway's Pullman cars. Ray's sophisticated educational background has crippled his ability to respond at a spontaneous animal level to the natural pleasures his friend Jake takes with such ease. However, Jake's imperviousness to the restricting morality of Ray's Eurocentric education is portrayed as a consequence of his brutal exposure to life in America's dehumanising black ghettos. On the other hand, Ray, beneath his inhibitions, still retains a sense of racial dignity, associated with his memories of the proud peasant traditions of his island home. Banjo carries on the struggle between flesh and spirit as the author takes his character Ray to the seamy port area of Marseilles in France, teeming with human specimens of all colours and stages of social deformity. Once again the cerebral Ray is opposed to a sensual character, Banjo, whose name suggests his association with the traditional stereotype of the laughing, musical negro.

In his portrayal of Bitia Plant in Banana Bottom McKay attempts to resolve this conflict of opposing forces by combining in a single character the beneficial qualities he associates with the impact of European education and civilisation on the transplanted African, with the positive aspects of the African psyche preserved by the Jamaican negro. The latter McKay identifies as the Jamaican peasant's emotional and sexual spontaneity which allow the individual to live in harmony with his natural environment. In her study of McKay's novels, Maria Diedrich suggests that McKay uses a single female character to express this synthesis rather than juxtaposing two male characters as he does in his earlier novels because he felt that educated women on account of their intimate relationship with the basic

processes of reproduction were potentially closer to the natural world than their male counterparts, especially when placed, as Bitá is, in an environment free of the added distortions of human perception encountered in the metropolises.

As Diedrich explains:

Anders als der männliche Intellektuelle kann sie als Frau in den Augen McKays ihre Sexualität nicht verdrängen, so daß der geistige Konflikt schließlich durch die Sexualität entschieden wird - eine Lösung im Sinne der Harlem Renaissance, die verweist auf die Einflüsse von Dadaismus, Expressionismus und Freudianismus auf McKay.^{32a}

(Unlike the masculine intellectual /Bitá/ as a woman cannot, in McKay's eyes, suppress her sexuality, so that the spiritual conflict is ultimately resolved through her sexuality - a solution in keeping with the ideals of the Harlem Renaissance, which points to the influences of Dadaism, Expressionism and Freudianism on McKay.)

Because he is obliged to set his story within a Jamaican reality with which he is familiar, before World War I, when the education of black women as a whole had not reached the standards suggested in Marson's poetry of the 1930s or in de Lisser's novel, Myrtle and Money, McKay has to contrive the modern education of his heroine. He does this by making Bitá's education in England at the expense of locally stationed missionaries an unexpected consequence of her rape at the age of twelve by the village idiot Crazy Bow. When Bitá returns to Banana Bottom as a well groomed and accomplished young lady, she is expected to take over the work of the mission from her benefactors, Mr. and Mrs. Craig, and to marry the up-and-coming native clergyman, Deacon Day. From the start Bitá comes into conflict with the Craigs because she feels drawn towards the secular entertainments of the village society, from which she had been removed as a child before she had time to internalise the class and colour distinctions by which her activities are now circumscribed. Bit by bit she overcomes the moral and social barriers which the Craigs now try to impose between her and her former existence: First she takes part in a village "tea meeting" under the protection of the eccentric Englishman, Squire Gensir; then she sneaks away to a house party

with the debonair horse dealer, Hopping Dick, who belongs to a smart new set of artisans and tradesmen similar to the social circle described at the end of Jane's Career. Finally she allows herself to be drawn into the frenzied abandon of the spiritualist dancers who interrupt a revival meeting with their primal African drumming and their African-derived religious ecstasies.

In each of these episodes, Bitá's spontaneous desire to enter into the activities of the community is balanced by a warning that in so doing she risks losing some of the positive benefits of her European education. McKay rejects the smart circle of middle-class aspirants to which Hopping Dick introduces Bitá as a fit social environment for his heroine, as he seems to share de Lissér's view that this group's social aspirations could ultimately be as petty and intellectually stultifying as the Mission House morality from which Bitá is trying to escape. McKay also rejects the traditional African religious ecstasies from which Bitá is snatched by her father's drayman Jubban. It is Jubban who finally offers Bitá the best social context in which she can achieve a synthesis of mind and heart. Their relationship is symbolically consummated in the dray cart which brings the body of Bitá's father back to Banana Bottom after his death by drowning in an unsuccessful bid to save the life of his friend Malcolm Craig. In this way the forces of life, associated with Jubban's strong body and rootedness in the peasant ^{existence} are asserted over the forces of death, connected with the Craigs and the repressive Puritanism of the Mission House.

This symbolic struggle becomes a recurrent motif in the development of the novel's various sub-plots and minor characters, but within the context of the discussion of the portrayal of women in Jamaican literature, McKay's presentation of Bitá invites comparison with de Lissér's portrayal of Myrtle in Myrtle and Money. Both girls are economically provided for by their family's flourishing agricultural properties, which are modest in size but capable of generating real wealth and providing them with a reasonable standard of living. In this respect

both are atypical of the average black member of the middle class whose earnings were on the whole related to their jobs in the "middle" sector of the economy as tradesmen or white collar workers. In both cases the girls marry men involved in the family business but here the similarity ends. In Bitá's case her choice is ultimately between her father's servant, Jubban, a bastard child of uncertain origins, and her cousin Babb, who though he is also illegitimate has been given a good education and shares in the family's wealth. Babb, however, opts for a career in the city and is therefore not in a position to provide Bitá with that vital link with the soil which McKay sees as necessary for the educated middle class to avoid cultural sterility. In Myrtle and Money a similar choice is implied in Uncle Burrell's decision to settle his money on his business manager and his sophisticated city niece, rather than his own illegitimate son who lives as a poor relation on his uncle's estate. Bitá's decision is therefore the opposite of Myrtle's for whom any idea of sharing her good fortune with her country cousin is completely out of the question. And while the union of Bitá and Jubban is presented as involving a degree of joint participation in the business of running the family property, Myrtle is pointedly excluded from the business affairs of her uncle and future husband. It must be said however that the situation McKay creates is utopian rather than realistic, and whatever its success at the symbolic level there is still to my mind a straining against reality in McKay's closing portrayal of Bitá:

She had no craving for Jubban to be other than what he was, experienced no hankering for that grace and refinement in him that the local soothsayers said was necessary to an educated person. She liked to play for him for he had a natural feeling for music and showed appreciation of even the most difficult things. But he was in no way a hindrance to the intellectual side of her life. He accepted with natural grace the fact that she should excel in the things to which she had been educated as he should in the work to which he had been trained.

Her music, her reading, her thinking were the flowers of her intelligence and he the root in the earth upon which she was grafted, both nourished by the same soil. 33

This assertion, coming as it does from a character who has been shown greedily lapping up the intellectual stimulation of long conversations with Squire Gensir on literature and philosophy, seems a forced resolution, even though McKay's portrayal of the educated black woman offers so much more hope than de Lisser's facile satire. Perhaps the problem lies not so much with the symbolic appropriateness of McKay's idea, as with his distortion of the social realities: Bitá with her foreign education and fashionable agnosticism is, rightly speaking, a woman of the 1930s rather than of pre-war Jamaica, while the kind of prosperous peasant proprietor portrayed in Jubban, who with limited literacy and sheer application to his work is able to maintain a flourishing estate had become a rarity by the 1930s when the banana boom had forced such cultivators to modernise or be squeezed out of the market. In Banana Bottom, therefore, McKay's vision of Jamaican society represents not only a reconnection between peasant and intellectual but a reversal of the economic reality which implies a radical vision of the ways in which Jamaican society had to be transformed if it was to avoid the dead ends implied in de Lisser's social satire.

One of the initial creative responses to the labour upheavals at the end of the 1930s was a renewed literary interest in the lower-class woman as a symbol of new racial and socio-economic values. This can be seen in the poems celebrating black beauty written at this time which carry on the rejection of "white" cultural values expressed in Marson's poetry. George Campbell's "Mother" which describes a peasant woman bathing in a river, uses the naked figure of a black woman with a baby in her arms as a symbol of Mother Africa, "stronger than old boulders, older than what moulders." In other poems Campbell attempts to coin images to describe what he considers the unique quality of the black woman's beauty:

Your blackness steeps through me
 It wets like dew
 It comes upon me like a lovely night.
 You are not here
 Your blackness stays round me like rich perfume.
 All space black dew.
 Your absence beautiful against my loins
 Oh! lovely woman like a velvet night!

Campbell's most memorable poem to make symbolic use of the black woman is "History Makers" in which the common sight along Jamaican roads of women in various stages of pregnancy carrying out the most arduous of physical tasks connected with road mending, the breaking of stones with pick-axes, is used as an image of the woman's strength and powers of endurance as well as of her historic role as mother of a strong race:

Women stone breakers
 Hammers and rocks
 Tired child makers
 Haphazard frocks.
 Strong thigh
 Rigid head
 Bent nigh
 Hard white piles
 Of stone
 Under hot sky
 In the gully bed.

II

No smiles
 No sigh
 No moan.

III

Women child bearers
 Pregnant frocks
 Wilful toil sharers
 Destiny shapers
 History makers
 Hammers and rocks.³⁴

The vivid impressionistic images seem to freeze the figure of the woman in the action of bearing down on the rock, and are able to accommodate the poet's sense of the women as both victims and shapers of history. The line arrangement and the division into stanzas creates a pattern of stress and pause that imitates the regular motion of the women's axes in stanza one; the slowing of their movements as a result of fatigue in stanza two with its protracted pauses; and the renewed vigour and determination of the women's movements in the closing stanza. The strenuousness of their work is seen in the context of their economic independence as "wilful toil sharers" while the moral outrage of their physical exploitation even during pregnancy is balanced against their pivotal role as the mothers of future generations. Finally the idea of the women as shapers of their country's roads and destinies is linked to the final image of them as both the hammers which provide the power and the rocks which receive the blows.

Creative writing by women about women, by contrast, tends to concentrate on their sexual and economic oppression and to use the female figure as a symbol of social injustice in the wider community. Una Marson's "The Stonebreakers" provides an interesting contrast to Campbell's visionary treatment of the same subject in "History Makers":

"Liza me chile, I's really tired
 Fe broke dem stone,
 Me han' hat me,
 Me back hat me,
 Me foot hat me,
 An' Lard, de sun a blin' me."

"No so, Cousin Mary, an' den
 De big Backra car dem
 A lik up de dus' in a we face.
 Me Massa Jesus knows it,
 I's weary of dis wol' -

"But whey fe do, Cousin Mary,
 Me haf fe buy frack fe de pickney dem,
 Ebry day dem hab fe feed.
 Dem wutless pupa tan roun' de bar
 A trow dice all de day -
 De groun' is dat dry,
 Not a ting will grow -
 Massy Lard, dis life is hard.
 An' so - dough de work is hard
 I will has to work fe pittance
 Till de good Lard call me."

"Liza me chile, I's really tired
 But wha fe do - we mus' brok de stone
 Dough me han' dem hat me
 Me back it hat me,
 Me foot dem hat me
 An' de sun it blin' me -
 Well - de good Lard knows
 All about we sorrows."³⁵

Marson's poem indicts men as well as an unjust socio-economic system for the oppression of working-class women by its juxtaposition of the image of the "buckra" car sweeping past the workers and raising the dust and that of the "wutless papa" throwing dice all day instead of working to support his family. The women's sense of resignation to their fate is expressed in the slow, tired rhythms of their dialect speech ("Me han' hat me, Me back hat me") and their fatalistic reliance on divine compassion. Though Marson's use of dialect and dramatic dialogue suggests a closer emotional identification between author and subject than

is the case in Campbell's "History Makers", it is precisely Campbell's artistic distance that allows him to transcend the immediate reality of the women's position and place their personal battle for survival within the context of the wider nationalist or socialist struggle. This gives his poem a sense of vision and timelessness absent in Marson's more straightforward protest.

The question of the relative merits of these two approaches to reality is part of the wider debate on the value of socially realistic writing versus socialist realism within literary circles associated today with the theoretical work of the Marxist critic George Lukacs. For many "engaged" black writers, the demand of socialist realism that the suffering of the working class be presented in its historical context as the first phase in the ultimately successful struggle of the proletariat against the forces of oppression has always seemed inadequate for dealing with the unique situation of the New World Negro. After the initial celebration of black culture of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s for instance, many black American writers turned to protest writing rather than socialist realism as a means of reacting to racism in their society. This probably contributed to the ideological split between the American Left and the Black intelligentsia during the 1930s. A similar divergence can be seen in practice, if not at a theoretical level, between the celebratory and visionary approach to the figure of the black woman in writing by Jamaican men in the late 1930s and early 1940s, and the often guilt-ridden realism and protest of their female counterparts in dealing with the same topic. In Lucy E. Norman's "Market Women", for instance, the ancient pride of the peasant woman is contrasted to the physical hardship of their long trek into the city and their economic vulnerability to the whims of their customers:

In the day, in the dusk ever going
 patient feet
 weary feet.
 On they tramp, burdened heads proud upheld
 to their place in the mart without knowing
 what fate
 may await
 all their hopes - the display of their growing.

Her description links the memory of the sale of women's bodies during slavery to their present barter of foodstuffs in the market place and this suggests that the poet sees a connection between the peasant woman's economic oppression and the denial of her human rights during slavery. In Una Marson's "Going to Market" the poet's recognition of the woman's resilience

Old lady, I love you
For the courage you bring
To life -

competes with her sense of having failed in her social responsibilities by not relieving her fellow woman of the hard necessities of the peasant existence:

Old lady, I am sorry
The sun beats down
So relentlessly on you
As you journey.

In their insistence on the victimisation of the working-class woman, such poems seem to negate the sense of joyful participation in agricultural work present in McKay's earlier view of the peasant woman, as well as to ignore the woman's capacity for aggression and self-defence implied in the dialect poems of McKay and MacDermot and in de Lisser's novel Jane's Career. Perhaps the changed emphasis was a response to the increased hardship within the working class and especially among working-class women during the depression years. In his analysis of industrial trends in the British West Indies Arthur Lewis cites statistics for Jamaica showing a decrease in the ratio of women to men in the Jamaica labour force from 73 % in 1891 to 48 % in 1946.³⁷ These figures reflect the rise in rates of unemployment among women as the domestic market was flooded with men pushed out of jobs in North and Central America during the 1930s economic recession. In addition, the prosperous small-farming sector, traditionally a female-dominated activity, had been undermined by the take-over of the banana industry by foreign monopolies like the United Fruit Company. This reduced many small farmers to the level of wage labourers and drained resources away from the modestly prosperous pre-war agricultural towns described by McKay in Banana Bottom and the Ginger Town stories, undermining in turn the other staple

rural occupations of women as seamstresses, bakers and craftswomen. The results were an acceleration of the rate of rural-urban migration; a relative dearth of cheap foodstuffs in the city; an increase in the number of women wholly dependent on men for their upkeep or the upkeep of their children; and an upsurge of religious fatalism and escapism among working-class women. Marson's evocation of the communal release of the possession rituals of the predominantly female spiritualist sects emphasises the cathartic effect of the religious ecstasy through which many women attempted to sublimate their social and economic impotence:

Lord gie you chile de spirit
 Let her shout
 Lord gie you chile de power
 An' let her pray...
 Shout sister - shout -
 Halleluja - Amen
 Can't you feel de spirit
 Shout sister - shout

As the woman's possession progresses, the other women are urged to support her and participate vicariously in her experience:

Join de chorus,
 We feel it flowing o'er us -
 You is no chile of satan
 So get de spirit
 And shout - sister - shout -
 Hallelujah - Amen -
 Shout - sister - shout!³⁸

Religious sublimation of the socio-economic reality is also a characteristic of the poetry by middle-class women about their working-class sisters. In this context it is used as a way of shifting social responsibility for economic conditions away from the concerned middle-class woman who could see no other solution to relieving her sister's economic burden. Marson opts for such a resolution in "Going to Market", for example, which ends by supporting her subject's faith in "a heaven/ Where there are no hot fields/ And hotter highways", and where "the great God Himself/ will wipe all tears/ From your eyes."

Perhaps the most ambitious poem by a female author of this nature is Vera Bell's "Ancestor on the Auction Block": Like Marson's "Going to Market", the poem begins by expressing guilt and shame as the poet confronts not only her social responsibi-

lities in the present but also her connections with the working class through their joint origins within slave society:

Ancestor on the auction block
 Across the years your eyes seek mine
 Compelling me to look.
 I see your shackled feet
 Your primitive black face
 I see your humiliation
 And turn away
 Ashamed.

Across the years your eyes seek mine
 Compelling me to look
 Is this mean creature that I see
 Myself?
 Ashamed to look
 Because of myself ashamed
 Shackled by my own ignorance
 I stand
 A Slave.

After this compelling statement of the conflict however, Bell attempts a resolution through the invocation of a shared sense of human dignity and purpose transmuted through the participation of the speaker and her ancestor in the divine will:

Humiliated
 I cry to the eternal abyss
 For understanding
 Ancestor on the auction block
 Across the years your eyes meet mine
 Electric
 I am transformed
 My freedom is within myself.
 I look you in the eyes and see
 The spirit of God eternal
 Of this only need I be ashamed
 Of blindness to the God within me
 The same God who dwelt within you
 The same eternal God
 Who shall dwell
 In generations yet unborn.

The transition from "humiliated" to "electric" is stated rather than demonstrated in the poem's movement and imagery, and the vagueness of the conventional terms in which the "spirit of God eternal" is defined leaves one with the sensation that after all the problem posed by the poet in her opening stanzas has ultimately been evaded in much the same way as, after reading Tennyson's poems on the problems of doubt and faith, one is left with

the impression that the poet has achieved a significant insight into the nature of the conflict but is unable to reach a satisfactory resolution or admit that resolution is impossible. The poem's closing stanza attempts another form of resolution similar in some respects to Campbell's synthesis in "History Makers", by which the woman's humiliation and labour is rationalised as the beginning of the Jamaican society's struggle for dignity and independence:

Ancestor on the auction block
 Across the years
 I look
 I see you sweating, toiling, suffering
 Within your loins I see the seed
 Of multitudes
 From your labour
 Grow roads, aqueducts, cultivation
 A new country is born
 Yours was the task to clear the ground
 Mine be the task to build.³⁹

In spite of the comforting downward cadence of the last two lines however, this stanza also seems in my opinion to lose touch with the central issues of the poem, in a negative sense rather than in the positive sense in which Campbell's poem takes its distance from its subject. There seems to be a non sequitur in the logic through which the poet rationalises her sense of her ancestor's humiliation by reference to her own nationalist ideals. Unlike Campbell's "History Makers" the poem seems unable to accommodate the idea of the women as victims and shapers of history in a single image so that the assertion of progress is made by suppressing the awareness of shame rather than through a creative fusion of the two ideas. A similar weakness is apparent in Bell's short story "Easter Lilies", where a servant girl, arrested for stealing her mistress' clothes so that she can look pretty in church on Easter Sunday, commits suicide by swallowing poison against a heavy backdrop of resurrection imagery that suggests her opting out of the struggle in this life may yet open the door to a new incarnation in which her chances of happiness will be greater.

