

The Liminal Text: Exploring the Perpetual Process of Becoming
with particular reference to Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*
and George Lamming's *The Emigrants*
&
Kitch: A Fictional Biography of The Calypsonian Lord Kitchener

Anthony Derek Joseph

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Department of English and Comparative Literature
Goldsmiths College, University of London
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I hereby declare that this thesis represents
my own research and creative work

Anthony Joseph

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Abstract

This practice-as-research thesis is in two parts. The first, *Kitch*, is a fictional biography of Aldwyn Roberts, popularly known as Lord Kitchener. *Kitch* represents the first biographical study of the Trinidadian calypso icon, whose arrival in Britain onboard *The Empire Windrush* was famously captured in Pathé footage. In the critical essay, contextualising *Kitch*, I argue that rite of passage theory, in particular, liminality theory, as defined and developed by Victor W. Turner, offers a valuable alternative to theories of hybridity and fragmentation hitherto applied to the postcolonial Caribbean and its literature. To support this position I offer close readings of two iconic works of postwar migratory fiction; George Lamming's *The Emigrants* (1956) and Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), showing how aspects of rite of passage and liminality theory illuminate these novels.

My critical reflection on *Kitch* examines the marked absence of auto/biographical work on or by calypso artists in ethnomusicology or mainstream publishing. This absence is disproportionate both to the numerous studies of the calypso which approach the form homogeneously, at the expense of its individual artists, and, to the socio-historical importance of the calypso to the Caribbean and its diaspora.

Since *Kitch* is a fictionalised biography, I provide a brief exploration of the genre by drawing on the work of Michael Ondaatje and Earl Lovelace. My argument here is that the multitudinous and liminal approach of *Kitch* offers a more plausible alternative to linear, single narrator approaches since it mirrors both the process of research, and the manner in which a community of non-hierarchical voices may contribute to the construction and memorialisation of a calypsonian's life.

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Kitch

Part One: 'Bean'

He have melody like peas grain.

- Lord Pretender

Everybody know 'Kitch' but few know 'Bean.' Is he sister give him that name, because as a boy, he was so tall and thin. She used to call him 'String Bean,' she used to call him 'Bean.' Then some people, where he was living in Arima, would call him 'Bean Pamp,' because Daddy Pamp was he deceased father name. I used to call him Bean sometimes, quietly, and he would laugh because he know that name dig far. The name is 'Bean.' But I never prostitute it, or let everybody know.

— Russell Henderson

Green Fig

The stable hand in his rubber boots throws a bucket of disinfectant into the pig pen. Sun coming up slow on the market now, but a faint moon still in the sky. Is Saturday. Donkey cart and wagon coming down the main road from Valencia and Toco, to the market, leaning in the potholes and the lumps in the road, heavy with purple dasheen and pumpkin, plump green christophene and lettuce by the basket, long brown cassava and breadfruit, mauby bark. Black back crapaud still weeping in the gullies, corn bird flying from vine to river vine, and the knock-kneed Indian woman sets her stall by the market side, near where the road slopes down into tracks and shacks, stirs her cauldron of cow heel soup and hums holiness hymns. She has been there since dew wet morning, from the first glimpse of light burst. Her pot bubbles and spits and the scent of wild thyme and Congo pepper drifts through the market like a spell. Soon, in the damp woody spaces of the covered market stall, chickens will be swung by their feet, wow and flutter against the grip of the abattoir man, with his cutlass hand and his hot water boiling on a cauldron fireside, to dip and pluck them beating, from wing and narrow bone. Sun sketching its arc still, light penetrating the sky, and the morning opening like a promise above Arima.

Miss Daphne sits on an overturned iron bucket shelling pigeon peas in her yard, with rose mangoes and speckled breadfruit laid out on a crocus sack before her. She talking to a full woman selling navel orange in the stall beside her - laughs - rims back and skulls and peas fall from her crotch. Down the aisle, Ma Yvette selling bottles of black strap molasses, Pearl selling saltfish, smoked herring, Ma Hoyte have nutmeg and mauby bark, Chambers selling lamp oil, Picton: corn. Customers to walk now among the stalls, choosing okra and congo pepper, cow foot, tripe and live crabs for Sunday calaloo.

Later in that afternoon time, after the market has been deserted, when only the stink of fowl gut and rotten fruit remains in the gutters, and the traders are packing their unsold goods, a team of cars will roll slowly across the ragged field behind the market. The dry season has parched the grass there till the earth is veined with fissures. Dust. Buicks and Austins, bullet shaped Chryslers are taking French Creoles to the Santa Rosa race track.

But uphill to the north Bean sit down on the worn wood of his front step with his head between his knees, making rhythm beat with a guava stick against the splintering edge and humming, upright bass in the throat, comping, with the high notes. Eileen, his sister, was frying fish in batches in the outside kitchen behind the house and he could smell the flour and oil burning in the skillet. A bee start to inveigle the stick. Bean get up. He dust off the seat of his pants, he catch a caps and walk down St Joseph Street, whistling, his slipper slapping the gravel beneath. He waved to the hornerman Deacon sanding crosses in his shed, to the black tongued socouyant hanging white sheets on a line flung between her lime and barbadine tree, to Baboolal the tailor, needle in his mouth.

Crossing the main road, by the dial, he passes the market vendors dragging their carts home and he walks across the dusty field beyond the market, to the old Samaan tree near the paddock. Its branches spread majestic over the wild yard where horses roam. He sits among its raised roots where a rage of ti marie bush waits with leaves that shut to the touch. From where he sits he can see the jockeys walk their horses from the paddock to the races. He can smell the horse dung. Simple so he sit there with his head resting on his forearm, and his forearm across his knees, inveigling the poor ti marie bush to close, is bass for a tune what humming in his head. He watching how the ants and batchaks live between the picka bush, in that little jungle down there, and each frond he touch folds like a shy shutting fan and it take him right there. It take him right there by the paddock and he didn't even know it take him. One thing he thinking and another thing thinking behind, melody like leaf, before the words reach the rim of his mouth they appear, like something telling him each time what the next word or note would be, the song singing itself in his head, fully formed, each line dictated, as if he had been working on this song even as he worked in the field, even as he walked through the village at night and waved, stuttering to the hunters going up into the hills, with flambeaux and lances, cocoa milk and cigarettes, crapaud bleating in the bush.

He looks up through the diamond patterns of leaf and light, as if the song has fallen from the Saaman trees' canopy. His lips move to whisper, his ears shut out all sound and nothing but the song. And not even the thoroughbred gallop along the dirt track with its high ass pumping, the splash of dust it kicking, not the

whip or the rustle of savannah breeze through the leaves, or the announcer on his megaphone can shift him from where he is.

*Mary I am tired and disgust
doh boil no more fig for me breakfast*

It come out whole.

When I first see Kitchener is in Arima I see him. It had a dancehall upstairs the Portuguese laundry, right by the dial, where they used to have christening and wedding reception. Was up there I used to play piano with Bertie Francis band. Castilians, a lil' Count Basie, Glen Miller, calypso music, music for dancing. And after we done play we drink, then we go looking for cutters in Chinese restaurant, some black pudding, or for the souse woman by the market. And sometimes, if you lucky, you may see Kitch stand up outside the tailor shop by the dial. He always well dressed - he very tall, a good looking brown-skin fella, always with the white shirt an' the neck tie, singing calypso.

The first tune I remember Kitchener singing was 'Green Fig.' I see him sing that in Arima, carnival Sunday night, 1941. He stand up under the dial with the guitar, the street lamp light on him, an' he singing,

*I going cut down your salary
some good jockey riding me race for me*

People start to gather round, they calling 'Kaiso! Kaiso!' So he sing a next verse. When he finish he say, 'Gus boy, I going in town with this. People say I have to do. I going down Port of Spain to m-m-make my name, Arima don't have nothing for me no more. I done win e-e-everything here.' And he used to stutter bad.

I say 'Bean, town not easy. y'know, you feel you ready for town?'

But he say, 'Yes, I ready.'

And I say, 'Well, if you ever need a piano player, I living Belmont Valley Road.' And you know when that man come down town he really come up Belmont and look for me? And is so we start to make we manima, for years.

Town Say

Bean, standing in the morning yard overlooking the rush of pasture downhill once more, from under the kitchen window where the earth was slippery with mud from face basin water, stale soap scent, to cow dung and frangipani in the fields. He washes his face in the rain water bucket. In the bedroom he combs his hair in front of the mirror. He wears the white shirt he has starched and ironed himself, the brown trilby, pinched in the Cuban style, the school blue suit his father left behind, the one with the pants a lighter blue because his mother once washed them with coal tar soap on the river rocks and faded, the black shoe cracked across the axle of the instep from walking long and hilly places.

Tender in the morning, dew still drying, he leaves the wooden house on St Joseph Road, with his grip and box guitar in a burlap sack/grease from two fried bake oozing grease through brown paper in his inside jacket. His sister watches him from the front door, as he crosses between the fowl shit and the mud and onto the government road. It is Bean who turns back to wave, turning back to the house, seeing it leaning to one side like it want to fall, the wood there corroded, termite in the ceiling, wood bug in the rickety balustrade, but is gone Bean gone to gone now.

When the people of the village see Bean walking along the gravel road with his suitcase, they come to their fences to wave. Sister Mag stops from sweeping her undulating yard to smile broad and whisper a prayer for Bean. The deacon stop sanding crook stick to watch the young man go, and Pundit who old, turn from throwing rancid urine on the breadfruit root to call, 'Bean boy, is you dress up like a hot boy so? This early morning, where you going? America?'

Bean grin like horse teeth, 'Is town, town I going.'

Bean walking the slow incline, remembering down what Lord Pretender told him, 'Good as you is you not really a calypsonian till you sing in Port of Spain. That is where the angle does bend me boy, that is where real calypsonian does get born. You must come in town.'

Down from the east through rustling villages, with raw country on either side and the black wavering line of the main road stretches out in the bright morning. Bean sit on a smooth wooden bench in the back of the rickety Darmanie

bus, and six cents to town he gone rocking in the bounce and swinging tug, with his long mango head leaning against the window watching the sun cast its buzz across so much wild and fertile island countryside.

D'Abadie

Tacarigua

Five Rivers

Iron bridges, through pasture land with churches hid in bush, a pink orphanage beside a river, the mint and white minaret of a mosque.

Arouca

Tunapuna

St Augustine

St Joseph

Mt D'Or

A wire veined man sits in the seat across from Bean with reddened eyes. Eyes that bulge in the leathered cage of his head. This man keeps two red fowl cocks in a wire cage between his knees, and in there is spurs and caws and fluttering. He wears raw brown linen trousers with frayed hems, his corned and mud-stained feet slip between rubber slippers. A sky blue shirt in the dust. He shifts nervously, tapping his feet in some secret rhythm. Bean lowering his gaze when the man turns towards him, then turing back to catch the scar on the side of his jaw, till entering the village of Champs Fleur, a song begin to compose itself in his head,

Pa pa dee, pa pa dee-o

Ah come from the country

Pa pa dee, pa pa dee-o

cock fight in the country

The man fowl cackle and cussing but nobody will say anything, what you expect people to do? But the middle aged woman, sitting in the back, wringing her wrinkled hands over the beaded purse on her knee. She wears the green lamé dress of her dry season menopause, patent leather court shoes, her feet shut at the ankles, the church hat tilted on her head. And when the chickens fuss and flutter and fowl shit funk up, she put one dark gaze down heavy on the furtive cock merchant, so he could feel the full weight of her stare, then she turn back to the piety of the road, with the same stoical gaze, and Tanty would suck her teeth, and hum a hymn.

Mt Lambert

Petit Bourg

Silver Mill

San Juan

The bus trembling, troubling the road. Bean, rocking between the fowl thief and the Adventist, leaning in the corner side the back seat with suitcase between his knees.

Barataria

Morvant

Lavantille

And these northern hills of Port of Spain that are laden with wood shacks and tin foil roofs sparkle in the sun. Open sores of ghetto ravines. Slum wood. Hillside tenements where the heat burst like pepper in a pot, glinting sparks on, driving down past the La Basse, on with its stinky sweet smell of black mud rotting in swamp land, and the rum and coconut oil factory, citrus scent, distilleries and the sky, extending out to brightness over Port of Spain, where human cargo spills out into the streets like ants from under a hessian sack of forgotten meat.

Policemen in white custodian helmets measure the traffic. Jake walking carpenters and small island market women stroll past carrying baskets on their heads. Walking a mile and a half. Bats in the garret of the big house, big men playing wappi there, slapping harsh cards down, and the drain in the abandoned land behind the barrack yard festering with thick black love and blue fly hissing so the air there always thick with muscle, steep and culvert, moss in the drain. A dog licking salt from the edge of the world, in Marine Square where the tamarind trees grow high, wide and black dravidian beggars stew in heat and piss at the roots, corbeau hawk buzzing.

Town. Riot of noise and colour.

Bean puts down his grip on Henry Street pavement, letting the city rock him in its river of flesh and concrete. He not sure what to do. Not sure how to move. Road running left, road running right, and he now come to town on the Darmanie bus. He step to cross the people road and a jitney near bounce him, was a Yankee Willys jeep that pass and splash a puddle on him; US Navy. One simple stink puddle funk up with rancid water and genk that run 'way from the Syrian steam laundry, to wash up on his foot like baptism in the city.

‘The Champion, boy!’ The voice startles him. This man, Mr Gary, waving, crossing the road towards him. Bean notices his wide bandy gait, like the curving limbs of a calliper, the unlit cigarette between the fingers of his right hand, and his voice pitched high and almost girlish, to cut through the noise of the street. Mr G puffing from the exertion of running behind the calypsonian, but he is the kind of man who seems to wear a permanent grin, he amicable. ‘Where you going Saga boy? I tell you wait for me by the bus depot and you walking like you know where you going?’ Extending a hand for Bean to shake, patting the young man’s shoulder at the same time. ‘Ha, you walking like a drake, like you know Port of Spain, but you eh know town no arse.’ Now he laughs, pious in the throat, the head slung back.

‘I just s-seeing what I could s-see nah. I thought maybe you did come and gone.’ Bean says.

‘If I say wait is to wait man. How you mean? You feel you could just come from country and start perambulating up here? You want these vagabond rob you? Anyway...’, to light the cigarette, whipping the match shut then flinging it to the ground. ‘Come with me.’ But it is this word ‘perambulating,’ that Bean considers, as he follows Mr Gary through the mess of black shack alleys and thoroughfares that is eastern Port of Spain. Unfinished wooden houses, barrack yards. The promoter stops grinning at the corner of Observatory Street, ‘Now, champ, let me tell you from now,’ he says, ‘don’t think because I bring you down from the country it mean I have hotel room for you, eh. You ent make a red cent yet, much less to pay rent. One you start working in the tents you can rent bungalow, but for now you could stay in the Harpe.’

Bean turns sharply, ‘La Cour Harpe? Is there you-you carrying me? I hear that place very terrible.’

Without turning to face Bean, Gary says, ‘Don’t worry yourself, people does say it bad, but it not so bad in there.’

So they walk the slight incline up Observatory, cross a bridge, past the poor house and turn left into a yard, the entrance marked with a hand painted wooden sign: *La Cour Harpe*. All this time Bean just quiet, he just watching the yard; the Baptist flags in the far corner, the lush long zigar bush grown from the moist land near the latrines, the mud walled bungalows, the sandy snot nosed children pitching marbles in the communal centre - *kax, pax, patax* - against their

knuckles to punish, the young men knocking iron to music in the shade of a grugru bef tree, the laden belly of washing lines strung from shack to shack, the hot tin roofs and the rustling of leaves, the grief water stagnant and pungent in cess pools, the women sitting on front steps scandalising, with their dresses drawn down between the valley of their thighs, the fisherman returning from the sea with a bottle of English gin, a cacophony of whores, rats in the attic and the soldier van passing, panty wash running in the ravine, moss like phlegm on the ravine bed like strands of something to be blown by water.

In the far right corner of the yard, just before the abandoned land and the dry river running under the silver bridge, by the palm tree in a tenement garden, a brown pot hound barks and rolls to the rugged dirt to scratch mange from its back, and a big headed boy runs out from behind a barrack house in khaki short pants; the fly undone, barefooted and barebacked in the government sun to see the Arima champion coming his come with the grip and the guitar, just reach from country, smelling of rampant earth and perspiration, laying his grip down. Watch how he pushes his hat back with the wrist, water pouring from his solar capital. Bean 'fraid to stutter, but he somersaulting in his skin, and Mr Gary, standing there next to the country singer, hands on hip, with his gut puffing out, clears his throat and spits,

'This a place they used to keep slave,' he says, 'and when the slave get free they stay living here. But these is good people here, is no problem if you live good with them, plenty calypsonian living here.'

Bean's eyes widen, 'It have calypsonian here? In this place...'

'How you mean man? Is here self they does live. Attila pass through here, you must know that, even Lion, Lord Snail, The Growler. It have plenty music here, plenty bacchanal too, and woman, lord. You playing stupid, man, you know about the Harpe.'

But looking around at the bright lit chaos of the tenement yard, all the young calypsonian can see is a whole heap of ketch-arse shack what breaking down. That night Gary find him keep in the house of a gap teeth woman who living in a corner house with a crop of rancid children, make him a pallet on the floor. Country boy used to that. He used to washing from a pan cup, he used to poor folk ways, and latrine and moist bush in the elbows of the land. But that night he ventures out into the city alone. He walks along the perimeter of a great

savannah, past the oyster vendors with flambeau and green pepper sauces burning, then down Frederick Street, sees night clubs, and American soldiers leaning on bonnets outside brothels. Creole Jazz. A band somewhere, a cornet punching the dark, blue lights in lanterns in the Chinese restaurant.

The Arima Champion has entered Port of Spain.

Them days you couldn't just say you coming to Port of Spain to sing calypso. You had to be a certain level, and you had to have a certain pedigree, you had to be awarded. So unless you were the champion of Arima you couldn't come to Port of Spain. To sing calypso in Port of Spain you had to be the champ of Gasparillo, the champ of San Fernando, the champ of some place in Gran Cumuto and then they say, 'Well, he's Cumuto champ.' So Cumuto champ will now have to beat Arima champ, and when you win champion of Arima, *now* you could come into Port of Spain.

— The Mighty Chalkdust

I REMEMBER KITCHENER when he land in La Cour Harpe. I was living with my grandmother in an upstairs house right there in the barrack yard, what you call the garret, the attic. We used to stay up there, not because we was well off, but because my grandmother used to wash clothes and cook for the landlord. So because I living up there on the top, I look like a big boy to them fellas down in the barrack yard. But is rat and woodslave up there, red ants, termite like nuts. And the old lady had to wash the landlord big flannel pants and his drawers on a jooking board in the yard, starch and iron his shirts till she catch dry cough and ague sometimes, so it wasn't nice. But even so we was better off than the people living in the yard; down there was pure ketch arse. The fellas used to call me Scholar because I could read and write, my head always in book, so them calypsonian who couldn't write or spell good, like Melody, used to sing and get me to write their words out for them.

La Cour Harpe was a big yard, a courtyard. It had a big house by the entrance, where the landlord living, and we living upstairs. Below had a big gate that used to close at night. On the other side of the entrance it have a little drugstore, a lady selling food, maybe a shop selling groceries. You walk through the gate and in front you, in the centre was a open space, the yard, gravel, it hard, where people used to lime and skylark, and on both side have barrack room around. Some room small but divide in two, a back door, a couple slat window, a bench where to cook. It had a long grass space in the back of them rooms, it had two-three standpipe there, some latrines that everybody using. Everybody washing clothes and doing their business right there in the back. Is sewage there, is dirty water, it squalid.

So you want to know how a lady and a man, or a lady who don't have no husband, living in one room with four and five children? Or how from Tanty to Uncle and grandmother living in one barrack, or how fifteen, sixteen Chinaman man living in one room, paying six cents a night? That was La Cour Harpe. And that is where Kitchener come to catch his black arse, to live hand to mouth, sleeping where he could find a hole, where jamette pissing and stick man bursting

each other head, right there in the barrack yard with everybody. He know the life, he know ketch arse.

When them calypsonians come down to town they always end up living in the Harpe. But when I say living, I mean they only changing their clothes eh? Because remember, soon as calypsonian wake up they have to go and hustle, they bound to go sing by some corner for a lil' change or they never eat that day, they never pay rent. Unless well, they have some woman minding them. So if something happen the night before, they sing about it the next day. Sometime they go by Lung Ting Lung shop on Henry Street to print lyrics so they could sell the copies on the street; penny a sheet.

When Kitchener come out he hole in the day - because he sleeping till 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning - he come and he take a bath, he change his clothes and he come out in the yard with he hand on he hip. He surveying Observatory Street like he build the road. But he have to hustle to eat that day, so he thinking what he could do, how he could get a few bob in his pocket, because he belly empty, rent must pay, he must maintain he image as a calypsonian. He would go by the corner of Henry and Prince Street. A Syrian fella name Moses had a bar there, and Moses would put out a plate with a few salt biscuits, a piece of roast saltfish and maybe a lil' flask of rum on the table for them calypsonian, and they would sing. Men like Spoiler, Melody, Sir Galba and The Mighty Viking used to go there to find out what mark play or how the hustle looking that particular day. As a boy I would stand up in front by the bar and listen to them sing. But they used to run me! They used to say, 'Lil boy, move from here! What you doing here? You eh see is big men here. You mother know where you is?'

