

The Gift of Music and Song

Interviews with Jamaican Women Writers

In this collection of interviews, Jacqueline Bishop is in conversation with eighteen female Jamaican writers, some of whom have emigrated from the island. This deeply intimate and personal encounter between the writer and artist, Bishop, and those she admires touches on the tensions, reflections and memories one has when writing about one's birthplace.

Beginning at childhood, each interviewee narrates their fond memories of the Caribbean country with a nostalgia and yearning for a place that is complex and freighted with political, social and racial difficulties. *The Gift of Music & Song* is a space for these writers to talk deeply about writing back to their homeland; about being female voices from Jamaica, how one should represent the country, its rhythms and cadences, and what it means to be a female writer in the world today.

So much of this collection deals with the duality and questioning of identity that movement and migration fosters. By interviewing many different writers, this book is also about the duties of being a creative individual and the act of writing. How and when does one realise they are a writer, storyteller, poet or artist?

Bringing the book full-circle, Bishop invites her interviewees to interview her, and thus it becomes as much about the art of interviewing and conversation as it is about the content of the interviews. In *The Gift of Music & Song* are lessons and meditations on writing and making for women and men, old and young, Jamaican and non-Jamaican alike. What unites the voices in this book is not their country of birth or gender but an unfaltering belief in the power of poetry and poetics. Each writer is faithful to the act of storytelling and the power stories have to promote change. Jacqueline Bishop is an award-winning photographer, painter and writer born and raised in Jamaica, who now lives and works in New York City.

The Gift of Music and Song

Interviews with Jamaican Women Writers



Jacqueline Bishop

PEEPAL TREE

**The Gift of Music
and Song**
Jacqueline Bishop

ISBN:

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240 pages

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NON FICTION

Paperback

JANUARY 2021

Rights held: World

Weighted Words

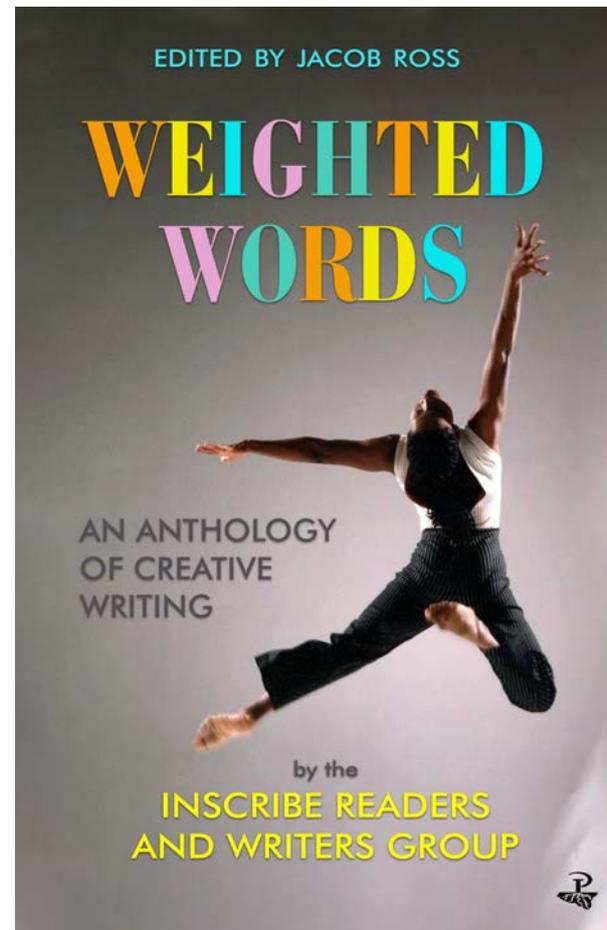
an anthology of Creative Writing edited by Jacob Ross

From the colonial idea of 'British' tea; the demasculinising experience of infertility in a Jamaican family; a Black woman being both tourist and tourist attraction on her travels in South Asia, and what it meant to be 'everybody's midwife' in an institutionally racist NHS, through to the experience of an Indian migrant child in the 'country of the oppressor' -- these are just a few of the themes explored in *Weighted Words* a new anthology by Peepal Tree Press' Readers and Writers Group.

The group comprises writers living in Leeds and West Yorkshire. Through poetry, short stories, confessionals and memoirs, contributors interrogate race, gender, relationship with self and with family, as well as identity in contemporary Britain.

Moments of self-reflection sit alongside longer accounts of familial conflicts, personal struggles, and the enduring repercussions of marginalisation.