It would seem therefore that though a number of women writers of this period seem to have been approaching in their work a sense of identification with their female counterparts in the lower class,

none of them is ultimately able to achieve the artistic balance between empathy and optimism suggested in the almost accidental virtuosity of Campbell's "History Makers". What is more, the women writers as a group seem ultimately to reject confrontation with the society or with men as a way of dealing with the problems of working-class women and concentrate instead on voicing the women's complaints or extending religious comfort to the women whose hardship they describe. Their tendency to withdraw the women they present from active participation in the fight for social reform anticipates the subordination of female and working-class figures in the nationalist literature written by men to a concern with the problems of the male ego in the late 1940s and for most of the next three decades in West Indian writing. One can deduce the reasons for this shift from George Campbell's poem "Smells Like Hell" in which the familiar image of the women breaking stones - "One million children from women breaking stones" - is contrasted with the image of "The little beauty with the peanut brain... all childless, well slimmed down." Here the educated or privileged middle-class woman is evaluated negatively in comparison to her hard-working, child-bearing lower-class sister. The comparison suggests two things. In the first place, the lower-class woman has become a depersonalised symbol evoked to express the West Indian male's sense of social injustice or a romantic notion of the dignity of labour. At the same time the middle-class woman is presented as typically materialistic and culturally sterile in her withdrawal from the child-bearing process and her inability to think, or contribute meaningfully to the process of social reformation.

These two views of Jamaican women imply that middle-class Jamaican men no longer saw women as contributing either physically or intellectually to the process of resistance to colonialism or social injustice. Indeed the typical middle-class woman is now presented as a thorn in the flesh of the committed middle-class male who wishes to protect the "helpless" women of the working classes and to assert his own ego against the emasculating strategies of the dominant culture. In this way de Lisser's earlier stereotype of the apolitical female is perpetuated but given a re-

versed significance as the Jamaican male attempts to establish his right to participation in the political decision-making process of his community. Though the lower-class woman is honoured in several poems of this period, not a single male author puts forward a positive image of a woman of his own social status in his poetry. Indeed, a new recurring theme in the fiction of the late 1940s and early 1950s is the lack of a shared sense of vision between male and female partners in a relationship, and the predominantly male protagonists of such works are presented as having to turn in on themselves for strength and support. This theme is central to the problematic middle section of V.S. Reid's New Day (1949), the first Jamaican novel to focus exclusively on a male protagonist.⁴⁰ The first part of the novel deals with Davie Campbell's involvement in the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865, while the last part deals with his grandson's emergence as a political leader in the 1940s. The middle section is taken up with the narrator's presentation of the marriage between Davie and the beautiful Haitian mulatto, Lucille, and their attempts to found a utopian society on one of the small cays off the coast of Jamaica. The first encounter between Davie and Lucille occurs as she enters the Morant Bay parish church at the side of the hated custos Aldenburg:

'Member I remember how I stood looking on her eyes, on her hair, and saying to myself, "Johnny O, is summer moon it, shining on Maroon Hole, and silver lights are a-twinkle at the bottom o' dark waters."

And then I saw that her eyes were resting on Davie. Davie it was I knew, for I saw her looking long over my head, and when I turned and looked too, there was my bro' Davie. My bro' stands there looking on Lucille Dubois as if other people were not here at all, at all.

Watch them, Johnny O! Stallion eagerness is a-ripple Davie's flank against me shoulder. The sun has brought silver to the black of Lucille's hair, her lips suck at a blood-plum that is not there.⁴¹

Reid's lyrical evocation of Lucille's intoxicating beauty contains more than a hint of sexual danger and recalls the stereotype of the mulatress as sexually wanton and temperamental so often used in de Lisser's historical novels and "pot-boiler" romances. The initial electricity between Davie and Lucille involves the lat-

ter willy-nilly in Davie's escape from the redcoats to the off-shore island where he later founds his utopian colony. Predictably, the fun-loving Lucille wilts in this environment, and her "woman's" inability to do without laces, parties and admirers in this austere community whose economic basis is the farming of manure droppings left by the island's colonies of guango birds is opposed to the rigidity of Davie's ideals for political reform. Lucille's refusal to share her husband's vision is ultimately the cause of her shipwreck on the coast of Cuba during a storm which blows up while she is being entertained on board a visiting cargo ship by the debonair Captain Grantley. During the storm the Captain is killed and in Cuba Lucille is mistaken for a common ship's whore. Our final picture of her is as a prostitute in a Kingston brothel where she meets the narrator once more before her drunken death during the great earthquake and fire that destroyed much of Kingston in 1907. The fictional story of Davie and Lucille is inserted into Reid's historical novel as a cautionary tale about the dangers of political extremism, and Lucille's tragedy is ultimately blamed on her husband's unbending fanaticism. However, the symbolic opposition of male strength to female weakness, so alien to earlier literary presentations of the independent spirit of the Jamaican woman, is taken for granted in the narrative in a way that suggests that a new view of female character had become the norm in Jamaican society.

A similar development can be noted in the poetry of Louise Bennett.⁴² Though Bennett maintains the old view of the working-class woman as more than a match for her oppressors at the level of language, her poems tend to show women using men as surrogates for their aggression and, at a first glance, she seems to follow the bias of Jamaican men in her presentation of women as apolitical. In "Uriah Preach" for example, Bennett recounts the vicarious pleasure taken by a Jamaican woman in the accomplishments of her children and especially in her son's ability to use his occasional ascent to the pulpit to lambast the family's enemies:

Fe me fambly is not peaw-peaw,
 Me daughta Sue dah-teach,
 An wen rain fall, or Parson sick,
 Me son Uriah preach!

...

Him climb up pon de pulpit, him
 Lean over, him look dung,
 Him look pon all we enemy
 An lash dem wid him tongue!

The woman's pride in the poetic justice of her son's scriptural attacks on her enemies is a comic version of the religious escapism expressed in the poetry of Marson and Bell:

De fus one him teck on, was Lize
 Who tell de lie pon me,
 Him stare in a her face an say,
 "Thou art de mouti-mouti."

Him say, "Thou art de meddlesum,"
 Him say, "Thou art de rowasum."
 An den him look pon me an say,
 "Thou art de slaughtered lamb."

In "Me Brudda" an irate woman who has failed to get a job as a domestic servant forces her would-be employer to placate her with two weeks wages by threatening to call in her imaginary brother to settle the matter physically:

Oonoo call me bredda fe me,
 Beg you tell him come yah quick!
 Tell him bring him pelt-you-kin cow-cod
 An bus-you-open stick!

Here again the woman shifts the responsibility for physical aggression to a male figure implying that the woman herself no longer considers the threat of her own action sufficient to terrify the housewife she abuses.

Though Bennett often works through apolitical female figures who are more likely to react to the cut of a politician's clothes than what he says, she often expresses a feminist perspective on topical issues. For example, her poems often take note of social reforms intended to improve the position of women. In "Bans of Oman" for example she celebrates the founding of the Jamaican Federation of Women in the 1940s aimed at bringing together women of all classes, describing the clothes and social status of the women who flock to support it as "high an low, miggie suspended" and poems like "Solja Work" show the consequences of a local military presence for Jamaican women. As noted in Chapter III however, Bennett's satirical resources are limited to what she can authentically express through the resonances of a specific social reality and way of speech so that in her presentation of women she can only be as positive

about women as the character through whom she speaks is in real life. In a more recent poem she has described what she considers the philosophy of the Jamaican woman:

Jamaica Oman know she strong,
 She know she tallawah,
 But she no want her pickney dem
 Fi start call her "pupa".

So de cunny Jamma Oman
 Gwan like pants-suit is a style,
 An Jamaica man no know she wear
 De trousiz all de while!

So Jamaica Oman coaxin
 Fambly Budget from explode
 A so Jamaica man a sing
 "Oman a heaby load!"

This presentation of the female point of view elucidates Bennet's own method in the early poems, by which she is able to assert a sense of female strength under the guise of using male surrogates and seeming to acquiesce in ideas about female weakness. The fact that she feels constrained to work through such masks however gives an indication of the extent to which the attitude to women in Jamaican society had become that expressed in the song she quotes in her poem on Jamaican women, "Oman a heaby load!" It is worth noting that Bennett is one of the first creative writers to register the increase of female oppression which was one of the consequences of the male assertion of racial and political power during the nationalist movement of the 1940s and 1950s. Her poem "Pinnacle" satirises this chauvinistic attitude of men towards women as it manifested itself within the Rastafarian movement which in other respects has had such a profound and in many ways beneficial effect on Jamaican attitudes to language, race and spiritual values. Written after the brutal destruction of one of the first Rastafarian communities by the Jamaican government, the poem delights in the humiliation of one of the male members of the sect who had formerly used his Rastafarian convictions to terrorise his woman:

Mass John come back fram Pinnacle
 Yuh want see him head Mumma
 Yuh kean tell ef it meck o' hair
 Or out o' constab-macka.

Him tell we dat him get wey
 Wen de police meck de raid;
 Him crawl pon him belly like worm
 Fe four mile, him soh fraid.

Him really have heart fe come back,
 Atta him treat Maysoh bad!
 Sell de po' woman li' Jackass
 An start gwan like him mad.

Black up har two y'eye, bus har nose
 An starvehar je so lang
 She nearly dead, because she hooden
 Goh jine him Rasta gang.

She say she hooden fegive him
 'Cep him go dung pon him knee,
 She get har wish, far him dah-lidung now
 Flat-flat pon him belly.

Given this female perspective, it is hardly surprising to find that in Roger Mais's presentation of his quasi-Rasta protagonist in Brother Man, Bra' Man's greatest weakness is his fear of becoming attached to a woman who cannot or will not share his sense of vision. This is summarised in the story he tells Minette of the other woman in his life soon after he and Minette have finally become lovers. His former lover's selfishness in refusing to share their home with one of Bra' Man's down-and-out friends who subsequently commits suicide, and her later framing and betrayal of Brother Man have left Brother Man wary of all contact with women. Bra' Man's acceptance of Minette as a friend and confidante comes as he is about to be betrayed by everyone else and beaten up by an irate Kingston crowd because he looks like a Rastafarian. Our last picture of Bra' Man is him leaning against Minette as she helps him to the window after his beating by the crowd:

He saw all things that lay before him in a vision of certitude, and he was alone no longer.

"Look at me," he said.

Her gaze met his, unfaltering.

"You see it, out there, too?"

She looked up above the rooftops where that great light glowed across the sky.

She said: "Yes, John, I have seen it."

"Good," he said, and again, "Good."

He moved away from the window, back into the cool dimness of the room beyond.

And she went before him, carrying herself proudly, shielding the little flame of the candle with her hand.⁴³

The passage seems to suggest that Mais's vision of the ideal male-female relationship was one in which the woman played the role of supporter to the man's vision and sense of personal integrity.

In Black Lightning Mais takes this idea further but removes it from the limited context of the woman's position vis-à-vis the man of vision. The relationship between Jake and his wife Estella, who leaves him shortly after the opening of the novel, becomes a symbol of the human need to accept support and to acknowledge a sense of dependence on others. For most of the novel, Jake's wife, Estella, is absent and Jake, the artist/blacksmith/intellectual, is forced to turn to much weaker individuals for the support and friendship he needs. His dependence first on Miriam, a young girl who is too insignificant to threaten his sense of self-sufficiency; then ^{on} Amos, the crippled hunchback whom Jake perceives as totally reliant on him; and then on his old servant Bess who becomes a surrogate mother after Jake is struck blind by lightning, illuminates in each case one facet of his former relationship with Estella. In the final pages of the novel Estella returns to explain the root of Jake's insecurity to his hunchbacked friend Amos, and the reader:

"You've grown into somebody, Amos. You will never go back to being nobody again. Jake's done that for you. No wonder you're proud to be his friend... But he could never forgive you that he had to be dependent upon you for something. It's in him. He just can't help it."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about Jake. We got on fine, until he found out that he was leaning on me too much..."⁴⁴

Estella explains Jake's inability to finish his carving of the biblical Samson as the consequence of his refusal, like Samson's, to acknowledge the limitations of his own strength. Jake's obsession with the biblical story of Samson's betrayal by Delilah and his final terrible destruction as he avenges his God and himself against the humiliations suffered at the hands of the philistines, becomes an ironic commentary on Jake's own eventual suicide, which, unlike Samson's, achieves nothing more than the ending of a life with which he has been unable to come to terms.

Mais's removal of the problem of male-female relationships within his community to an allegorical level in the Black Lightning story is typical of his tendency to search out the philosophical centre of the human situations he portrays rather than becoming absorbed in the surface realities. His three novels span

the whole range of attitudes towards women expressed in Jamaican literature during the chronological period covered in this study: in The Hills Were Joyful Together he concentrates on the predominantly female interdependent community of the yard, similar in some respects to the yard in which de Lisser places his young heroine in Jane's Career and containing strong independent women like those in McKay's stories (for example the prostitute Zephyr whom Mais describes as continually being embarrassed by the largeness of her heart). But Mais's yard also contains women who have become victims of oppression by men and society or who have opted for religious escapism - for example the three sisters of Charity whose songs provide an impotent backdrop to the sufferings of the other women in the yard. Brother Man deals like Reid's New Day with the personal vision of a single male protagonist as well as his interaction with the society as a whole. Here Mais casts women in secondary roles as supporters of the man's ideal at the literal level, who act out in their relationships with the central male protagonist - as confidantes, rejected lovers and people in need of healing - the various stages in the protagonists' spiritual and intellectual development. Brother Man anticipates the treatment of women in the novels of the 1950s and 1960s like Naipaul's Mimic Men, Garth St. Omer's Nor Any Country, Lamming's Water With Berries, and John Hearne's Voices under the Window, where female characters are given similar supportive roles in relation to central male protagonists whose inner conflicts and problems in relating to society are expressed through their relationships with several representative women. Black Lightning looks forward to the West Indian writing of the 1970s in which the figure of the woman once more reasserts itself as demanding examination in its own right rather than as an extension of the male ego. Works like Lamming's Natives of My Person, Brathwaite's Mother Poem and Walcott's Another Life attempt a re-appraisal of the role of the West Indian woman which, as in Black Lightning, often takes the form of revealing the dependency of the masculine figure on the woman as the ultimate source of the man's vision and potential strength, if only he would be prepared to acknowledge it.

Jamaican society is unique within the English-speaking Caribbean in its close documentation of every step of the changing

perception of the West Indian woman in its literature. In Trinidad by contrast, although a powerful sense of the strength and independence of the lower-class woman is expressed in the short fiction of the Beacon group written in the 1930s, there is no middle phase comparable to the idealistic writing of the Jamaica Poetry League to help explain the transition from this figure of the woman as economically and sexually aggressive to the later treatment of women in the work of Naipaul and Selvon as facets of the male personality. In Guyanese literature, Mittelholzer's portrayal of dominant matriarchal figures in his historical novels as well as his use of female protagonists as late as 1953 in novels such as The Life and Death of Sylvia suggests that any patterns developed for Jamaican society and its literary perception of the woman cannot be automatically transferred to other literatures of the region although a basic pattern of male protagonists taking over from female figures in the literature published after 1950 remains true for the region as a whole. What the wealth of evidence for the almost obsessive concern with the female figure before the emergence of an internationally recognised school of West Indian writing in the 1950s demonstrates most conclusively is the extent to which the "typical" West Indian novel with its middle-class male protagonist and its themes of cultural alienation is in fact a comparatively recent phenomenon. Both male and to a lesser extent female writers since 1940 have minimised the social and intellectual contribution of the West Indian women in much the same way that the 1930s Jamaican poets attempted to play down the sexual and economic independence of their female subjects. An understanding of the stages of development in the early literary presentation of women in Jamaican writing goes a long way towards explaining new directions in West Indian writing and their importance to attempts at self-definition for both male and female West Indians.

Notes

¹W.P. Livingstone, Black Jamaica: A Study in Evolution (London: Sampson, Low Marston & C., 1899), pp. 46-47. Livingstone himself seems to qualify his criticism partially later in his study when he notes: "A robust, active and independent class (the women) appear unconscious of any hardship in the arrangement which transfers to them so large a part of the burden of life. It gives them a certain power apart from sex (sic), over the men, which in the circumstances is perhaps essential. It would seem that nature has counterbalanced the weakness of sex by supplying them with constitutions stronger even than the male. The one drawback is a tendency to neglect giving proper attention to the duties of maternity and the responsibilities of the household" (pp. 220-221).

²See Rhoda Reddock, "Women and Slavery", paper presented at the Institute for Social Studies, The Hague, Holland, 1980.

³See Erna Brodber, "Profile of the Jamaican Free Woman", paper presented at the Institute of Social and Economic Research, U.W.I., Mona, Jamaica, May 1980.

⁴"Nana" by Mary Wolcott in The Island of Sunshine: Verses by "Tropica" (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1904), p. 39. In his article on "Creative Literature of the British West Indies During the Period of Slavery", Savacou, I, 1 (June, 1970), Edward Brathwaite notes a similar tendency to depersonalise black figures in pre-Emancipation literature. He cites "Monk" Lewis's description of a black girl, Mary Wiggins, which ends, "Mary Wiggins and an old cotton tree are the most picturesque objects that I have seen for these twenty years" (p. 52).

⁵H.G. de Lisser, Jane's Career (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 81.

⁶Thomas MacDermot, "Market Basket in the Car", in Orange Valley and Other Poems by "Tom Redcam" (Kingston: The Pioneer Press, 1951), p. 28; Claude McKay, "The Apple Woman's Complaint", in Constab Ballads (New York: Black Heritage Library Edition, 1972), p. 57.

⁷"Pay-day", by McKay, in Constab Ballads, p. 52; "The Mothers of the City", by MacDermot, in Orange Valley, p. 26.

^{7a}See A.L. McLeod, "Memory and the Edenic Myth: Claude McKay's Green Hills of Jamaica", World Literature Written in English, 18, 1 (April, 1979) for a discussion of the pre-lapsarian quality suggested in McKay's nostalgic evocation of rural Jamaica.

⁸Claude McKay, "The Strange Burial of Sue", collected in My Green Hills of Jamaica and Five Jamaican Stories, ed. Mervyn Morris (Kingston: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1979), p. 157. The story first appeared in Ginger Town (New York, 1932).

⁹See H.G. de Lisser, "Marriage", a series of articles on Jamaican society published in the Jamaica Times between June 9th and August 25th, 1900.

^{9a}De Lisser, Jane's Career, pp. 108-109.

¹⁰Curious because MacDermot chooses a pure African character rather than a pure European character as a symbol of purity. The stereotype of the mulatress, however, as highly charged sexually and temperamentally fickle is a common one in Jamaican literature. H.G. de Lisser uses it in Morgan's Daughter, and more recently John Hearne has used this figure in his novels. See also the discussion of V.S. Reid's portrayal of the mulatress Lucille in New Day later in this chapter.

¹¹De Lisser, Jane's Career, pp. 193 and 196.