Because that's one thing, they very respectable, always dress sharp, they wearing neck tie, suspenders, shoes shine up, always in suit. All the big bards used to wear suit and tie, felt hat, two tone brogues. They looking good but they broken to thief. Them days it had no real money in calypso, unless your name is Roaring Lion, Caresser or Attila the Hun.

Sometimes Kitch used to sing at the corner of Prince and Charlotte Street. There was a Chinese restaurant there and he used stand up in front the restaurant and play guitar and sing. People pass and may give him a penny or two, maybe he sell two or three song sheet. And if you call him, 'Ai Kitch,' he turn round and he answer you, whoever you is.

'Ai chief, wha' going on?'

Well eventually the Chineese people run him from outside there. They say he was obstructing. Another time I see him quite down on the wharf, singing for them stevedores. All that time he struggling eh. Sometime not a black cent in the man pocket, he hungering, but you would never know his business, you would never know that is one good pair of leather shoes he have that he polish, the suit; he will wipe it down when it dirty. Sometimes he wear just the jacket with a khaki pants. Sometime he wear the suit pants with a white shirt and a tie. But Kitch would never ply you with prayers when he see you, he wouldn't moan. He hold his head high and he carry on, he make his song and joy or pain he singing same way; white shirt and tie, he going up the road.

Up Frederick Street had a yard where tests used to go and lime, to listen to them bards old talk and sing. I see Kitch there one, lean up under a tamarind tree, one foot up on the trunk, strumming his box guitar. He was composing 'Tie Tongue Mopsy', right there, in the dust bowing across from the savannah. And if you like it maybe you give him a li' something. Kitch wasn't no real hustler, he wouldn't lock your neck, he wouldn't thief, his whole intention was calypso, sun, rain, belly full or empty belly same way.

Anywhere you see Kitch, you see me, anywhere he goes I there, when he make a calypso, even before he know it I know it, because I could retain, you know. And he sing it and say 'This is a new one, and he have the guitar and he humming it under the big tree in the yard, and he'd sing it for me and within minutes I have it already and I singing one of Kitch new ones. When I start to sing calypso, I call myself Young Kitch. I did love him. We was close, he used to live in my mother yard in La Cou Harpe. In those days he had nothing, in the hard days. So Ma had an oven there baking bread and for a while he used to sleep up there, on top the oven.

- Leonard 'Young Kitch' Joseph

Steel Band Blues

Nights in the Jungles of La Cour Harpe

THE RIPPLE OF STEEL CAME to Bean's bed from the iron band beating there in the gap between wood shack and wire fence round Harpe yard, and the sound of the iron beating was Arima, and the sound of the iron was his father Daddy Pamp, working the iron in the smitty, when it red and melting till water make it rigid and triplet notes would seep out from under the mallet and smelt, and sing like a flute in his ear, and from the sound it making, everybody in the village would know that Pamp was in the fire shed making iron bend.

Bean can't remember when he started singing calypso but he sure he been singing since Pamp used to send him to fetch water from the river and he hear the bamboo creak, the parakeets whistle, the river running under, the bull cow bawl, till now he reach town, as man, but hurt pocket plain, and sleeping in the early dawn on top of Ma Holder's oven, in the ragged yard beneath her starch mango tree.

The sound from the iron band is not flung far from the blacksmiths' treble, nor the stick from the steel, nor the wrist from the rubber or the palm from the goat skin. In dreams he dreams he composes calypso concertos for this iron band to play; rugged polyrhythms of call and response, lavways. In this dream he walks a simple mile from the yard down town to Tamarind Square and by the time he reach there he done compose a symphony.

But the country boy, Aldwyn, Bean, Young Pamp, the Arima Champion can't afford even a six cents room in the yard, and his zeal strain from singing on the corner of Park and Charlotte Street every afternoon for two cents and three. Lord, the barrack yard hard like banga seed heart and his bed so bogus and crumple, and the tarpaulin he wrap in have holes, and his perspiration pungent like cat piss in his armpit. He pick a bad time to come to Port of Spain, War in Europe, Carnival ban, people getting cat-o-nine for playing mas. But maintain. He young still. Hold still in the darkness there, with the chirp of crickets and the hoot-hoot of toads in the ravine, where sewer cream and panty wash staining the edges of the world, until his heart becomes heavy in his chest, and he shuts his eyes tight against any notion of despondency. He shuts his eyes so that only the sound of the

young men beating their iron drums penetrates, and the sound is sweet; sweet and low as a snake's shadow, and expanding, till he can hear each poor man's cry in the steel, in the resonance of the drum he can hear every weary mother's moan in the yard, flesh on flesh, every ring hand slap and cuss and quarrel and shiver of flu, of hip, of sigh of open sigh, of thigh on crosscut thigh, a jamette's gnashing tongue as she sparks insults around her saga boys' head; rent to pay and chicken to pluck and he lying on the couch with one wotless leg up on the back rest. Till he get dam vex and leaps from their cardboard bed to flex, to fling on his hot shirt and swagger down to Tanty's Cafe where the Mighty Spoiler still holding the corner, drunk like a fish in those dead man hours, talking shit and auditioning new calypsos.

Nights in the barrack yards of Port of Spain. Stars bright like pin pricks in a cape flung against the darkness. Humble in the corner, the young man there, humming bass in his throat.

Kitchener come to Port of Spain because he want to come to Port of Spain. Nobody eh *make* him come. Kitchener was living in La Cour Harpe. La Cour Harpe was prostitution. Was a old hole in the yard there. But he couldn't afford nothing better. Kitchener come to see if he could make a dollar. The first time I saw a woman underwear was on George Street. I see women sit down with their legs open wide, wide, as a boy in the 50s, so I know what Kitchener had in La Cour Harpe.

—The Mighty Chalkdust

KITCH MAKE HE WAY. He didn't look for trouble. He ketch he arse like everybody in the Harpe. But he was ambitious and he had talent. Them times calypsonian didn't have no money. They singing in Carnival season but when the season done they broken again. People used to call Kitch 'Country Boy' because he come from Arima, and them times, poor fella, he like a jumbie all about Port of Spain, trying to get a break, he hustling, he sleeping in whorehouse and all kinda kiss-me-arse place. But somehow he always decent. Always suit and felt hat and two tone brogues, paisley tie, an' then he get through to sing in calypso tent.

The first tent I know was right in the back of Nelson Street, and I living in George Street, so when they singing over there, I could peep over the wall and see them from where I there in the barrack yard. I would hear all them fellas; men like Kitchener, Spoiler, Attila, even Tiger, Pretender, Lord Melody, I see them sing right there.

When Railway Douglas start with this kaiso tent thing was just galvanise and palm, saw dust on the ground, but then all them bourgeois people from St James and Maraval start coming to hear calypso. French creole inquisitive. Yankee soldiers coming quite from the base in Chaguaramas just to hear this thing, even Captain Cipriani in the tent, big dignitary and mayor there. So they put bench for people to sit down, and they start charging decent money to get in. Fellas selling nuts, sweet drink. Children couldn't go in there, but being as I was living in the back of the tent, I get to hear them sing. Them days your mother don't even want you to *hear* calypsonian sing. Much less to watch them in tent. Calypsonian was ostracise, together with the pan men. So if my mother so-help-me-God catch me beating iron, or if she find I by the fence watching them calypsonian, she would break a lime tree branch and bawl, 'Ai boy, bring your arse from there now!' And I wouldn't let her have to call me again.

First time Kitch went to try he hand in the tent, they put him to sit down, they make his wait. His blood was hot, he had good songs that year but he have to show respect, have to pay dues. Them days somebody had to bring you up, if you don't know the big boys, somebody have to introduce you, to coronate you.

Coronation Calypso

Is Tiger give him his name

THE BARD STANDING THERE they call him Tiger. Growling Tiger. Leaning between the bamboo posts that holding up the back of the calypso tent. But what they calling tent is just a shed that thatch. Tiger growling as he sucking orange after navel orange in that narrow yard behind the shallow wooden platform they calling the stage, where old knotty zigar bush that hard to kill does trouble the wire fence that separate the tent yard from the back of the Diamond Dollar whore house on St Vincent Street. The Tiger face screw-up: sharp citrus rind biting the corners of his mouth, his eye squinting, spitting the slippery seeds. His mouth like cardboard box when it wet, and he folding the orange for juice to burst, and it sucking sweet. *Sans humanite.*

As the calypsonians arrive they gather there, behind the stage. Some drinking bush wine, some smoking pipe, some singing low say they warming throat. The fiddle man oiling his elbow with a nip of rum, the sax man sit down on an overturned pigtail bucket, sweetening his old horn, tapping on the pads, twisting the mouthpiece to the exact angle, puffing it, prepping it, sucking the reed. The horn hanging down like a gorgon between his legs. It get knock much and plenty lacquer crack out, gun brass. But she sweet when she blow; is a good horn. The trumpet man stoop, pants hem reaching up his shin bone, and the seam sharp, and where the socks don't reach it hairy. He fingering the valves, polishing the shining like a bell.

Sans humanite.

Tiger turn from the darkness and watching young Bean talking with the other singers. Bean blinking his words out, sputtering like his timing belt break. The young man tall, what they call *lingae*, bent from his waist to trouble the guitar man ear. And Tiger watching him sideways, leaning forward so the damn orange juice don't run on the good white shirt that his woman starch and press for him that afternoon. And from how the Tiger stand: the bandy knee, the one leg slight in front of the other resting light on the sharp outside edge of his black derby shoes, you can see clear how Tiger used to box before he start to sing kaiso. He ruggedy steep and lean, but his fists big like grapefruit and his face know war, so the grin

lopsided and the eyes like flat stone skimming, only glancing brief. Yes, Tiger was worries in the ring. The Siparia Tiger. He would brazen against bigger tests from Matelot and Cedros. Men with good-good pugilist pedigree, who chasing world title an' ting, and Tiger would tear them and beat them like snake. Men like Kid Ram and Jungle Prince get beat up and down the island, till Tiger win the bantamweight title of 1929, in this colony.

Sans Humanité.

When Sa Gomes send Tiger to New York in 1935 to record calypso with Attila the Hun and Beginner, and the big men sing their songs and it gone down in time, and it come Tiger time to record 'Money is King' - the arranger, Felix Pacheco say 'That is not music! You break all the laws of music, you can't expect musicians to play this primitive thing. I can't arrange this. I won't.' Well, Tiger watch Pacheco cold, he watch him frankomen in he face, till all the blood drain out the Cuban eye. Tiger never say nothing but he watching Pacheco from below, like when pugilist on stool waiting for the bell to ring, ready to stand up and fight, and his voice growl deep and it heartless,

'Boss man, hear my cry, I come from quite Trinidad to record that calypso, and it bound to wax.'

And the say he say it was said, and quick-quick Pacheco cry, 'Play it again, let me hear it. Maybe I did not hear eet right de first time.' And he start to score and arrange the damn thing, and it is a classic in calypso. Then hear the song the Tiger sing:

*If a man have money today,
people do not care if he have cocobay.
He can commit murder and get off free,
and live in the Governor's company.
But if you are poor, people will tell you 'Shoo',
and a dog is better than you.*

An audience begin to gather on the wooden benches in front of the stage, waiting for the singers and the band to play. Still, Tiger watching this long young man that Johnny Khan bring to sing in the tent. He heard about him. This country bookie who pants short in the ankle and wearing a black jacket that look like St Joseph Road prostitute put together and buy for him because he never have no money, and you can't sing in tent without jacket. Tiger watch good when the great Attila the Hun himself, walk up and tell the young man to sing let him hear, and

how the young man strain with a stutter to say, 'OK', till Attila had to line out the word for him. 'Arima, what key your song in?'

Arima say, 'R-r-r-r-r...R-r-r-r...'

Attila watch him with compassion and interrupt, 'Ray minor you mean? Is in E?'

'Yes, give it me in E'

And Bean sing it. And the fiddle man stoop there in slits to catch the tune, and the bass man wood start to tremble like a woman leg. The country boy grinning, he know he have a good tune. He fling down two verse and Attila say, 'OK, good good, I want you go on after Invader.'

When Tiger suck the navel from the last orange he throw the pith over the fence in the crapaud land and he call to Bean, 'Young boy, come nah?' And when Tiger call you you does come. 'Is you who sing 'Green fig'? People talking, they say is a good song. You will sing it tonight?'

Bean smile, 'Yes Mr Tiger, I-I-I—'

'Oh ho, that good boy, that good, so long I want to hear the damn song and I cyar hear it. I have to wait for you to come to Port of Spain before I hear the kiss-me-arse thing.'

And Tiger bray, but he have he eye on Bean. He must be say something, and Bean bend his neck like a swan to listen to the swifter blade. Hear Tiger: 'What they call you?' Raising his voice to its elegant tenor and turning from the fence to face Bean straight.

'My-my name? Roberts. Aldwyn Roberts.'

'I mean your calypso name, boy.'

'Well, they call me Bean.'

'Bean? What? You is the Mighty Bean? Lord Bean? Butter Bean? That is no kind of calypso name. Come better than that.'

'Well, I win Arima, so they call me the Arima champion.'

Tiger laugh, 'Arima champion? What kind of jackass name is that boy? Them name eh good.' Laugh like the laugh been sitting in the back of his throat since morning and only now decide to come out. 'Listen, in kaiso you have to have better name than that. This is big man thing, tests will merciless you if you sobriquet weak, look...' and he bring his right hand up to pull his chin and his face get serious to think. Then he look at Bean and he say, 'From now, you could call yourself "Lord Kitchener." Anybody ask you tell them Growling Tiger give you

that name. I give you that because I feel you could be a real general in calypso. You have the height, and you seem like a serious fella. You have the ambition. So take that name. You know Lord Kitchener?’

‘Yes, the Englishman, the general, the Field Marshall. But he dead years, years now...he...’

‘Yes, he dead, but he used to beat bad y’know...Lord Kitchener? Yes.’ And with that Tiger done talk and he move to stage side to watch the show starting. Bean stop there to think by the wire fence, to let the name roll round his head, for it to mingle and merge with the jungles above the city and the river running beneath, and the sound of the black back crapaud bleating in the bush, and to repeat the name lightly, like something fragile in his mouth, until it begin to take on its shape and resonance.

...Lord...Kitchener...

This is the city and this is the hill and these are the ravines where mosquitos are knitting barbed wire in the gullies. And where the Growling Tiger, shadow boxing at the side of the stage, to fire blows to the breeze, to compose himself. His turn to step up into the ring.

Sans humanité

When was Kitch turn to sing he sing Green Fig, and the crowd applaud, encore, he sing a next verse. The calypso was good in truth, so he give them special verse. Attila was pleased; he put two shilling in the young man hand and give him a bag of grapefruit and two bake an’ saltfish. That night Kitch walk from the tent to La Cour Harpe and his foot never touch the ground. The night sweet, ravine stink till sweet, he hearing melodies in the breeze how it blowing round the bridges. Everybody he pass he tip ‘goodnight’, foreday dawn and the light coming in. Now he in tent in town, so as he walk he retracing each step he make on that stage. *Lord...Kitchener....*the name ringing in his ears.

Fever

East Dry River Breakdown: V.E. Night, 8 May 1945

First Movement

FROM THOSE JUNK METAL jungles behind the bridge where the river bank pave and the water running in the middle crease, narrow with moss and filtered in the St Ann's Hills, washed down from the Lady Chancellor ridge, down through Belmont where the current come soft and trembling, with ripple and silver fish, under Observatory Street, through barrack yard and shanty town where flesh upon flesh secretes its own oil and seeps into the ravine, black dirt and the La Basse scent sweeps up west from the jetty and stinks till sweet in the vibration of air and heat and steel drums that ring like bells from a rugged cathedral tumbling down from hills above the city, filling the streets with its sparkling sound - pitch oil lights lamp the hill tracks coming down, from Lavantille, under riverless bridges and the talcum fog of dust; grey green at the lips of loose light settling on the gravel roads and the tin roofs of a tenement glimpsed in moonlight, twinkling; backroads of the mythic where people are drawn up close in humble desperation, in this land, in this land that steep and slippery with stick fight blood and rum, hillside small holdings, this world of hard corners and swift curvatures, of flick razors hid inside jacket pockets for good luck, of blades between flannel pleats and bright calico cloth, east of this sprawling sea-swept city, where citrus scent sent from upper Nelson Street, to the corner by the yaraba butcher shop where ox blood spill and still sticky on the road since morning like it don't want to wash away and fade, fade that the full weight of night coming, so people begin to gather in the communal space of La Cour Harpe yard to gamble and cuss, to lay down the burden of their day right there on the gravel, and who eh drown waterlogged, and who not dead badly wounded but most of them catching hell, same night well that Churchill claim victory over Hitler, and the whole of town turn upside down

Second Movement

The iron band gather near the entrance to Harpe yard, where the earth uneven and the poor grass scant and catching arse to grow through the hard dirt

and gravel. A barrel chested young man with a curved stick leans back to beat bass from a big salt biscuit tin. Drum and the boom big like a pig tail bucket, he keeps the pulse and swagger; his wrist twisting like a hinge, his bearded face turned up to the moonlight, eyes closed, sweat pouring beads from his stinky brim rim, and each blow he pelts sends shivers through the flesh of him.

The cowbell man with his instrument to his ear. Is really a old church bell he beating. Each beat seems to tighten his pursed lips, then slack to grin, he knocking sweet, he is the metronome of this spasm band and can't afford to miss a beat, or the band will slack, the beat:surrender. The du-dup roll. Neither, the black Indian on the bent paint can that turn up side down can stop knocking or the band will bust, nor the sugar haired man who deals with the ping pong pan proper, leaning, as in gospel, can pause or the rhythm will sway. The straps of his neck veins strain as he plays, crafting a melody from just two and a half notes. The cuff boom grumbling.

'Buglers coming! Regiment, Army band.'

Perimeters of dust. The audience grows. Hilltop women come down to the flat yard in calico skirts that ride up higher at the back than the front, clapping in time, voluptuously, wining with the grinning maracas man, flirting, scandalously with the iron man, they move to the front where the iron beat is sweetest. But you still want to know how music could bring from these rancid paraffin yards behind God's back, eh? In that black triangle of suffering, laughter and sin? Flesh upon flesh. It sweet, but it have a sting in the tail.

And how can anything beauty-full be born here?

Third Movement

Hear Miss Daphne: 'You eh hear war done Mr Jaja? What you doing in that room say you reading bible and you know you can't read a damn thing by that pitch oil lamp? Why you want to strain the lil' piece a eye what God give you? Come outside, man, you eh see people coming outside? War done boy, Churchill declare, let we drink two rum and celebrate!

Eunice Daphne is a tall, hard boned woman with skin dark as aubergine seed and a gap between her front teeth because fellas does say she have a bag of sugar down there. She lives in the barrack room next door to Mr Jaja and every

morning she can be seen walking across the Queen's Park Savannah with a straw basket on her arm. Is going she going to go wash wares and brush as a domestic for some French Creole in St Clair. She stands in the bacchanal yard with her hands akimbo, folded back at her wrists on her waist, waiting for Mr Jaja to come down two three step into the yard to fire two shot with she.

'Ignacious Jaja?' She calls.

And the old man indeed closes his bible shut like a drum. 'Yes...Daphne', he moans, ah comin', a comin'.' He rises, the chair creaks. He turns the wick down in his paraffin lamp, those feet search for slippers under the table. He twists his pants waist right, with the insides of his arms and finally he steps down four rugged threads into the yard. The iron band are playing under the tamarind tree, a crowd have gathered to hear them. What they play is rhythm and iron, the mere suggestion of a melody, but things like melody are not important here, is to move these people need. Even old bandy knee Mr Jaja, leg bend like calliper. He serve thirty five years in the Anglican Credit Union in Port of Spain and was never late once, never take sick leave, never miss a day. Till his hernia drop and his stones get so big he can't work like used to, so they lay him off, poor fella, but he still upright in manner, auspicious, he have gravitas, he tell people he fire the work.

He lives in one of the good rooms in the yard and keeps it tidy. Jaja have a radio, he have sacred heart picture above the door, he build some shelves, he put down linoleum floor. But he one alone in there since common law Mavis take in one morning with a bad feelings and fall out of bed and dead. Now he stand up surveying the bacchanal yard with his hands clasped behind his back on the outskirts rim of the secular world, and his knee can't help but bend. Hear Daphne: 'Where your glass Mr Jaja? You know rum sharing and you eh bring no glass?' So Jaja gone back up to his room for a glass; coming back down as Daphne unwinding the cork, 'Is a lil white rum the mister get from the docks; a Bajan something, must be fall of a ship, it nice too bad. Come, hold your glass man.'

But Jaja afraid God, he say, 'Not too much. I was just reading my bible, Papa God watching.' But he offering the glass to fill.