Edited by Jacob Ross, *Weighted Words* includes the work of established poets like Malika Booker, Khadijah Ibrahiim and Sai Murray alongside previously unpublished writers. Here, a dazzling mix of fresh perspectives and backgrounds mesh and complement each other in a powerful collage of individual experiences, giving rise to a rich and wide-ranging anthology.



Weighted Words
edited by Jacob Ross

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ANTHOLOGY

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Zion Roses

Monica Minott

"This is a powerful second collection of poems in a constant dialogue between four quadrants of engagement: with history, with landscape, with personal and family experience and with the worlds of literature, music and art. Monica Minott's poems grasp the reader's attention with a voice that is distinctively personal, both taut and musical – and tender and muscular when the occasion demands. Her language moves seamlessly and always appropriately between standard and Jamaican patwa, a reflection of a vision that encompasses a Black modernity still very much in touch with its aphoristic folk roots.

"I see visions wider than all the nets cast' ends one of the poems. Monica Minott also hears said visions; so much cultural lustre and light is 'languaged' here, a strong song that is mythic as it is rapturously melodic. The poems are no mere voiceovers but lyrics inflected with the sight of history. These poems crown us where we are, the ennobled and dignified living."

Major Jackson

'Zion Roses, with its alluring title, builds impressively on the promise of Minott's Kumina Queen. The pursuit of self-realisation runs through inter-related themes such as family, ancestors, the challenges of a girl's growing into womanhood, and these grounded in the history of African-Jamaican slave experience. She engraves Jamaican folk culture in her word-scape, as in the sequence that revives "jonkunno," the theatre of the streets. Art and music become integral parts of the experience, as in the poems about Jean Michel Basquiat, Paul Gauguin and trombonists Don Drummond and Rico Rofriquez. The title poem, which closes the collection, is a song of praise, instinct, in the nuances of the title itself, with the issues explored in the preceding range of poems. The Zion of Christianity interplays with Rastafarian, and "Roses" illuminates each.' --Edward Baugh

Winsome Monica Minott is the author of two collections of poetry, Kumina Queen and Zion Roses. She was awarded first prize in the inaugural Small Axe poetry competition She lives in Jamaica.



Zion Roses
MONICA MINOTT

PEEPAL TREE

Zion Roses
Monica Minott
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POETRY
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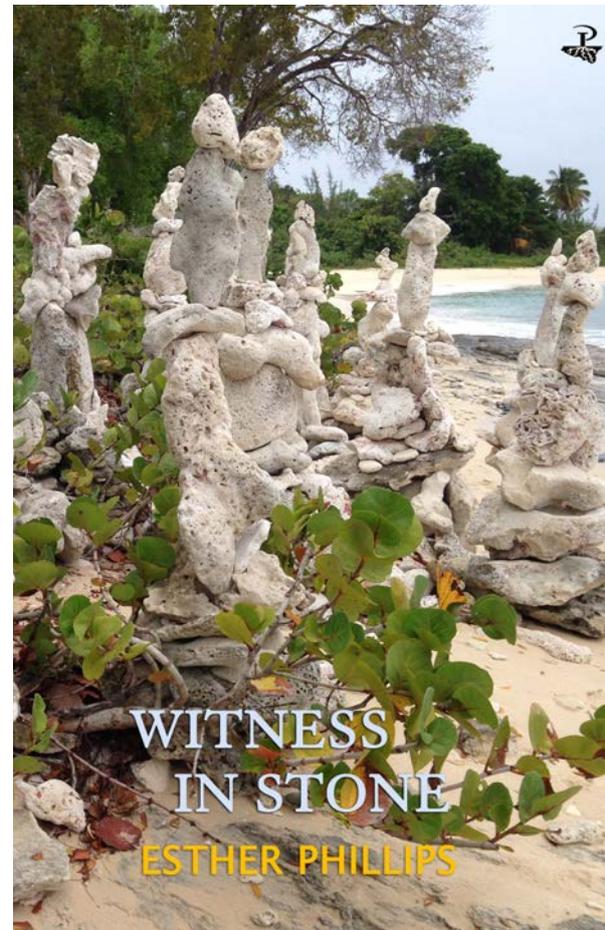
Witness in Stone

Esther Phillips

"This collection explores the fragile territory between remembering and forgetting, both as an individual experience and in the life of a society. If in the end all is subject to "time's slow bleed", these poems enact the capacity of the imagination "to pass through ancient walls" and to reorder failures long gone in time into more hopeful connections. Poems recreate those childhood moments when physical presences, such as the "great house" at Drax Hall provoke the "beginning of poetry", the searching for what is "hidden in the dark", and thence to a grasp of the history that society would rather forget. For while forgetting is human, the collection also explores how amnesia can be cultivated in society as a means of hiding the sources of contemporary privilege and economic power.