¹²Kenneth Ramchand, Introduction to Jane's Career, p. xvi. John Thieme in his article "Careering Uphill" in the Guyana Sunday Chronicle, 18th February, 1973, also expresses unease over de Lisser's attitude to his heroine. He takes issue with Ramchand's description of the novel as the first "proletarian novel" written by a West Indian and compares de Lisser's narrative stance to V.S. Naipaul's technique of distancing irony, and comments: "Whereas in Naipaul this is consonant with his disenchanting vision of Caribbean life, in Jane's Career it is at odds with the would-be liberalism of the novel. One can only conclude that the novel as we have it is not what the author intended it to be; his unconscious prejudices come through." However, in my opinion de Lisser's prejudices are as conscious as Naipaul's disenchantment, although under the benign influence of Sydney Olivier they are less obtrusive in Jane's Career than they become in later novels. The comparison between de Lisser's work and Naipaul's is a useful one though. An interesting study remains to be done between the two writers whose biographies, attitudes and techniques reveal many similarities.

¹³McKay, "The Strange Burial of Sue", in Green Hills, pp. 156-157.

¹⁴J.H. Froude, The English in the West Indies or The Bow of Ulysses (London, 1888), Chapter I. De Lisser's references to Froude's book occur in his series of articles called "Marriage" (see note 9 above).

¹⁵De Lisser, Jane's Career, p. 196. Marcus Garvey's involvement in the 1907 printers' strike is discussed by Adolph Edwards in Marcus Garvey: 1887-1940 (London: New Beacon Books, 1967).

¹⁶Astley Clerk, "The Queen Mother", in Voices from Summerland, ed. J.E.C. McFarlane (London: Fowler Wright, 1929), p. 53; and "The Lady of the Birds", in ibid., p. 49.

¹⁷Constance Hollar, "The Caged Mongoose" in Flaming June (Kingston: The New Dawn Press, 1941), p. 121; and "The Little Goat", in ibid., p. 92.

¹⁸Hollar, "My Grandmother", in Flaming June; J.E.C. McFarlane, "Beauty", in Summerland, p. 147; M.M. Ormsby, "What Is Love?" in Summerland, p. 233; Stephanie Ormsby, "Desire" in Summerland, p. 247.

- ¹⁹J.E. Clare McFarlane, "Dawn", in Summerland, p. 133; Joan Richmond, "What Hast Thou Done", in The Yearbook of the Poetry League of Jamaica (Kingston: New Dawn Press, 1939), p. 8.
- ²⁰See Fernando Henriques, Family and Colour in Jamaica (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1953).
- ²¹J.E. Clare McFarlane, Sex and Christianity (Kingston: The Gleaner Company, 1932), pp. 26 and 27.
- ²²J.E. Clare McFarlane, Beatrice: A Narrative Poem in Classical Metre (Kingston: The Times Printery, 1918), p. 3. This edition seems, like de Lisser's Squalitone (1917), to have been subsidised by the rum merchants Myers & Son, advertisements for whose products appear on the covers of the volume.
- ²³J. E. Clare McFarlane, The Magdalen: The Story of Supreme Love (Kingston: The New Dawn Press), pp. 17-18, and p. 43.
- ²⁴De Lisser himself comments on the improved facilities for female education in an article on St. Hugh's High School in Planters' Punch, IV, 4 (1941-42), p. 10, and on the new breed of assertive independent women it produced in an earlier Planters' Punch article on working women in II, 5 (1930-31), p. 25.
- ²⁵The following poems from Una Marson's Tropic Reveries (Kingston: The Gleaner Company, 1930) are quoted: "To Wed or Not to Wed", p. 81; "If", p. 83; "Illusion", p.54; and "The Waves", p. 6.
- ²⁶The following poems from Una Marson's The Moth and the Star (Kingston: The Gleaner Company, 1937) are quoted: "Kinky Hair Blues", p. 91; "Black Burden", p. 93; "Cinema Eyes", p. 87; and "Confession", p. 63.
- ²⁷See J.E. Clare McFarlane, A Literature in the Making (Kingston: The Pioneer Press, 1956), p. 94.
- ²⁸H.G. de Lisser, Myrtle and Money, in Planters' Punch, IV, 4 (1941-42), p. 5.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 35.
- ³⁰H.P. Jacobs, review of Myrtle and Money, in Public Opinion, 3rd January, 1942, p. 8.
- ³¹De Lisser, Myrtle, p. 70.
- ³²See Mervyn Morris's article, "Contending Values: The Prose Fiction of Claude McKay", Jamaica Journal, IX, 2&3 (1975), for a discussion of the two poles of behaviour represented by Ray and Jake and their relation to McKay's own situation.
- ^{32a}Maria Diedrich, Kommunismus im afroamerikanischen Roman: Das Verhältnis afroamerikanischer Schriftsteller zur Kommunistischen Partei der USA zwischen den Weltkriegen (Stuttgart, 1979), p. 93.

³³Claude McKay, Banana Bottom (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1961), p. 313. Similar reservations about McKay's presentation of Bitā's character are expressed by Rupert and Maureen Lewis in "Claude McKay's Jamaica", Caribbean Quarterly, XXIII, 2&3 (June-September, 1977). They note important gaps in McKay's psychological presentation of Bitā's character (How did the twelve-year-old Bitā feel about her rape by Crazy Bow? In what precise way did her English education shape her thoughts, attitudes, predilections?) and come to the conclusion that there is "no emotional basis for the reader to believe that Bitā Plant, transplanted from a prosperous peasant home to a rural English manse for two years and to English boarding school in Britain for five, apparently could be content to return to her father's home to live, and furthermore, to eventually marry her father's drayman. Not that this is totally impossible but that the factors leading up to this are most unsatisfactorily dealt with" (p. 48). Like Morris (see note 32 above) the Lewises relate these areas of ambivalence to McKay's own unresolved conflicts about class and race within Jamaica. While agreeing with this judgement there remains, however, a positive side to this aspect of wish-fulfilment so often remarked in analyses of McKay's fictional presentation of Jamaica that relates it closely to other attempts to present Jamaican society in a positive light (see the Conclusion of this thesis for a discussion of this characteristic approach among Jamaican creative writers).

³⁴Poems from George Campbell's First Poems (Kingston: City Printery, 1945) are quoted in the following order: "Black Mother", p. 37; "Your Blackness Steeps Through Me", p. 36; "History Makers", p. 61.

³⁵Marson, "The Stonebreakers", in The Moth, p. 70.

³⁶Lucy E. Norman, "Market Women", in The Yearbook of the Poetry League of Jamaica (1940), p. 36. But note also the more affirmative ideas expressed in her closing stanza:

When men vaunt of their courage, their toil
and their fame
in the frame

Of my thoughts I shall see as a foil
Moving forms, gleaming eyes - sisters dark
serve and feed
daily need

I shall hear softly tread the warm soil
women's feet.

Also quoted: Una Marson, "Going to Market", in The Moth, p. 89.

³⁷See W.A. Lewis, Industrialisation in the Caribbean (Port of Spain: Caribbean Commission, 1950).

³⁸Marson, "Gettin de Spirit", in The Moth, p. 76.

³⁹Vera Bell, "Ancestor on the Auction Block", in Focus (1948), p. 187.

⁴⁰The one exception could perhaps be de Lisser's Triumphant Squalitone, which makes use of a male first-person narrator as well as a male protagonist, but the story itself concerns equally the fate of Squalitone's daughters, and the activities of women in Jamaican politics is one of its central themes.

⁴¹V.S. Reid, New Day (Kingston: Sangster/Heinemann, 1970), p. 38.

⁴²The following poems from Louise Bennett's Jamaica Labrish (Kingston: Sangsters Ltd., 1966) are quoted: "Uriah Preach", p. 203; "Me Brudda", p. 190; "Pinnacle", p. 121. "Jamaica Oman" is quoted from an unpublished manuscript.

⁴³Roger Mais, Brother Man, in The Three Novels of Roger Mais (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), p. 191.

⁴⁴Mais, Black Lightning, in The Three Novels, p. 215.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MORANT BAY REBELLION: HISTORY AS THE BASIS FOR FICTION

In discussing the fictional treatment of the Morant Bay Rebellion it may be useful to keep in mind a simple list of the events that led up to the riots in 1865. Kenneth Ramchand quotes the following summary from The Making of the West Indies in an essay on V.S. Reid's New Day:

The event known as the Morant Bay Rebellion was in fact a local riot. A group of independent smallholders, excited by a Baptist Union preacher named Paul Bogle, marched on Morant Bay Court House on 4th October, 1865 to challenge the Custos of the parish on what they considered an unfair case of arrest the day before. The militia had been called out and, in the heated exchange of argument between Bogle's men and the Custos, they were finally provoked to fire on the crowds. What had been an angry deputation now became a disorderly gang. They burnt down the Court House, and twenty-eight people including the Custos and some of the rioters were killed. More property was destroyed and the inmates of the prison released before the band retreated into the country again.

Ramchand adds this résumé of the events which followed:

Governor Eyre treated the outbreak as a Negro insurrection led by discontented coloured settlers. A state of emergency was declared in the Parish. George William Gordon, an influential coloured landowner who had some kind of contact with Bogle, and who had previously clashed with Eyre was arrested in Kingston and brought into St. Thomas where a court-martial found him guilty of high treason. Gordon was hanged in front of the Morant Bay Court House; 580 men and women were killed or hanged, 600 were flogged and 1,000 houses destroyed before Eyre called off his English troops, satisfied at last that the insurrection was over.

While the historians quoted in the first extract above are probably factually correct in insisting on the localised and therefore limited scope of the riot itself, the events of 1865 at Morant Bay began to acquire a wider ideological significance for Jamaicans in general almost as soon as they occurred.

In the first place the riots took place three decades after Emancipation when it had become obvious to all concerned that the old Jamaican planter class was not about voluntarily to allow its former slaves to acquire the full rights and privileges of free

citizens. There were constant squabbles over rights to land and property between planters and peasant proprietors, and the judgement on one such case was the bone of contention that finally led to the 1865 riots. The 1860s had also been years of particular economic hardship because a series of severe droughts had exacerbated the inflationary prices for imported food stuffs and raw materials brought on by the Civil War in America. The plight of the peasant farmers and poorer classes in Jamaica had become in the eyes of some observers so desperate that an English Baptist minister was moved to write directly to the Colonial Office on behalf of the Jamaican poor, describing the extent of the hardship being experienced in the island and the unsympathetic attitudes of the planter class. Underhill's letter inspired further direct petitions, notably the petition of the poor people of the Parish of St. Andrews. Their petition drew in response the famous statement known as "The Queen's Advice" in which the Colonial Office in the name of the Queen informed the petitioners:

The means of support of the labouring classes depend on their labour. Her majesty will regard with interest and satisfaction their advancement through their own merits and efforts.²

The full text from which this extract is adapted was posted in all public places and read from the pulpit in established church congregations. It reinforced the rift between the Baptist community from which Underhill's original letter had been sent and the established church, which had been losing ground locally against the non-conformists following the great religious revival of 1862. In this connection it is not insignificant that both Paul Bogle and George William Gordon held positions within the local Baptist congregation - Gordon was a lay preacher, and Bogle, a deacon. Underhill's letter and "The Queen's Advice" created a stir in the country and were unusually dramatic symbols of the political conflict and mood of confrontation within Jamaica at this period. It would not be overstating the case to say that the Morant Bay Rebellion was a local eruption of widely held feelings of resentment among Jamaicans for the contemptuous way in which their attempts to gain redress for their situation through established channels had been rebuffed.

The riot itself was also not as accidental as the phrasing of the historians' summary implies. While spontaneous riots were and still are a familiar means of expressing frustration and discontent in West Indian societies, the death during the rioting of twenty-eight persons, including the Custos of Morant Bay, suggests that the outburst was rather more serious than the periodic burnings of canefields and destruction of property that usually characterised a local riot, and this in turn implies a greater amount of frustration and determination on the part of the rioters than usual. There is also no question that Governor Eyre himself saw the riots as a form of organised rebellion. His harsh methods of repressing the violence have undoubtedly contributed to the legendary and ideological importance of the Morant Bay Rebellion as, in the words of Eyre himself, "the retribution was so prompt and so terrible that it is never likely to be forgotten."³

One of the political connections usually made with the Morant Bay Rebellion is that it was this event which led to the suspension of the Jamaican Constitution and the introduction of the Crown Colony system of government in 1866. This change in government would probably have come about in any event as it did in other islands, with or without the Morant Bay Rebellion; however the riots probably heightened the urgency with which the constitutional changes were discussed. Gordon's implication in the event as a coloured member of the Jamaican Assembly must have reinforced the fears of those members of the plantocracy who saw the growing prosperity of sections of the black and coloured middle class as a threat to their control of local politics and preferred to give up their constitutional rights to rule the island rather than share power with their former slaves. The actual manipulation by which Eyre gained a vote in favour of the suspension of the Constitution is another matter, but certainly later attacks on and defences of the Crown Colony system took it for granted that the events at Morant Bay had played an important part in the Assembly's decision and could be cited in support for or rejection of the new system of government.

Another reason for the subsequent ideological importance of the Morant Bay Rebellion was the controversy it created back in England about human rights and methods of crowd control. Eyre was recalled in 1866 from his position as Lieutenant-Governor to face charges of unwarranted brutality in the suppression of the rebellion, especially with regard to his legally dubious act of removing George William Gordon from Kingston to an area under a state of emergency and executing him by court martial for his role in an uprising in which it was quite clear he had played no physical part. Eyre's trial excited attention within intellectual circles in Britain, and probably every prominent British intellectual of the period took up a position on the matter: Carlyle, Ruskin, Froude, Tennyson, Dickens and Kingsley favoured Eyre while Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, T.H. Huxley and Charles Lyell were against him.⁴ In general the case for or against Eyre was argued from opinions on the nature of the revolt and the characters of the leading figures, and before the end of the century a number of works that dealt with ^{the} lives and politics of Eyre and Gordon appeared in print.⁵ Unfavourable estimates of Gordon characterised him as a bastard mulatto with a chip on his shoulder and a grudge against society, who had often provoked the wrath of the Governor and regularly used violent language in public speeches calculated to stir up the masses. Eyre's career in the civil service was examined and comparisons were made between his actions in Jamaica and his methods of dealing with aborigines in Australia where he had lived before coming to Jamaica. Very few accounts dealt with the role of Paul Bogle who had actually led the group involved in the rioting, and little seems to have been known about him except that he was a Baptist deacon and may have acted as a political agent for Gordon during elections.

In Jamaica itself, Morant Bay came to be seen as a "Second Haiti" and was cited to reinforce arguments for the need for strong central government as well as the opposite argument that English expatriates like Eyre knew less about "handling the natives" than the local planter class and that political power

should therefore be decentralised. Gordon became the archetypal point of reference for the view of the man of colour as temperamentally volatile and ultimately destructive in his relationships with both blacks and whites. From the opposite perspective Gordon was perceived as the prototype of the new nationalist politician. His challenge to the Governor and local plantocracy and his support for the aspirations of the black masses were constantly cited by later coloured leaders as epitomising the pivotal role of the Brown Man in Jamaican politics.

Such a combination of local and international repercussions and ideas could not fail to have an effect on the literary imagination, and each of the ideological positions summarised above has been given a literary or fictional context by a Jamaican writer or in the popular tradition. The way in which the Morant Bay Rebellion is presented and interpreted in Jamaican literature provides a useful touchstone to changing social perceptions and artistic goals in Jamaican society. The earliest texts on record in which the Morant Bay Rebellion is mentioned are the two folk songs Jekyll includes in his collection of Jamaica Song and Story. The fact that he was able to collect them shows that the memory of Morant Bay was still a real one among the Jamaican peasantry at the beginning of the twentieth century. The attitude to the event implied in the songs tends to reinforce the historian Roy Augier's suggestion that we ought perhaps to "remember Morant Bay in greater measure for the many who suffered, rather than exaggerate the achievement of the few who rioted," as in both songs the emphasis is on the suffering inflicted on the peasantry by what Jekyll describes as "the prompt action of Governor Eyre":⁶

War down a Monkland
 War down a Morant Bay
 War down a Chiggerfoot,
 The Queen never know.
 War, war, war oh!
 War oh! Heavy war oh!
 Soldiers from Newcastle
 Come down a Monkland
 With gun an' sword
 Fe kill sinner oh!
 War, war, war oh!
 War oh! Heavy war oh!

Jekyll comments on the fact that in this first song the rebels are referred to as "sinners" as compared with the second song "in which they pose as aggrieved persons" and sees this as evidence "that there was a loyal as well as a disloyal party" within the black population. His reading of the song already quoted seems based on a false understanding of the symbolism within the Creole language. The phrase "poor sinners" in the Creole context of the religious revival of the 1860s would have carried the connotation of "victim" as in "I'm only a sinner saved by grace," indicating helplessness against the wiles of Satan (Eyre?) rather than evil on the part of the sinner. The reference to the Queen a few lines earlier clearly refers to the fact that many Jamaicans saw Eyre's decision to call in the troops as not having the support of the Crown (personalised in the popular imagination as "Missus Queen" Victoria, the emancipator of the slaves). This reference reinforces a reading of "sinners" as "victims" since it implies that in this particular situation the sinners/victims had been without divine/royal protection because Eyre had acted behind the Queen's back.

The other song, which Jekyll quotes as evidence of a "disloyal" element, actually expresses the same combination of personal suffering and sense of unwarranted retribution as the first song, except that here the criticism is more overt:

Oh General Jackson!
 Oh General Jackson!
 Oh General Jackson!
 Oh you kill all the Black man them!
 Oh what a wrongful judgement!
 Oh what a wrongful judgement!
 Oh what a wrongful judgement!
 You kill all the Black man them.
 Oh what a awful mourning!
 Oh what a awful mourning!
 Oh what a awful mourning!
 You bring on St. Thomas people!⁸

Neither of these songs takes up the question of the rights or wrongs of the St. Thomas people's initial use of violence, which was to become central to later fictional attempts by members of the Jamaican middle class to deal with the Morant Bay Rebellion. They also make no reference to the internal political changes

which followed the rebellion, though in the first one an awareness of the international repercussions of the event is implied.

Claude McKay's poem "Gordon to the Oppressed Natives", which was published in the Jamaica Times in 1912 also links the event with politics in the mother country, but already there is evidence of a popular perception of Gordon's involvement and the riots themselves as playing an important role in the black Jamaican's struggle for political power and personal liberty. McKay's poem is declamatory in style, a feature it shares with other pre-World War I Jamaican poems such as MacDermot's "Song for the Exhibition Year" quoted in Chapter II. Such poems seem to have been written for oral delivery, and were often featured in the columns of the Jamaica Times as set pieces for recitation competitions in the Times Literary Army. "Gordon to the Oppressed Natives" however goes beyond the traditional sentiments expressed in rhetorical poems of this nature, and is perhaps comparable to the Gettysburg Address or Henry V's speech before the Battle of Agincourt in its attempt to use the call to arms it contains to place the historical event to which it refers within a tradition of ennobling and heroic action based on shared national or spiritual ideals:

O you sons of Afric's soil,
 Dyin' in a foreign land,
 Crushed beneat' de moil and toil,
 Break, break de oppressor's hand!

Wake de lion in your veins,
 De gorilla in your blood;
 Show dem dat you ha' some brains
 Though you may be coarse and rude.

Wilberforce has set you free,
 Sharpe and Buxton worked for you;
 Trample on the tyranny
 Still continued by a few!