God? A big man like you Mr Jaja? You believe in them thing? You think God have you to study; if you drink a rum? God busy no arse tonight, man, drink the damn rum or I give somebody else.' Jaja rolls the rum around the sides of the glass, he raises it to his nose, then in the same sequence he leans the glass to his

lips: worries on the tongue, his lip twists to a scowl. Behind them, light from her lamp throws dark shadows onto the walls in Daphne's small room, glinting on the framed photographs on the wall. Hard men born in the 1800s, with eyes that know. Women, standing perfect and straight, unsmiling for photographs. The room itself is a chaos of ornaments and doilies, it smells of burnt milk. In a shadowy corner of the room, Daphne's big daughter Bee, is sitting on the floor plaiting her younger sister's hair — gunshots, sudden so, and they look up. Was Mr Henry, a big lip cook in the infirmary, who living in a little stilt house in the yard back, who bust three-four shot from a rickety hunting rifle, cutting the sky in two like is Old Year's night, leaning out his balcony, with half a cigarette perched in the corner of his mouth. They uses to call him, 'Englishman.' He like to wear suit and cummerbund, centre part in his hair. Yes. He was in England once, in 1919.

Daphne and Mr Jaja cross the yard to where the iron band beating. Firework-spark-the boom is bamboo bursting, or carbide boys lighting down on the dry river bank. Mr Jaja feel like his head moving from side to side on the axis of his neck, small circles, wind swirling in his ear, and as he stands there with Daphne, even he, upright Ignatius Jaja, find the little iron band beating sweet. Just so Daphne pulls away to throw her waist, to dance the juba, the belair, lifting her dress over the mud and rum. And at the arched gateway that separates the barrack yard's undulating earth from Observatory Street, engines buzz, horns blow, bottle and spoon, a scratcher-man scratching, a bugle, the chorus of whistles and voices rising as a victory procession nears the Harpe yard gate.

Then the young man in the grass-green suit and the straw hat enters the yard with his entourage. The Chantuelle, a guitar slung round his neck, his hands cutting across the sound hole, fluttering like a wing, but the sound hard to hear with all the noise around. He walks, like scissors cutting; tall in the stride, with his head cocked back, chipping, chipping, strumming chopping chords, till the B string bust and dangling, but he grinning still and singing so the people gather round him in a call and response. He singing this song because he run out of songs to sing.

*Sergeant gimme de day today.
Oh, Monday, Tuesday eh 'nough!
Sergeant gimme de day today.
Oh, ai ye, ai ye, ai ye!*

And when the gang eat out that one he singing a next one:

*Me one alone on the ocean,
me one alone.
Murder, fire, blood in the gutter!
Me one alone..*

He bring lavway, he bring chant, he pull kalinda to burn away smoke. Walking out the tent and just buy a bag a' salt nuts he hear the bugle blow, somebody say 'war is over' and he gather them calypsonians come, and they march through town, people leaning out their windows, coming on to street, jeep horn blowing, somewhere in a distance a bell ringing, incense burning, they walk until they cross the bridge to enter La Cour Harpe. He leading the way, the chantuelle, he leading the charge, he coming.

Now they reach the Harpe and bounce up with iron man, man pick up hub cab and rail knuckle, beat any damn thing, to bring drums down from where they outlaw their faith, from high up some bush fire hill, from rock stone quarry and coming down. And the chantuelle in the centre of this axis, forget himself and come out of his skin. He is a channel, rivers pass through him.

Hear Miss Daphne: 'Kitchener.'

Mr Jaja: Kitchener who? Ent that the buck mouth country boy that uses to sleep on the Madam Holder oven in the yard?

Miss Daphne: Yes, he self. They used to call him Arima Champion —

Mr Jaja: Oh ho, so *he* is the one they calling Lord Kitchener.

Miss Daphne: He real good you know. You never see him sing in the tent?

Mr Jaja: Me? Tent? You ever know me go Calypso tent? Calypso tent not for me. But I hear people talking about this Kitchener from Arima, and how he could sing. They say he composing good.

Then the rum like it make Ignatius Jaja merry, he start to fling his tongue, uncharacteristic colloquially. 'Me? I, I is a man, I not in them thing, not really, tent not for me. I went tent once; once them boys carry me...calypso, if they have the words...is good, but if not then no, not so.

Bobulups there among the men, shaking she roll, she bodice ride up on she belly, she swinging her arms above her head. She come with chantuelle, pick them up in the gang from town where she was making her fares. Daphne calls to

Bobulups in the crowd, 'Ai gyal, you passing me straight or what? A-a, and where you pick up them sweet man from?'

Bobulups laughs and shouts above the ruckus, 'But look at my crosses. So much man you have an' you watching mine, Daphne?'

Then she walks over and the two women laugh proud and reckless, they throw their heads back and dance their hips, hands on each other's shoulders. Bobulups says, 'Gimme a rum nah girl, you keeping all the rum for yourself or what?' She takes the glass from Daphne's hand and drinks the rum down whole. She looking for more but a vibration was passing same time and carry she gone by the iron band to inveigle the men there with her slack and scandalous mouth.

Mr Jaja goes back to his room. He thinks to pray but rum tell him God not watching. So he falls asleep face down in his widowers' bed with all his good clothes on. The iron band join the victory procession and start to push out from Harpe Yard and onto Observatory Street, each man beating with the sweet burden of his instrument, feet shuffling. Some man have no shirt and they shining, some don't want to jump but they jumping, and Kitchener right there with them.

Keeeech

Keeeech

Women point at him with their pursed lips.

And he would turn around and flash a smile, he would shake his head and laugh as if to say, those women crazy. But when they call him he would go, and stand at the side of the road with them, stuttering and charming, already knowing his worth as a calypsonian, in this colony. They like when he tip his hat, how he stand with one long leg frontwards; the seam down his pants could cut, and they wondering, how he managing, day after day, eating saltfish and nuts, drinking Jigger Bush tea, to shave and sweet water soap and fresh, how he able, to come out like a jacket man with tie clip and merino vest. But don't ask him what happen, you see him alive.

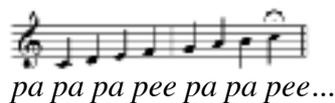
In the yard, Kitch don't look for trouble. Is 'Good morning Mr Jaja,' 'Yes sir, good morning Mr Henry, Miss Yvonne good morning,' Miss Daphne good day and how you do?' Is so he pass through, whistling down through the dry river, or a grass stalk like a feather in his teeth. But when you see him sit down under the big tamarind tree, strumming his guitar and grinding his jaw to make his calypso, don't say a lonesome word, or he will suck his teeth and scowl.

The lil' iron band reach as far as Basilon street corner and they stop there and play two-three tune but is not tune is pure rhythm beating. The crowd around them like some jourvert morning bacchanal. Kitchener in the heart of the thing. The band captain, Sheriff, have a scar down the middle of his forehead, he blow a whistle and the band turn back to push for home. Moonlight in your eye and the sirens still a long way down, but the governor ban pan, much less from beating in the night so they have to go back inside the Harpe, victory night or not, no iron tonight, tomorrow. The yard folk gather there in the yard with the band again, prancing up the dust. Dirt foot children run between them, playing catch and hide and seek with sleepless eyes and high pitched glee to be up this late, running, playing catch in the pissy recesses between the latrines and the mud, behind the yard, almost falling and running, falling and getting back up. And when the iron band humble and simmer, here come The Mighty Spoiler, done spume his guts in the bandon land and feeling refreshed and ready for more rum, he start to sing the lavway with Kitch. They dip and dingolay, they open their throats and sing. And Bobulups, waving the Bar 20 flag like a kerchief, bending forward with her backside cocked out, twisting her heels into the dirt and backing-back on Kitchener and Spoiler. The lavway is:

*Oh Lord, glorious morning come,
Ambakaila!
Oh Lord, the glorious morning come,
Ambakaila!*

Sing that till morning.

AFTER THE FIRST VICTORY in Europe, I was working in a store in Port of Spain. Midday, the sirens come out and they say, 'Oh, War is over.' Everybody run out in the street. Tests start to turn their jacket upside down - they eh play mas for five years! Dustbin turn over, inside out, anything they could find get pelt an' play. We had two days a that. Well, the Army band was out on the streets too, with the trumpets, the brass and the buglers. And the buglers come in the fetè, blowing with the people, they take a lil' touché with the young boys. And is those buglers that fellas start to imitate on biscuit tin and dustbin, lil' pan in hand and kettle drum they beating with stick. And by the end of that day, they was playing - no, not no tunes - see a bugle could play but it cyar play flat, is all a diatonic scale, so it playing:



Them iron man try to play the same thing. But is just rhythm they was beating because the tonal range of their pan was limited, so all them iron band was beating same way. That is why when Kitchener made the first steel band tune in 1944 you hear him sing:

*Well I heard the beat of the steelband,
friend, I couldn't understand,
it was hard to make a distinction
between Poland, Bar 20 and John John.*

An' even Kitchener was singing the same notes as the bugle, the same diatonic scale. But as he himself get a lil' bit more musical he start to write more interesting music for the pan; for them fellas to try, to extend the range of the instrument. Because remember Kitch living right there in the barrack yard with all them Bar 20 iron man, men like Zigalee, Fisheye, Battersby, Ozzie. So if you pick up with Kitchener, you will know exactly where the steel band start.

THEM WOMAN IN THE barrack yard used to mamaguy Kitchener. They would cry 'Kiiitch, Kiiitch,' and they could get anything from him. Just give him sweet talk, kiss up the side of his face, rub breast on his back, squeeze his prick, he love them things, an' he love when they call his name, 'Kiiitch, Kiiitch, you so sweet.' Kitch like to pretend he have money. But Kitchener don't have nothing, otherwise he would be living in St Clair or Woodbrook, he wouldn't be living in La Cour Harpe. Every night he singing calypso but calypso don't make money, unless you is a big boy in the game.

But he have plenty girls; woman like him, and he could get his lil' mopsy in the yard to iron his shirt for him. He pass by another one up in the quarry - take a lil' stew beef and rice, next one darning his socks. And when these women husband gone up in the hills to hunt, or they gone down on the wharf to work, they giving Kitchener good curry manicou and jungle pig to eat.

He had a Chinee woman once. Merlin. Somehow she break away from she flock and end up living in the yard. She used to wash Kitchener clothes and feed him, when the night come she give him leg. The woman nice; she clocking forty, but she skin smooth like a cup, and she have she teeth in she mouth to smile. Things going good, till the mark bust and she find out Kitch was friending with a woman from John-John; a girl they call Sugar Mouth. The Chinee want to kill Kitch now - you know how Chinee does jealous bad. Anyway, one night she get damn vex and pull for a knife, she leggo one cussing on Kitchener, right there, in the yard. If you hear she, 'You sleep in prostitute bed and come by me, you take am for arse! I wash your clothes an' cook an' you do me this - it no good - I show you trouble now, if you want dead, come trouble am!'

People come out to see, but time you look for Kitch, Kitch gone. So long? How you mean? They not married, so she have no rights on Kitchener. Couple day after she hanging up Kitchener singlet and drawers on the line, she cooking pigeon peas and pigtail for him like nothing happen, and Kitch lie down inside snoring. Well don't ask me what happen, you see him alive.

Was so thing was. Melody, Sir Galba, Spoiler, all a we had two-three woman minding we. If woman not minding you, you not a calypsonian. And when

a man say he is a calypsonian it wasn't no skylark; calypso was big man thing. If anybody interfere with you, you have to be ready with a razor in they tail, you didn't 'fraid make jail, you have cutlass under your mattress. Some calypsonian was hustler, some was pimp and unscrupulous, smart-men, some was scamp. Fellas like Spoiler or Melody could sweet con the shoes off your foot while you walking, they would eat out food from your hand like cat, they would thief the cigarette out your mouth and you wouldn't notice.

It was a girl call Fat Cunny Lou that take Kitch from La Cour Harpe and carry him up Basilon Street in the big *cacheau*, where all them prostitute was living. That's why in 'Chinese Memorial' he sing, *Sleeping in me cacheau, in a dream I hearing a echo.*

Kitch used to friend with all them stink mouth woman. I can't lie. These is women who will go in shilling hotel and bull, or they gone Lucky Jordan or The Wang when Friday night come and they know man just draw their pay. They would wine back on you in the club, kiss you all on your big toe. But cross them and they cuss you upside down and break bottle in your face. Six months in jail.

La Cour Harpe didn't have no hi-class prostitute; is only bat and jagabat you getting there. If you want nice woman you have to go downtown; you have to go St James or Woodbrook, you have to make a rounds by the Oval and there you could get some sweet red coolie or a Venezuelan rose. I never partake myself. Maybe once, twice at the most. But sometimes I used to hold their money for them, and I know people up on that side so I could find them a room to do their business in, make sure they safe, that kinda thing.

And we had some good ones. It had Jane Broadbelt and Jean in Town, Black Stallion, Sacharin Irene. The one they calling Coolie Rosie was a skinny Indian girl with a cry like police horn. She used to bite and scratch like tiger cat when sweetness take she. So town say, not me. Broadbelt was a red woman; always a big belt 'round she waist. She face hard, she cheek sink in, she haggard. But some man did like them thing and would come down in the Harpe just for she. She was from San Fernando and used to take the bus to town every night to sell pussy. Then next morning she hop the train and go back home. She had a man down south and children but she used to tell him she working nights at Elite Shirt Factory. Somehow the poor man get to find out is prick the woman taking and he come down in the Harpe behind she. He jack she up coming round Belmont

Circular Road, arm in arm with two jacket man. When he really start to leggo cut-arse in she tail the jacket man run, Jane bawling: 'Help, help me, please!' Licks. Blows. But nobody go interfere with husband an' wife business.

Somehow Jane get away, and is so she end up staying in town. Kitch used to help she, give she a little change; cause she was living on the street for a while. He would take her for Chinese food, buy she a pow, poor thing, she old, she didn't have nothing. Then she get a cleaning work in the Salvation Army and done making fares. She dead now. She catch a sore foot that never heal and only running pus. Syphilis. She uses to wear long dress to hide it.

The one they call Black Stallion; black girl, very black, black like jet, but she wasn't bad looking. Kitch like she too bad. He was a few years older than her, but he...y'know...he want some too. She was from deep south; she eh know town man ways, an' I observe how Kitch work on she. He sweeten she with gentleman talk, he buy salt nuts and melon give me, he croon Bing for she, he mamaguy she until she give him. When she broken, he would give her a few shillings. One night Stallion stab a man on Duke Street and had to run Grenada by she father. She never come back.

But Bobulups was the queen. Bobulups used to sit down on George and Duke Street corner with a bottle of stout between she leg and a cigarette in she mouth, and when a jacket man pass she blowing kiss, sailor boy pass, she lift up her dress. Yes. She sit down on the pavement, right there and open up she leg. People passing...she take the bottle and...*lord*. But she could fight; Bobulups used to beat man bad. And if police hold she for whoring or obstructing justice, she tearing off she petticoat, she opening she breast, she stripping naked in the street, and it would take about five police to carry she down, she was strong; a big bone brown skin woman; she wasn't no pretty girl, and he was heavy, but lord, she could wine like a genie when she hear pan beat and she love nothing more than to make rab with ol'nigger in the street. She go in jail all the time. Six months one time, six months a next. Kitch used to friend with she; they was close, she look after him. Maybe he get a lil' shine one time he was thirsty, I don't know, town say so, not me. But he make up a song about she:

*Bobulups, why you beat the officer,
six months hard labour*

I cyar remember the rest.

Even when Kitch was making money he wouldn't try to get no classy woman. Is wajang an' jamette, them bony nigger-woman from John-John he like; woman with gap teeth and bandy knee. I used to ask him, 'Kitchie, boy, why you don't get a good woman from Petit Valley or Diego Martin? What you want with these women? A man like you, in your position as a calypsonian now, you could get a nice reds, a decent craft.'

But he would laugh, 'High class woman not cheap poopa. If you have a woman in the yard, y-y-you just buy she a sack dress when month end come, or some sweet water and she feel she in class, she happy. But them highfalutin woman from Petit Valley want gold bangle, they want ballroom, they want cherry wine.'

I say, 'A'right Kitch.' and I leave him there with that. Kitch love all them characters. He love stickfigher and knifeman, mobster was his friend, men like Samperlie and Joe Pringay, fellas born bad in the 1800s. And he love to be around tight dress woman in night club, 'Kiiitch, Kiiitch' they calling him, they arm round his waist walking in the street, after the tent close at night. I would see Kitch on the corner of Observatory and Basilon Street, or stand up drinking a boscoe outside Maxitone parlour with two, three woman around him. An' is from them, from them badjohn and jamette woman in the Harpe that Kitch get many song to sing.

*Bobulups and Elaine Pow
every night they making row.
When the thing is not the same
they gone in the poker game.*

*Ruby Rab and Stallion
have a different solution.
When they fail in Charlotte Street
they heading for Cocorite.*

Kitch start to make money but he not spending stupid. He from the country so money wrap up tight in his hand. He don't like to talk about his money. You would never know his business. But these woman in the Harpe could get money from him. Sometimes they pass, 'Mr Kitch, gimme a shilling to buy a bread and a tin a sardine, please?'

'Kitchy, gimme a bob to buy a piece of black pudding, please?'

He come like a saga boy, like a sweetman in the yard. When carnival season he in the tent. He had songs. He had 'Jump in the line,' 'Tie Tongue Mopsy' and 'Chinese never had a VE day,' all these had people talking. But these days he not recording yet, so you have to go to the tent to hear him, or you can catch him on the street with his guitar, under some lamppost singing. But he making his money, he could afford to buy you a beer, he could afford to buy a bake an' cheese, he could afford to stroll in flannel pants with woman on he arm.

DURING THAT TIME when the steel bands was up in the hills, pan men from town used to come up to the Dry River to hide and play. The river bank pave and the river bank high and we hiding them fellas in the canal to practice. This is where I used to see men like Ellie Mannette, Black James and Zigalee. Then it have fellas from Belmont; badjohn pan men from Mon Repos, Never Dirty and Clifton Hill; men like Zanta, Moppers and Didier. Every area had a steelband. Going up by Lavantille Hill it have Rising Sun Band, Free French and Tripoli. You come down Quarry Street by Dry River and you bounce up Bar 20 and Alexander Ragtime, Red Army.

Now, La Cour Harpe was a village unto itself. You could be who you want, you don't go there to tell nobody nothing. La Cour Harpe was hard. Hard-hard. Imagine you walking on that side in the early morning and you seeing blood in the gutter. Some man get zwill the night before, some skull get bore, some cocksman burst and leave he thing right there outside the mechanics hall. You have to cross over ravine to go bathe. The latrine almost overflowing, you could fall in. Somebody piss on the wall outside the butcher shop, lord have mercy, when the butcher come in the morning he have to wash that down with disinfectant, rubbish burning, dog shit piling, when rain fall: mud. When mud fall: you slide. I don't put water in my mouth to talk; it wasn't no nice place to live. But it had a spirit. It had a something in there that was special. Whether is stick fight, cockfight, calypso or moko jumbie, is behind the bridge it come from. And even though the people there was poor-no-arse they would give you their last piece of pig tail if your belly was empty.

Men from the Harpe was bad like yaz. Bar 20 fellas living there. Men like Sugar Bain, Mokotux Charlie and Ancil Boyce, the captain. Boyce was a saga boy, he wasn't no real badjohn but if you rough him up he would cut you. He always impeccable: cowboy shirt with pique collar, denim pants, skimmer hat, and when he pass through the yard to go an' beat iron in the riverbed, he always, 'Good afternoon, good afternoon Mr Donawah, what mark play today?' And I would tell him whether Centipede, Gouti, Dead Man or Crapaud play, 'cause I was a real-real whe-whe jumbie in them days. Now, Boyce don't work anywhere,

but he smoking Chesterfields, and he always have money in his pocket, and he have girls. He and Bobulups was in thing. The story go that one night Boyce was walking along the ledge at the side of the Dry River - remember is concrete there; the riverbed pave and somehow Boyce fall in and mash up right there. The fellas had to carry him hospital; next day, he dead. That night them Bar 20 boys dye they jacket black and light candle for him. But it had a rumour that the police kill Boyce because he was a big time iron band leader and the governor did want steelband to dead bad.

When they bury Boyce, Kitch was there in the cemetery with all them knife man, pan man and prostitute. He bathe and brighten up, he smelling sweet. Grey dog teeth suit and the neck tie. Because he did know Boyce good. All a we did know him. Ancil playing pan in the same yard which part Kitch living, and both of them was saga boys. So when I see Kitch in the Lapyrouse cemetery that day I wasn't surprised. He stand up sombre in the long grass when they lower Boyce down. Boyce family start to wail. Some boys pour white rum in the hole. Two craft put they arm round Kitch waist and ask him sing, so he sing:

*Ancil Boyce is dead an' gone
but the iron beatin' still
Ancil Boyce, he dead an' gone,
but the iron band beating'*

People start to clap and breakaway right there in the people cemetery. Now, the police don't like them thing, so it had some officers there and they start to guff-up and bray, they start to tighten up baton in their hand, they start to talk hard, 'Alright. Alright Allyuh done bury the damn man, leave this blasted burial ground now. Right now!' And they start to break up the funeral. Things turn tense, like the air ready to burst. Is anytime the police go leggo they hand.