'Esther Phillips' poems are always lucid and musical; they gain a rewarding complexity from being part of the collection's careful architecture that offers a richly nuanced inner dialogue about the meaning of experience in time. Not least powerful in this conversation are the sequence of poems about Barbadian childhoods, poems of grace, humour and insight.

When Barbados chose Esther Phillips as its first poet laureate it knew what it was doing: electing a poet who could speak truth, who could challenge and console her nation – and all of us.



Witness in Stone
Esther Phillips

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POETRY

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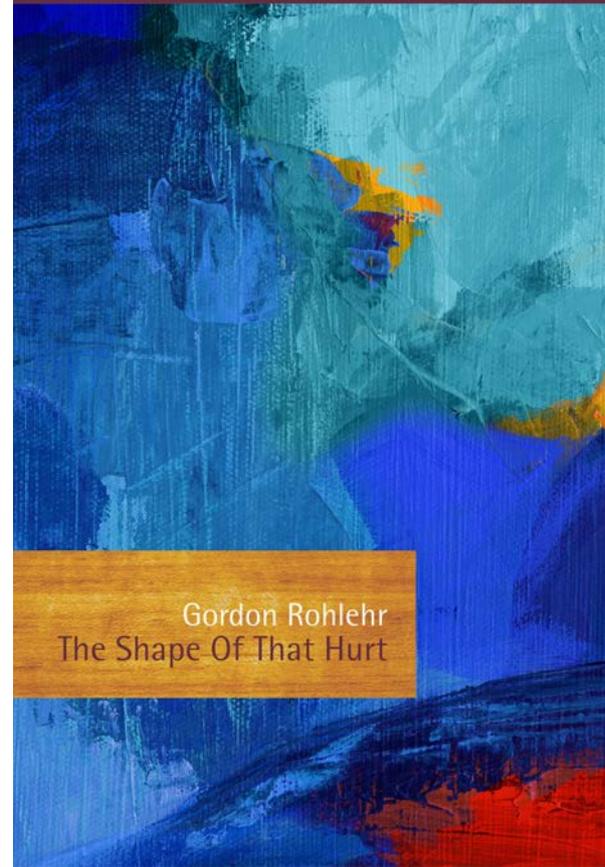
The Shape Of That Hurt

Gordon Rohlehr

'Continuing on from his outstanding collection of literary criticism, *My Strangled City* and other essays, literary critic and Professor Gordon Rohlehr delves further, examining the work of sam Selvon, Louise Bennett, Kamau Brathwaite, Derek Walcott and many other luminaries of the Caribbean. originally published by Longman in 1992, this is a marvellous addition to the Caribbean Modern Classics series.

'Gordon Rohlehr is Emeritus Professor at the University of the West Indies at St Augustine. Unquestionably one of the Caribbean's finest critics and thinkers, his territory covers both literature and popular culture, particularly Calypso. His publications include: *Pathfinder: Black Awakening* in "The Arrivants" of Edward Kamau Brathwaite (Tunapuna: College Press, 1981); *Cultural Resistance and the Guyana State* (Casa de las Américas, 1984); *Calypso and Society in Pre-Independence Trinidad* (Port of Spain, 1990); *My Strangled City and Other Essays* (Longman Trinidad, 1992); *The Shape of That Hurt and Other Essays* (Longman Trinidad, 1992); *A Scuffling of Islands: Essays on Calypso* (Lexicon Trinidad Ltd, 2004); *Transgression, Transition, Transformation: Essays in Caribbean Culture* (Lexicon, 2007); and *Ancestories: Readings of Kamau Brathwaite's "Ancestors"* (Trinidad: Lexicon, 2010) and *My Whole Life is Calypso: Essays on Sparrow* (2015).