Keep before you Clarkson's name!
 Ef your groans caan win de fight,
 Jes' to put do'n dis great shame
 Lawful 'tis to use our might.

England paid you' ransom down,
 Meant to save you from the pain
 Now, freedmen o' England's crown
 Burst de cruel tyrant's chain.

Never would an English mind
 Bow beneat' such tyranny;
 Rise, O people of my kind;
 Struggle, struggle to be free!

 Shake de burden off your backs,
 Show de tyrants dat you're strong;
 Fight for freedom's rights, you blacks!
 Ring de slaves' old battle-song!

 Gordon's heart here bleeds for you,
 He will lead to victory;
 We will conquer every foe,
 Or togeder gladly die.⁹

The poem's militant note anticipates later protest poems by McKay like "If We Must Die", which though written in response to black oppression in America has often been quoted in other contexts as a rallying cry for armed resistance - notably by Winston Churchill during the Second World War. The fourth stanza's use of the conditional "ef" in presenting the case for violence as an heroic alternative when all other forms of resistance fail echoes the sentiments of the second quatrain of the later sonnet:

If we must die, O let us nobly die,
 So that our precious blood may not be shed
 In vain; then even the monsters we defy
 Shall be constrained to honour us though dead!¹⁰

In "Gordon to the Oppressed Natives" the heroes of earlier struggles for freedom who are called by name are predominantly English leaders of the anti-slavery movement whose tactics were pacifist and legalistic rather than revolutionary, but McKay goes on to link their struggle with an African warrior tradition as well as with physical resistance to slavery by black Jamaicans before Emancipation, ideas which McKay cites in My Green Hills of Jamaica as having been handed down to him by his father. The juxtaposition of these various traditions of struggle in the poem is in line with McKay's later attempts to blend what he considered the best aspects of the Jamaican's African and European heritage in his prose fiction. Though the African is characterised as being "coarse and rude", the use of violence is seen as proof of his humanity, rather than part of the negative racial stereotype connected at first glance with an expression like "wake ... de gorilla in your blood." McKay presents the Morant Bay Rebellion as one inci-

dent in the black Jamaican's continuing struggle for personal liberty and puts this struggle on the same level as the Englishman's proud claim of being above submission to tyranny. In a sense McKay reinterprets the values expressed in the song "Rule Britannia" in a way that suggests he had internalised the ideals of British Imperialism without allowing it to negate his own racial or social aspirations.

Though George William Gordon is the dramatis persona who speaks the poem, it is the ideals with which he is associated that hold the centre of the stage rather than the character of the speaker himself. In the final stanza the mulatto is presented as leading the armed struggle though the cause for which he fights is essentially that of the black Jamaican rather than his own. However the outsider's commitment to the cause is not questioned and there is no attempt to suggest that he was not involved in the violence. Indeed the poem closes by expressing Gordon's involvement in the rebels' cause ("Gordon's heart here bleeds for you") and his commitment to support it even to death. Such views may have brought McKay into conflict with his patron Jekyll, who in Jamaica Song and Story characterises the Morant Bay Rebellion as a near massacre of white residents that was only averted by the prompt action of Governor Eyre. One is tempted to speculate as to whether this difference of opinion may have influenced the exclusion of this poem from McKay's early collections which were published through Jekyll's efforts. The poem was one of McKay's best known pieces locally, and was awarded an international prize in 1912. It was given a place of honour in the literary evening held at James Hill Literary Society and published in the pages of the Jamaica Times. It is possible that the poem was written after McKay's manuscripts had been prepared for publication, but other poems which appeared in the volumes were featured in the Jamaica Times at around the same period. If the poem pre-dates the volumes' going to press then its exclusion suggests that Jekyll may have censored McKay's poem indirectly and that other poems closer in spirit to McKay's later protest writing may also have been left out.

McKay's presentation of the Morant Bay Rebellion as epitomising the convergence of white and black ideals is in line with the generally "progressive" position of MacDermot's pre-war Jamaica Times in which the black struggle for social and political recognition was presented as commendable and not necessarily antagonistic to the benevolent ideals of racial amelioration which were felt to characterise the best British interests in the island. Although armed struggle was considered unnecessary at this stage, the educated blacks and their patrons within the dominant group tended to see themselves as allies against the local remnants of the old plantocracy in much the same way as McKay's poem brackets the white abolitionist movement and black resistance to slavery against the interests of the planter class of an earlier generation. After World War I when black resistance did in fact return to more militant forms this assumption of a convergence of interests between the black population and the dominant culture would have been considered naive as by then privileged locals and expatriates had closed ranks against the threat of lower class militancy. H.G. de Lisser's post-war novel Revenge (1919) expresses this new mood of distrust of black political demands. It recreates the events of the Morant Bay Rebellion as a cautionary tale for contemporaneous society, presenting both black dissatisfaction and coloured leadership as threats to social order.

Though both Bogle and Gordon appear as characters in de Lisser's novel, our attention is focussed on the fictional Carlton family who own and run an exemplary sugar estate in the Morant Bay area. At the centre of the novel's interest is the danger of racial holocaust which the rebellion implies for these sympathetically drawn protagonists, and the threat of rape to Mrs. Carlton and her beautiful niece Joyce, only recently out from England. These twin spectres are constantly reiterated in the novel's imagery. The novel opens with the Carltons watching the spread of bush fires in the mountains overlooking their estate:

Black but distinct the huge piles loomed, their summits silhouetted against a sky all sable and quivering gold. And on the crests and slopes of some of these mountains fierce fires were blazing, each one a glaring tongue of flame that licked viciously upwards as if hungry for destruction.

When Dick, the Carltons' son, mentions that he has heard that the fires were being set as a call to religious repentance aimed at purging the wickedness which had caused the droughts out of the land, his mother's comment drives home the ominous symbolism of this description:

"Those fires are not only warnings," she said bitterly; "they are signals. And we are the 'wickedness' to be purged out of the land. Haven't you noticed the change that has come over the people of late? - I have spoken of it before. But only now have they begun to set fires and plan revivals, making the drought an excuse."¹¹

Later the sign that the time is ripe for an attack on the whites is received at a midnight revival meeting which Joyce secretly observes. Bogle's prayer for a sign from heaven is answered when the moon is blotted out by clouds. Here the rape imagery is explicit:

Steadily the crowd moved forward, and after it came creeping the dense black mass that now covered half the sky. At this moment the moon struggled out from beneath the veils of vapour that had dimmed it. Serenely it shone, as though conscious of its triumph. A groan burst from Paul Bogle and was echoed by hundreds of the expectant crowd.

But still they stared, and inch by inch the darkness drew towards the light. Joyce, too, infected by the spirit of the people, watched the scene with intensest interest. At last the cloud touched the edge of the moon, a moment after it had swept over most of it. Darker and darker grew the night, swiftly the light departed. Soon it was all gone, and gloom profound had swallowed trees and hills. Only where the fires burnt brightly at the bottom of the gorge could any object be distinctly seen.

There had been silence during the engulfing of the moon. Now there arose a wild cry of triumph, and high above it rang the voice of Paul Bogle - "A sign, the Spirit give us a sign!" Once again the chant rose, its measure beating quick and fierce upon the air. "Come, Charles," gasped Joyce, "I have stayed here long enough!"¹²

The orgiastic tone of this scene is reinforced by de Lisser's description of the obscene writhing dance of the obeah woman Bogle has engaged to prophesy at the meeting. The use of images of fire and darkness as metaphors for rape and racial holocaust finally converge when the Carlton great house is set alight in the night of terror which follows the riots, and Joyce and her aunt are taken hostage. The high point of the narrative's suspense is Joyce's

narrow escape from rape during her captivity. This attack is averted by the timely intervention of Governor Eyre himself at the head of the troops marching towards Morant Bay.

De Lisser also makes suggestive use of the paradoxical juxtaposition of hurricane and drought as metaphors for a brooding sense of evil in the society before the unleashing of the storm of hate and violence. The fact that there was a drought is part of the historical background to the rebellion itself and it is often referred to in the novel as one of the causes for the political unrest. The drought significantly breaks immediately after Bogle's ritual invocation of a sign from heaven witnessed secretly by the terrified Joyce, and the rain continues steadily throughout the descriptions of violence. De Lisser divides his novel into three sections or books which deal respectively with the build-up to the riots, the riots themselves, and their aftermath. Like the first section which opens with the symbolic description of drought and forest fires already quoted, the second section is introduced by an extended metaphor describing a West Indian hurricane and relating its destructive force to the events about to unfold:

When the West Indian hurricane is approaching the atmosphere gives warning. For days the heat is intense; there is a brooding stillness in the upper regions of the air; the sky is a dull grey canopy, a lifeless, neutral pall. Then black masses of cloud riven by livid lightnings come hurrying from the direction where the wild winds are raging scores of miles away; great sudden puffs of breeze sweep over the sea, lashing the surface of the water to angry hissing waves, striking the land with savage fury and bending and tossing the heavy branches of the trees with irresistible might. These are but indications of the coming destruction. Soon the storm itself, speeding fast upon the heels of its couriers, bursts upon the terror-stricken islands in a deluge of rain, and roars and rages as it passes onward to northern climes. In a few hours it has come and gone. But in its wake is desolation; behind it is visible evidence of its terrific strength.

So too, before the bursting of the storm of human rage and passion, the wild expression of hate and anger and madness, there are signs and warnings which the clear-sighted may plainly read. In the month of October, 1865, such signs were not lacking; from one end of Jamaica to the other there was restlessness, uneasiness,

a presentiment of approaching disaster. The wise knew that the people were discontented, and acknowledged to themselves that behind all the exaggeration of the agitators there was truth enough to occasion searchings of heart, questionings of conscience. The poverty was intense, the ex-slave owner stubbornly withheld the land from the people; in the petty courts the peasants had little hope of justice, and thousands felt that only through a crisis could reform be effected.¹³

This is the nearest de Lissier comes to presenting the rebels' case in his novel. However the juxtaposition of the explanatory passage with the hurricane metaphor shifts the reader's attention away from the ruling classes' refusal to take action before the crisis to the personal threat to their safety and the sense of impending doom and destruction expressed in such emotive phrases as "savage fury", "angry hissing," and "indestructible might".

Book three begins with Rachel Bogle's execution on suspicion of having murdered Dick Carlton and takes note of some of the less justifiable uses of violence by the military in putting down the rebellion. The action is prefaced by a description of gloomy weather and torrential rain which is associated with the "gloom and sadness everywhere." The clouds finally lift at the opening of the novel's penultimate chapter just before the two last conspirators connected with the uprising meet their deaths. The re-establishing of the proper order of things is signalled in the chapter's opening paragraph:

Now the burning, oppressive heat was passing away; already the breath of a cooler time was blowing sweetly across the land. Change was in the air, change welcome and grateful, and every living creature seemed to know it. After the parching heat of August and the drenching rains of October was coming a season of light refreshing showers and golden sunlight: a time of plenty and a time of peace.

The only change that de Lissier describes however is the change of the balance of power away from the rebels and back to the government which he makes explicit in the following paragraph:

For a few hours, for two days at the most, the rebels had been masters of the parish; then swiftly the scene had changed; with lightning-like rapidity the voice of authority had spoken, the hand of power had fallen, and every rebel and malcontent had learnt that what they had thought was the Government's weakness was only strength disguised.¹⁴

And there is no attempt to connect the rebellion with any actual political changes within Jamaica. Eyre's later recall and the commission of enquiry into his actions are not mentioned in the novel though the unjust death of Rachel Bogle for a crime she did not commit is used to acknowledge indirectly that in some cases the retribution which followed the rebellion was unfair or at least, misdirected. The novel ends with the Carltons mourning Rachel's unlucky death but looking forward to Dick's marriage to his cousin Joyce and a new start for the family as planters in Jamaica.

It would seem therefore that in spite of the heavy polemical overtones in de Lisser's use of metaphor and pathetic fallacy, his concentration on the personal vulnerability and rescue of a sympathetically drawn planter family serves to divert interest from the wider political problems behind the historical event on which the novel is based. George William Gordon appears only briefly as a needy estate owner who is indebted to the Carlton family for the purchase of equipment for sugar refining on his less prosperous estate. His attitude to Dick Carlton is one of ingratitude but he is characterised as having feelings of racial inferiority and harbouring a vague sense of grievance against white society. He gives vent to these emotions in inflammatory public speeches while privately courting the patronage of influential whites. Though there are occasional references to some of the political issues that were causing dissatisfaction at the time, de Lisser invents a series of personal motives for revenge which he weaves together to create a plausible fictional explanation for the riots: Bogle's hatred of all whites and especially the Carlton family is fuelled by his desire to revenge himself on Dick Carlton whom he has been persuaded to believe is dallying with his daughter Rachel. His suspicions are fanned by Raines the Maroon, who also has an interest in Rachel and has promised her father the help of the Maroons in any attack on the planters in exchange for Rachel. Raines knows of Rachel's secret but unrequited love for Dick Carlton and arranges the destruction of the Carlton property and an attempt on Dick's life in order to spite Rachel for having refused his attentions.

The most significant use of the revenge motif is made through the introduction of a fictional white overseer, Solway, who is portrayed as a depraved outsider to his class on account of his common-law relations with a native woman. His interest in Joyce Carlton is rebuffed in a series of humiliating encounters with her cousin Dick. These culminate with Solway being horse-whipped publicly by Dick for having insinuated to Joyce that Rachel Bogle was Dick's mistress. Solway learns of the plot to attack the planters from Raines the Maroon, but because of his hatred for Dick Carlton he allows the rebels' plans to take their course without informing the authorities. In addition, he actually takes part, disguised as a black man, in the attack on the Carlton estate and the kidnapping of Joyce and Mrs. Carlton. His plan is to save the two women from death at the rebels' hands though he personally masterminds the destruction of the Carlton great house as an act of revenge against his rival. In the last hours of his life, however, Solway's "nobler" racial characteristics reassert themselves and he dies fighting bravely to protect the Carlton women moments before the arrival of Eyre and his troops. Solway's final wrestlings with his conscience are described in detail:

He had not expected such an awful tragedy; had not imagined that the rebels would have been so successful; had hoped and believed that the magistrates would have escaped and that what would have been at most a mere riot would have been stamped out in time. Had Dick alone lost his life - it suddenly flashed through his mind that even so he would have been a murderer, accessory to a dastardly crime. He impatiently fought down the suggestion. But try how he would he could not veil the fact that his hatred of one man had made him an accessory to the murder of many. This was what his revenge had meant!

"Colour for colour!" That was the rallying cry of the rebels all over the parish today, perhaps all over the country. And he, when the crisis came, should have stood by the people of his own colour to the last. He had failed to do so ... yet not altogether. His being here was proof of that. He was saving two white women. 15

De Lisser's use of a white or near-white character as the "brains" behind a historical event usually associated with black Jamaicans is a technique to which he resorts repeatedly in his

historical novels: In Psyche (1943), the English-educated mulatto daughter of a former slave suddenly feels drawn to her African origins and takes a leading role in the Sam Sharpe rebellion which occurred during the final years of slavery in Jamaica. In Morgan's Daughter (1931) the story of the runaway slave Three-fingered Jack, whose exploits were so legendary that soldiers refused to fight if they thought he was among the enemy, is rewritten with the role of Three-fingered Jack being given to a white fugitive who performs his feats disguised as a black man. In The White Maroon (1939) the maroon leader Juan de Bolas is portrayed as Spanish in descent as well as name: De Lisser makes him a direct descendant of an Arawak woman and one of Christopher Columbus' lieutenants who had been shipwrecked on Jamaica's north coast. In each case the fact that the protagonist is white or partly white is used to explain the unusual cleverness or success of historical events usually regarded as having been carried out by blacks. In several cases when such characters are pitted against established authority, their final act, like Solway's, is one of contrition as the "good" European side of their nature re-asserts itself.

One of de Lisser's most interesting uses of this technique occurs in The White Witch of Rosehall (1929). The legend of the white woman who had killed a series of husbands and was reputed to be versed in the arts of African magic provided just the combination of evidence for white supremacy and black venality that de Lisser favoured. While making it clear that Annie Palmer and the other whites who appear in the novel have been morally tarnished by their contact with African culture, the novelist emphasises the superiority of the white witch over the native practitioners of Obeah. Several of the white characters in this novel are ultimately destroyed by the "debased" cultural practices they have acquired from the slaves. However, their destruction is given the dimensions of a heroic tragedy - the great intellect running out of control of the moral faculties, rather than the half-civilised savage returning to his original state.

By contrast the black characters in de Lisser's historical novels who are most sympathetically drawn are those who remain subservient or are prepared to die in defence of white characters. Joyce's groom Charles dies protecting her from the mob which burns down the Carlton great house, while Rachel Bogle pays ultimately with her life for having foiled Raines' attempt to murder Dick Carlton. Black men who use violence to further personal ends or group aspirations are shown descending ultimately into bestiality. This is the judgement implied in the final scenes of Revenge describing Paul Bogle's life as a fugitive in the hills before he is hunted down by Eyre's men:

He knew that the soldiers down there were searching for him, knew that a reward had been offered for his capture, and realised, as indeed he could not but realise, that he could not hope to escape. He could not live for long like a wild beast, without even the companionship of other beasts. He was not afraid of men; but at night, when alone in the darkness, surrounded by the vast silence of the mountains and gazing at the distant over-arching sky, he trembled as he thought of those whose deaths lay at his door and whose spirits might at that moment be around him. Physically, Paul Bogle was a brave man. But underneath the veneer of his religion lay deep the superstitions of the African savage. He heard the voices of ghosts in every wind that swept through the trees amongst which he lay concealed; he saw the eyes of ghosts in every star that shone down upon him; he perceived their movements in the rustling of every branch. He was haunted; haunted by his own fears. The utter loneliness of day and night, the knowledge of his certain, approaching doom, the sense of his utter failure, the realisation of his ruin: this and the ghosts that had come to torment him, were slowly driving him mad.¹⁶

Brutal to the end, Bogle's last act is one of personal revenge on the Maroon Raines. Raines' complicity in Rachel Bogle's death and duplicity in dealing with her father are finally rewarded in a grotesque scene in which Bogle strangles Raines to death with his bare hands.