It had a few man with pan beating, even though they know they not supposed to beat no pan in the road, but they beating they lil' tune, they harden, they beating. They leave from the cemetery and going up Tragerete Road with a dozen police in their tail. I could see Kitch big head up in front with all the Bar 20 bad man. I say, wait. Like Kitch gone mad. But they flag waving and they going through Green corner, up Park Street, people behind like is a Carnival band they following. They know by law they not suppose to have pan on the road but they have pan, they have bugle, they have drum. They have Bobulups.

Jump in the line

Iron Band Funeral/A chant to kill death

HOSPEDALES WITH THE BUGLE coming up Park Street, blowing.

Roll

Jack Ben, Swiss and Gri-Gri with the bubblers three.

Blow

Park Street narrow; it bawling. Fathead have the kettle beating, Audrey have the cuff boom. Brake drum iron. Mallet beaten down from the yankee caboose. Whistles, bells, bottle and spoon, bone and teeth. A riot of sound like a storm stirring, surging, seeping through a crack in their agony, with more vamp than harmony. The cortege is no longer mournful on its way back home to the hills. Dust to dust. Dirt to dirt. Unto thy hands we commit our souls: Bar 20 Band from Bath Street.

Thousand, ten thousand to bar me one

Ai ai ai is murder!

Thousand, ten thousand to bar me one

The drums. Drum is breath and drum is life and drum is lung and heart. These men and women play these drums as if their power had too long been hidden in the hot alleys and gutters that perforate these regions east of the Dry River, and having been unable to speak till now, they beat reckless in their supplication. People start follow them across the bridge, moving, among the muddy gutters and black shack alleys with shattered glass and red dirt at their feet. But the police have a jeep.

The police have a jeep and they blowing the horn. They trying to disperse the crowd but it growing, it growling, it picking up delinquents from all the hard hell yards going up Observatory Street, Quarry Street, they call them street but that is a misnomer, underestimated like these islands by cartographers, these are alleyways, passages, colonial roads. Passing Tanty Tea Shop corner: more tin pan grumbling in the cortege, bottle breaking, a chant, a chant to kill death. Siren send some scamper hid. But some stay beating iron in the dusk till they pass Oxford Street corner and they going up still. Some warriors stay with zwill and steel

knuckle in hand to ramp with the police when the police try to break up the band, and they bound to try by law.

Is then Bobulups emerge with the Bar 20 flag at the head of the iron band with the skull and bones flailing in the citrus wind. She waist she rip, she roll, the flag in she hand she fling it, she wave, she wrap it round she and flash it in them police face. She even ask the inspector, 'How a man could fall in a dry river an drown. When the river so silt and shallow that even crapaud ketchin' they arse to bathe?' And when he say was accident, she prong back and arch, hand on her hip, she plait her mouth and cuss him till he somersault in his skin. 'You mist be think black people stupid'. And when he go was to grab and desist her, she cuff him in his face and his glasses break in three pieces. People hear it splash on the road. The big man just put a hand on his holster, Bobulups cry, 'Shoot me nah! Shoot me. If you name man then shoot.' Then a shot ring out in truth, and everything turn ol'mas in the street.

The police jeep kicking back dirt and sticking, it straining to follow the band through these red dirt and dusty roads, it get turn over on the side of the road and it tumble with a crush that sound like carbide burst, with the wheels still spinning. Bobulups and the inspector start to wrestle like dog in the gayelle. She could kick, Bobulups could bite, and he really don't want to hit no woman, but he smelling puncheon rum in she breath so he start to fling baton blind and a blow catch Bobulups in she chest, in the breast, in her heart so heavy like it could burst.

Bobulups burst on the government road. Gravel eating at her knees, blood and saliva trickling from her mouth. The knuckles of the fist she still gripped the flag with are torn and bloody, pressing into sharp stones on the road. The suffer the love. All her struggle life like a vice round her neck now. Time suspend her there on the rugged road with her own heart beating loud in her ears and the salt bitter taste of blood in her mouth. She feel she could not rise up, she could not reach them; her people, they behind something, a blurred murmur of gossip alone, the incline too steep, the road too narrow. They have nothing else but gesture to fight with. And is now she knew her people, in this moment, she seeing them as they really are, and how they live, is a wonder, congealed together in their shack wood rooms with thin partitions, hid in the rancid gut of this city where decent

people fear to reach, overcome by the overwhelming stench of poverty and destiny, but still clapping blades, mano mano, they don't fear life.

But Bobulups did tired fight. She tired make fares on George Street corner. Tired of the pimps, of the police, the courthouse, the jail. Fed up of skinning up, sucking and smiling back. Sick of the suffering she saw all around her. The law like it make to downpress them alone, bourgeois politician never pass this way, and she people bathing by standpipe. Suffering and smiling like rain fall and sun shine same time. And as she staggers to her feet, the sadness of it that fills her with wind and lifts her up; upwards and away from the scene, upwards above Quarry Street, till she can see the battle of sticks and stones still raging beneath, the blood red sun sinking, the ocean flat and deep and dark as death. Erzulie. And bereft at the agonies, the weight she must bear, the muddy inclines and stagnant pools, the hurricane brewing at the interstice of day and night, torrential rain, the lingering scent of a stevedore, the courthouse and jury, colonial awnings, dust upon the roof of time...

Up

Up

She feeling herself - lifted - bliss of this moment - the flag falling from her hands - unfurling to the earth like wings of a stingray - she is falling through eternity - away from her birth and growth on these streets - the dirt track warrens - the hills - light draining from the sky - red - her head burst like a splash - extending out to brightness, hover above and see everything, the grid shape of colony and fantasy, the true image of the these islands, how they were, misrepresented on maps by cartographers, the white spray foaming at the gills, cocoa frogs, elbows of the land. Then she feel herself fall again, then spinning, spinning, spinning.

And it was then that the young calypsonian held her from falling, catching her round her waist; her weight pulling him sideways. He had seen when Bobulups fell from the blow, had seen when her heel had failed, and she fell, like spiritual baptist mothers when the Holy Spirit swept them, the bell still ringing hard, and he steadies her just by Argyle Street corner.

She fixes her dress, dusting off the dirt with the tips of her fingers, as if she sends waves back to the ocean. 'You see what they do me, Kitch? Even a woman, even a woman they will beat.' And she sigh like she blow out the sun.

'Bobulups y-y-you, you mad *oui*. How you go see big police so and want to fight the man, you mad? He coulda kill you? You eh 'fraid?'

'*Fraid?* Fraid For what? What I must be afraid for? What they could do me that people eh do me a'ready? Beat me? Shoot me? For what? I is just a jamette boy, a ol'whore, Bobulups eh nobody. Jail cyar kill me. But he prefer hit me a baton, see, is he did 'fraid fockin' me, yes, is he who have to 'fraid, because me eh afraid he.'

She cries. But her tears are not the nacreous tears of sorrow; they are hot with rage. 'Ancil really get a good send off eh? You eh see how much flowers people bring? I feel is one of them police kill him y'know. Ancil was a so nice, Kitch, I must love Ancil, oh gorm, is one a them police kill him, eh Kitch? They was running behind him and is so he fall to the bottom and dead.'

He takes her by her arm, 'C-c-come,' he says, 'Let us go back in the yard.'

The band and its entourage had dispersed, disappearing into cracks in the gutters and tunnels beneath the street. Boyce was dead, he had been buried in the muddy clay. The war was over. And they walked. Sliver of a deep. Side by side into the big barrack yard on Basilon Street where Bobulups lived. Wood shack and slum. The latrine soon to overflowing.

So swift the night comes down east of the river, lamp light to light the hill tracks coming down. And a muscle in the air ~

The Spirit

AT NOON, when the Lavantille breeze billowing warm through the stained lace curtains of the jammette yards, and the sun is blowing down hard from the Belmont hills to the valley of the Harpe and Hell Yard kitchen, the asphalt roads soften, and Kitch struggles to steal a few more minutes of sleep under a light cotton coverlet, in the back room of some frolic house. He rests the soft inner part of his right arm across his eyes, seduced to restless sleep by the rustle of leaves above his head, a branch rolling across galvanise. He pulls himself up and walks into the yard, past the croton and the hibiscus tree, to the latrine.

Brother Jimmy the Baptist Shepherd is passing in white, uphill to the quarry. Gamblers and wappi card men are slapping harsh cards down and casting dice at the side of one of those wooden houses, where a black dog is tied under; its pink tongue hanging from its mouth. Heat. Same time the ice man passes. Ice in a humber bicycle basket, brown crocus sacking over hard ice to keep it cool, to chip with his pick. 'Ice, ice, ice in your ice! Ieece!'

When Kitch reach Moses's Bar he finds The Mighty Spoiler sitting at the counter finishing his saltish and bake. Spoiler wipes his lips with the back of his hand and blinks hard, 'Ai Kitch. Gimme a cigarette nah, you have cigarette? I want a cigarette boy.' Spoiler wears last night's brown suit. Stale drunk. Kitch puts his hand on Spoiler's shoulder,

'But you know I doh smoke Spoils, where I will get cigarette?'

And The Spoiler laughs, rum teeth grinning in his gum. 'Well lend me a shilling then, your boy broken you see him here. Moses so good he trust me a bake.'

Kitchener takes his hat off and places it on the counter. 'I now going by Slate. Moses, g-gimme a cup of cocoa please, and a bake and smoked herring.'

Spoiler sucks his teeth to dislodge threads of salted cod from the insides of his mouth. 'Oh ho, you going by Slate? I will come with you. But your brother don't have dollars boy, ease me up nah, a lil' nip of brandy, a taste, till Friday?'

Kitch takes a sip of his cocoa tea. 'Nah boy Spoils, all the money I have done a'ready. I still have to go by the Chinese man to print up some song sheet to sell this evening; my money small, boy, I eh holding.'

At the shoemaker's shop, the calypsonians find the cobbler Hargreaves hunched over his work, with the whine of his transistor radio like a bee buzzing in the heat above him, and his bottom lip slung down in concentration. Kitch closes the swinging bottom door behind them, 'Mornin' Mr Hargreaves.'

Hargreaves raises his head, squints, sunlight sparkles on the thickness of his spectacle lens, his face is narrow and dark, the skin shines, his hand still twists an awl to the helm of a boot. Then he peers over the bridge of his spectacles, 'Poke a poke boy, poke a poke, allyuh just come out for the day?'

'Tent close late last night, so the fellas was down by the bridge liming, was a late one. Snake in the back?'

'He in the shed, all yuh pass through nah, mind them boots hang up there, Spoils, watch your head.' They find Slate sitting at his workbench eating butter bread and cheese from a brown paper bag. He wipes his mouth with the back of his hand,

'Ai, The Spoiler and the Lord Kitch, boy. A lil' hunger take meh tail, come man, sit down.' And the calypsonians sit beside him on a hand stitched wooden bench. The one they call snake is a dark skinned, wire boned man with steady eyes.

Slate twists his lunch bag shut then he rests his elbows on the workbench top. 'So what I could do with allyuh? Songs?' Then he turns to Kitch, 'Tall man, I hearing real good things about you, boy. I hear last week you sing for Harry Truman, is so?'

'Yes, I sing for him. They call for us so me and Beginner went up Wallerfield and sing. When I done sing Truman say "Boy, I never heard music so. You're like a negro Bing Cosby." An' he pat me on my back.'

Slate swings his head back and looks at Spoiler, but Spoiler drifting, then he look at Kitchener: 'He call you "Boy"?' Kitchener begins to respond but his words descend into a mess of stuttering and the three men laugh together, like washer women at the river rocks. 'Joke I making boy Kitch, joke.' But he watching Kitchener.

Kitchener says, 'Slate I have a new tune I working out, but like the words not fitting good, tell me what you think nah?' Slate rolls the bake bag to a ball and throws it over his back to the bandon land. He drinks water from a pan cup, and picks his teeth with a twig, then he spits and rises from his stool.

'Sing it nah, lemme hear you.'

Kitchener sings. Slate strums his chin, 'Well it nice, nobody could feel you what to do now in kaiso, but people have to hear every word you sing, I mean, your diction must be impeccable, and the rhythm of your wording have to be right, grammatically exact, you know what I mean? Sing it again.'

So Kitchener sings and rephrases to fit the gaps between rhythm and melody. Slate, listening with eyes closed, as if he can see the words falling out of Kitchener's mouth, listening for excess syllables and half rhyme. Till the sun's heat becomes less fierce and throws long shadows of shade across the yard. Spoiler has fallen asleep on a bench beside a dasheen stream. The fowl cock crows, the water truck passes. The old woman falls and she gets up. Let the sun peel back the clouds like starched sheets, reveal the blue gust of light, in the distance, down on the outskirts of the low lying shanties, north of the dry river, and on the shacks on the hill like so many wooden flags, in this colony.

sans humanite

Slate Say, 'Sing it again, gimme.'

And Kitchener, map out the bass notes, swing the rhythm, the line, the du-dup of a drum, his hands conducting the air, his legs itching to kick. That night he sings last at the tent and chants his kaiso eloquently, to applause and ovation. The other calypsonians watching from the eves and the band, each man in the arena with Kitch, in the alley, and the yard, they with him there. Sing with the neck tie twist, the suit jacket broad, the people eating from his hand. But in all this still the man is awkward, this must be said. Is like he can't come out of himself, he wrap up in something there and anytime he try to punch out you could see the effort. He shy, embarrass. He have to inhabit his own self. But sometimes he would bust out and rage, the words spitting from his mouth, flinging down spirit and bad mind, making people laugh. Them is the times he forget who he is. Catch him one night when the mayor in the tent, or when it pack up with white people and you will see Kitchener perform. The night Cipriani in the audience, or the night he sing in competition and win second place, was \$15 and a bottle of cacapoule rum. He will

walk like a prince, he will buy Chinese food, he will ride in taxi, he will make his way.

KITCH WAS NEVER NO BAD JOHN. Doh mind he big like a robot; when is time to fight he gone; he not in that. He will grand charge: 'Me? I doh want kill nobody, if I get vex and fight with a man, ah go have to kill him, no question! I don't make joke y'know, if any one of them interfere with me, take it easy.' But is just throw he throwing words so people will leave him be, because really, Kitchener couldn't fight.

He was behind a woman in Belmont once, Linda, a lil' French Creole who break away from the flock. This Linda was working as a stores clerk on the docks and through the fault of her own slackness end up living behind the bridge with them jamette and vagabond tribes. Linda an' a big breast woman call J.J. - who I was trying to inveigle myself - was living in a yard on St Francois Valley Road.

But this Linda had a man call Rawlston who was a well known Corbeau town stickman who people say kill a man in a bar fight but police never bother to hold him. Kitch know, the woman tell him about this Rawlston. But Kitch don't care, he still behind the poor woman, he want to get inside. One night me and Kitch meet the two craft in a bar on Charlotte Street. Kitch want to carry Linda home by him but she say she tired; long shift. Kitch beg, he beg, I watch that man beg until she oblige. He take she up in the lil' bachie he had on Basilon Street, was to badden she head with rum and he must be make one set of love to Linda.

The next day about 5 o'clock in the afternoon, Kitch coming back from Lum Lee shop with a piece of saltfish in his hand, he whistling like a semp, he pep. When he reach the junction by Bath Street corner he hear, 'Country boy, Mr Calypsonian. I want talk to you sir.' Was a fella stand up like a ol' police, on the otherside of the road, with his hands behind his back. He wearing wasp waist pants and short sleeve shirt, stingy brim straw hat. He build big; muscular; if he jump he bust he head on street sign, them arms was thick like hog leg. He call again, 'Country boy, come nah? Yes is you, you is the man I want talk to.'

But Kitchener like he smell cut arse, he buck when he see the man. He intend to pass straight, he say, 'Ai, alright.'

When the man start crossing the road Kitch stop and start to stutter, 'W-w-what you want to talk to me for?' The fella stand up in front Kitch and swell up like a bull in the road.

'You mean you don't know? I feel you know, a smart man like you.' Both of them same height, strapping. The fella ask Kitch, 'You know who I is?'

Kitch pull back he neck, 'No, me don't know you.' And he backing back, barring the sun from his eye with the saltfish bag and the saltfish smelling. 'Who you is?'

'Is I who name Rawlston. You ever hear 'bout Rawlston?'

Kitch drift like tilde over vowel and he knee bend, he say, 'But I-I don't know no nobody call so. Is *me* you sure you want to talk to?'

'Ent is you they calling Kitchener?'

'Yes, is me.'

'You know a woman name Linda?'

Kitch face pinch up, playing like he confused, 'Linda? No, I don't know no, no, me eh know no Linda. Linda? Linda who? From where?'

The more Kitch talk he stutter, and the more he stutter is the more Rawlston get vex, and the vex Rawlston get was to fight. Kitch start to walk and Rawlston behind, is so they enter Harpe yard. People come out their house, they smell trouble, some inside peeping through curtain. Kitchener in front and Rawlston behind. When they reach the centre court Rawlston pull a razor from his back pocket, flick it and it flash like a mirror in his hand. A simple razor he sharpen like bad mind. Sharp like the one good eye the old man have after cataract and high blood pressure take all.

People start to circle round - they smell blood. Kitch backing back 'cause the blade burning his eye, hands up by his chest, showing the palm and the saltfish hand as if to say 'wait.' 'I-I done tell you I don't know no Linda' he bray, 'I don't want trouble, leave me in peace man, please me in please, peace, don't want, no trouble me, leave me be.'

When men get damn vex and just before the battle, they does start to talk sideways, so Rawlston, when blood rush, start to stutter and talk shit too, like the words getting heavy in his mouth. 'You, You like nice woman? Eh? Is nice woman you like? Is nice man woman you like nice, eh, woman man nice?' And just so he lunge forward and fling the razor at Kitchener, but the way he throw it was like he

was hoping it didn't connect, and in that doubt somehow Kitch manage to hold his hand, and the two of them wrestling there upright, in the middle of the yard, like dog. Kitch holding the blade hand and Rawlston puffing like a cow, he eye open big-big, he cussing, 'Leggo meh hand, leggo meh fockin' hand!' Lord, if he did only manage to wrench way the blade he mighta cut Kitch bad-bad! But Kitchener strong; is cowfoot and butter bean he eating. He hold the man hand tight like a vice and twisting, was to break it.

Rawlston want to bite, he try, and he cussing one set a cuss until vexation like it overcome him. He vex so vex he foaming at the eye and his neck get stiff with rage. He manage to pull away the hand with the blade, but like he don't know if to cut, or to cry - and Kitch stand up there with the bag of saltfish still in his hand and a lil' blood on his elbow, poor fella, he body trembling.

It was me who pull Rawlston back, I see everything. But it was old Mr Jaja who really hobble in with he bandy leg and part them. 'Look here!' he say 'All you is big man, it have children around, you cyar do that stupidity here, in broad daylight. Kitchener you self, you should know better, this is the Harpe boy, this is not John-John, we don't behave so here.' He turn to Rawlston now. 'Sonny boy, I never see your face so you not from here. What you doing in the Harpe? Eh? You want to dead? You don't know the Harpe is a dangerous place?'

But Rawlston have to stand his stand, he say, 'Old man, you better tell this one, you better tell him don't never interfere with man woman, he know what he do, otherwise I will come an' burn down this whole fucking place. You hear me? I go burn down every blasted thing inside of here!'

Mr Jaja bend his head to the side like he don't hear properly. 'You will what? You will burn down where...the Harpe? Is so? You know that fella over so?' It was Mr Henry he point to, swinging in a rocking chair in the yard in front his house with his rifle across his knee. And on the other side of the yard, Saga boy the stick man lean up on a wall, and the Indian they call Cacique, coming with a three canal cutlass they say mount with spirit and leaving mark in water. And all around the yard you see men picking up stone, piece of wood, anything. Mr Jaja tell Rawlston, 'You best go from here boy, before these fellas bust way your carapace. You take Harpe Yard for some kinda open sepulchre?' Rawlston take in front before front take him, he turn and run through the land behind the latrines,

he jump down in the Dry River bank and run - big stone behind him, pelt we pelting, even dog take off in his tail.

Kitch go and sit down on the bridge under the Tamarind tree and he wouldn't talk to nobody. Like he feeling shame. He hand trembling. The saltfish bag greasy how he hold it tight. Them woman come to hug him up, they bring mauby, sugarcake, but he push them away. Mr Jaja went with his bandy leg self to talk to the champ, to rub his back, but Kitch swell up like a turkey; he vex to kill priest but his body don't know fight, and all the tension, so it stiff. He was to stay there until he boil down like bhagee and come back normal-normal. Eventually that whole commess pass, and people could laugh about it, men drink rum on that, people even start to consult Mr Jaja for arbitration. Kitch even sing about it, that same night in the tent.

KITCHENER WAS SMART. He come down from Arima and he hit one time. So they want him in the tents, they want him in the Victory Tent, they want him in Millionaires tent, House of Lords want him. Everybody want to hear what he coming with next. He come with 'Shops close too early', 'Worrier', 'Tie Tongue Mopsy', he come with 'Jump in the line' an' people near tear up the tent, that was 1946. He had another one they calling 'Mount Olga':

*Mount Olga, Mount Olga,
This is a mountain I climbing
I catching hell to climb this hill,
the more I climb the more I sliding still.
Me body run down before a week,
fighting up to reach up this mountain peak.*

When them fellers in the yard hear that they bawl, 'Wee boy! That is kaiso!' Double entendre. Kitch catch them again, it smut but smart. Then you hearing he singing for Truman, he on the American base singing for the soldiers, he down San Fernando, Princess Town. He was doing very well. Eventually he get so damn popular that for the 1947 season he, Spoiler, Melody and Killer decide to start their own tent. They find a lil' yard - 100 Edward Street - they tie bamboo with wire, they throw some bachelor galvanise on top, they put down a few folding chairs and they call it 'The Young Brigade'.