Caribbean Modern Classics / Non-fiction



The Shape of That Hurt

Gordon Rohlehr

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CARIBBEAN
MODERN CLASSICS

Essays/Literary
Criticism

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Fortune

Amanda Smyth

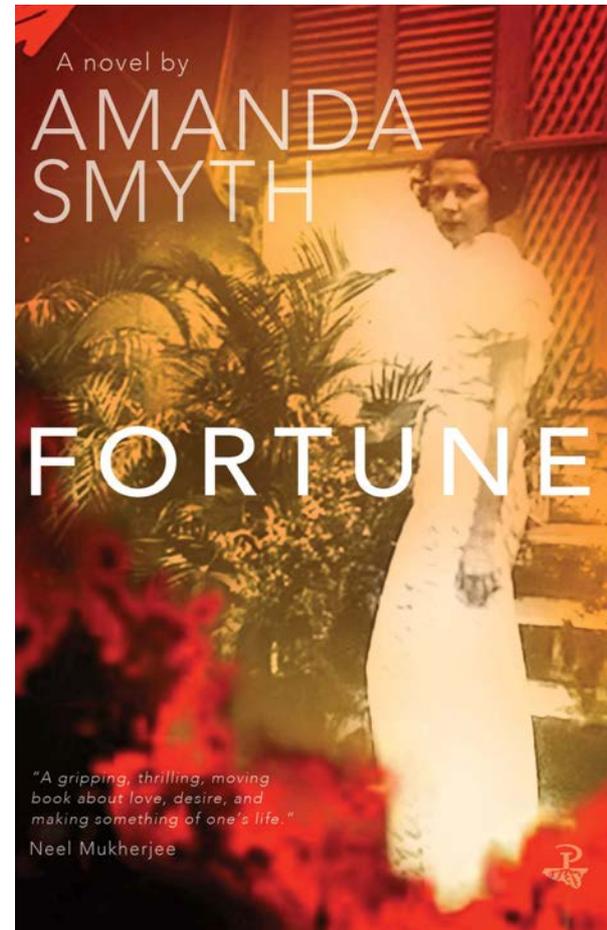
Eddie Wade has recently returned from the US oilfields. He is determined to sink his own well - despite the dangers - to make his fortune. His sights are set on Sonny Chatterjee's oil-rich cocoa estate. Although big corporations want to get their hands on his land, Sonny puts his faith in Eddie. When a fortuitous meeting with businessman Tito Fernandez, brings Eddie the investor he desperately needs, the three men enter into a partnership. A friendship between Tito and Eddie begins that will change their lives forever. But when Tito introduces Eddie to his wife Ada, things become complicated. Hampered by mosquitoes, heat, monsoon rains and superstitious fears, Eddie and Tito's fortune eventually materialises, shooting from the ground and filling thousands of barrels of oil. But as the pressure builds with signs of danger nearby, and Sonny threatens to sell up, Eddie and Tito decide to sink one last well, hoping that their luck will hold. With so much money at stake and many lives on the line is there any hope of a happy ending? Re-imagining the 1928 Dome Fire in which 17 people perished, this is a remarkable story which deserves to be told.

"Fortune is a perfect novel, a master work of Caribbean literature which will stay with me for a long time.'
MONIQUE ROFFEY, COSTA BOOK OF THE YEAR WINNER 2021

A thrilling, gripping, moving book about love, desire, and making something of one's life set in the lush tropical beauty of Trinidad in the 1920s, FORTUNE is going to hold you in its thrall from the very first page to the last and not let you go long, long after you've put it down. It's also written in some of the most beautifully lyrical and clear prose I've read in a very long time.
NEEL MUKHERJEE

Amanda Smyth is Irish-Trinidadian and was born in Ireland. She spent long summers in Trinidad with her mother, who told her the true story of the Dome fire of 1928 that led to one of the worst oil disasters in the history of Trinidad's oil business.

Amanda is the author of Black Rock (2009) and A Kind of Eden (2013). Black Rock won the Prix du Premier Roman prize, was nominated for an NAACP award, shortlisted for the McKitterick Prize and selected as an Oprah Winfrey Summer Read.