De Lisser has been criticised for retreating into historical fiction when he was no longer able to deal with the Jamaican reality.¹⁷ There are, however, clear signs in several of his historical romances that his use of history was meant as a direct comment on

contemporary social issues. Revenge is one of the most significant of de Lisser's historical novels to comment on contemporaneous events as it carries on the denigration of local political aspirations begun in Triumphant Squalitone (1917). In both novels the butt of de Lisser's satire is directed against the local journalists and politicians whose championing of mass participation in politics and use of inflammatory rhetoric de Lisser considered dangerous. Apart from his presentation of the coloured politician Gordon, de Lisser draws on history in his creation of three minor characters in Revenge who are presented as journalists connected with Gordon's political views. The journalists, Robson, Bolt and Mace in the novel correspond to the journalists connected with the "progressive" newspaper The Watchman, which before the Morant Bay Rebellion had given publicity to Gordon's views. However de Lisser may also have drawn on contemporary models in creating these characters as there were a number of small newspapers at the time when Revenge was written which had begun to publish anti-government views once more. One of these was associated with the St. Elizabeth lawyer-cum-politician Frederick Charles Tomlinson. Tomlinson was also the author of a novel called The Helions (1903). The novel, a satire of Jamaican society at the turn of the century, had included an ironical sketch of a snobbish young newspaper sub-editor who specialised in crying down any local attempts at cultural or political activity. It is clear that Tomlinson had de Lisser in mind in creating this caricature and the two had clashed as recently as 1917 when Tomlinson accused de Lisser of plagiarising The Helions in Triumphant Squalitone. Tomlinson seems to have been a leading light behind the anti-establishment Public Opinion newspaper, which often opposed specific issues raised by de Lisser at The Gleaner. One such was the move by de Lisser and a number of members of the local elite to have Sir Sydney Olivier reinstated as Governor of the island after the war. In an unsigned article voicing telling criticisms of Olivier's bureaucratic methods a correspondent to Public Opinion notes:

In our opinion, it is not so much a question of change of Governor, as it is a change of government or of the constitution. So long as our present hybrid constitution last, so long will the vast majority of natives remain in ignorance, squalor, poverty and rags, aye, as economic slaves to be trodden underfoot by the little ring of tin gods, time-serving officials, fawning hypocrites and speculative parsons and teachers all of whom have conspired to exploit the people - to fool and terrorise them.¹⁸

This is strong stuff, given the early date at which it was written and the fact that there was a war going on. But it is clear from a reading of the correspondence and public controversies reported in this early newspaper that popular opinion on public matters was nowhere near as uniform and acquiescent as one tends to assume from a reading of de Lisser's Gleaner or even MacDermot's Jamaica Times. The playing down of potential areas of conflict with the establishment within the society was deliberate policy at The Gleaner under de Lisser's editorship, especially during the years of political flux which followed the First World War. Commenting on the new proletarian tendencies in world politics in a 1919 editorial for example, the powerful Gleaner editor observes:

We could not expect Jamaica to remain ... the same with the world in flux and change. What happens in Austria... Russia... Italy... or ...England is known ... within a few hours or days and a growing majority of our people can read. Ideas are like ... influenza they will enter the remotest corner of ... earth and ... cannot be effectively quarantined. Our duty will be to ... render dangerous ideas as innocuous as they can ... be rendered ... this ... itself will be ... difficult.¹⁹

Given this stated perspective de Lisser's criticism of radical journalists and politicians in Revenge can be seen as one of the methods by which he attempted to "render dangerous ideas... innocuous" in his own society. His principal fictional technique in achieving this end is the reduction of the journalists in Revenge to absurd, peripheral figures. This is achieved through the comic manipulation of the journalists' use of dialect and Standard, already noted in Chapter III. De Lisser also proceeds by satirising other characteristics often connected with the

anti-establishment journalism of his time. Public Opinion, for instance, apart from its anti-government diatribes, carried regular columns by a "Pastor Russell" which explored the study of eschatological theology. Political correspondents as well were fond of comparing establishment politicians to the Anti-Christ and seeing their monopoly of power as one of the signs of the "Last Days".^{19a} De Lisser picks up and satirises this tendency in his presentation of the journalist Robson who is always seeing chance events as divinely revealed omens. At one point in Revenge, for example, Robson, who has been delivering himself of execrations on the state of the roads and the irresponsibility of the Governor as he and Mace wend their way through the darkened streets of Kingston to attend an anti-Government meeting, slips on a banana skin:

"If it wasn't that I promise Mr. Gordon to come to de tabernacle tonight I would turn right back home," he exclaimed wrathfully. "It seems like de devil is on me track tonight, an' if I am not careful I will broke me neck before I get back."

Then suddenly, without a word, Mr. Robson halted in his tracks. With the dangers of the darkness ever in his mind, Mr. Mace promptly halted also. But this time Mr. Robson was not thinking about bottles or banana skins.

The thought that perhaps, after all, a malignant power was pursuing him, made him wonder whether he should continue on his way. Another thought occurred. What if the misfortunes he had experienced were warnings? Robson was superstitious at heart, and though fiery-worded when addressing a public meeting in the midst of sympathetic friends, and wordily courageous when discussing public matters in the daytime, he was always on the look-out for signs and omens.²⁰

The style of Robson's anti-government harangues is very near to the journalistic style in Public Opinion so that the insertion of this reference to Robson's belief in signs and omens would have strengthened the point of de Lisser's satirical thrust against his anti-establishment contemporaries.

Indeed, de Lisser consistently satirises the religious rhetoric and beliefs which have always played an important part in Jamaican political protest. Apart from his ridicule of Robson's superstitious nature, Paul Bogle's involvement with the native

Baptist church is presented as a heathen and primitive throw-back to African religious rituals while Gordon's documented use of Biblical proverbs in his public addresses is cleverly manipulated so that it becomes an aspect of his personal grudge against white society. Commenting on a government report which admitted the truth of some of the criticisms brought by the English minister Underhill for example, de Lisser's Gordon says:

"... When I have said things not half so strong, they have cursed me and reviled me and humiliated me; but now that the Almighty has raised up friends for us in England they are bound to admit that what I said was true." He laughed aloud, a hard, bitter laugh. "But they still must put the blame upon the poor people. These are all going to prison. They are all bad. They can all work, but will not. Surely the Lord heareth, and the axe is laid to the root of the tree!"²¹

This particular Biblical quotation was one actually used by Gordon, which was cited as evidence against him in the enquiry that followed his execution. By putting it into a negative context in his fiction, de Lisser is able to support the interpretation of Gordon's words put forward by his detractors.

Perhaps de Lisser's most telling manipulation of the historical event is the way in which he uses the uncertainty about who was to ^{be} blamed for the actual riots as a way of underlining how insignificant and irresponsible he considered local political agitators. His journalists are portrayed as the most poorly informed individuals when it comes to an inside knowledge of what is really taking place in Morant Bay. This point is effectively made in a scene in which Robson and Mace babble on randomly about the situation in St. Thomas to impress a white man within ear-shot. The man turns out to be Dick Carlton, a resident of Morant Bay far more up-to-date about events than they. Though they are tried for sedition, the journalists escape punishment because it becomes clear that they have no real grasp of the political events to which they have contributed inadvertently. Gordon too is completely taken by surprise when the news of the riots reaches him, but he realises immediately that his incautious words in the presence of crude individuals like Bogle have contributed to

the outbreak of violence, and he is shown waiting fearfully for his summons and execution by Governor Eyre. Thus, while condemning anti-government rhetoric as dangerous, the novelist manages to create the impression that the local politicians and journalists who voice such sentiments are unimportant politically and incapable of transforming words into action. This is the attitude de Lisser took editorially in dealing with political movements in contemporaneous Jamaica, of which he did not approve. He also uses this method of simultaneous attack and dismissal in his novel The Jamaica Nobility (1926), an anti-Garvey satire that presents the members of ^{the} Garvey-inspired United Negro Improvement Association as at once dangerously self-opinionated and pathetically absurd. The similarity of technique between his editorial style and his fiction on historical and contemporaneous Jamaican society supports the view that de Lisser's historical romances were part of the polemical ammunition with which as a creative writer and journalist he fought all threats to the status quo.

The swing in the balance of public opinion on the Morant Bay Rebellion away from the position held by de Lisser coincided with the emergence of the nationalist movement in Jamaica in the 1930s and 1940s. It was given its greatest impetus by the appearance of Sydney Olivier's sympathetic study of the rebellion, The Myth of Governor Eyre (1933). As a former governor of Jamaica, Olivier's negative estimate of Eyre's action carried a great deal of weight. Olivier criticised Eyre's introduction of the Crown Colony system in the wake of the events of 1865 as having retarded the development of attitudes of political responsibility within Jamaican society without really bringing about the much needed reforms in local government, that had created the friction between the Crown and politicians like Gordon before the rebellion. Gordon's political position was treated with sympathy in Olivier's analysis: so much so that many people feared his giving respectability to the uprising might lead to further action within Jamaican society of a similar nature.²² By the time that V.S. Reid's novel about the rebellion, New Day (1949),

was published Jamaica had experienced another major social upheaval. Though the violence of the 1938 riots was nothing on the same scale as the violence of 1865, certain significant political reforms such as the introduction of adult suffrage and a limited measure of internal self-rule were introduced in the wake of the disturbances. Reid's novel attempts to connect the two periods of political crisis in 1865 and 1938 in order to create the basis of a national myth celebrating the movement toward self-government in Jamaica.

Though Reid's New Day takes the opposite ideological position on the rebellion to de Lisser's Revenge, the two novels have a great deal in common: As in Revenge, Reid's treatment of the historical event is polemical in tone and a great deal of the novel's imagery is used to rationalise the author's political position on the Morant Bay Rebellion. Reid also concentrates for the presentation of his ideological perspective on a fictional family, the Campbells who, like de Lisser's Carltons, are at the centre of the novel's human interest. Actual historical figures connected with the rebellion like Gordon, Eyre and Bogle appear only briefly, or are referred to in passing. Perhaps most significantly Reid, like de Lisser, is preoccupied with the question of the legitimacy of the use of violence as a form of political resistance. Although his novel comes out more strongly than Revenge against Eyre's brutality, Reid's position on the violence used by Bogle's followers is ambivalent to the point at times when his moral attitude to the event seems identical with that of de Lisser.

Reid's use of nature imagery worked into the form of Creole proverbs has already been noted in Chapter III. His technique has little in common with de Lisser's more conventional use of the pathetic fallacy but he does make use of the drought and the breaking of the drought in a similar manner to de Lisser's use of changing weather conditions to reflect the change in mood of Jamaican society.

Outside in daylight, and sea-breeze is putting anger-marks on the face of the Bay. It is October month, and all over Salt Savannah silver arrows wave above our cane field to say that the juice is ripe. But cane leaves are brown and the earth is dusty, and I know are bad, these.²³

The lyrical quality of the narrator's stylised Creole speech in New Day suggests a more sophisticated symbolic use of the historically accurate drought conditions which preceded the riots than in Revenge, but the emphasis is still on images of violence in the description of the ruffled crests of the waves as "anger marks" and the reference to the arrow-like cane flowers. Reid's painting of the drought also carries undertones of foreboding or impending doom and this is finally realised with the coming of the rains as the storm of violence breaks.

At the polemical level most of Reid's political perspectives come out in the proverbs used during exchanges between the narrator and other characters, several of which have already been discussed. In addition the work's polemical argument is conducted through Reid's manipulation of dates, characters and events in Jamaican history in much the same way that de Lisser introduces fictitious characters and motives to drive home his point about the personal spite and lust for blood which produced the Morant Bay Rebellion. In Reid's case the historical modifications are far more sweeping as the novel covers an eighty year span and includes contemporaneous as well as chronologically distant historical events. H.P. Jacobs in an article on "The Historic Foundations of New Day" has listed some of the most important of these deviations: The Custos of St. Thomas who is murdered in the riots is given the name Baron Aldenburg in New Day and like his historical counterpart Baron von Ketelhardt is a naturalised German. Reid presents him as the "typical" planter stereotype: rich, fat and unjust in his dealings with the peasants. The historical rector, a Mr. Cooke, becomes the fictional Pastor Humphrey and is integrated with another historical figure, Mr. Herschell, the Curate of Bath whose unethical award of the contract for a new church to his own company was one of the local scandals in the St. Thomas Vestry which excited controversy in the period before the riots. Reid also represents Pastor Humphrey as levying tithes on all members of the community whether they belonged to the Established Church or not. H.P. Jacobs points out that such tithes were not actually levied in

Jamaica but that they are introduced here to reinforce Reid's presentation of the representatives of church and state as epitomising corruption.

The more significant parallels and distortions of history occur in the third part of Reid's novel in which Garth Campbell, who is the grandson of one of the men who had taken part in the Morant Bay Rebellion, becomes the leader of the new nationalist movement. Several details in the presentation of Garth are clearly linked to the actual barrister and politician Norman Manley: Both men are coloured lawyers who lead political parties and become involved in labour unions; both men are married to white women who are sculptresses; and both men face cousins with Spanish names and Cuban backgrounds (in real life Bustamante, in Reid's novel, Fernandez) in the political arena where their political ideals and aspirations bring them into conflict and eventually split the political and trade union movements. Reid himself stresses in his preface to the novel that it is meant to be read as fiction rather than history and that the Campbell family in particular is completely fictitious, but as Jacobs notes:

If we agree that it is permissible to alter historical facts in order to obtain particular artistic effects, this must apply to contemporary history as fully as to the remotest past. The effect on the reader's mind must, however, be decidedly different in the two cases. If you put Marathon in 480 B.C. and Salamis in 490 B.C., the reader will treat you indulgently; if you move Trafalgar to 1815 and push back Waterloo to 1805, the reader may be a little critical; and if you were to place Italy's conquest of Ethiopia in 1945 instead of 1935, after instead of before the second world struggle, the reader would be painfully conscious of a difficulty.

The aesthetic theory of deviation from historical fact might be re-stated in the form that the aesthetic value of an altered fact varies inversely to the reader's belief that he knows something about the fact.²⁴

Jacobs proceeds to demonstrate in his article how Reid's departures from history in his presentation of recognisable contemporary and historical characters are ^{part} of a process of wish-fulfilment on the part of the author by which he attempts to give an aesthetic shape to Jamaican history lacking in the actual historical details, in an attempt to re-inforce the sense of moral right behind the new

nationalist movement. The novelist achieves this polemical end by connecting the early rebellion with the later nationalist movement at the personal level, making his fictional nationalist politician Garth the grandson of one of the rebels. In terms of race and class, he introduces white and coloured Creole characters on the rebel side while underlining, or inventing the alien origins of Eyre's supporters. In this way he changes the rebellion from a racial confrontation as suggested in Revenge to a nationalist struggle. Reid even has Bogle and other rebels agitate for secession and against imperialism, ideas more closely linked with the later nationalist movement than with the economic hardships which produced the 1865 riots. Most significantly the bloodshed of 1865 becomes the symbolic birth through fire and sword of the new Jamaican nation though the actual political change is represented as taking place eighty years later with the granting of the 1944 constitution. Jacobs offers this explanation for the psychology behind this connection:

One will often hear an outburst of political violence condoned on the grounds that it is part of the process of achieving political self-consciousness. This monstrous theory is due not to humbug but to a real feeling that somehow the country has not earned its present political status. It is not unlike the sentiment in Yeats's poem:

That nothing but our own heart's blood
Will make our rose tree grow.

If a man has this awkward feeling that the 1944 constitution was won without battle or bloodshed, without striking proof that it was the will of the people of Jamaica to have it, it will no doubt be a relief to be able to think that the necessary human sacrifice was offered in 1865.²⁵

From this perspective Reid's novel can be read as an attempt to bolster the image of the new Jamaican middle class which supported the People's National Party, even in its final small deviation of allowing the victory in the elections under the new constitution to go to Garth and his party, though in real life Manley's People's National Party was defeated. But if Reid's intention is indeed to create a heroic moment of violence out of 1865 as McKay does in his poem "Gordon to the Oppressed Natives" he seems ultimately to be ambivalent in his attitude to the use of violence

as a political weapon. Early in the novel we are told of Gordon's sermon to the men at Stony Gut in a passage already quoted in Chapter III where Gordon's metaphorical use of violent scriptural quotations is distinguished from Bogle's literal interpretation of such scriptures as justification for the use of arms. Reid has a number of options open to him here. He could, like de Lisser, present Gordon's use of biblical language as irresponsible clap-trap that lands him into more trouble than he expected, but this would mean doing violence to his portrayal of Gordon as a heroic figure. On the other hand he could take McKay's position in "Gordon to the Oppressed Natives" and present Gordon's advocacy of violence as a justifiable last resort in the face of the government's harsh and unsympathetic attitudes. This is the position for which the novel's use of larger-than-life stereotypes of evil in its presentation of the establishment figures Baron Aldenburg and Pastor Humphrey prepares us. Even without assigning moral responsibility it would not have been difficult for him to portray the actual riot as a spontaneous show of indignation brought about by the Custos' order to the militia to fire on Bogle's men. Instead of such alternatives, Reid allows his characters, like himself, to become bogged down in the moral problem of the use of violence. This moral uncertainty undermines his primary aim of showing the riots as the heroic forerunner of the later nationalist success. In the first place there is the conflict between Davie Campbell, a fiery and impulsive youngster, and his father. Pa Campbell ultimately signs Bogle's petition, but he dissociates himself completely from all extra-constitutional acts of protest. Pa Campbell becomes the real martyr of the novel when he marches fearlessly into the fire of Eyre's troops singing "Onward Christian Soldiers" because of his firm belief that constituted authority would not allow a man to be killed unless proven a murderer. Davie too is ultimately separated from the acts of violence, as he is not present at the meeting at which the decision is taken to march upon the court house in Morant Bay. His response to the hymn singing of Bogle's men outside the court house is one of disgust: "This damn' puppet-show - chanting Psalm at time like this!"²⁶ And he dissociates himself completely from the attack on the Custos and

the members of the vestry:

"I told Deacon that we should no' kill, but take them to the Gut, where they would be hostages if war comes. But is that what he does? No. Stoney Gut men get mixed with Morant Bay rabble and do as the rabble would do. Will this no' turn even our friends from we? Is what Mr. Gordon and the others will say now? Think say the Maroons will come to we when they hear we ha' mixed with the Morant Bay people? Think say those proud fighter men will want to march side-and-side with riff-raff? Is what it that makes Deacon Bogle such a dam' fool?"

Outside, we hear the chant is finished, and Deacon is calling that Stoney Gut men should fall in ranks. But a new noise comes above his voice.

"What is a-happen, Davie?"

My bro' listens. He spits and says: "Morant Bay carrion - saying they will burn Custos's house."²⁷

Thus in the last resort the final acts of mob violence are even dissociated from Bogle, and in this way Reid concedes that the action of the rioters was morally insupportable while shifting the responsibility for the act away from his "heroic" characters. It becomes difficult at this juncture to decide on what grounds such blundering and short-sighted leaders as the Bogle and Gordon we see in the novel can be given the stature of heroes, as their lack of initiative and foresight in the actual rebellion hardly distinguishes them from de Lissers' talkative journalists and irresponsible politicians.

Part of Reid's problem is that his novel has to make a link between 1865 and the events of the 1930s and 1940s and it is clear from his presentation of the later riots of the 1930s in New Day that he saw the use of violence in contemporary politics as a negative factor, a position which is in conflict with the desire to see the earlier violence as the baptism in blood of the national movement. Ramchand in his essay on New Day sees this as one of the weakest aspects of the novel:

Whereas the author manages to construct his 1865 story satisfactorily, he fails to do this for the events of 1944. He does not fail because he was rushing to complete the novel but because the particular connection he wishes to make between a disastrous attempt at popular revolution in 1865 and the song and dance of a new constitution negotiated by middle-class politicians eighty years later is a false connection which the novel, crucially,²⁸ fails to make convincing or true in the fiction.