Them old timers like Growler and Roaring Lion was saying, 'Never happen, nobody eh going there' Eh heh? Pepper on top of pepper — the Young Brigade sell out! You couldn't get a seat. People coming from all over Trinidad; tourists, them *petit bourgeois* from St Clair, even Governor Bede and other dignitaries coming in the tent. The Young Brigade become so popular that season that less and less people going to the Victory Tent to hear the old bards, except them high brown and French Creole people who feel they in thing because they listening to Tchaikovsky an' Benjamin Britten. Even them, after a while, start to go over by Kitch. People love the tent because the music exciting; plenty horn and bass in it, people dancing in the tent like is a fete.

I mean, they had Mighty Killer there and Killer could dance. The Mighty Spoiler there, Pretender, Melody, Wanderer, a fella name Red Soil, and Kitch. Entry not exorbitant either, so poor people could reach inside. \$2.00 a head for

seat. \$1.50 if you stand up at the back. Money coming in, and every night after the show them calypsonians coming down Edward Street singing:

*Young Brigade again, Young Brigade again
We young and we have the brain.
Tell them we eh 'fraid
We go mash up the Old Brigade*

Kitch big tune that season was 'Chinese Memorial' and when *that* hit the tent, well is now Kitchener walking through the Harpe like a lord. Now he is *Lord* Kitchener; he not Bean no more, you can't call him 'Arima Champion' or 'country boy'; he making style on people. See him with the big trilby and the rayon shirt with the pique collar, the wasp waist pants, the two tone brogues. And every week he in the barber shop for a trim, and every other month he get a new suit measure and make.

He had a tailor on Belmont Valley Road that uses to cut and sew suits for him. The fella name was Greene, and every time you pass on the Valley Road you could see Greene - a red skin Bajan fella — sit down inside his drawing room with a tape measure round his neck sewing, and a wood pipe hang out the side of his mouth, stitching suits, pleated pants. Bespoke waistcoat hang up in the shop. Cloth mark with chalk and ready to cut. Nice cloth. When Kitch go by Greene he ordering the good wool cloth that come from England, the wool that smooth like baby head. He want the silk paisley lining, he want the jacket cut long and the lapel narrow, he want vent in the jacket back and two inch fold in the pants. He want 2 inch fold. And anything he want Green could cut. Greene could measure a man from the way he walk. He sewing for Lord Invader, Lion and Growling Tiger too, and these is tests don't imp with clothes, so.

Kitchener was one of the best dressed calypsonians I ever know to pass through Port of Spain. He walking through the Harpe and the fellas saying, 'See, Kitch have on a next suit on again, new pants, new shoes.' Only Roaring Lion could dress more better; nobody could touch Lion. Lion would wear pin stripe tuxedo with African waistcoat, red cummerbund, bow tie, he bus' cravat, hat matching shoes, belt matching hat, watch and chain, monocle, anything, bowler hat, white cane. When Lion walk in a room, big men breath used to pause. Lion like a prince, he always cool, he never fluster, you never see him sweat.

Kitch used to watch Lion good, because Lion have the seppy, He have the style, like he eh even try. Lion? How y'mean? Lion singing in The Village Vanguard, Lion in Harlem, San Francisco. Lion in Hamburg, Lion cutting record and Kitch want to cut one bad-bad too. Kitch want to hear his voice on the shellac, leggo throat, he have songs, he want to he want to see the world. And thats is normal, no problem. Because when a young man in Trinidad get to be about 23 or 24, he does feel like he outgrow the island. Remember, Trinidad nice, but it small, it does get mundane.

So around this time Kitch start talking about going to America. He tell me, he say, 'Len, boy, I want to get out there, I must try my hand.' He see Sa Gomes sending Lion, Tiger and Atilla up there to record and a fella name Houdini was making one set of money signing calypso in New York City, and maybe Kitch feel he could do better. But people have to invite you to go America, you can't just take your boldface self and say you going America. You have to have pedigree; you have to get sponsor, your papers must be in order or they would send you back same as you come. Or, you end up like deceased Sharkos brother; living in a cold water warehouse, snow and rain beating you, and you can't get work. It had plenty fellas went through that.

So I tell Kitch 'Take a chance and go down in the Emporium and talk to Sa Gomes. Ask him to record you.' But like Sa Gomes didn't want him. So he looking now, for a way out of Trinidad.

'Cleo in the Yard', 1947

EVERY DAY Kitchener pass he would say, 'Mornin' Miss Cleo,' and he smile and tip his hat. But in the back there, where we living, it have latrine and standpipe right next to each other, mud, dog shit and galvanise bathroom that smelling of carbolic soap and disinfectant. I was 17. Mammy was a domestic in town. My father dead on the wharf, so we living in a two room barrack house in the corner of Harpe Yard.

Kitchener used to call me Miss Cleo, as if I was a big woman. And if I sweeping the yard or sit down on the step front he would stop and chat. He had words, he know to make me laugh, his head long like a mango but his skin was dark and smooth like cocoa seed. Ma did always warn me to stay away from calypsonian.

Dry River had plenty calypsonian in them days, everybody feel they could sing calypso. But people was saying that Kitchener was special, how he, Spoiler and Melody was the best of the new ones to take over from Atilla and Lion. One Friday night, Me and Ma was coming down Edward Street after church. It was the night they put Sister Ruby down on the mourning ground. Mammy stop to talk to Miss Patsy in her yard and I could see straight over Miss Patsy back fence into the other yard, where they had the calypso tent. I leave them talking and go by the fence and I see Kitchener and the rest of the calypsonians standing by the side of the tent, all in suit and tie. Kitch was singing, he was playing a guitar, and I wave and he wave back, he smile. And he start was to come and talk by the fence, but Mammy bawl, 'Cleo, what you doing there? Who you talking to?' And I had was to run back.

But the next day, the Saturday, I was sitting on the step, minding my business, I think I was shelling pigeon peas, Mr Kitchener pass, whistling, feather in his hat. 'Hello Miss Cleo, hello g-good day, you is just the one I want to see. I-I have so-so-something for you, y'know, yes.'

And I giggle, I shy. 'Me? What you could have for me?' And I fixing myself to talk to him. He put one foot up on the step next to me, his shoe was

shining like a trumpet, and he tell me close my eyes, and when I close my eyes he put a mango in my hand, a ripe starch mango that warm and smooth. The sap run and stain from the stem, it firm and nice, but my mother — lord ‘av mercy — my mother see me from the kitchen and brawl, ‘Cleotilda, Cleo, bring your tail in here.’

And when I go inside she beat the back of my leg with a swizzle stick till it welt. ‘I tired tell you don’t talk to them fellas! Them calypso man is no good. They want one thing, one thing they want. A young girl like you. You is my one piece of daughter, Cleo, O gorm, you go carry on until they gi’ you big belly. Is that you want? Eh? I carry you church, I try my best with you, I even get Leader Jimmy to burn garlic and pray for you, I smoke asafoetida in the damn house and you still in calypsonian tail? After I bust my liver string for you? Please Cleo, don’t let me see you talking to any of them again, or I will send you to live by your Uncle Billy in Talparo, and you could mind pig and milk cattle up there.’

But the mango was like honey. So I take a chance one evening, just before dark when the sky turning red and Ma was in church. Kitchener was sitting under the sandbox tree that hanging over the ravine. He was playing his guitar. When he see me watching he call me. And I sit down there with him and he telling me to sing. I laugh, ‘I can’t sing, what you want me to sing? You is the singer, sing.’

‘But a pretty girl like you, you must have a voice to match, and I can tell it is the voice of an angel.’ And he went to kiss me but I turn my head so he meet me on my cheek. Is not that I didn’t want him kiss me, is ‘fraid I did ‘fraid if anybody in the yard see and tell my mother. So after a lil’ while pass I tell him, ‘I have to go home, Mammy coming home just now.’

‘Pretty girl, don’t mind your mother, how old you is?’

’21’

He smile with a full set of teeth, ‘Well, you is a big woman now y’know, you could do as you want. A nice butterfly like you, you must be free to fly. Why you don’t come back tomorrow, when your mother gone to work, and we will go for a walk round the savannah, you like boil corn?’

And is so things start. I would lie and say I going to take shorthand lessons in Belmont, and me and Kitch would hop the bus and go Carenage to bathe. I had to hide. Once he take me matinee to see ‘Black Beauty,’ first time I see inside a

picture house. Once I ask him, 'But Kitch, a fella like you, you must have so much woman, what you want with me?'

And he hold my hand and rub the inside of my wrist, 'That is just calypso life, for show. Those women mean nothing to me. All I want is to get in with you *doux-doux*. Anywhere I go, I taking you.'

'I want to go America.' I say, 'You will take me America?' And he laugh. But when people poor sometime even secret they can't keep, and the talk went round that me and Kitch was in thing. It come back to my mother and when I reach home one night I meet she sitting on the step, waiting on me with a bible in she hand.

'Where you was Cleo? Lessons finish late?' And she calm.

'Yes, lessons now finish, Mr Richards keep us late, and —'

'Keep you late? Then tell me how the arse I see Richards going up the hill since 5 o'clock this evening, and he tell me no classes today? Eh Cleo? You gone back in that country nigger tail?'

She give me a bad cut-arse that night with an old police belt. Mammy used to beat bad y'know. And the next day she put me on the bus with three dollars in copper money and send me by Uncle Billy in Talparo. A whole month I stay on the farm. When I come back to La Cour Harpe I hear Kitchener gone. Gone where? He gone Grenada to sing. He gone Curacao, St Maarten.

But my mind on him. I can't lie. Every time the dog bark I looking out in the yard. And when I lie down to sleep I could still feel his arm round me, like when we was in the cinema, like when he did take me to the hotel in George Street, first time I knew these things. I smelling the sweet soap on him. I hearing his voice. I wait till Christmas for him, then Carnival come, 1948, and I pick up with a ping pong man from St James. Mammy didn't approve of he either.

I REMEMBER WHEN he was going because he come through the Harpe and tell everybody. Christmas was coming, people was buying their pig leg and sweet biscuit, and you could smell the oil paint in the air all down the avenue. From where I cutting hair in the barbing shop on Bath Street corner, I see Kitch coming down the road. I see him go by Miss Dolly parlour to buy a sweet drink, he gone across by Caesar shop, he buy a Gazette, he stop to ol'talk with the fellas outside the poor house and then he come by me, where I put linoleum on the bare dirt and hang up two mirror and Paul Robeson picture, in my lil' place where I doing my work to feed my children and charging five cents a cut, eight cents with shave, where I sharpening my razor on the leather strap I nail to the centre post.

When you is barber you does know everything that go on in the area. You know how fast man hair growing, you know when you see a man come for a trim when could expect him again, in four weeks or five depending on if he have dada head or indian in he blood. You know who with who woman, who getting horn and who horning, who lose thing and who thief. Who going bald and who have moss on their neck. And when men sit down in barbing shop they does gossip like crapaud in moonlight. Is there men does look for work, plot, scheme and organise to make their manima.

Three old man was there liming that Monday morning, sit down against the wall as regular, chewing roast peanuts with they back teeth and talking about things and times. I now lathering Bill Frank beard with the shaving foam brush. Bill big throat prise up. Just so the strip curtain shift and Kitchener hop in, light on his foot like a mantis, brown linen pants, white shoes, white shirt open down and a black hat swank down on one side like star boy; peacock feather in the band. He grinning like a boy, 'Mornin' Mr Billy, morning Mr Frank, Mr Murchison, Sir.' He turn to me: 'Mr Sheriff, the boss, I need a lil'trim, I travelling tomorrow.

I stop with the razor in my hand, 'You travelling? OK. Where you going?' Because even though Kitch and them calypsonian always on some hustle, I say I will give the man a chance to talk.

'America, I going Aruba and Curacao first, but I trying for America really, is there I want to go.'

Bill Frank raise up his head from the chair, all the cream foam thick on the man face.

He say, 'America? How the hell you going America? I eh know calypso making big money so. America don't want no ruffian y'know, they have plenty there.' Bill Frank breath bad, like the last thing he eat was rotten ham, about a week ago, and he laugh with the big throat and lean back in the chair. The other men laugh like they coughing. I start to shave Bill now and Kitch stand up in the centre of the shop like he can't find a pose. He lean up by the sink, he looking out the window, he reading magazine. Then he ask me, 'You see Melody for the day yet? Melo owe me \$10 an' he dodging to pay me, he like a rumour, I hearing but I can't see him nowhere.' And he chuck and chuckle but nobody laugh with him.

I wipe the scissors on my apron. 'Not today. I eh see Melody since yesterday.'

Jus's so Murchison close the newspaper he was reading, 'Every ass and he uncle want to go America. What America have that Trinidad don't have, besides snow and skyscraper, and one set a ketch arse?' Then he gone back in the paper, like he make more of a statement than a question, like he say more than he wanted to say. Murchison old and cantankerous, he nearing ninety, even he don't know how old he is.

Sun coming up strong now and Bath Street wash white with the light. Oban Billy push back his cap. I watching him, because Oban Billy is a cocoa hound, he not from town, he from Matelot, and he don't put water in his mouth to talk. He used to blow bugle in the army band till one eye blow and one eye dim with cataract, and I never expect him to say one damn thing good but he lean in the scene with gravel in his throat and surprise everybody. 'Well, that is good news boy, I glad for you, go, go and make your name, this kiss-me-arse place eh have nothing for you. You have ambition. I like that. And you can sing too. Yes, man, is good to leave this blasted place.'

I have the shell handle razor shaving round Bill Frank ears and I turning his head to suit the blade. Bill gone back in Kitch tail, 'New York not easy poopa. My brother in New York since last year Christmas, he ketchin' he black arse in Harlem, say he working doorman — when the mark bust is ponce the man pimping. New York? Police ketch him; eight weeks in jail. So who is you? Eh? You come from country with two-three good song and just so you say you going

America? Look, don't me fall off this chair this early morning.' And that make the rest of the tests bray on the bench like old mule. But Bill Frank didn't done with the *mauvais langue*. 'Calypso have no future boy. Long time, when it had men like Lord Columbus, King Lancelot, *them* was kaiso singer, not this stupidity you young fellas coming with now. Attila is a master calypsonian. Executor still singing good. Lion could sing, Tiger, even Killer have something. But you, you just start boy, you eh even make one damn record yet and you talking 'bout America? You best take your country bookie arse and go and plant peas in Arima. Yes, or stay in the damn Harpe and mind the child I hear that jamette have for you. America don't want you boy, forget that, Sa Gomes woulda send you.' And the men laugh again, hard. Bill Frank reach out his hand, to slap Kitch on his arm, as if joke he making.

'But Mr Frank, you feel, you feel, you feel I want to stay in Trinidad? Tiger, Attila, Lion, Invader, all of them fellas travelling. They does go all New York, Chicago, they does go Boston, they recording for Decca, for RCA. Houdini making one set of money in New York and he not even a real calypsonian. So I say well, is my time, I must take my chance. Attila give me the contact up there. Invader know people, calypso making money in America...I know people in Brooklyn...I have good contact in Boston...'

But the boys forget Kitchener. They gone back in their own business. Kitch lean up by the window like a imps. Bill Frank handle him rough, he get weak. I feel sorry for him. As I washing the razor in the sink I turn and tell him, 'You go get through man, forget them fellas, they only making joke. Come back about three for your trim. I have plenty head to cut today.'

When Kitch gone Bill Frank steups and shake his head and as I soft brushing his neck with talcum powder and taking off the sheet, he grumble,

'Every kiss-me-arse calypso boy want to go New York. But you think is just so you does go America? If was easy so all a we would go.' But the laughing simmer down in the men on the bench, they maybe get the sense that Bill Frank eat tiger cat that morning.

And I look out the lil' window above the sink and see Kitchener walking down Observatory Street, he head up in the air and he waving to people as he going down, he tall, he outgrow the Harpe. And as I leave that vision to wash out the lather brush, I watch Bill and the other men sitting on their old decrepit arse in

the barber shop, making joke on the man ambition, and I watching Kitchener again, he quite down the road. He stop by the coolie people shop, he crossing the bridge by the poor house, he disappearing into the sun, and just so something touch me inside, out from nothing, I even surprise myself, I wipe my hands in my apron and stand up in the middle of the floor.

‘Is so black people bite up eh? You don’t like to see your people prosper. The boy trying he talent, he trying to catch a chance and instead a’ wishing the boy luck, Bill Frank, a big man like you, instead a that you make the man feel like a fool. But what you do with your life? You work on the rail for 25 years and never make engine man. What you have to show? You still living in a one room in Gonzales, you have so much children you does forget their name.’

Bill laugh, his skin can’t get pierce with that. I know. He stand up there and fixing his clothes, ‘Look,’ he say, ‘I is a big old man now, my skylark days done, I never travel, is true, I go give you that, and I poor no arse you see me here. But them young boy make a lil’ money and they feel they in action. Oh, this one going New York, this one going Panama, they running here, they running every kiss-me-arse where. What Kitchener could do in New York? I bet you he don’t have his papers correct and they send him back. Kitch not so good...you find Kitch good?’

I didn’t answer the arse. I watching the street. I know once a man catch the vision of the outside, inside no good enough no more. So as I stand up there with the apron slack round my waist, I was wishing I could go with Kitchener too, away from this place, just to see what outside there.

And Oban Billy take the chair.

I wish you knew Kitchener. He is nearly seven foot tall, and is blacker tan a whole deck of aces of spades. He has rhythm in his ears. In his knees. In his fingers. In his elbows. And in his soul. he is one of Port of Spain's outstanding calypso singers [...]

Lord Kitchener sang to us in a taxicab. Harvey McMillan, who is travelling with me, and I picked him up shortly after midnight on our way from Port of Spain to the Pan American guest house, where we were staying while waiting for the plane to Belem, Brazil. He rode with us for about an hour, and I wish I could put on paper his accent, his words, the mad time he beat out with his hands on the door of the cab.

I wish too, that I could give you an adequate picture of the jungle which holds Trinidad in its arms, and the size and color of the moon that rode above the jungle. The jungle, the moon, the strange calls of the birds, and Lord Kitchener's songs formed an unforgettable picture...

All the music he had was the hum of the motor, and the time he beat out on the doors and cushions of the car. 'Mr Henry' Lord Kitchener said, 'What do you want me to sing about? And Mr Harvey, what is your pleasure?'

—Henry McLemore
Schenectady Gazette
Aug 7 1947

CARNIVAL COME AND Carnival gone and calypsonian broken again. Some a we take the boat, as regular, gone up the islands to catch them small island Carnival and to make a few bob in them tourist nightclub in Curacao or St Croix. This trip it was Kitchener, Melody, Beginner and me, the Lord Jooking Board. We on this boat call the *Northern Eclipse*. Bobby Khan organise. Curacao and Aruba have hotel, they have nightclub, they have casino for people to sing in, they have tourist coming there from America and Holland, so it have money to make. You sing your lil' 'Mary Ann' or a nice 'Rum and Coca Cola' and you could make ten dollars a night easy, plus tips.

And is not just tourists; the locals want to prance, plus, it have Trinidadians living in these islands too; men who come to work on the oil refineries. These fellas away from home, so when they hear a Lord Jooking Board coming from Trinidad or a Lord Beginner, or a Melody, they ready to jump up — bring rum come out - they want you sing whole damn night. My song for '47 did call 'Fishing Pole':

*Well the girls in town want to know
how Jooks catching big fish so
River cold or river deep
a catchin' from grouper to carite
and when I hook them they bound to roll
when they see the length a my fishing pole*

You hear kaiso? That is kaiso. That tune cause plenty ruction in town, Sa Gomes wanted wax it, but they rob me in the calypso competition. They put me 7th, behind Lord Woodslave. Is alright though, it have next year. But you ask me about Kitchener. Well, Kitchener never really go out of Trinidad to sing, properly I mean, as a bonafide calypsonian, before the trip he make with we. I hear he went Grenada once with Galba, Pretender and Small Island Pride but that was banana boat thing; where they sing? This time we going quite Curacao and Aruba, so is a big boy engagement Kitch find himself in, and he whistling like a picoplat when you see him on the boat.

Now Kitch was good, but I did find he too hurry. He wanted do everything one time. He hear the big timers going America to perform so he want to go. He

see Lion in the Wang in a polywool suit and he jealous; he must get one too. He see Invader driving Austin Cambridge, he eye get long, he want vehicle too. Melody pick up a white woman; he want one too. The boy was ambitious. But calypso is big man thing; you can't rush it. They tell me good, I tell them 'Wait, let we see how he peruse, when it come to proper composition. He still can't beat Attila or Invader when it come to lyrical proficiency, and in picong duel, I don't think he able, not for instance, with a man like me.'