Fortune
Amanda Smyth

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FICTION

Paperback and
ebook

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No Ruined Stone

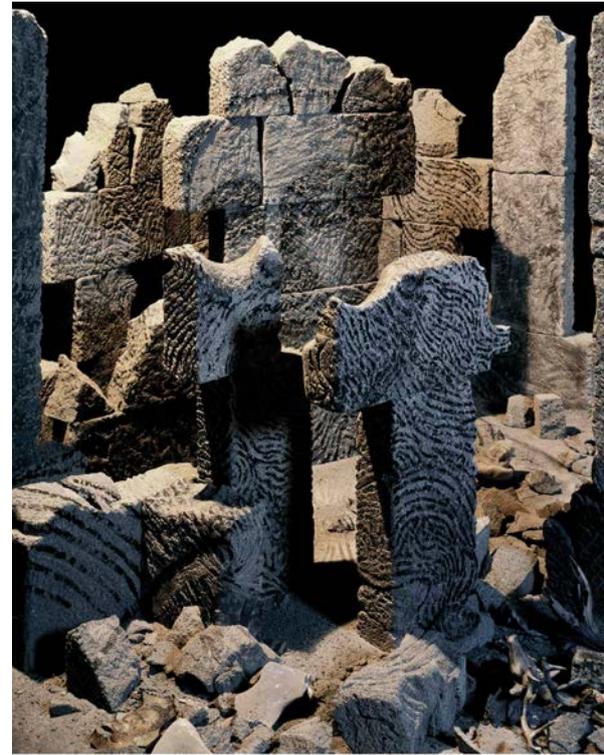
Shara McCallum

No Ruined Stone is Jamaican poet Shara McCallum's sixth collection of poetry. She is the author of *The Face of Water: New and Selected Poems*, *This Strange Land*, *Song of Thieves*, *The Water Between Us* and *Madwoman*.

Shara McCallum's poems have appeared in journals in the US, the UK, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Israel, have been reprinted in textbooks and anthologies of American, African American, Caribbean, and World Literatures, and have been translated into Spanish and Romanian. Her personal essays appear in *The Antioch Review*, *Creative Nonfiction*, *Witness*, and elsewhere. She is the recipient of a Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, individual artist grants from the Tennessee Arts Commission and the Barbara Deming Memorial Fund, the Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize, and an Academy of American Poets Prize, and has been a Cave Canem Fellow and a Walter E. Dakin Fellow at the Sewanee Writers' Conference.

McCallum was on the permanent faculty of the MFA program at the University of Memphis and the Stonecoast Low-Residency MFA program at the University of Southern Maine and has served as visiting faculty for the Catskill Poetry Workshop, the West Virginia Writers Workshop, the Frost Place, and the Chautauqua Writer's Center.

She lives with her family in Pennsylvania, where she teaches and directs the Stadler Center for Poetry at Bucknell University.



NO RUINED STONE

SHARA McCALLUM



No Ruined Stone
Shara McCallum

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POETRY

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August 2021

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Commonwealth



In the Eye of the Storm: Edgar Mittelholzer - Critical Perspectives

edited by Juanita Cox

In the 1950s and early 1960s no Anglophone Caribbean novelist had a higher profile and was more praised than Edgar Mittelholzer. He was the first Caribbean writer to earn his living from writing and his earlier novels in particular found enthusiastic reviewers in the UK and USA. But after his suicide in 1965 his reputation sank and until Peepal Tree began republishing his earlier writing in 2007, for several decades, none of his books were in print. This collection of essays charts both the way Mittelholzer's work was read in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, and shows how a contemporary generation of critics is rediscovering his real merits – the quality of his prose, his literary ambition and the ways in which at least some of Mittelholzer's ideas about the Caribbean speak to a postnationalist generation.

The essays in this collection explore Mittelholzer's treatment of race and the divided person, of sexuality, history, heredity and the charge that he wrote pornography. More recent essays discuss his formal inventiveness in exploring analogies for musical forms, the leitmotiv in his fiction, and the diversity of genres he employs in his short stories. Contributors include A.J. Seymour, Michael Gilkes, Joyce Sparer and an important biographical essay from Mittelholzer's widow, Jacqueline Ward. More recent critics include Keith Jardim, J. Dillon Brown, Juanita Cox and Jeremy Poynting.

The collection is edited by Juanita Cox, whose research on Mittelholzer's life and writing has played an important role in the rediscovery of this important Caribbean writer.

Juanita Cox has a PhD on the novels of Edgar Mittelholzer and taught at the University of North London. She is currently a self-employed literary critic and producer of a monthly community forum, Guyana Speaks (UK).



In the Eye of the Storm

Edgar Mittelholzer
1909–2009:
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

Editor Juanita Cox

Two elements have always lived within me, side by side and in restless harmony... Any positive disturbance and the precarious symbiosis dissolved into roaring chaos. The Idyll element dreamed of a peaceful, sylvan situation... secure under cosy, twilit rafters, with rain, thunder and lightning, sunshine and the rustling of trees providing a simple, satisfying variety in the flow of days... The Warrior Element listened always to the sound of Conflict, was perpetually alert to the raw actuality of Life, perpetually ready to resist...