Reid tries to rationalise this ambivalence within the novel by insisting on the need for responsible, educated (and therefore middle-class) leadership to guide and channel the anger of the mob away from self-destructive acts of violence, presenting the co-operation and compromise which produced the 1944 constitution as the right and logical alternative to popular or revolutionary violence. The problematic middle section of the novel New Day, already discussed in Chapter IV, seems also to offer another rationalisation of the problem: Davie, now a hardened and embittered revolutionary, is given the opportunity to fashion a society by his own ideals. The result is the puritanical work camp which Davie (ironically) refers to as Zion. The Davie who had earlier dissociated himself from Bogle's hymn singing and biblical rhetoric now becomes a Bible quoting zealot through whom the false ideals of Bogle's followers are taken to their logical conclusion. The middle section of the novel becomes a parable demonstrating the sterile social consequences of a society built on moral indignation (however sincere), violence, and political cant, and the implication is that, had Bogle succeeded, Jamaica as a whole might have been flung on to a similar path. This point is reiterated in Reid's long ^{it is} "mother bird" metaphor. Violence is presented as inexcusable even when a spontaneous outburst of outrage and should be quickly replaced by negotiation and compromise as happened in the 1930s.

Ultimately, however, the link if any which Reid succeeds in making between 1865 and 1938 is an emotional rather than an ideological or political one through which the fervour of nationalist patriotism of his own time is reinforced and reflected in the depth of feeling which his Jamaicans of 1865 display for their country. This heroic patriotism embraces Davie, Pa Campbell, Bogle, and Gordon, though none of them are able to provide political solutions to Imperialism. The importance of patriotism as an ennobling and unifying force is established in the opening chapter of the book as the narrator, an old man who has survived 1865 and lived to see 1944, is flooded by the memories and emotions of earlier years as he awaits the dawning of the day which is to bring the new constitution:

Then, now! Pa John and Ma Tamah, father and mother o' sorrow - are you hearing? And my brethren, Emmanuel, David, Samuel, Ezekiel, Ruth, Naomi, are you hearing?

Are you a-hear, George William Gordon? And Paul Bogle, Abram M'Laren, and the good doctor Creary?

And you too, bloody Governor Eyre and your crow Provost-Marshal Ramsey, are you hearing wherever you are? Tell me, Bro' Zaccy O'Gilvie, are you a-listen of me tonight?

Then, now! All o'you Dead Hundreds who looked at the sun without blink in your eyes, you Dead Hundreds who fell to British redcoats' bullets and the swords o' the wild Maroons, the wild men o' the mountains; tell me, you Dead Hundreds o' Morant Bay, are you hearing that tomorrow is the day? And that sorrow and restlessness are here with my joy, for I am standing here alone?²⁹

The problems of perspective and ideological homogeneity raised in Reid's novel illustrate some of the literary difficulties experienced by creative writers connected with the nationalist movement already touched upon in the conclusion of Chapter III: Reid, like de Lisser and his inter-war contemporaries, is compelled by the desire to present whole and self-justifying images of his society to his audience: In de Lisser's case and in the case of the members of the Jamaica Poetry League, contradictions between ideology or aspirations and the objective reality are suppressed by deliberately ignoring those features of reality which conflict with the writer's world view. De Lisser therefore has no apparent problems creating a fictional setting to justify his limited negative perception of the 1865 riots, just as in the field of poetry the imperial loyalty of the members of the Jamaica Poetry League to England does not conflict with patriotism to Jamaica because they refuse to acknowledge a difference.³⁰ Nationalist writers like Reid built their whole ideological position on a rejection of these earlier ideals, but remained part of the system of moral values on which the earlier writers had based their world view. Instead of allowing the interplay of these contradictions and ambivalences to surface in their work, Reid and his contemporaries seem always to have been trying to come up with opposite but equally definitive positions on ideological issues to those held by the earlier generation of writers. In so doing the nationalist writers seem to miss the subtle point that the sweep-

ing confidence of their predecessors was a weakness rather than a strength and a sign of their inability to deal creatively with conflict. Reid's attempts to come up with a satisfying alternative national myth stumble again and again on the real contradictions inherent within West Indian history. Even though he modifies the past in order to lend a sense of artistic wholeness to his view of Jamaica's history he is unable to distance himself from the conflicts of the present for long enough to admit that the cut and dried solution he seeks but does not find is a private illusion. In the final analysis New Day, because it aims at an ideological homogeneity which it cannot achieve instead of making creative use of the ironies inherent in the historical events it treats, misses greatness and is often self-contradictory.

Roger Mais's play, George William Gordon (1949) is less tied to an ideological position dictated by contemporary social exigencies than either de Lisser's Revenge or Reid's New Day. This may have been because though he too makes a connection between 1865 and his contemporaneous society, Mais's opinion of the 1944 constitution was by no means favourable. Consequently, in treating the Morant Bay Rebellion as an example of Jamaican heroism he does not limit himself in his fictional use of the historic event to a view of the rebellion as a parable of contemporary events. Instead, Mais's play focuses on a number of philosophical ideas and positions raised by the historical event. These include a concern with the figure of Gordon himself as a martyr; the exploration of the way in which human sympathies are distorted by an unfair political system; and, as in Brother Man and Black Lightning, the relationship between strength and dependence in the individual of vision. In spite of its preoccupation with more "universal" themes than the intrigues of local politics, Mais's play is the most "historical" of the fictional accounts of the Morant Bay Rebellion as it takes historical rather than fictional figures as the central protagonists in the action and even makes use of extracts from the historical records of the day. Most of the fourteen short scenes in the

play record conversations between various historical figures: between Eyre and Gordon; Gordon and the members of the court martial; Bogle and his followers; Gordon and his doctor; Eyre and the members of his government; and Gordon and his wife. The only purely invented characters are two servants and Burns the Jailor to whom Gordon dictates his last letter to his wife while awaiting execution. The action of the play starts with the period just before the uprising, during which Gordon's documented confrontations with Eyre over government policy in Morant Bay occurred, and ends with Gordon's wife receiving the news of his execution. Apart from the conversations between historical figures, much of the action takes the form of readings of extracts from actual historical documents - Carlyle's views on the West Indian negro; socio-economic statistics of the period; reports on the rebellion; and excerpts from the court martial proceedings. Each scene is completed by a chorus which gives the action that has gone before its philosophical or ideological context so that the fairly prosaic exchanges of facts and information become part of the author's wider pre-occupation with "universal" issues.

In contrast to the two novels already discussed the action of the play does not take in the actual riots in Morant Bay. This may have been due to the logistic restrictions imposed on the writer in constructing a drama meant for the stage, but it also reflects Mais's relative unconcern with the question of violence as such as it preoccupied the other writers. Bogle and his followers are portrayed in one short scene in which they present some of their grievances and come to the decision to march peacefully to Morant Bay to answer the charges against them. Though Bogle underlines the fact that their intentions are peaceful, Mais goes past the issue of right and wrong and focusses in the chorus that follows the scene on the exercise of free will the men of Stony Gut make in choosing to confront their accusers, seeing this as the action of men free in spirit:

It is not enough to engage the action
The men of Stony Gut engaged the action
They burnt the court house and killed the magistrates
And were themselves hanged

It is to see past the action and its outcome
 To the empty nooses dangling from their trees
 And to know the tree and the noose inevitable,
 and to know
 That this is the way a man must go
 For the fire at the heart that is truth
 As the fire at the heart of the wood
 Is a part of it all from a time beyond remembrance
 With the smoking sap and the green blood
 And the seed in the unformed fruit
 In the belly and the blood of the tree

These slaves knew, and they chanted their song
 And their song was the chant of free men
 Who are not afraid to die and go forward
 And to go forward and die
 Since the action and the outcome are one
 Outside of time identical
 These men of Stony Gut who were freed bondslaves
 Or the sons of bondslaves who had been granted a
 word
 Of favour and the name of freedom
 And a Queen's bond that was the name for freedom
 But themselves not free, seeing that men
 Are not made free by the naming of a word
 Being bondsmen in all but the empty mockery of a
 word
 Perforce must go forward to die
 Perforce must die to go forward
 To see the action and the outcome enjoined in one
 And there was no other way for them.^{30a}

Mais's use of the chorus at the end of each scene to summarise and reinforce the philosophical concerns raised in the action which takes place in the body of the scene is even more closely modelled on T.S. Eliot's use of the chorus in Murder in the Cathedral than is the case in Brother Man. Like Eliot, Mais makes repeated use of paradox to communicate his intellectual vision: The play of words in the phrases "die to go forward" and "go forward to die" for instance reinforces Mais's paradoxical idea that true freedom can only be achieved through the ultimate sacrifice of one's life. The reiteration of the idea that "the action and the outcome are one" reinforces his view of the historical event being of more importance for the symbolic truth it contains than for its actual repercussions in time. Mais's view of the Morant Bay Rebellion is fairly close to that expressed in McKay's poem "Gordon to the Oppressed Natives" in its emphasis on the shoulder-

ing of individual responsibility as the mark of the man truly free, and its implied connection between the Morant Bay Rebellion and the struggle for personal liberty begun during slavery. However, details such as the fact that Bogle is described as a "dignified commanding figure of a man, worthy descendant of a probable line of African chiefs," and the insistence on the orderliness and discipline of his followers are reserved for the stage directions and the short body of the scene's action, while the much longer choruses are devoted to the play of philosophical ideas suggested in the encounter.

Mais's play is polemical in the widest sense of the term, in that it puts forward a specific view of a controversial historical event and organises its selection of action and imagery to support this view. It is not polemical in the sense of being partisan as Reid and de Lisser become in their distortion of the characters on the side with which they disagree and the weighting of arguments among characters in the story in favour of their own chosen positions. By contrast, Mais's choice of action in the drama gives equal weight to Eyre's camp as well as Gordon's, and though Eyre is presented negatively Mais suggests a wide range of attitudes and characters among the officials who are ultimately involved in suppressing the rebellion. In Scene Two we are introduced to a cross-section of the members of Eyre's government, all of whom bear the names of actual persons in Jamaica at the time of the rebellion. Mais lists them in the stage directions to the scene as:

Dr. Bowerbank, Baron von Ketelhardt, General O'Connor, Mr. Moses Bravo, Lt. Brand, Commander of the Onyx, Rev. W. Cooke, Capt. Field, Rev. Herschell, Colonel Hobbs, Major General Forbes Jackson, Brig. General Nelson, Inspector Ramsay, Mr. W. Raynes, ³¹Smith, Member of the Executive Committee, and others.

In the course of the informal conversations which take place between them we are given impressions of the characters of several of these men. Dr. Bowerbank's lines reveal him as a rather simple-minded coward whose most important contribution to the general discussion of the trouble brewing in Morant Bay is "Ten to one! They could murder us all in our beds!" Even Eyre is exasperated by his fatuousness and responds to this repeated

refrain at one point with the sardonic remark, "Say something to comfort him, Baron. It is the heat. Dr. Bowerbank is not really a timid man!"³² Jackson, who figures in the folk song quoted earlier as one of the most feared leaders of the punitive expedition against the people of Morant Bay, is portrayed as a braggart who enjoys exaggerating the number and size of the men he killed during his military tour of duty in India, much to the private derision of his listeners. By contrast General O'Connor, another military man, presents himself as a professional soldier of principle who is sickened by the casual and callous manner in which Baron von Ketelhardt speculates about the eventual use of military force to silence dissent in Morant Bay. O'Connor refuses to be drawn into the discussion and ends up storming out of the room when Eyre suggests that the troops under his command can be used against Jamaican citizens.

Eyre himself is shown as a strong individual with a cool head. He tactfully allows the weakest members of his entourage to voice the most repressive views while cautioning them to keep in mind the forms and limitations of constitutional authority. However, when he is challenged openly by O'Connor's withdrawal his first comment is "The blockhead, the fool! I will break him", showing in this flash of passion his truly autocratic nature.³³ Within this spectrum of characters and individuals, Gordon's encounter with Eyre in the scene which follows is presented as the most extreme of the forms of resistance to Eyre which occurs within official circles and Eyre's passionate threat to O'Connor becomes a premonition of his ultimate treatment of Gordon. During his interview with Gordon, Eyre is constantly goaded on to more and more insulting behaviour by the presence and encouraging comments of the cowardly Dr. Bowerbank, who clearly makes a practice of pandering to the Governor's every whim. What the two scenes dramatise most effectively is the way in which the relationships of dependence within a colonial system of government lend themselves to the free use of personal prerogative by one man in whose hands all power is concentrated. Eyre and his government officials are shown not as stereotypes of evil but as ordinary men with their fair share of human weaknesses. Bowerbank

for instance, for all his exaggerated fear of racial holocaust, is appalled from the riots at the toll in human life resulting from Eyre's measures to suppress dissent. Mais's focus in the play concentrates on the way in which, within an unequal system, men like Bowerbank are encouraged to indulge their weakest characteristics - cowardice, bravado and personal malice. For those who refuse to conform the system offers only the alternative of withdrawal taken by ^{General} Captain O'Connor. Gordon is presented as a threat to the system because he refuses either to withdraw or conform and it is for this that he is eventually executed by Eyre. In Mais's play both Gordon and Eyre and the various officials between their positions are presented as trapped within the limitations of an unjust system of government and Mais stresses their common humanity in the chorus that closes Scene III:

Boaster
 Bruizer
 Bankrupt
 What's the odds
 All have the same bellies
 Bills due
 Groanings
 Gods

Hand golden oranges
 From golden boughs
 For one man's folly
 For one fool's boast

All choke on the same breath
 Foul in the same pit
 Feel in the same pulse
 Falter on the same steep
 Fall short on the same step
 Fail of the same span

A man
 Touches all meanness
 Greatness, Goodness,
 Littleness, fineness
 That touches man.

Mais's insistence on the shared humanity of the men on both sides of the political fence does not prevent him from enlisting our sympathy for his protagonist by allowing us into his domestic life, in much the same way that Reid and de Lisser use the Campbell and Carlton families respectively to win our emotional support for their polemical positions. Here the family unit consists

of Gordon, his wife (an English woman), and their maid Mary, who plays the dragon with both her employers when they overwork or refuse to take medicine and rest. This symbolically interracial unit encompassing various social levels within the community helps remove considerations of class, race and national origin from the foreground of the action, just as the cross-section of values and ideological positions among the officials, presented in Scenes Two and Three and again in the court martial scenes, shifts attention from individual evil to the weakness of the entire system of government. The minor role of the servant Mary is crucial in establishing the emotional tenor of the play as it is she and Mrs. Gordon who together generate the air of protective concern with which we follow Gordon's progress towards death. As in the novels the weather is invoked to create a sense of impending doom, though Mais, with his characteristic disregard for literal accuracy in his use of details, makes no mention of the historical drought in this context, moving directly to the more romantic imagery of storm to create the sense of impending doom from the outset of the action:

MRS. GORDON: Don't go, Mary. It is close in here. Why is it so dark?
 MARY: Must be it's a storm coming. It looks for rain.
 MRS. GORDON: Did he take his mackintosh?
 MARY: Mr. Gordon, Ma'm? Yes, Ma'm. He saw it was clouding up for a storm.
 MRS. GORDON: (Rises and goes across to window; draws aside curtain and stands looking out, brooding.) And he is out there on that wretched road... and it is going to storm.
 MARY: Is he gone on a journey, Ma'm?
 MRS. GORDON: He is on his way to St. Thomas now. Mary...
 MARY: Yes, Ma'm.
 MRS. GORDON: It is black in the East.
 MARY: Yes, Ma'm. It is the storm.
 MRS. GORDON: I should not have let him go.
 MARY: You could not keep him.
 MRS. GORDON: (Looking at her quickly) I know. I am all on edge this evening.
 MARY: Yes, Ma'm. It is the storm. ³⁵

Mary's repeated references to the storm have the effect of a tolling bell of warning, connecting the coming rains with personal danger to her employer. Her observation "You could not keep him" is fraught with ironic meaning and relates the exchange back to

Mais's philosophical preoccupation with the pre-ordained nature of martyrdom or any other truly heroic act. This idea is picked up in the chorus that follows this scene which asserts:

... the spirit in man
 Is dark flame
 A sudden mysterious flame
 Flame of God
 Moving in a mysterious way
 And the flame
 Knows not death
 Moves onward
 Unseen
 Moves
 Godward³⁶

In Scene Twelve, just before Mrs. Gordon learns of her husband's death, it is once more Mary who is used to establish the mood of foreboding and inevitable doom. Esther, a servant of the family with which Mary and Mrs. Gordon have been staying, "gets religion" and takes to singing hymns loudly and predicting apocalypse:

(Outside Esther's soprano voice can be heard singing "Rock of Ages". Mary appears in answer to the bell, and Mr. Airey goes out muttering: "Good Lord ... will have to put a stop to this nonsense ... the woman must be mad!")

MRS. GORDON: Oh, Mary ... Why, what is the matter, girl? Have you been crying?

(The singing goes on. Now there are two voices, Esther's and cookie's.)

MARY: (Sniffing like a child) No, Mrs. Gordon, Ma'm.

MRS. GORDON: But of course you are. (Kindly.) What is it, child?

MARY: Do you think they could ... (Catches her words back.)

MRS. GORDON: Could do what? Who?

MARY: Nothing, Ma'm. Oh Lawd, I don't know what I am saying anyway. It's that Esther, Ma'm. She said they was goin' to kill all the black people ... and Mr. Gordon first. But it ain't true, is it, Ma'm? They couldn't do that, could they?

MRS. GORDON: (Quickly, harshly) Esther is a fool!

MARY: Yes, Ma'm. I think so too.

MRS. GORDON: When did she - make this - amazing statement?

MARY: Every day she's been at it, Ma'm. Ever since Mr. Gordon left here. It gets on my nerves.

MRS. GORDON: (Calmly) Never mind. She is a little cracked I believe.

MARY: (Heartily) Yes, Ma'm.

(A pause.)

MRS. GORDON: Why, Mary ... of course they couldn't ... could they ... because he has done nothing ... don't you see?

MARY: Yes, Ma'm. That's just what I say. But that Esther...

MRS. GORDON: (The singing becomes louder) Poor Esther.

MARY: (Doubtfully) Yes, Ma'm.

(A pause.)

MRS. GORDON: Mary.

MARY: Yes, Ma'm?

MRS. GORDON: Mary ... (Rising, she reaches out a hand and touches the girl's arm.) Mary ... (shyly) do you believe in dreams?

Mary's reversal of Dr. Bowerbank's spectre of racial holocaust is particularly effective because of its connection with the singing of hymns and religious frenzy, both of which were traditionally associated with evil directed against the white population rather than the black population's fear of its own extinction.