So krik krak, the story go: we on the boat and I smoking my Chesterfield cool there on the deck. We now pass Bonaire Island and we heading to Curacao. The ship engine humming and the night blowing a lil' cold on my skin, so I fold up in my jacket. Mr Kitchener come up from below deck, he wearing check triple pleat pants with suspenders, white shirt, the trilby, he like a star boy in a Western - he eh dress for boat, he dress for dancehall.

He come and lean with his back on the deck rail, 'Ai Jooks,' he say, like if me and he is friend from long time. 'You ever went Curacao before?' I watch him, but he don't look like he even expect a answer. He looking out to sea — star boy pose - one foot up on the rail and the other one bend like a cutlass.

I say, 'Yes man, I was there last year with Galba and Lord Brett. It don't have many a these islands I aint sing in yet.'

He want to know everything bout Curacao. 'What the people look like, if the woman nice? What music they does have there? They have Jazz there? They like calypso? The food nice?'

Now, I did like the fella eh, I had nothing against the boy, but eventually I had to ask him, 'Look man, what do you at all? You's a police? Why you have so much question? When we reach Curacao you will see everything for yourself.' I flick my cigarette in the sea and I suck my teeth. But Kitch in my tail. He want to know about making record now. He know I make a record in Barbados, so he asking me,

'The studio big? What it have in the recording room? The machine have plenty button? How much button? What kinda microphone? How much they paying?' And the poor boy stuttering like his engine spoil, spitting in my face.

Soon as we reach Curacao that night; I mean the men now tie the anchor, he want to go nightclub. We passing through Willemstad and he eye get big-big when he see how pretty the little city was. They have nightlife, they have

restaurant, bright light, glass front bar, and them brown-skin, thick bottom woman. Yes, Curacao nice. He want to roam. Beginner say he tired, Melody drunk but Kitchener want to spread joy. I don't want him to get in trouble; he don't know the place and since my head was a lil' tipsy from the two white rum I had on the boat, I say a night breeze go straighten my head, so I say, 'Leh we go.'

In Willemstad it have a bar they call The Bira Ront and a local calypso band does play there some nights to entertain the tourists. When we reach there it pack with people and a quintet playing on a lil'stage: guitar, wood bass, trap set, clarinet and piano. The piano man was Boyie, a big belly Indian I know from St James who living Curacao for years. They playing their rumba while white people eating lobster and flying fish. The tables they eating on have candle vase and flowers on the tables; it have real palm tree in every corner. The roof is wood slats like a shed, thatch on that, chandelier in the centre. In there all you smelling is tobacco smoke and rum. The waitresses dress in tight skirt and yellow blouse, with a red neck tie to the side, yellow Allamanda flower in their hair and they twisting through the crowd with trays of rum punch, cheese and pineapple sticks. It noisy. Is a good place. The people really not listening to the band, the band just there for background and vibrancy. The locals sit down by the bar at the back, watching the show and drinking their hard liquor, the men there seeing who eye they could catch. Me and Kitch go and lean up by the bar, we order a couple stout.

The lil' band playing sweet. They play 'Mary Ann', they play 'Linstead Market', they play 'Shame and Scandal' and then they call intermission. Boyie come straight to where Kitch and I lean up. He hear about Kitchener. 'So you is the Green Fig man?' He say, 'Sing something with we nah? And Jooks you too boy, both a you have to sing, we can't have two great calypsonian in the Bira and eh taste your hand.'

Kitch jump up, 'Why not? Well, yes, that is no problem at all at all at all.' I say to meh self, 'Lord, this country bookie go embarrass me here tonight. We not getting pay to sing here, we have we engagements, plus, you don't come in people place and just get up and sing so. This ain't no Swizzle Club. It not professional. But Boyie want we up there, so he go and he buy two shot a rum, cigars, cutters. I say, 'OK, alright, we go try a lil' something.' Because in truth, one set a white woman in the place drinking white rum and lime, and I have my eye open, it have hotel upstairs, I not stupid.

A-a! Bram. Music start again, Boyie introduce Kitch and Kitch stand up on the people stage. He call for 'me minor' and start to sing some song he calling 'Jump in the line'. The audience applaud him decent. Is a good song, yes, it nice. Boyie introduce me, 'The great Lord Jooking Board from Trinidad' and I start to leggo kaiso in they tail! I give them a piece a 'Fishing Pole', they bawl like ten Tarzan, I give them 'The Donkey can't bray' and they laugh they belly full. But as I ready to come off, Boyie come and pull down my shoulder and say, 'Gi'we a lil picong duel nah? You and Kitch, a lil' extempore?' I laugh, 'cause I don't really want that. I tell the Indian, 'Boyie boy, people have to prepare, the band have to know how to play it, men have to be sharp. And you can't put a veteran calypsonian like me against a youngster; picong duel is a serious thing, I don't want to embarrass Kitchener in front all these white people; it wouldn't look good.'

Kitchener come, 'Who say picong? I hear picong? Me and Jooks could do something. Why not?'

Music leggo — bram! It not the real extempore music they does play in Trinidad, but the boys trying their best. I turn to Kitchener, 'Listen boy, let we just give them a couple verse eh? Light thing, slight. You take front.' But I could see he eager to go up. He start his verse,

*Many nights I been wondering,
who teach Jooking Board to sing
Yes, many nights I been wondering
who teach Jooking Board to sing
He face hard like rock stone
he so ugly no woman don't want him
he better go back Grenada
and leave calypso to Lord Kitchener*

I say 'Wait, what jail is this? Like Kitchener really feel he could tumble with an experienced test like me.' The people clap him hard, and they watching me.

Things get hot. The band start the melody again and I step forward:

*Ladies and gentlemen
thank you for your hospitality.
Now watch this young man carefully,
I'm going to send him to casualty.
I know him since he was a little boy
Yes, since he was small...
And if I tell you a next thing...a next thing I say*

If I tell you...

And I don't know what happen, but I bust. I bust right there. I couldn't bring nothing else. You could believe that? Right there in front the whole damn Bira Ront, the Lord Jooking Board bust. But is ok. I did never want to embarrass the boy, and I really wasn't ready for picong duel any how, my mind wasn't on that. And the stiff rum I drink on the boat must've tamper with my head, because I never bust before. He catch me weak. But he good, I go give him that.

So after the Bira, when we walking back to the hotel, the big street empty, it late. Is only a few drunk fellas outside, and them Curacao police in shorts pants and sandals. Juts so Kitchener ask, 'Jooks, you vex with me?'

I watch him and laugh, 'Me? Nah man, vex for what?'

'The lil picong I give you, I notice after that you turn a lil' funny with me.'

I ask him, 'Who teach you to extempore so? Executioner?'

'Is Pre-Pretender teach me, and Tiger show me a lil' thing too,' he say, but he watching me to see if I vex. Few day later we gone Jamaica to play, and when time to go back Trinidad, he get a work in a club and decide to stay there.

THE DANCERS USED to come on first, they used to open the show, and they dance the juba and the limbo in their 3/4 pants, and the women in raffia skirts and the flower bra, they will dance under fire in that limbo there. Elena, then Litico and Sandra. Then Madame Jeffrey the acrobat would contort, spin plate on her head and crab back. We had a comedian; a Black Chinese fellow from Trelawny name Long Ting. Some nights we get Dora Misingham, she was a classical singer, and she would play piano and sing before the intermission. And then the master of ceremonies would introduce Lord Kitchener, and he would come out with his top hat and tuxedo, sit on the stool there and oh he would sing lovely things, with the Sugar Hill Band behind him. I remember him doing 'Beyond the Sea', and people used to love that. Then I would come out, Bill Buckle, I uses to croon.

Saturday night the Sugar Hill Club was the place to go. It was in St Andrew, Red Gal Ring. Is all dark wood in there. It have plants and palms and the bartender pouring good rum an' lime, tonic and Scotch, liquor galore. The bar maids used to make plenty tips. English people, French people, Canadian, all of them sit down there to eat their pepper shrimp and rice while they watch the show. Sometimes men like Lord Fly and King Cinch, even Lord Creator, would come backstage and beg Kitch teach them a few calypso.

We did a show once, just me and Kitch, was a Monday night in a little place called the Big Penny Club in May Pen and something happen with the promoter and he never get people in there, it was embarrassing; about 12 or 15 people in the club, lord. So before the show, me and Kitchener go see the big man in his office behind the club. I remember him well; was a half white man call Mr. Carmichael. I say, 'Mr Carmichael, bare 15 people here, what to do? Sing? Or we cancel? Either way you have to pay we you know.'

He say, 'Yes man, no man, sing, you must sing, people will come, it early.' So we sing. Kitch do his thing, I do mine, hi de ho, they call me Bill Buckle, I uses to croon. The room catch about 20 people, and 'bout ten a them was waiter and barman and chef. When we go in the office, Mr Carmichael crying, 'Oh, lord fellas, so much money I lose, ease me up man, pressure. Let me give you some now and the rest next week.'

I get vex. 'But Mr Carmichael? A so you a go on? You must pay we.'

But Carmichael in a daze. Debt sharpening he big toe. Band to pay, bar man, bar maid, rent to pay. Kitchener start to swell up, 'I for one need *all* my money tonight - I going England in a few days, I can't wait for you. Monday night never good for these things, but I is not the promoter. I come to sing and I sing, so I wants my-my-my money, tonight, tonight, tonight.' And his hand trembling.

Mr Carmichael stay giving prayers, how we should see the situation and have a heart, how he don't have the money there. I watching Carmichael because I hear he carries gun, but I size him up, an' he don't look like no gunman to me. He pat Kitchener on his arm, 'Take the half and share it, come back next week for the rest, Bill, you will get your money, a beg you, believe me.' But like something fly up in Kitchener head and he pull for a drape and he rip that down, he lick off a glass from the desk, he kick open a cupboard, then he collar Carmichael and Carmichael cry out: 'Lawd! Have mercy, no bother beat me, no beat me, look, look, take this.' Y'know that scamp had the qualie roll up inside his jacket all that time?

The next I hear about Kitchener is that gone England. A ship did pass through Kingston harbour charging £28 pound a head to England. Kitchener gamble to hop 'pon that and gone; he take a chance, but he spend his money wise.

Part Two: Lord Kitchener

Build me a road let me walk on the sea,
to see the mother country
— The Mighty Viking

ALLYUH SEE HIM THERE? The one they calling Lord Kitchener? See how he sit down there on that bench facing the sea? He singing his calypso, humble and sweet, he not troubling nobody. You see how the boys gather round to hear him sing? Is because he does remind them of who they is, he does sing them full of hope, sing them out from fear. Because I will tell you something; even the most cantankerous man on this ship does frighten when night come and all you seeing is bare black ocean, and the big ship start to rock up on the waters of babylon. And you in the middle of nowhere and nowhere. You in between your own self.

Fellas does feel sweet when Kitchener open he throat to sing. Long as he singing they feel safe; they eh go dead. You leave maybe your mother, your wife or your children behind in the islands; what you will do in England? Eh cowboy? Where you go sleep? What food you go eat? Who go give you a overcoat if it snowing? Coverlet if it cold? Where your clothes washing in the white man country? What work you could get? You ever hear about cooking rice under your bed?

As I stand up here and the boat rolling, I could look around and tell you all who never travel before, all who know sea and all who never even put one foot on boat. I know from how they walking, from how they fix themselves in relation to the ocean. Some sit down quiet-quiet inside their cabin, but they watching how the sea line rise and breathing because it have no branch in the sea.

Some does want to play card till 3 in the morning, 'cause they can't sleep. Some get sea sick and hide to vomit like when woman making baby. Well, yes. Some does cry, oh! How they want to go back home, oh! How they make mistake, oh! How England don't want we. Is 'fraid they kiss-me-arse 'fraid, they 'fraid they make mistake, 'fraid the uncertainty. All some of them know about England is what they get teach; about the King in Buckingham Palace, how London Bridge falling down, and 'the sweet green fields of England with the sunshine overhead.' But those like me who been before, who serve in the war for his majesty, anyone of us can tell you: England is dread, dread place, it prim on top but sour at the bottom, is nothing there, really, for we. England like a big hole we does fall in. Is

true, I know they don't want we there, but we coming anyway. Is them have to be accountable for all that happening. But let me refrain.

Sometimes Kitch and Lord Beginner would go down in the galley and they used to play music down there; Jazz and what not. A young boy, Dizzy, had a trumpet and he could blow good. Another test from Dominica had a mouth organ, one had a tambourine, one man make a pair a shac-shac from two bean tin. Kitchener, well he could play guitar, and then somebody make a box bass with a crate, and Kitch used to play that like a bitch. I used to go down there some nights and gamble and the cook would fry up some liver and onions for the boys. Who have grog bring it out, who have weed, smoking. Was all these things make the crossing quick till we land at Tilbury.

I know Kitchener from Arima. But he won't remember me. His father, deceased Pamp used to shoe my Uncle Ben mule. And many time I go by Pamp with Uncle on the mule cart, I would see Kitchener as a little boy, running about the yard in he tear up pants. 'Bean' they used to call him. But I sure he forget me. I hear him tell people he going to sing in nightclub, record he want to make. They telling him sing, and he singing, and he could make up on the spot. But England have a way, it does do for you. Back home you could see straight inside your neighbour house, you know what he doing, you know what he eating, how much money he making. But in England everybody does think you doing well, because you can keep your business private. You might be smiling, yes, but deep down, is suffer you suffering.

London is the place for me

FOREDAY DAWN, THE SKY is ashen grey. The sea washes from the waters and the river begins to lash at the ship's bow. Estuary. The water here is dank and slow and dour, like shreds of bachelor galvanise, moss smell and fresh with the scent of snakes in damp country bush. Along the Tilbury coast line there are dark and sleeping hills, a few factory chimneys that pout fog, lights blink. Saplings and crab apple trees. Marshland and the fisheries, port side warehouses and shippers offices. The morning opening sickly, diseased and dull, slowly, like a narcotic prayer. Silt. The white foam forms a trail, the engines churn, through sediment of oil and blackness.

Sea ride oblivious to cold Atlantic splash.

Dark figures crowd the prow of the ship: black faces peering from the top deck. Some have footholds in the riggings, others hold their hats and jackets shut against the wind. Silhouettes of their dark mass, and then the buzzing hum of their voices, travelling across the water. The ship begins to turn, slowly into dock, it asserts its draughts and trim, it rests on its keel, and then the engines die with a voluptuous groan. Those on the shore cannot fathom the depth of field, likewise as islands are often underestimated on maps by cartographers, so too the ship's true scope overwhelms the eye, the breath, not yet.

The men on the boat can see the crowd gathered on the docks to meet them, and they wave. They put fingers beneath their tongues and whistle. They have seen shipyards and ships arriving before. They know what to do. Their faces are taut and starched by six week sea blast, and when they come down the gangways with their sea grips and baggage, their shoes are the only things shining in the dull light.

A young man steps onto land, he feels the air with his face, tastes it, the sea smell, the moisture on the tongue. One suitcase or box case or bundle tie up with twine, the soft suit, the pastel coloured, seersucker shirt, the trilby, the burnished brogues from kneeling between the varnished pews on some evangelical Sunday, mourning in the tropics, with the breadfruit branch knocking on the roof of the sermon. But he stands there, on the wooden jetty, upright in England, the land he had imagined for so long. A photographer fixes his image, flash bites his eye.

All experience is in this moment, there can be no past, no muscle of longing, as light divides the tide, takes black from night, light from day, as the sky parts and expands to shudder a gauze of sunlight, like a great breath: scent of jetty fish, the harbour, algae and moss stink up with engine oil and paraffin, spreading rainbows on the black water. The sea is thick here, deeper than memory.

A reporter in a black wool coat, black hat, his red face round and smiling, Pathé mic in hand. He pulls his bulk up the gangplank to the deck. There are a group of men there, leaning starboard on the top deck, smoking slow cigarettes, waiting for the jetty to clear so they can come down to England in style. He who sings is the centre of their circle, and the reporter wants to see who stands in the gayelle with the song. The calypsonian emerges, to face the mic and camera eye. He wears a wide brimmed trilby, fawn brown, pinched at the crown. A polywool suit in indigo blue with wide lapels and padded shoulders. Black tie, criss cross patterned with white near the knot. The trousers hold two inch folds with a high waist. They fit loose in the thigh so the sea breeze flaps the pleats.

The camera operator sets his tripod on the roof of a car on the jetty below, and zooms the image of the calypsonian down to earth from the deck. What appears to be close in his lens is equally distant and this is why the film stock cannot capture the fine details of the calypsonian's face; the rigid bone, the cat eye blink. Instead, the recess image is dark and simple.

'Now, may I ask you your name?'

'Lord Kitchener.'

'Lord Kitchener. Now I'm told that you are really the king of calypso singers, is that right?'

'Yes that's true.'

'Well, now you sing for us.'

'Right now?'

'Yes.'

London is the place for me

(mimics the upright, wood bass)

London this lovely city

(the right shoulder rises, the beat runs down)

You can go to France or America

India Asia or Australia

but you must come back to London city

(wood bass in the throat, the rolling, country Baptist diction)

Well believe me I am speaking broadmindedly

I am glad to know my mother country

I've been travelling the countries years ago

but this the place I wanted to know, darling

(tap-tap of the beat against the railings, and his shoulders
ducking and clenching, releasing the rhythm, the lavway, the drum)

London, this the place for me

(he can hardly contain the motion of his body)

(mimics the wood bass the rattle of the corn bird's throat)

Two verses is all he sings.

Wind on the river blowing up ghosts behind these men, look cold how it
tighten their smiles, and the dim dawn somber. After, when the calypsonian climbs
down the gangway, he carries his suitcase: beige canvas with brown leatherette
edging, cool wind shaking. He looks to the sky, always the sky, but cannot find the
sun.

More smoke. Smoke upon smoke.

Cold in the Winter

KITCHENER, KITCHENER! Yes boy, come, don't stand there, move, yes, you're in the way man, and these people don't care, they knock you. How was your journey, it's long hey? I did it in '44. Terrible seas, cold. I was sick, night an day for the first three weeks. You were sick? Lord boy, when you catch that sea sickness you feel as if your whole belly rolling. Here, give me the grip, it heavy boy, what you bring? You bring a sack of coconut? Ha Ha, you bring a bag of yam in England boy? I hope you bring a heavy coat, that saga boy jacket you have there won't help you; this country cold boy. Nobody ain't tell you England cold? You feel it cold now? Wait, you wait till December or January, and you will see how quick you find a winter coat. See all those chaps? They been here before, might be soldiers, see how they have their duffle coat hang on their arms? I tell you. Come. Eh heh, we will catch the trolley bus. Pearl and I live in Bayswater, not too far from here. In fact, you're lucky I'm even here, we're getting married on Saturday, of course, you have to be their man, I might even make you sing a song or two. But of course. Look, there's our bus, let's cross. Mind the road. How things back home? Heh? I hear those Americans still in town, they feel Port of Spain is theirs now. I know the Governor, Shaw, I know he don't like them there, but England only manage to come through the war because of the Yanks. You know Bain? You know Fisheye? Jumbie from Belmont? How those fellas? How those boys from Woodbrook with the steelband? Sweetest iron band in the land come from there. How you mean? La Cour Harpe? Nah, La Cour Harpe don't have sweet pan like Woodbrook. Joke I making man, take it easy. Well, give me the new calypsos nah? The bards singing good? Atilla still singing that same song? He's good of course, but no variation in melody. Ah, and what about Tiger? Red Soil? Well, I know Lion's doing well. What about that short fellow, from the country, panyol, ah, yes, Lord Pretender? But we have time to talk, I want to know what all those boys are doing. Not much calypso here my boy. Not really. English people very set in their ways; music hall, vaudeville, Jazz, classical. I miss Trinidad bad boy, bad. Especially the food. Oh boy. Can't get wild meat and bush rum here — don't mind him, he doesn't want to sit next to a darkie, let him be, that's how these people are. You will learn how to deal with them. I don't mean you will learn to accept it,

no, because you shouldn't accept it, but this England is a curious place. Imagine you're on the bus, on the street, minding your own business and a child will rub your skin, an old woman will touch your hair to see if it real. Once, I was in a pub in Birmingham and a man was talking to me good-good, a white man, pleasant chap. All of a sudden the man bite me on my hand like he want to eat me. I get so confused, I couldn't move. You laugh? The chap bite me I telling you. I had to run from that place. I was vex till I frighten. They will make you feel uncomfortable, but most of them they hardly say anything, they just watch you cut-eye. Or they smile that snide smile they have. And then of course there are some hooligans who like nothing more than to interfere with you. They like to stab the boys. I mean, they would be stupid to tackle a fella your size, but you have to be aware, you have to keep alert because they may come from behind. Simple fact is English people don't want us here; they don't like us eating out the same plate. That's how it is, and..and...alright, this is our stop, hand me the grip, careful how you step down. Come. Mind the road, wait — this not Trinidad pardner; they will bounce you down.

My Landlady

KITCHENER TURNS in a cool cotton sheet on a narrow bed in the guest room of a high ceiled apartment, his ankles are tangled in water, reaching for a vine above a green river with mango branches overhanging and the ripple of swift fishes escaping to the mossy gutters of the river. River dove and iguana. The stunning buzz of cicadas. Down in the valley in the shack wood smithy, his father knocks a horseshoe into shape and dips it in the cooling pan, and even from the riverbank, as he aims a slingshot into the tall bamboo, he is sure to hear the hiss.