Edgar Mittelholzer,
A Swarthy Boy



In the Eye of the Storm

Juanita Cox

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352 pages

£19.99

NON FICTION

Paperback

August 2021

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One Day, One Day Congotay

Merle Hodge

Merle Hodge's rare achievement is to create a dynamic work of fiction around the life of a woman who is unquestionably good: Gwynneth Cuffie, schoolteacher, lover of children and music, and pillar of her small semi-rural community. The novel shares her adult life through the long, hard years of colonialism on the Caribbean island of Cayeri in the first half of the 20th century.

Tensions within the Cuffie family continue through the generations - Roy, the apple of his father's eye, alumnus of an elite college that has taught him to be ashamed of his race, is in dramatic conflict with his sisters. But Merle Hodge offers another vision of family that has little to do with biology, and everything to do with love. This is a novel whose form is true to its meaning, a book that balances linear narrative with a structure that peels away the layers of time in a way that shows the constant interpenetration of past, present and future. Its subject is life, tragic, comic but always in struggle for better must come. It revisits and revisions the colonial world from a womanist perspective.

It is a novel, like George Elliot's Middlemarch that celebrates the small, hidden lives that make the world a better place. Like any richly documented historical novel, it has much to say, by implication, about the present.

Merle Hodge is a Trinidadian novelist and literary critic. Her 1970 novel Crick Crack, Monkey is a classic of West Indian literature, and Hodge is acknowledged as the first black Caribbean woman to have published a major work of fiction.



One Day, One Day
Congotay
Merle Hodge
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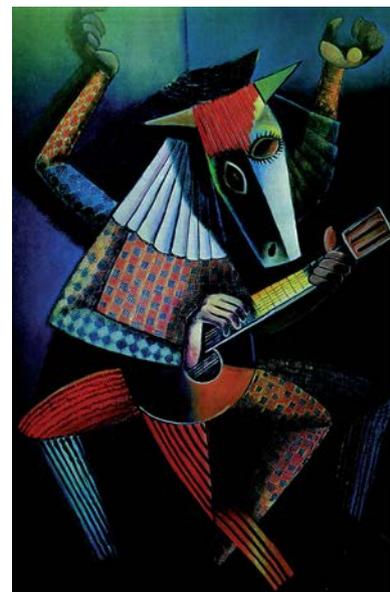


We Must Learn to Sit Together and Talk About a Little Culture: Decolonizing Essays 1967-1984

Sylvia Wynter

The beginnings of the anti-colonial struggle in Jamaica coincided with the childhood and early adolescence of Sylvia Wynter, providing the motivation for this, the first phase of her important body of work. The essays and articles collected here go beyond making an argument against colonialism, but set out to decolonize the nature of the discourse that legitimated the imperial order. At the time of their writing, Wynter was a practicing novelist, an innovative playwright, a scholar of Spanish Caribbean history, and an incisive literary critic with a gift for the liveliest kind of polemics. This intellectual virtuosity is evident in these wide-ranging essays that include an exploration of C.L.R. James's writings on cricket, Bob Marley and the counter-cosmogony of the Rastafari, and the Spanish epoch of Jamaican history (including a pioneering examination of Bernado de Balbuena, epic poet and Abbot of Jamaica 1562-1627).

Across this varied range of topics, a coherent thread of argument emerges. In the vein of C. L. R. James, the imperative of her work has always been to reconceptualize the history of the region, and therefore of the modern world, from a world-systemic perspective; that is, no longer from the normative European perspective, but rather more inclusively, from the "gaze from below" of the neo-serf (i.e. Indian) and the ex-slave (i.e. Negro), which is "the ultimate underside of modernity." Strongly influenced by Marx, together with Black thinkers such as Aimé Césaire, Jean Price-Mars, W. E. B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon, and with an appreciation of the insights brought by the New Studies of the Sixties (including that of Black feminism), Wynter's work has sought, from its beginnings, to find a comprehensive explanatory system able to integrate these knowledges born of struggle.



I write, and writing is the impulse of my life. I am neither writer nor critic, neither playwright nor novelist. I am a Jamaican, a West Indian, an American. I write not to fulfil a category, fill an order, supply a consumer, but to attempt to define what is this thing to be – a Jamaican, a West Indian, an American. I believe that this definition is the beginning of awareness: the 'taking of consciousness' of being, as modern Latin American writers express it. ... George Lamming wrote: "...unawareness is the basic characteristic of the slave. Awareness is the minimum condition for attaining freedom."



We Must Learn to Sit Together and Talk about a Little Culture:
Decolonizing Essays
1967-1984

Sylvia Wynter

We Must Learn to Sit Together and Talk About a Little Culture

Sylvia Wynter

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