Mais's view of history in his presentation of the character of George William Gordon is of particular significance. Like each of the writers discussed, he sees the historical controversy as to the extent of Gordon's actual involvement in the rebellion as a matter of central importance: In McKay's poem Gordon's involvement, physically and spiritually, is taken for granted; de Lisser represents Gordon's words as an important cause for the violence while dissociating the character himself from any physical involvement which could be construed as indicating bravery or whole-hearted commitment to the rebel's cause. For Reid, Gordon's absence from the scene of violence is clutched upon as evidence that he is not morally responsible for the riots in Morant Bay. Mais's position is different again from each of these. For him Gordon is a man of courageous ideas as well as a man of peace and he is portrayed warning Eyre of the possibility of violence if he does not respond to the justifiable complaints of the people of Morant Bay. However Mais's main focus is on the paradox of Gordon's impotence as an individual to influence the course of events in Morant Bay and in the local assembly, compared to the potency of his ideas as a man of political and spiritual vision. Mais gives dramatic substance to this idea by portraying Gordon as a soft-spoken, frail, short-sighted man who invariably gets the worst of arguments with his colleagues in the assembly, but who never loses

sight of the ideals which inform his resistance to Eyre's policy. Gordon's human vulnerability is emphasised in his conversations with his wife to whom he confides his fears that perhaps he has been wrong in removing her from the society of her English friends through her marriage to a coloured man. He also expresses

doubts about the success of any attempts to influence political developments and is shown turning repeatedly to Mrs. Gordon, his medical advisor Dr. Fiddes, and even to the servant Mary for physical and emotional support.

The stage directions describing Gordon during his court martial repeatedly emphasise his physical weakness:

Scene set for court martial. Presiding is Lieutenant Brand, a naval officer from the gun boat Onyx. Gordon looking very ill and with a blanket thrown around his shoulders, because his coat and waistcoat have been torn off him, stands in the place allotted to prisoners. He is trying to read, near-sightedly; his spectacles have been snatched from his eyes. The sheaf of notes in his hands trembles visibly.³⁸

During the court martial proceedings Mais gives his protagonist no opportunity to make noble speeches or even to defend himself satisfactorily. His words are often inaudible and when he does attempt to criticise the court martial proceedings he is rudely silenced and led away. In contrast to the defeat and humiliation described in this scene, the chorus which follows is a triumphant fanfare which emphasises the parallels between Mais's presentation of Gordon and the biblical account of Christ's crucifixion:

Men of ideas outlive their times
An idea held by such a man does not end with his death
His life bleeding away goes down
Into the earth, and it grows like seed
The idea that is not lost with the waste of a single life
Like seed springing up a multitude.

They hanged Gordon from a boom
Rigged in front of the court house
They hanged him with eighteen others for company
And Jesus had but two ...

A hundred years is not too long
For the seed to burst its husk under the ground
And cleave a path and press upward
And thrust a green blade in triumph at the sun
Do not be anxious for the house that is a-building
For the unsown acres under the plough
For all things await a time and a season.³⁹

The imagery of fruit and seed with its biblical connotations of dying into life is one of the recurrent motifs of Mais's choruses, used perhaps most memorably here and in his description of Bogle's men looking forward into the future and seeing:

... a vision of the naked trees
 And nooses swaying in the wind
 And of the alien fruit that was their own rotting flesh
 Stark in the sun.⁴⁰

The recurrent metaphor reinforces Mais's presentation of the Morant Bay Rebellion as sowing the seed of the future flowering of social justice, seed which in Mais's opinion was still dormant at the time his play was written, or perhaps only just beginning to "thrust a green blade in triumph at the sun." The poetry of Mais's choruses functions in one sense as inspirational rhetoric for the continuing political struggle similar to that offered by McKay in "Gordon to the Oppressed Natives". At the same time it goes beyond the limitations and objective reality of Jamaican politics to become a statement of the artist's world view, anticipating in many respects the themes of the later novels, Brother Man and Black Lightning. Thus, George William Gordon manages to be the least polemical but the most deeply relevant of the artistic treatments of the Morant Bay Rebellion for Jamaican society.

One of the generalisations which can be made about all the literary responses to the Morant Bay Rebellion considered in this chapter, from the folk songs collected by Jekyll to Mais's play, is that none of them attempts to romanticise history in the way that most of the fiction based on West Indian history but written by non-West Indians does. Even in the novels of Reid and de Lisser where the introduction of romantic intrigue and daring escapades seems at times to be moving in this direction, the attempt to rationalise Jamaica's past and to assign moral responsibility for actions differentiates their work from the swash-buckling tales of pirates, slave revolts and desert islands presented in foreign novels and on the screen.⁴¹ What seems in each case to be of most significance to the Jamaican author is not so much the drama of the historical event as its ideological significance for contemporaneous Jamaican society, and in each case a progressive relation-

ship between the past and present is assumed. This progressive interpretation of Jamaican history is one aspect of Jamaican society's perception of itself to which its writers have repeatedly attempted to give aesthetic substance. It can be seen in de Lisser's portrayal of progress in Revenge as a reassertion of political stability symbolised by the triumph of establishment values; in McKay's notion of an ongoing successful struggle for personal liberty; in Reid's attempts to portray 1944 as the fulfilment of the promise of 1865; and in Mais's projection of Gordon's ideas as providing the seeds of social justice that will flower in a future Jamaica. Significantly, none of the writers shares the unmitigated despair and sense of suffering suggested in the folk songs, and before 1950 no Jamaican author used this particular historical event as a metaphor for chaos or repeated frustration. This mood was to come later with the disillusionment of the post-Independence era, but while West Indian historians have tended to put forward the idea of the Morant Bay Rebellion as a political dead end, the creative writers have been slow to take it up. Here again the extent of the pressure towards conformity which Jamaican society places on its creative writers may be gauged as well as the society's need for heroes and ideals. Both Gordon and Bogle are now revered as national heroes, and while this status would have made them the automatic target for anti-establishment satire in other countries, Jamaican authors remain reticent about expressing ambivalence about their achievement even when, as is the case with Reid, the writer's natural bent seems to be to reject at least the violence with which these figures are associated.

In addition, fictional treatments of the Morant Bay Rebellion tend to concentrate on the characters of its leaders rather than on the people of Morant Bay who actually took part in the riots. Apart from de Lisser's negative treatment of the psychology behind the blood lust of Bogle's followers, few fictional attempts to explain the motivation behind the riots are successful. Reid's recreation of the decision-making meetings of the men of Stony Gut get him into deep waters ideologically, and it is perhaps signi-

ficant that our perspective on these meetings is that of an eight-year-old child. For McKay and Mais the actual historical event becomes a backdrop for working out their own political and philosophical ideas, though this does not negate or detract from their imaginative involvement in their country's history. However, in all four works the central ideas with which we are asked to identify most closely are those expressed by ideal leader figures: Dick Carlton's views and demeanour in Revenge; the attitudes of Davie and his grandson Garth in New Day; and Gordon's ideas as interpreted by McKay and Mais.

The Jamaican authors' treatment of the Morant Bay Rebellion can in this respect be compared to the presentation of the Haitian Revolution in the work of other Caribbean writers where a concern with the character of Toussaint L'Ouverture and the leaders who succeeded him has often overshadowed attempts to celebrate the revolution itself as a popular movement, rather than one created from above.⁴² This preoccupation with the figure of the leader and the positive and negative qualities of leadership is an obsessive concern within formerly colonial Caribbean societies accustomed to looking outwards for leadership as well as for the ideals by which they should be led. The negative position that the colonial man is incapable of leading his society is expressed unequivocally in de Lisser's Revenge, while each of the other works discussed is in one way or another trying to prove the opposite point by asserting a sense of shared ideals between the local leader and his followers. For McKay there seems to be no distinction between the aspirations of the leader and those he leads so that it is not incongruous in his work when he allows his leader to speak on behalf of the people. For Reid the problem is more complicated, and his vagueness about the motivation and attitudes of the crowd points to one of the weaknesses within the national movement of which he was a part, in which a basically middle-class leadership attempted to articulate the aspirations of the masses from whom they were socially and intellectually distanced. In his work Mais shares some of the vagueness of Reid about the aspirations of the masses but he is able to avoid Reid's

dilemma by distinguishing in his choruses between the function of the leader as the source of ideals, and the responsibility of the mass to act on their own behalf in asserting their rights as free men. In this respect his work shares the unity of purpose expressed in McKay's poem, between the leader and his followers.

The Jamaican writers' presentation of the Morant Bay Rebellion, like the portrayal of women in their novels and poems, offers the literary critic the unique opportunity to follow at close range each change in the popular perception of a specific event or object in the society through its literature. The 1865 riots are not the only example in Jamaican literature of multiple fictional treatments of a specific historical event. De Lisser's novel about Juan de Bolas, The White Maroon (1939), could, for example, be compared with V.S. Reid's treatment of the same phase in his island's history in The Jamaicans (1976). A further series of comparisons is possible between Reid's New Day and other attempts by Jamaican authors to deal with the political violence and changes of the 1930s and 1940s: for example, de Lisser's Haunted (1940), Neville Dawes' The Last Enchantment (1960), John Hearne's Voices Under the Window (1955) and Frank Hill's play, Upheaval (1939). This constant return to specific historical incidents which have already been treated fictionally by other authors has no real parallel among other Anglophone Caribbean writers, though the Haitian Revolution has been used in a similar manner by Caribbean writers in French and Spanish-speaking territories. The Jamaican writer's obsession with local history and its meaning for contemporary society is in one sense therefore a unique characteristic. It underlines the polemical bent of much of the island's creative writing as well as the involvement of Jamaican writers in the creation of their nation's self-image. Fiction which concentrates so exclusively on a specific local historical event assumes its readers' familiarity with the material it presents. The emphasis on reinforcing or contradicting specific attitudes to the event already present in the society seems almost to exclude the external reader, so that the Jamaican writer's treatment of history could be said to constitute a private dialogue between himself and his society.

Notes

¹Augier, Gordon, Hall and Reckord, The Making of the West Indies (London, 1960), p. 224. Quoted by Kenneth Ramchand in his An Introduction to the Study of West Indian Literature (London: Nelson Caribbean, 1974), p. 41. The second extract follows in Ramchand's text.

²Reproduced in this form in V.S. Reid's novel New Day (Kingston: Heinemann/Sangster's Ltd., 1970), p. 8. The actual text of the historical document reads, "...they may be assured that it is from their own industry and prudence in availing themselves of the means of prospering that are before them, and not from any such schemes as have been suggested to them, that they must look for an improvement in their condition; and that Her Majesty will regard with interest and satisfaction their advancements through their own merits and efforts." The full text is quoted in Douglas Hall's Free Jamaica 1838-1865: An Economic History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959).

³Eyre's comments quoted by Roy Augier in "The Consequences of Morant Bay: Before and After 1865", New World Quarterly, II, 2 (Croptime, 1966), p. 29.

⁴For an account of the controversy in England over the rebellion and the positions taken by these men, see Bernard Semmel, Jamaican Blood and Victorian Conscience: The Governor Eyre Controversy (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1976). In his study of John Stuart Mill (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976), R. J. Halliday suggests that Mill's bitter struggle to have Eyre officially condemned for his action was ultimately responsible for the destruction of Mill's own political career in Westminster (p. 139, note 2).

⁵These include: W.F. Finlason, The History of the Jamaica Case (1869); A.H. Hume, The Life of Edward John Eyre, Late Governor of Jamaica (1867); George Price, Jamaica and the Colonial Office: Who Caused the Crisis? (1866); Benjamin Thomas Williams, The Case of George William Gordon (1866).

⁶Augier, "Consequences of Morant Bay", p. 29.

⁷Walter Jekyll, Jamaica Song and Story (London: The Folklore Society, 1907), pp. 187-88.

⁸Ibid., p. 233.

⁹Claude McKay, "Gordon to the Oppressed Natives", Jamaica Times, 4th March, 1912, p. 20.

¹⁰McKay, "If We Must Die", in Selected Poems of Claude McKay (New York: Bookman Associates, 1953), p. 36.

¹¹H.G. de Lisser, Revenge: A Tale of Old Jamaica (Kingston: The Gleaner Company, 1919), pp. 1 and 2.

¹²Ibid., p. 41.

¹³Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁷See for example Kenneth Ramchand's comments in his introduction to the Heinemann reprint of Jane's Career (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. viii. He writes: "The retreat in de Lisser's fiction to what he seems to have regarded as a safe historical distance was in itself an expression of alienation from the changing society around him." However, Ramchand concedes (p. vi) that de Lisser's attitude to social change in his own time may be found transferred in apparently historical novels like Revenge.

¹⁸Public Opinion, 3rd August, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁹Quoted in James Carnegie, Some Aspects of Jamaica's Politics: 1918-1938 (Kingston: The Institute of Jamaica, 1973), p. 157.

^{19a}T.A. Johnson, for example, in an article in Public Opinion for January 17, 1917, called "The Classes and the Masses" sees the growth of lower-class militancy as the fulfilment of divine prophecy. Johnson set 1874 as the date of the emergence of world wide lower-class consciousness and deduces this date from a passage from Revelations 15:14. His article closes with the Apostle James's condemnation of the Rich (James 5:1).

²⁰De Lisser, Revenge, p. 33.

²¹Ibid., p. 36.

²²See Carnegie, Some Aspects, pp. 38 and 153. Carnegie claims that the response to Olivier's book when it appeared in 1934 led to an extensive controversy in the local press. He cites letters for and against Olivier's views in The Gleaner for January 2nd, and January 4th, 1934. He claims it was only after the appearance of Olivier's book had made 1865 "respectable" that local politicians began to connect their calls for constitutional reform with the pre-1865 constitution.

²³Reid, New Day, p. 11.

²⁴H.P. Jacobs, "The Historic Foundations of New Day", The West Indian Review, March 14th, 1949, p. 21.

²⁵Jacobs, "Historic Foundations", part II, The West Indian Review, May 28th, 1949.

²⁶Reid, New Day, p. 129.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ramchand, Introduction to the Study of West Indian Literature, p. 36.

²⁹Reid, New Day, p. 2.

³⁰In his article on "Patriotism in Jamaican Writing", Jamaica Journal, IV, 3 (September, 1970), Leo Oakley notes that Arthur Nicholas, a black Jamaican and a member of the Poetry League seems uneasy with the negative appearance of Governor Eyre's actions in his poem about the rebellion. While adopting an apologetic tone with respect to Eyre, however, Nicholas presents Gordon as a hero. Oakley quotes the following description of Gordon from Nicholas' Poem:

At last he comes! how nobly
He holds his haughty head
And walking with his jailors
How firm and strong his tread!
His face is calm and tranquil,
No coward dread is there;
The only marks of suffering -
The white threads in his hair.

Without access to Nicholas's poem it is difficult to assess the accuracy of Oakley's observations about Nicholas's attitude to Eyre. However, if this estimate is correct then it seems to substantiate my point that fictional accounts of Morant were often uneasy about conflicting ideals and loyalties suggested by the event and attempted to suppress or rationalise them. Nicholas's presentation of Gordon as hero and his embarrassment at Eyre's betrayal of the best Imperial ideals would have been in keeping with the League members' attempts to assert a positive image of the educated black and coloured man while subscribing unreservedly to Imperialist ideals.

^{30a}Roger Mais, George William Gordon, in A Time and a Season: Eight Caribbean Plays, ed. Errol Hill (Port of Spain: U.W.I. Extra-Mural Department, 1976), p. 42.

³¹Ibid., p. 13.

³²Ibid., p. 19.

³³Ibid., p. 17.

³⁴Ibid., p. 30.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 10-11. Mais makes use of a similar series of images of foreboding in his short story "The Noose", in And Most of All Man (Kingston, 1942), pp. 40-45. Set in 1865, the story describes a meeting between a white overseer and special constable and his mulatto mistress whose husband, unknown to the woman, has just been executed by Governor Eyre's troops. The woman's sense of being trapped into an affair with the overseer and her anxiety that her real husband may come home and surprise her with the overseer are communicated through her frequent glances at his coat and hat hanging on a peg in the room. As the story progresses and we become aware that the overseer has taken part in the execution of his mistress's husband the coat and hat hanging on the wall become

a symbol of the noose which has ended their owner's life. The multiple ironies of this short story are delicately balanced so that a sense of foreboding is created even before the reader becomes aware of its import.

³⁶Mais, George William Gordon, p. 12.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 86-87. Mais seems also to be consciously making use of the Shakespearean device of having the tragic hero's wife or faithful servant anticipate the death of the hero. Though the Shakespearean influences in this play are not as marked as the influence of Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral, it is clear that Mais conceived of his drama in terms of the conventions of Shakespeare's history plays.

³⁸Ibid., p. 76.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 78-79.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 43.

⁴¹There is, however, in other historical novels by de Lisser, a tendency to sensationalise. Ramchand notes this feature in his introduction to Jane's Career when he observes that examined in chronological order "the romance element in successive (de Lisser) novels becomes more prominent" and "the author yields more and more to a temptation to equate action with sensational happenings in an exotic setting." Ramchand sees the novel The White Witch of Rosehall (1929) as representing the climax of this tendency, but in my opinion The White Witch is one of de Lisser's best historical novels and the one in which his concern with the question of moral order and its relationship to European values is most effectively expressed. Certainly chronologically later novels like The White Maroon (1939) and The Return (1944) which Ramchand may have missed since they were only published in Planters' Punch show a tendency to trivialise and sensationalise historic events, but even here issues of leadership and acquiescence to authority remain important in a way that differentiates these works from similar "pot boiler" romances with West Indian settings published by non-West Indians.

⁴²See for example Aimé Césaire's Tragédie du roi Christophe (1963) and C.L.R. James's play The Black Jacobins, in A Time and a Season. Alejo Carpentier's treatment of the revolution in El reino de este mundo (1949) is by contrast much more oriented towards a view of the Haitian Revolution from the perspective of the masses.

CONCLUSION

To return to the generalisations about West Indian literature put forward in the Introduction to this study, it now becomes clear which factors could be said to constitute a uniquely Jamaican attitude toward creative writing. One aspect of Ramchand's general premise seems to hold true for Jamaica as well as the rest of the region: that West Indian society, especially within its educated sectors, has usually been hostile to local literary and intellectual concerns. Ramchand explains this hostility as a feature of the colonial's rejection of everything which did not come from the "mother country" as well as a product of materialistic attitudes towards education among the rising middle class, for whom learning was merely a passport to higher social status. In the Jamaican situation I have tried to show that certain groups within the middle class did attempt to free themselves from materialistic attitudes to education and cultural activity, and to promote indigenous creative writing. However, their cultural range was often limited by their wish to maintain a distance between their notion of literature and the cultural traditions associated with their slave ancestors. I have also tried to show that this self-rejection on the part of black and coloured Jamaicans was matched within the privileged sectors of the community by a profound distrust of intellectual activity which was seen as a threat to the dominant group as it was feared the creative writer would expose the group's attitudes to criticism.

What makes Jamaica unique, however, is the relatively large size of its middle class and the presence and prestige of atypical representatives of the dominant group whose patronage of the Arts was overt. Such influential figures were not without precedent in the West Indies: one thinks immediately of Frank Collymore in Barbados who, as editor of the literary magazine Bim during the 1940s and 1950s, influenced the development of a whole generation of Caribbean writers, including George Lamming and Samuel Selvon.¹ Harold Simmonds is another case in point. The

long poem Another Life pays tribute to Simmonds' influence on the talented Walcott and St. Omer brothers of St. Lucia.² Although, relatively speaking, both men belonged to the privileged sectors of their communities, neither of them was an expatriate. Outside of the circle of young writers whose development they so profoundly influenced, Simmonds and Collymore were negligible figures within their respective societies and carried no prestige in political or official circles.