He wakes to the sound of Miss Pearl moving outside in the hall, fussing over her hair, scraping gum from the bottom of her shoe, filling a kettle and cussing, and then singing folk songs in the same high breath:

Do you know Mr John Boulay - tim-bam
That man from Charlotteville? - tim-bam
he owe me one dollar bill - tim-bam
He owe me for something - tim bam

He rises. Still, the subtle motion of water rolling under his feet, a week after he stepped off the *Windrush*. The room feels dry, the air, artificially hot and brittle. Dust in his throat. But he waits. He is reluctant to step outside while Miss Pearl is getting dressed for work, for to appear in the hall or the kitchen this early in the morning would be to remind her, he fears, of his imposition on her and Edric, for his temporary room and board. So when eventually he steps into the small hallway that runs between the rooms and sees Miss Connor fixing her hair in the drawing room mirror, he speaks delicately, with prison politeness. 'M-m-morning Miss Pearl, morning. Like you going out early today?

'Yes, I have a meeting at the British Council. I just made some coffee, go on, it's on the stove.' And she rushes past him into the bathroom to brush her teeth and gargle. She is a tall woman, broad shouldered, with wind-ball calves in heels, fair brown and Creole with oval eyes and a broad European nose. Kitchener waits until he hears her gargle and spit, and then the faucet closing.

'London busy eh? Everybody have somewhere they rushing to go.' He says.

Pearl answers from the bedroom, 'Of course, there're no hammocks here. This is not Arima where you could ride donkey cart and suck orange all day, people have things to do.' She rushes, pulling a breeze into the kitchen to drink the last cool dregs of her coffee. 'Was it Brixton you went last night? How was the Tropico? You sang?'

He grimaces with a response but it will not sound, he folds his eyes to suppress the glitch of his tongue, and then at the sharp top of the breath the stutter releases, 'Yes, I sing. I went to sing. Plenty people there. I even see a few fellas who stowaway on the boat; if you see them, like them is more English than the Englishman.'

Pearl moves to her bedroom again. She sprays Ben Hur perfume on her neck, her wrists. In the kitchen Kitchener turns the third spoon of sugar into his coffee. 'Edric say he know a man who want to record calypso, a West Indian fella. A Mr Simmons, you heard of him?'

'No, I have not but Edric knows a lot of people. You really think you could make a living from singing calypso though? Maybe you should think of another job of some sort. Something to fall back on.'

Kitch folds his arms. 'Well, yes, but if a man don't dedicate he life to what he love I feel he wasting he time. I want to make some records, play a few shows, then we will see. I come here for that, a man have to try.'

Miss Pearl stands in the doorway fiddling with an earring and an ear, her head leans at 45°. 'Edric tells me you left school at twelve or something. I don't know, but me, I couldn't just turn up in England with nothing. I would be so afraid. You're not worried?'

Kitch laughs, 'But what it have to 'fraid? If I bust I go back to Trinidad and plant peas. The only thing I know is calypso, so I have to get through, I bound to.'

He listens to the door's creak and close, her footsteps down the stairs, the front door opening, closing. He looks out the kitchen window and sees her walk, then run between traffic across Bayswater Road, disappearing into the light, a bright gauze falling over the street as the sun begins its arc.

A man have to try.

Kitch in the Jungle

FOR THE first two weeks after the *Windrush* docked, the arrivant men would walk from the deep shelter at Clapham South to the New Pacific Bar in Brixton. The men dressed high and broke dick slick, with the island heat still in their bones, and their brown skins still dark and shining, not dulled by the cold, to drink and to see which spare craft they could pick for prick. And it was here, within this early time, that Lord Kitchener decide to get up and sing with the house band. Not on a Sunday night when Cyril Blake or Rupert Nurse was on the stand, and the place was jam, but one dry Tuesday night when Malcolm Tito and the house band was in session.

Kitchener recognises several men from the *Windrush*; men who were dry and dour on the crossing, who had only simple sentences for each other, shivering in the sea breeze, maintaining, till they saw the white cliffs of Dover. Now these same men were posing in their high waist trousers, leaning on the bar, drinking gin and warming women's ears with sweet talk.

The house band have no collective name besides, and are setting up to play on the narrow stage, against the wall, right where people passing for the toilet. In fact, sometimes, in lulls between songs you could hear men pissing in the urinal behind. The stage is garlanded with green, white and orange bunting; old and curling, left over from St Patrick's Day, and there is a long bar at stage right, where drinkers and talkers are leaning.

Brady, leaning there too. The old Irish cuss Brady, who wears a stiff and rancid grey tweed suit. His scalp holds a thinning tonsure of silver hair and his eyes are glazed with Scotch. His back is noticeably arched so he appears pious and considered with his drink in his hand. Malcolm Tito is still feeling round the keys for a tune when Brady catch a vaps and skitter across to the stage.

'What band is this? What you play, Jazz?'

Malcolm raises his weary head from the piano. In his eyes there is the slack gaze of a too-queried man, 'Yes, a little Jazz, but we more play Calypso music.'

'Calypso? What's that? Come now lad, I hope y'don't mean that jungle music. That's not what we want 'ere.'

Malcolm coughs a laugh to appease and diffuse the old man, make him go sit in a corner and beh-beh on himself. The crowd comes nearer to the stage and then the band begins to play, straight away with pepper and step; 'Stone cold dead in the market', 'Mary Ann', 'Jourvert Barrio'. Three songs deep and Malcom Tito rises from his piano stool and speaks into a microphone. 'Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome now the man, he just come from Trinidad, Lord Kitchener. Give him a big welcome, he now reach in England, Kitchener.' And Kitchener, who had been pacing a dim spot at the side, enters centre stage. The quartet play a legato, minors in the chords, swinging thirds, 2/2 in the beat. Kitchener begins:

Imelda bawl 'Murder' when Kitchener was leaving Demerara
Imelda bawl, when Kitchener leaving Demerara
I jump on the stage with pretty Preddie
Imagine how I sing with Tie-Tongue Mopsy
Imelda say –

A hand reaches up into the song, to pull the microphone from the singer. Brady. He holds the chrome stand at an angle, like a neck bent in supplication and it squeals with feedback. Brady stands there for a long second, with his scowl and his stagger, as if he is waiting for the band, the singer, anybody to say something, to explain, to save themselves. But the tune is broken, the wood bass gone fickle, the drummer hand stick, the piano weeping in a ditch of knives and Kitchener is mute.

The audience start to rumble and guff but no one make step to Brady yet in that gap in time. 'You call this music?' Brady asks, in seriousness. 'I've not understood a single thing, not a single word. It's nonsense man, what you're singing there. What is it? It's a complete nonsense man.'

Kitchener, on that stage there in the glare, his mouth opens but makes no sound. His eyes bulge and stare coldly. One bead of sweat rolls down the side of his face, with his arms slung down. *Act or be impacted upon. Do or be done to. Take front before front take you.*

Malcolm Tito stands beside Kitchener at the front of the stage. 'Come on man, give him back the microphone, no one trouble you.' But his pleading eyes do not assuage Brady.

'I said play the Jazz lad, that's what you boys should play. And you mate, you can't sing. Get yourself off. Off!'

A string of bunting tangles to Kitchener's shoe as he jumps down from the stage, it rips, pulling a string of Irish flags, pinched from their thumb tacks. A heat begins to build in him, a rage so nervous and hesitant, vexation collapsing upon itself. He pulls at the microphone stand, still gripped in Brady's hand. His voice is awkward and tremulous, pushing against the plot. 'G-Give it, give me that man! You mad or what? Give me the damn thing!' Brady's grip is feeble, the pull knocks him to stagger. He bucks back and raises his hands, palms up, as if in a question. There is a pained grin in the corner of his mouth, but his moment is past. He drifts to the far end of the bar, knocks into a bar stool, calls for double Scotch and fades, to slack.

The band kick back. Plot is how you tell it. The trumpeter pierces the air with the cry of his horn, the rhythm jumps, and Kitchener sings. Simply sing it now, sing it away like everything else. Let it go. Humble down in the song.

Throw.

Oh lord, Kitchener I want to go

let me go, take me to Trinidad

WHAT HE WANTED MOST was to hear his voice on the shellac, to see the stylus wind across the wax. So when he record one take he would beg Mr Jones, the engineer, to play it straight away because he want to hear how it sound. And he would stay smiling there, in front the machine, with his hands behind his back, bending forward with his ear press to the speaker. 'Play it, play it again gimme, lemme hear.'

They call the place The Manor, was in Morden, Renico Simmons put up the session, Hummingbird Records. Was the first time Kitchener get record, properly, and we there behind him in the band, playing music like beast. Rupert Nurse there, Fitzroy Coleman. Lord, we shaking up like jumbie in that basement. And I look up through the one window it have in there and see the leaves leaving the big Crab Apple tree, outside in the Manor grounds; it was autumn. I hearing motor car passing in the distance, train, people going about their business, and I say to myself 'but wait, like England don't know we here at all.'

Look how I beating them bongo drum till I coughing up blood. We put all we spirit in that music. Is eight song we record that day. Eight. Straight. Kitch call for 'Chinese Memorial', run the tape, we run that down. 'Steel Band', 'Jump in the line' and 'Chinese Memorial', all get wax in one take. And no matter how Mr Jones tell Kitchener that is best to record everything first, and then to listen, Kitchener have no patience, he want to hear every note, he want to hear every words, as it going down in history.

Calypso Clambake

An unusual commotion was caused in Parlophone's Abbey Road Studios last Monday afternoon (30th). The occasion was the first recording session in this country of genuine Calypso music played and sung by Trinidadians. And to mark the date, Parlophone threw a cocktail party and arranged for the press and Calypso lovers to witness the recording.

An interesting point about Calypsos (which were described in these columns last week) is that they are always sung by men. There are no women Calypsonians. On this date were two well known singers, Lords Kitchener and Beginner, accompanied by Cyril Blake's Calypso Serenaders. They each sang two of their own songs: 'Underground Train' 'Nora' (Kitchener) and 'Dollar And Pound' 'Matrimony' (Beginner) Among the audience were chanteuse Mona Baptise, Mrs Rex Harris, Mrs. Steve Race, Lord and Lady Donnegall, Iain Lang, Humphrey Lyttleton, 'Frisco' Robin Scutt, Edgar Jackson, Max Jones, Sinclair Tralli, Bert Wilcox and Tom Cundall.

The band comprised Freddy Grant (clt); Cyril Blake (gtr); Fitzroy Coleman (gtr); Brylo Ford (quatro); Neville Boucarut (bass); and 'Dreamer' (conga drum)

This session was the brainchild of St. Denis Preston, who organised the group and supervised the recording.

— *The Melody Maker*, February 4 1950

Cricket Champions

Llewelyn Barrow interviewed in Harlesden, London

by Michael Myatt

Michael Myatt: Were you living in London at the time of the 1950 Cricket tests?

Llewelyn Barrow: Yes, I was living in Kilburn. Dyne Road, Kilburn, near the railway, in a one room there, in a house with some Irish people. I was working in a biscuit factory in Harlesden at the time.

Myatt: What made you leave Trinidad in 1949?

Barrow: Well I was only 24. So you have to remember that we was young men, and as young men we want adventure, we want action, we want to see England, see what it like, see the sights; we want to see the mother-country. Now, don't think we had no understanding of the thing. We know England not easy, we know they don't really want us here. But we coming, as man, we name 'West Indian', and England is the mother country. Don't let people tell you West Indian was stupid, that we come England cap in hand, expecting the King to meet we off the boat, singing how 'London is the place' and all them arse when white people spitting on we in the streets.

Myatt: But tell me about the cricket - West Indies versus England at Lord's in 1950, the second test. How significant was that match for West Indians in England at the time?

Barrow: Well boy, that day, I think since I leave Trinidad, that day in Lord's, when the West Indies win that cricket match, was the best I ever feel, up to that time, as a West Indian in England. West Indies beating England at Lord's? When we lose the first test, everybody head bow. The boys didn't play well, the wicket didn't favor we. They beat by 202 runs. But then at Lord's, at Lord's we start to throw fire on them. We beat them bad-bad, at the cradle of cricket.

Myatt: Did you feel proud?

Barrow: It was more than proud yes, we was proud of the cricket team, of course, but we was proud of we self too. West Indies team did represent we, and we was fighting up like man in the empire to show England that we could stand equal, that we beat them. Because if you really want to know, those days we talking about, lord, a man couldn't get a room. Chinee man can get a room, Jew man can get

room, even the coolie man getting - if they have money, but nigger man walking 'round all day and door slamming in he face. It was hard. Room you get dilapidated and smelling of cat piss. Shoe have hole and you looking for work. It take me three months before I get my lil' work at McVities, and when I get that I hold on, I hold on.

Myatt: So did you suffer any direct hostility?

Barrow: Direct? Listen. I used to try always dress smart, y'know, you never see me without jacket and good pants, shoes polish. I used to think if I look sharp the English people would see me as a respectable chap, but that didn't work. I remember coming home from work one night and I buck up on some Teddy Boy. I walking, whistling my lil'tune, and I hear, 'Oi! Sambo, go back to the jungle!' It was four of them, walking behind me. Well, I carry on. But one come and spit on my jacket an' blood rush in my head one time. I turn and hold the first one I ketch and I bring out me ratchet blade on him. I did fed up, I did want to kill 'im, to chook him, but something tell me, *No Llewlyn, let him go, leave him*. And I let him go, and the whole a them run.

Myatt: So, going back to that day at Lord's, in a way you felt, it seems, like West Indians were settling scores. Would that be fair to say?

Barrow: Well yes, but you know, even with all the pressure England put in we backside when we come here, how they treat we like animal, we did still love England.

Myatt: Can you tell me about the game itself, the last day of the second test?

Barrow: I was with the fellas in the G stand, right there on the ground, right behind the boundary line, and from early, we could see England was in trouble. They was chasing runs everybody know they couldn't make. When Ramadhin clean bowl Washbrook for 114, and then Yardley, Evans and Jenkins fall quick-quick, the West Indians that was there - and we couldn't have been more than 150 or 200 strong - we start to make one set a'noise. Man beating iron, man being bottle, one man had a bugle, and every time he blow we bawl.

All now the English people face red. They know a sweet cut-arse book for them. Johnny Wardle come, he make 21 and get out lbw stupid-stupid, and then Alec Bedser, but Bedser was a imps, he couldn't bat, Ramadhin bowl him for a duck, and that was that; the Indies win by 326. The umpire just grab up the stumps

and run. West Indians invade the grounds. Plenty confusion boy. We even try to go in the Pavilion, but police stop we. If you see bacchanal.

Lord Kitchener there with his guitar singing and prancing all round the wicket, an' we following him, a fus he singing sweet. Rum come out, the bugle blow, who have shac-shac shaking, whistle, you blowing. Them days we never had flag to wave.

Myatt: So Lord Kitchener, he was leading the crowd?

Barrow: Well yes, he was popular. I see a officer, imagine this: a police hold Kitchener by he arm, hold him to arrest, say, 'Young man you can't do this here, this is Lord's.' And a white man tell the officer, 'Let him go man, you can't see is happy the people happy?' And the constable let go.

Eventually we leave the grounds and we go down Park Street singing and beating anything we could find, dustbin, old wood, anything. I even see a couple man with Congo drum, I don't know where them come from, might've been Africans; some of them love their cricket y'know. People come out their house, looking out their window to see us pass.

By that time my head bad with red rum and stout, I eh know my arse from my uncle, I following. We move down Baker Street and then we cut down Oxford, Regent. I hear people say we going Piccadilly, we going in the heart a town. Kitchener was in front with the guitar still, and he singing all the way (sings):
Those little pals of mine, Ramadhin and Valentine.

We dance round Eros twice like cannibal, singing that. Police shaking they head, but they not bothering with we. We not hurting nobody. Then we cut up by Glass House Street and we hit Soho, and the group start to scatter out.

Myatt: And what was there in Soho? A club?

Barrow: There was a club there, yes, the Paramount, a West Indian club. We get there now and start to drink, we drink till we weak. If you see people. All kind a people was there, not only West Indian, English people, Indian, African. Music playing and people celebrating. It was wonderful man, wonderful. I hear Kitchener and Beginner and a couple other calypsonians was going to come back and sing there later that night, I wanted to stay in town, but I was drunk bad, boy, I don't even know how I reach home, I fall asleep face down in my bed; boots, singlet, pants, hat, every damn thing.

Calypsoes, Bands and War Dances in Lord's Victory Riot

LORD'S, June 30 - Across this sacred sward of cricket, when the last English wicket had fallen to the West Indies, swept wild rejoicing crowds. Leading them was the gleaming blackfaced Calypso singer, 'Lord Kitchener.'

Right around the ground he went in an African war dance, all in slow time.

'Kitch', with a khaki sash over a bright blue shirt, carried an outsize guitar which he strummed wildly.

'Do you see that patch of ground moving over there?' said a cricket wit, 'That is W.G. Grace turning in his grave.'

Wild-looking West Indians in dungarees, scarlet jockey caps, or zoot suits, after this victory over England yelled: 'We want to go to Australia.'

A sober-minded M.C.C. Official said: "It is unlikely — in fact it isn't possible. But I wouldn't like to be on the other side if they did.

— *Trinidad Guardian*, June 30 1950

HALFWAY DOWN BERWICK STREET there was a club in the basement of a shop and Cyril Blake worked there. Cyril played the guitar and the trumpet and he would sing 'Frankie & Johnny' and 'St James Infirmary' just like Louis Armstrong. Kitchener worked in that club too, and that is where I first met him. One night I went there, and Cyril told me that there was a tour coming up, playing a few American army bases in Germany and did I want to go, I said 'Yes, of course.'

There were six of us in the troupe. Two dancers: Dot and Dash, a pianist, myself, Cyril and Kitchener were the singers. We were in Germany for about six weeks in spring 1951. We started off in Stuttgart, then we went to Heidelberg, Frankfurt and then Wiesbaden. I remember the night we got to Wiesbaden. As soon as we got there Kitchener disappeared. I don't know where he went. There was a rehearsal the next morning with a new pianist and Kitchener arrived late, after the rehearsal had started, looking like he had slept in his suit. He came to me and said, 'Gimme your comb.' Not 'May I borrow a comb please?', No, just 'Gimme your comb.'

My hair was quite greasy at that time; I had pomade in it to keep it neat and set, and there was grease and hair all at the top of the teeth, so I said, 'No, I'd rather not lend you my comb.'

He said, 'What? Just give me the comb.'

I said, 'No, I won't, it's not clean.'

And he went really horrible, using all sorts of bad language and nasty expressions, like, 'You think you're this and that. You feel you're too special to lend me your comb? You feel because you're half white your comb is too good for me and my knotty hair? You think you're too white to lend me your comb.'

I thought, oh well, that's not nice. But it didn't bother me because we only performed together, I did not have to talk to him otherwise. After the show we hardly saw him anyway because he would off doing whatever he was doing. I think he had a ball in Germany; every night after the show he would leave whichever army base we were playing at and go out on the town. Sometimes with Cyril, sometimes with the American soldiers. But when it was show time he

would be ready, oh yes, immaculately dressed in his navy blue suit, his white shirt and red bow tie; his shoes would be shining.

It was all cabaret really. We would all sing something together at the beginning, to open the show. Then each of us would do our act. Dot and Dash would do their dances, then I would come on and sing a few songs with the pianist, and then Cyril would do his numbers, and he would introduce Kitchener, and Kitchener would do his songs, singing and playing the guitar. He would sing, 'Ugly Woman.' He would bring the house down. He was a very good artist. He could pick someone out of the audience and sing straight away about them, and he was charming when he wanted to be. People liked him. But I didn't have much in common with him as a person, I found him a little bit rough.

Talk about a land which enchanted me.
Is when I spend my vacation in Germany.
I walked around in the bright sunshine
romancing a beautiful fräulein.
But when I told her I was going away,
in the German language the lady say,
'Oo la la lieblich Kitch-Oh,
wiedersehen meine Apollo.'

— Lord Kitchener, "Liebling Kitch"

IMAGINE WE GO in a bar in Wiesbaden. Had to go down, down below a restaurant and it dark and it smell kinda funny down there, and dampness not good for my chest, it not good for blowing trumpet. But the dancers gone back to the hotel, the piano man and singer gone, and Mr Schreiber say, how we can't come Wiesbaden and not try some of the local bock beer.

The bar room grand, with dark wood floor and chandelier. German people down there smoking pipe and drinking their liquor. It have big leather armchair, some old painting of men hunting with horse and wood gun on the wall. All the drinks bottles hang up and shining behind the bar, barrel o'beer and crystal glass and some accordion music playing easy over the loudspeaker, a woman singing in German, what sound like duck bone stick in her throat. A few hard face German man watching we, they suppin' their brew from big tankard and watching we. But that is normal thing. I used to that. It don't worry me. They could watch how much they want, to look is free.

We sit down at a table, a waitress come, and Mr Schreiber order a round of the bock. Then Schreiber son come and join us with his young girlfriend. The boy must be about 20, 21, he don't look like he even start to burst yet, but he have a slim, blonde craft on his arm and like butter can't melt in her mouth, she softly spoken.