By contrast in Jamaica the major patrons of the Arts were not only expatriates - and therefore representatives of the mystical "mother country" - they were also individuals of indisputable prestige and, in some cases, of political importance within Jamaican society. Sydney Olivier was Governor of Jamaica before World War I and remained involved in Jamaican affairs for most of his active political life; Walter Jekyll was known to have aristocratic connections; Edna Manley, by the time she became a patron of local literary effort, was an artist with an international reputation and the wife of a leading barrister and politician. Other patrons of the Arts were expatriate newspaper editors, prominent clergymen and missionaries and well-known educators. What such individuals did - whether it was, as in Olivier's case, that he walked to work instead of using a carriage, or as in Jekyll's case, that he ate beans instead of meat - was of supreme interest in the small, class-conscious colonial society. Mrs. Manley's attendance and attire at weekly boxing matches was reported religiously in the society columns of The Gleaner newspaper, while Sydney Olivier's stylish Latin moustache and beard set a trend among the young men in Jamaica before the First World War. Jekyll too, in spite of his hermetic lifestyle and well-known agnostic views, was persona grata in the homes of many devout Jamaican-based missionaries. When such individuals made it clear that local creative expression was something worth recognising, the society acquiesced; even if the kind of expression favoured was potentially antipathetic to the interests of the dominant group. In his novel Banana Bottom, Claude McKay includes an ironical account of the change that

comes over Bitah's guardian, Mrs. Craig, when she learns that Bitah has attended a forbidden tea meeting, but in the company of Squire Gensir - who McKay tells us was modelled after Jekyll:

"But certainly, Bitah" - she pronounced the name broadly - "you must have been out of your senses. A tay-meeting! A tay-meeting! I cannot understand it. I will not understand it."

"I went with my cousin and Squire Gensir," said Bitah.

At the mention of Squire Gensir's name Mrs. Craig's feeling and her attitude underwent a magical change and Bitah's attending the tea-meeting was seen in a happier colour.³

Whereas in other islands the creative writer was ignored by his own society and had as a result to go abroad if he wished his work to be given serious consideration, the element of official patronage of the Arts in Jamaica made it possible for acclaim and recognition to be accorded to writers at home. Both MacDermot and McKay report sales figures of more than 2000 copies for their first publications and de Lisser probably had a similar success with his first novel, Jane's Career. The official extension and reinforcement of such patronage through the Institute of Jamaica ensured that local creative effort was not ignored once influential individual patrons left the island. Although the Institute itself was often tardy in recognising local talent, once a writer had achieved a certain amount of public recognition official honours usually followed. Both McKay and de Lisser received awards from the Institute shortly after MacDermot had protested against their neglect. Later MacDermot and various members of the Jamaica Poetry League were similarly honoured, and by the end of the 1940s when the Institute's affairs had passed out of de Lisser's control, the work of several of Mrs. Manley's protégés was recognised by the Institute. The swift recognition of literary achievement on the local front may have been one of the reasons why relatively few Jamaican writers chose to migrate in search of an audience for their work. In the case of a writer like de Lisser, it could even be argued that he continued to publish and live in Jamaica in spite of his slightly contemptuous attitude toward local society because he received more attention there than he

would have abroad. Had he attempted to make a name for himself as a coloured writer in America or England his status as an "honorary" white might not have been possible. From his position of privilege within official Jamaican circles, he was able to travel as a celebrity and mix within the most prestigious business and cultural circles abroad. Conversely, the apparent creative silence of the promising young writer George Campbell, after his migration to New York in 1948, could have been the result of his relative anonymity in the impersonal, competitive world of American letters where he would have been without the moral and material support of his patron.

Underlying the superficially receptive cultural climate in Jamaican society, however, was a profoundly conservative attitude toward the Arts and the role of the creative writer, which had its roots in the old attitudes of the dominant culture to aesthetic innovation and intellectual debate. As someone who had been singled out by a member of the dominant group for attention, the writer was expected to show a proper sense of gratitude to his benefactor and to refrain from using his creative license to embarrass or attack his patrons. In most cases this implied that the writer was not expected to upset the status quo within the society. In addition, since a great deal of the attention given to the writer by the society in general was unrelated to any real understanding of the aesthetic merits of his work, the creative writer could expect little meaningful criticism of his work from the society. The result of these factors may be seen in the swiftness with which experiment gave way to consolidation in the work of each generation of writers discussed. Writers like de Lisser may have deteriorated over the years because their prestige ensured that whatever they wrote would be read regardless of its literary merit. Less complacent writers like Roger Mais, who in an article quoted earlier accuses his society of erecting a "moated tower of mediocrity" around its authors, were the ones most likely to migrate in search of an audience: and then this migration was not because their work had received no attention, but because

it had received the wrong sort of attention.

The pressure on the writer to respect the status quo had the effect of inhibiting creative response to social issues. Like writers elsewhere, the Jamaican writer was usually a product of the middle class, and in each of the West Indian colonies this class had been produced by an educational system in which the moral and cultural values of the dominant group were firmly entrenched. Because the writers in the other territories received no official patronage and, in many instances, were ignored or even ridiculed, they felt no obligation to rationalise their society's short-comings or celebrate its aspirations in their work. As a result, their work often registers the contradiction between the bourgeois ideals which had shaped their education and the realities of race and class prejudice which circumscribed actual relationships within their societies. For the writer within Jamaican society such independent attitudes were well nigh impossible if he wished to live and work in Jamaica. Consequently, though creative writers were often associated with progressive social and political trends, their work seldom broke new ground in advance of general opinion within the Jamaican intelligentsia. Thus for example, Jamaican writers were articulate in their expression of sympathy for the masses before World War I and after the social upheavals of 1938, periods when a degree of official attention was being given to popular dissent within their communities. Between the wars, however, when the establishment and the middle class were antipathetic to lower-class claims for social and racial equality, the Jamaican middle-class writers rarely attempted to deal with such issues in their work. By contrast, in other parts of the West Indies, writers were usually to be found in the vanguard of new social and political movements, and were often ostracised by the rest of their class on this account. The Beacon writers in Trinidad for example anticipate the working class's assertion of its rights and the anti-imperialist sentiments of the late 1930s and the 1940s in the work they wrote between 1929 and 1933.⁴

Their prose fiction about the women in Port of Spain's barrack yards suggests that they saw in the lifestyle of the yard aspects of cultural vitality missing within their own class. Such a view is far in advance of the type of benevolent attitude to the lower classes expressed in early and later treatments of lower-class culture in Jamaican writing. On the political front, while the writers of the Public Opinion group exerted themselves in championing the new nationalist leaders of their day, writers elsewhere in the West Indies were far less willing to commit themselves to such a positive view of events. H.A. Vaughan of Barbados in "For Certain Demagogues" comments ironically:

"We love the people, sir," You do?
 You ought to; nay, indeed, you must:
 Shouting their needs has brought a new
 Elation to your fickle dust.⁵

A fitting retort perhaps to George Campbell's impressively worded declaration:

We want to identify ourselves with
 Our people; come close to them and they
 Come close to us. People how goeth your
 World? Know you with pride in understanding
 Or are there hard words in the dark: are you
 Formless dust blown in the wind?⁶

A similar contrast can be made between V.S. Reid's enthusiastic celebration of the new nationalist leaders in his novel New Day and the far less complimentary analysis of the role of the new middle-class politician put forward by the Barbadian novelist George Lamming in his novel In the Castle of My Skin (1952).

Apart from the limited social perspectives of the Jamaican writer in comparison to writers elsewhere in the Caribbean, early Jamaican authors were also more conservative with respect to stylistic innovation and attitudes to language in their work. Radical approaches to language and theme where they occur are often the result of the direct promptings of the writers' patrons, and once this influence was removed the writers often lapsed back into more conservative forms. Claude McKay, for instance, claims to have been convinced by Jekyll's arguments in favour of writing in dialect; however once he left Jamaica and Jekyll's influence, he never again used this idiom in his published poetry.

Conversely, however, other radical departures in McKay's later work, such as the introduction of a more militant protest note in his poetry, seldom feature in his early work, possibly (judging from the difference in opinion between patron and protégé on the Morant Bay Rebellion) because Jekyll would not have approved of this tone in McKay's work had it appeared more frequently.

Later writers of the Public Opinion group often seem to rely on Edna Manley for inspiration in their poetry. The use of Mrs. Manley's carving in the work of Campbell and Sherlock is a case in point. Campbell's poem is unsuccessful because his anxiety to use his patron's idea is not complemented by any real understanding of the meaning of her symbols for himself. Sherlock, a more mature and controlled artist at this stage, is able to use his patron's symbols more successfully. In both cases, however, the social aspect of the poem's theme is passed to the poets through their patron rather than through their direct observation of society. The tendency to rely on outsiders for the symbols and language with which to describe their own experiences is most pronounced in the work of the poet J.E. Clare McFarlane and the Jamaica Poetry League. McFarlane's vision of himself as the Arnoldian prophet in the wilderness, surrounded by materialism and machinery, blinds him to the deeper aesthetic possibilities of his environment. At a time when Jamaica was on the threshold of change this writer remains bound to static notions of aesthetic perfection which he seems to use at times to shield himself from the social realities of his time. This attitude is expressed most memorably in the ringing affirmation of his "Villanelle of Immortal Love":

Love will awaken all lovely things at last.
One by one they shall come from the sleep of Time,
Bearing in triumph the deathless dreams of the past.⁷

The Poetry League's overt refusal to deal with the realities of change in Jamaican society, and their imitation of the Romantics was countered by the Public Opinion set during the 1940s by an appeal to members of the League to read more of T.S. Eliot and less of Shelley and Keats. The completely original

approach to the Caribbean reality put forward by Wilson Harris in Guyana during the same decade, however, would hardly have found a spokesman within either the Poetry League or the Public Opinion set. In the course of a review of A.J. Seymour's Guiana Book in 1948, Harris writes:

A.J. Seymour's poetry marks to my mind the completion of the ornament in a century of poetry in the West Indies and British Guiana. In fact, it is to be associated with the contemporary artifice of a closed union, a finished work, a collective loyalty that one finds today so strenuously upheld by critics as the only criterion for great art. Seymour's work, however, though within this school of tradition, is no such strenuous organisation. The poet is unaware, as it were, of internal weakness, and therefore uses his scope more leisurely in a gracious dream of the past. That group of Guianese poets and prose writers, however, who intend to add ineffectual ornament upon ornament to reinforce a puppet society can no longer hope for such ease and leisure in a work of tradition. If they insist they will now have to become strenuous and forceful to achieve any measure of distinction. A measure of distinction which will be purely an imposing facade. This temptation to impose is already at work so much so that most writers in British Guiana are completely devoid of anguish or real passion, and experiment is frowned upon by them as too personal, ugly and sinister. But the poet of the moment has to accomplish a leap. He can no longer secure himself in a collective fashion but must surrender himself in actual symbols - as distinct from recollected symbols - even though the shock of his surrender presents great difficulty to an audience whose "encased lives before the Infinite" have found their measure in collective dreams and whose formula for existence has always evaded the actual world.

Tied as they were to the immediate social and political concerns of their time, few Jamaican writers would have been capable of such a profoundly revolutionary approach to creativity. Roger Mais comes nearest to this position in some of his theoretical statements, but even he remains in practice imitative of European models, although at times his work goes beyond imitation to achieve an authenticity that is truly original.

The literary history of Jamaica within the period considered in this study has not, however, been without its important achievements. In the first place the patronage of the Arts at an official level created an infrastructure for the promotion and support of

cultural activity which has served Jamaica well. Compared to the rest of the Caribbean, artistic talent in Jamaica continues to be recognised and given material assistance. This is why even today the island continues to attract creative writers from elsewhere in the region, several of whom have found in Jamaica a degree of financial security and appreciation that would not have been possible within their home territories. For such writers the pressure to conform within Jamaican society has not been as marked because their status as outsiders has preserved for them a degree of immunity from such considerations. Living within the West Indies however, they have been able to relate their earlier experiences to the Jamaican situation and produce work which can be described as West Indian in its broadest sense. The Barbadian poet Edward Brathwaite is the most celebrated of these "expatriate" West Indian writers who have found a home and an audience in Jamaica, but other writers like Derek Walcott, Garth St. Omer and Wayne Brown have participated for varying lengths of time in Jamaican society and the influence of this period of creation and communication with other authors and West Indians may be seen in their work.

The development in Jamaica of a socio-cultural milieu willing to accord its writers a hearing, even if only on limited terms, has also had the side effect of creating a well-documented local literary tradition. No other West Indian territory can boast so extensive a history of unbroken literary activity between 1900 and 1950, although many of the islands produced more original work during this period from a stylistic point of view. The existence of this early Jamaican material makes it possible to reconstruct the development of various trends which are common to West Indian writing as a whole. Without the early Jamaican writing, for example, West Indian literature would seem to be dominated by a concern with male protagonists, female characters only being presented as shadowy symbolic extensions of the men. The Jamaican literature produced before 1950 proves that this concern with male protagonists has not always been typical. It also demonstrates that the subordination of the female character

is part of the process by which West Indian society has tried to minimise its former connections with slavery. Early writers could not help but be aware of the dominant role played by working-class women in Jamaica in the decades after Emancipation. Their work reflects this social reality even when, as in the case of de Lisser and MacDermot, the positive significance of the woman's sexual and economic independence is played down. In the creative writing produced between the wars the desire to suppress the connection between such women and the new middle class was strong among Jamaican writers. Consequently instead of associating women in their work with sexuality or physical labour, they present women as ideal figures whose distinctive qualities are spiritual rather than physical. By the time the post-1938 writers began to assert their aggressively masculine nationalist ideals, the original view of the woman as a challenging, dominating presence had begun to disappear. Instead women were presented as victims in need of protection, or vixens whose activities threaten the male and by implication the society in general. The return to an interest in the female character in the most recent West Indian writing suggests that this development has now come full circle and that the society as a whole is now prepared to re-examine its attitudes to women, just as in the 1940s and 1950s it began to re-appraise its attitudes to language, class and race.

The existence of an extensive collection of early Jamaican literature also allows for a detailed examination of changing attitudes to history in Jamaican literature. Like writers in other parts of the Caribbean, the Jamaican writer seldom uses historical events as material for purely sensationalist writing. Instead, history becomes a means of interpreting or reinforcing trends in contemporaneous society. There are, however, several aspects of the Jamaican writer's use of the past which distinguishes it from the treatment of history by other Caribbean writers. For a start the Jamaican writers tend to concentrate on specific political events rather than general historical issues. The existence of at least four versions of the Morant Bay Rebellion written between

1900 and 1950 demonstrates this tendency. The writers seem often to depend on the reader's intimate knowledge of historical detail associated with the event they portray to fill out their symbolism; and this leaves the impression that the writer saw his work as addressing his own society and expected it to have real political repercussions for his own time.

Each of the fictional re-workings of the Morant Bay Rebellion presents a positive view of socio-political developments in Jamaica, although the rebellion itself has been cited by historians as epitomising the chaos and frustration of West Indian history. In Revenge the rebellion is seen as re-affirming the strength of the establishment to resist attack; in George William Gordon the rebellion is seen as sowing the seed of change whose ultimate flowering will take place in the Jamaican society of the future; in New Day the writer seems to strain against his own moral uncertainties in his attempt to maintain a positive perspective on the rebellion, and this leads to a sacrifice of artistic integrity in exchange for polemical consistency. This approach to history is in keeping with the writers' unspoken duty within Jamaica to uphold their society's ideals.

Perhaps in the final analysis this urge towards affirmation is the weakness and strength of the Jamaican writing discussed. Where the poet feels unable to express confidence in his society, the pressure to conform may limit his ability to express ambivalence or despair. When writer and society share the same ideals and aspirations, however, the result is an expression of national pride and self-confidence which imbues the work of the creative writer with a heroic quality that is capable of inspiring a real sense of vision within the society as a whole. It is this feature of affirmation which ultimately distinguishes the Jamaican writer from his counterpart elsewhere in the Caribbean. One feels this quality in the grand rhythms of MacDermot's "Song for 1891" as well as in the assertion of abstract ideals in McFarlane's "Villanelle of Immortal Love" and Mais's choruses in George William Gordon. It is there in V.S. Reid's New Day even though

in retrospect his limited political vision has dated. Perhaps most significantly this spirit of affirmation has reached out and inspired writers in other parts of the Caribbean. Derek Walcott pays tribute to this inspirational quality when in Another Life he describes his response to George Campbell's First Poems:

Below the bulb
 a green book, laid
 face downward. Moon,
 and sea. He read
 the spine. FIRST POEMS:
 CAMPBELL. The painter
 almost absently
 reversed it, and began to read:

"Holy be
 the white head of a Negro,
 sacred be
 the black flax of a black child..."

And from a new book,
 bound in sea-green linen, whose lines
 matched the exhilaration which their reader,
 rowing the air around him now, conveyed,⁹
 another life it seemed would start again

And this response surfaces again in the poet Wayne Brown's fascination with the cultural vitality of Jamaica which led him to write a biography of Edna Manley:

As a Trinidadian in Jamaica I had envied and lived vicariously the upsurge of the arts that had accompanied the political crisis of three decades earlier, and for which I saw Edna Manley as a catalyst. Nothing like it had happened in Trinidad. I wondered why.¹⁰

Brown's sentiments could be my own, in spite of the limitations and dependencies which this study has documented within the Jamaican situation. The Jamaican writer's sense of responsibility to his society, the intimacy of the relationship between his work and his times, and his ability to express his community's ideals remain features which demand respect even when time has destroyed the ideals which the writer celebrated.

Notes

¹George Lamming acknowledges his debt to Collymore in an interview published in Kas-Kas: Interviews with Three Caribbean Writers in Texas, ed. Ian Munro and Reinhard Sander (Austin: The African and Afro-American Research Institute, 1972). Collymore's influence on the development of Caribbean writing in general is explored in a special issue of Savacou, 7/8 (January/June, 1973).

²See Derek Walcott, Another Life (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972). See also Baugh's comments on Simmonds' life and work in Another Life: Memory as Vision (London: Longman Caribbean, 1979), on the significance of Simmonds in relation to Derek Walcott and Dunstan St. Omer in particular.

³Claude McKay, Banana Bottom (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovitch, 1961), 91.

⁴See Reinhard Sander (ed.), From Trinidad: An Anthology of Early West Indian Writing (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1978). The short stories and articles from The Beacon and Trinidad magazine collected in this volume illustrate the editor's claims for the group as a precursor of the general social and political changes which characterised the post-1938 era in the West Indies.

⁵H.A. Vaughan, "For Certain Demagogues", in Caribbean Voices: An Anthology of West Indian Poetry, Vol. II, ed. John Figueroa (London: Evans Brothers Ltd., 1970), p. 71.

⁶George Campbell, "On This Night", in First Poems (Kingston: City Printery, 1945), p. 67.

⁷J.E. Clare McFarlane, "Villanelle of Immortal Love", in A Treasury of Jamaican Poetry, ed. J.E. Clare McFarlane (London: University of London Press, 1949), p. 142.

⁸Wilson Harris, "The Guiana Book by A.J. Seymour", Kyk-over-al, II, 7 (December, 1948), p. 37.

⁹Walcott, Another Life, p. 7.

¹⁰Wayne Brown, Edna Manley: The Private Years 1918-1938 (London: Andre Deutsch, 1975), p. 11.

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