But it have a next room. It have a next room in the back, through a doorway and it dim in there, like they have candle light there flickering. I want see what in there so I go to the W.C. and when I come out I go and stand up by the door to peep in now and see two giant sit down there with elbow on table eating

meat straight off the bone, like dog, some big-big junk of meat they holding, blood dripping, and they have no rice nothing, no knife, no spoon, just meat in their hand chopping. So I watching. One of them turn and catch my eye and he watching me watching he as he eating the meat, but he wouldn't turn away. He wearing glasses and the candle light blinking from the lens. I watching him back, I not afraid.

Even from where I standing the meat have a fresh smell, like flesh beef and vinegar. Is the kind of smell that does go up inside you and make you feel sad. So I go back to the table and I ask the promoter, 'Mr Schreiber, what they eating in there?' And he look around twice, left and right, and he lower his voice, like he don't want nobody hear,

'Bear, that is bear they are eating there.'

I lean back, 'Lord, bear?'

Schreiber say, 'Yes, they are eating bear. But please, please don't look at them.'

All this time Kitchener sit down there like a schoolboy, he talking to Schreiber boy but he watching the fräulein. He don't care the girl fiancé there, he winking at the girl. But when he hear 'Bear' he look round. 'Is B-B-B-ear allyuh say they eating in there?'

I tell him, 'Yes man, blood running down their hand, the meat look raw.'

Kitch buck. He turn to Schreiber, 'Wha-what kind of p-p-place is this you bring we? This place not for us. What place is this?'

But he want to see the men eating the bear for himself so he straining his neck to see. Mr Schreiber say, 'Please, let us drink, don't look at them anymore. Mr Kitchener you want another beer? Cyril, you?' And he looking for waiter.

Now, we sitting on a table in the middle of the room, so one of the bear men just lean forward and he could see we, and I could see he, the same one with the glasses. The man shoulder wide like motorcar bonnet hulk over the table with big meat in his hand. Just so his chair push back and scrape on the ground. He stand up. He about 6 ft 8, and from there, he taper down. The hair slick back, jet black, it shining, the head too small for the body. He wearing a long black fur coat, the wool thick and it hanging off him like it just cut from the bear. I know was trouble when he come and stand up at the table between Kitchener and Mr Schreiber and he watching me frankomen in my face. Is then I realise that one lens

missing from the glasses and the other one crack. He say, 'Who are you? Don't you know Germany is for Germans only? And you are as black as night. How do you feel?' And he grin like a goat. I didn't answer the fool. He watching Kitchener, he watching Schreiber, he watching the fräulein, he watching Schreiber son, he watching me. Kitch straighten up, 'Mister, we not look-looking for n-no trouble here. Just a drink we having, as friends.'

The fella just watch Kitchener cold. Mr Schreiber jump in and try speak to the big man in German. But it sound like the man leggo one cussin' in Schreiber arse and Schreiber sit back down. The man stand up there with his hand on his hip, like he waiting to see if somebody, if anybody was man enough to step up and say something. So I stand up, like man. The beer glass tight in my hand, I ready to break it on the table edge if it come to brawl. I hear Schreiber son say, 'Mr Cyril, no, no. Do not upset.'

The big man bend his head to peep over the glasses frame, 'Aren't you afraid of me?'

And I say, 'Well no, we are all God's children here, so I feel safe.'

When I tell him that he blink hard, like a twitch, not a blink, and his breathing get heavy like his engine stall with the bonnet open. He put his hands in his coat pockets and he prong back on his heels. He look in everybody face. He survey Kitchener up and down, from the trilby to the brogues and then he ask him, 'Who are you? What are you doing here?' But Kitch watching Schreiber, like he want him to answer, but the Schreiber reluctant to get cuss again. The man ask again, 'I ask you a question. What are you doing here?'

Kitch shrug his shoulder, 'What you mean what we doing here? We having a drink, you can't see that?'

The man turn back in my arse, 'Don't you know where you are? Where are you from?'

I laugh, I trying to play it cool. But I don't like people ask me that question at all at all. I put my hands on my waist and I push out my chest, 'Why you want to know? You is a police?'

'You are musician? American? My name is Eberhard,' he say, 'I have no problem with you, but my friend wants to fight you.'

The friend coming to come behind him playing shy, he wouldn't look nobody in the eye. Big like a ox, both hands tattoo, tattoo on his neck, tattoo on

his face. His overcoat burst down and dirty and the buttons hanging off because his belly big like a flour bag and he have 'bout shix or sheven chin and smelling of blood and cigarette. Is cokey he cokey-eye, he can't see straight, but he spraying hate and spit like he want us to dead. He voice like pig, drag slit slaughter, 'You are not for here. Go out. Now!'

But I decide I not going one mothercunt. I not moving. Why I have to 'fraid? Because we in Germany? Just so Kitch get up and he move from the table. What will happen? I just laugh. Things tense. People in the bar watching. I put my glass up to my mouth and I drink the last of the bock beer down, was really a good brew, thick, like syrup. All the time I watching the brute fix in his face, the glass warm in my hand.

The bad eye one squeeze he fists an' squeal: 'You are not welcome here. You must leave!'

Kitch say, 'Who say so? Who say we have to go? You?'

I know Kitch. Kitch revving up his motor and if he get a flying start he will forget he don't like to fight. But I don't want fracas in the people bar. The promoter, like he screw to his seat, he son sit down there like a mook, with his hands on his knees and he fräulein like a swan, she neck bend down. I leave them sit down right there and I pick up my trumpet case, easy-easy, and me and Kitchener walk out from that place.

All the walk back to the hotel we never say one thing to each other. It shake Kitch up, he was trembling. Big as he was he fear altercation. But he have to maintain. He have reputation. And all I was thinking as we going through the town was thanks Papa God, that I didn't have to bat them man, and damage my good trumpet hand.

OH HE WAS THERE, of course; we went together. Men like Roderick Haynes, Black James and Spree Simon in London and Kitch not there? Never happen. Dudley Smith? Tony Williams? Them was pan self. Ellie Mannette, Betancourt, Pan DeLabastide, Boots. All these was boys from Port of Spain and Kitch know them good. Remember he used to live in La Cour Harpe, right where those fellas used to beat their iron. So when we hear that TASPO coming to England for the Festival of Britain, we make a lime and went down to the South Bank to hear them play.

That day, good sun, heat like back home. We reach early and walk round, watching all the exhibition, the Skylon, the this one and that. A few of the boys was there already; Trinidadians from Notting Grove, a few Jamaican tests from Kensal Rise. Everyone in a good spirit. White people strolling with their parasol, the Thames flowing cool, she rippling in the sun.

Me and Kitchener stand up by the Festival pier, right by the river, waiting for the band to come out. They have chair arrange there, microphone set up, television people with their camera, crowd start to gather. Two young boy come and wipe the chairs. Kitch just watching with hands behind his back, and every now and again he would hum something. He restless, he can't mellow, is not his way.

Then one by one the players start to come out from inside the Festival Hall with their pans around their neck. And Lieutenant Griffith coming behind with the baton in hand. Everybody in the band wearing Hawaiian shirt and pleat waist khaki pants, trilby hat. They take a bow, sit down on their chair. And then the Lieutenant Griffith face the band, he raise the baton and he watch in every pan man straight in their face.

Pa dong pa dong! Is start they start. The crowd give a cheer and they gone with a mambo. One time Edric Connor and McDonald Bailey start to dance and break away in the crowd. Boots Davidson have the cuff boom pumping like is wood bass he strumming, lord, the tenors bright. Kitchener watching the band, he watching round at the crowd, he watching to see how the white people watching,

how they listening to the pan, how their foot take it, he watching the band, he concentration deep. Kitch is a man did go down inside music.

The rhythm take a white woman in the crowd and she start to shake waist. She come in the little circle where Griffith conducting and she making bacchanal. I don't know where she learn to dance steel pan but she wining good. A police come and ask her move but she oscillating on the sergeant and all he decal an' braiding get press up and ramfle. But Kitch not taking she on. 'Them pan look r-rusty boy, like they eh prime. Must be sea-blast. Black James tell me the seamen didn't handle the pans pr-properly at all; they eh care for them. Is just oil drum nah, so they throw the pan like is ol'iron. But they sounding good, an' it have pan inside there that I never hear, new pan them boys make.'

Bam! The boys leggo 'Johnny,' the Houdini song, Griffith singing:

*Ah look a misery, wherever I see Johnny.
All you people will be sorry to see
the grave for Johnny and the gallows for me*

Tony Williams start to go down in the rhythm and lick the tenor boom till Kitch catch a vaps and start to tremble. I shame for him because you know how English people does watch we. But he take a small dance, on the side, he couldn't help it, and them fellas in the band start to grin when they recognise was Kitch. Last time they see Kitch was Port of Spain, and that is a good four years. Kitch tip he hat, and I nod my head, 'cause some of them recognise me from when I uses to wrestle in the quarry.

When they done their repertoire, Griffith conduct them to simmer the last note, to trill it and it fade. Griffith pull down the hat from his head, he bow, the fellas stand, they bow and the crowd applaud, and is gone they gone. But like the pan still sounding, ringing on the river, going down. We was to catch up with them at the Paramount later. Kitch want to walk now, he don't want catch no underground. We go along the Embankment and he saying, 'I find they didn't play enough calypso. And how, how they...I did expect them to play a lil' longer, so much good calypso it have, they didn't even play one of Lion song, or even, or even a ...' And that man talk about pan till we reach back Bayswater, pan like it still ringing in he ears.

Camera On You

The BBC, London, August 1951

THE LIGHTS OF THE STUDIO surprise him. Tungsten heat. A chaos of spotlights illuminating plywood palm trees with mint green fronds. The pastel washed veranda and the swinging kitchen doors, the sky blue backdrop. And then the male dancers come, dressed in turquoise silk with billowing sleeves, three-quarter pants with ragged hems cut at exact angles for pulling seine nets or stepping through holy wood and cocoa jungle undergrowth in muddy bare feet.

The women follow behind, lifting their floral skirts and dancing delicately. They have sharpened their toes with red nail polish. To twirl. Rouge on their cheeks, their black hair tied back and punctuated with a pink dupoini flower, broached to the left side like lilies of the plantation. Olive oil caresses the knots and vowels of their limbs and lower branches of their bodies. They tie their white blouses in a knot at the waist and their smiles brighten the room more than the bulbs in the rigging above.

Then the steel pan men come with sticks in their hands and their instruments hung by straps around their necks. They wear short sleeved shirts of floral seersucker and pleated beige flannel trousers. Scent of light on a seersucker, fabric and armpit, same old black and rancid armpit from shanty town that come under lights in England still spewing its rancid scent.

They begin to play, to vibrate. But these verandas over look no ocean. These ochre shores look up no hill. Dry Rivers. The black carrion crow who avenges corpses in the *labasse* and flies over the land, hissing through its beak is missing. The Shango bells that ring at eight each night, sending jumbies tumbling down from chapels hid in the quarry are missing. The crapaud poison and fetish mirrors, the thunderstones and dried navel strings are missing from this scene. The badjohns with razor for teeth who would lime outside the Greedy Jordan on a Friday night, likewise the women that would be waiting to cordon and kiss them are gone, like incense burning in the Mechanics Union, like Hell Yard and George Street fight. Halogen won't make sunbeam. White paint don't make salt spray. All that gone. This scene is in black and white.

Boscoe hefts the horizontal limbo stick. He runs his fingers along its length, ceremoniously, replacing it between the two upright staffs which stand in the middle of the studio floor. Then he stands back to assess the limbo rig. Its smooth staffs, black with white rings, the horizontal held up with a sly hook of nails, so it stays. Then he dances, with his arms akimbo, wrists bent inwards at the waist, shaking his elbows back and forth, his legs press, instep and back, twisting, his bare feet scraping the floor. The women dance around him, circling with delicate steps. They hook elbows with the men, gesturing as if to speak plantation talk in some abstract bongo yard.

When Kitchener sings, the cardboard palms sway, the sea spray splashes against the studio doors, the lizard and agouti hide in the gully grass, among the gaffer wires, where a green river runs to the sea, between the stout cocoa and the guava fields. Poised there with the song in his throat, with the lizard skin talking drum's rhythm fluttering in his double breasted suit.

*Ah ha, never me again,
to go back on that Underground train
I took the train from Lancaster gate,
and the trouble that I I'm going to relate*

Fitzroy Coleman's guitar inveigles the space, shuffles in duple time. Then the wings of the corn-bird have flown and the sea recedes to night and sleep again.

Slow Fade. To black. In a minor key.

BUT IT'S AMAZING to see when he come in the studio and he set up a tune, and he have pieces of paper, microphone there, he loosen the tie, he push back the hat and he going to sing. He will take a run through first and when he feel it ready he say, 'Right, let's do it.' And we leggo music, *bram!* An' he would kick out his foot and dance like he on stage, like he forget we was in the studio.

What a lot of people don't realise though, is that the producers and the recording company had a lot to say in what get record. Sometimes they would even get so fast with themselves they will go inside your song and tell you how to sing it, might be a word wouldn't work in the song, they ask you to change it.

For example, 'Tie Tongue Mopsy' was a tune Kitchener sing in Trinidad, one of his most popular songs, it was a Road March before Road March, and that year, 1946, he come second in a big calypso competition in Port of Spain. But when he come to record it in London the producer, Denis Preston, say, 'Kitchener boy, people don't know it here as 'tie tongue,' make it 'tongue tied.' And poor Kitchener ketch he arse to turn that one around. All how he try he couldn't get the words to fit in his mouth, he struggle till he sweat. Musicians laughing in their horn. He try another take, he buck, the damn tape rolling and Preston shout, 'Oi! Hold it, hold it, Kitchener, break, break.' They call him in the back, in the production room, and Preston talk to him. When he go back to sing he singing:

*Last night I had a romance with a tongue tie mopsy
who then convince me that she so love me*

See that? He wouldn't sing tongue *tied* at all! He tongue tie he self. 'Tongue tie' is the best he could do, poor fella. But I think even when Belafonte sing 'Mama look a boo boo dey' he change the thing around and pronounce it different. He couldn't sing it exactly how Lord Melody sang it, no; Yankee people can't understand a damn thing what Melo singing, they can't catch the lingo. So Belafonte soften the edges lil' bit, make it accessible; he make it so anybody could understand what he singing, without changing the meaning of the song. That is the art. And I would go as far as to say that if you can't do that, you're not a true-true entertainer.

Piccadilly Folk

12 April 1952, Manchester

Football and footballers, at Manchester
you find the headquarters.
City and United, a wonderful performance is expected
from Manchester City and United.
Three cheers for the city of Manchester

Lord Kitchener, "The Manchester Football Double"

ONE BRIGHT SPRING NOON in April a train pulls in to London Road Station and those Liverpool supporters begin to chant and claim the station concourse. All is motion in red, black and white as they push out onto the street singing fighting songs. Kitchener steps from the train like a dandy amongst the undertow. The one they call Spider beside him, walking with his cynical gait, assessing the scene. But it is not Kitchener's grey serge suit, rather, the honey coloured trilby with the peacock feather in the band; the audacity of this hat is what Ras Makonnen sees first as he waits beside the ticket office. He is a dark, barrel chested man of thirty-nine, this Makonnen, and his three button blazer drapes elegantly about him.

When Kitchener has managed to pass through the crowd, Makonnen smiles and walks towards him, 'The Lord himself boy, Mister Kitchener, how are you sir?' Makonnen does not rush his words. Each is humble and considered. He extends a thick fingered hand with three gold rings. Kitchener shakes the hand firmly.

'Yes, good, is a long time now we supposed to meet. This is Spider? And the Spider leans his head to greet the big man, a floppy newsboy's cap leaning jauntily on the side of his head. Spider, slim boned and rigid in the jaw, skin stretched tight so that each ridge remains prominent.

They walk. Kitchener is looking sideways into Makonnen's face, the rivulets and contours, the craters and the ancient scar above the left eye. Makonnen turns, 'So this is how it is when United are playing at home, it's a mess. Police have a hard time with the supporters. I'm more of a cricket man myself, but since you say you like football I say OK, I'll come along, but really,

it's not for me. And mind yourself as we passing through the crowd, some of these scousers, they pick your pocket, they could thief your watch straight off your damn wrist.' He laughs.

Spider sucks his teeth. 'Thief who watch? My watch? Who will thief my watch here? Nobody not touchin' this, you mad? Fish will clap first.' And he coughs like dull blades clapping.

Kitchener: 'Well I love my cricket too.' He says, 'B-But I like the football, because it have the excitement. Is a long time I want to see United play at Old Trafford.'

Makonnen say, 'Yes, but you see the kind of people that follow football?'

Spider flicks his cigarette butt in a culvert, he spits with a hiss. 'Football have its people, cricket have its people. Just because you don't like football don't mean is not a nice game.'

'I never said I didn't like it you know, Spider. I just favor cricket, and as a West Indian...' Makonnen says.

Spider stops his walking, so Kitchener and Makonnen have to stop and look back at him. 'What you saying? You saying me and Kitch is not West Indian?'

Makonnen says, 'No man, look, don't vex with me, both of them game is Englishman invention anyways, so it don't matter. Is just that the West Indies team does a lot for us, y'know, it's a lot of pride there. You don't agree?'

Spider sucks his teeth. 'Pride?' But makonnen never respond, he know better. They walk among the crowds through the city center, down Whitworth to the corner of Chorlton Street, where Makonnen's white Morris Oxford is parked. The skies are clear. Sunlight glinting on the roofs and awnings, wrought iron balconies, tramways and viaducts, the fountain and the library yard, imperial architecture, grey stone turrets and the spire of a cathedral.

They put the luggage in the car boot and Kitchener sits in the front passenger seat, Spider in the back. The interior smells of new leatherette and cigarette smoke. Makonnen tumbles the engine and turns to Kitchener. 'The game finishes round five, so after we could go to the club, have a meal, and you could see how we set things up there for you tonight.'

Kitchener winds the window down, 'So how big is the club? How much people it holding?'

‘Well, we get around eighty, a hundred if we lucky. Saturdays are usually the busiest, so don’t worry about that.’

‘You done say you have a wood bass in there so I, I satisfy with that already. Gimme a bass and a sweet craft and I happy.’ The men throw their heads back and laugh.

In Moss Side, supporters on their way to the stadium crowd the streets. When Makonnen, Kitchener and Spider have passed through the turnstiles, they walk up the several wide concrete stairs that lead out to the deafening rage of the stands, where the sky opens up and the majesty of the field overwhelms them. It is like entering a high ceilinged cathedral. The green field is trimmed tight and marked by bright and gleaming white lines. All around them are packed terraces, a riot of noise and colour. Then the players enter the arena. Manchester in their red and white trim, Liverpool in black and white with red striped socks. Busby on the touchline. Byrne, Downie, Rowley —

Manchester United 4 - Liverpool F.C. - 0

By dusk the chants have faded, and the Liverpool supporters make their journey back west, lest dark catch them in Manchester. United fans gather in the streets. They spill out from pubs, milk bars and chip shops, they play jukeboxes, they lash the beer of victory on the streets, they confuffle the road.

The Cosmopolitan club is a converted dwelling house on the verge of a rugged region, four stories high, with dark wooden door frames and heavy pine doors. Up one flight inside, they come to a small bar. The room itself is empty except for a few stools along the bar, and a few chairs and tables laid out on the floor.

Makonnen goes behind the bar. ‘Scotch, Spider? Kitch what you fancy, a good rum?’

Kitchener runs his hand along the smooth dark bar top. ‘I doh drink heavy y’know, just give me a stout or something light.’

‘Stout? A big man like you afraid of hard liquor?’ Makonnen laughs, a big throaty laugh that weakens his bulk so he puts a hand on Spider’s shoulder for support.

But Spider does not laugh with him. And the forlorn hand soon slips away.

Spider leans his elbows on the counter top. ‘What Scotch you have there, you have Johnny?’

I have Johnny, but I have some Bells too, I have —’

‘Gimme a shot a’the Johnny.’

Makonnen has to crack the seal of a new bottle for Spider to drink Johnnie Walker Whisky. He tips a drip or two to the floor, a toast for those too dead to drink. He gives Spider a highball glass with a generous layer of whisky at the bottom. When Spider takes the first sip he scowls from the sting of it. But they never fight.

Later, from a upstairs window at the Cosmopolitan, Kitchener watches people arriving. West African students, white boys in denim and patent leather, young women with chiffon scarfs and beehives and bandy-legged West Indian Jazz men in zoot jacket suits. The scent of stewed chicken and beans weaves its way up from the kitchen downstairs. He can hear Makonnen’s voice as well, rising and falling between the jukebox. It is almost showtime. The room is bare except for folding chairs stacked in storage, cardboard boxes with worn edges, a long mirror, a pine coat hook and Spider, drunk in a corner, sprung out across an armchair.

Kitchener fixes his tie. He buttons his jacket, and then he takes careful steps down the stairs into the crowd. Although there are less than fifty people there, he swings his step, he cocks his head to the side, and he walks among them, as if is he and he alone they come to see.

To speak of the red hair lady
a woman of natural beauty,
she keeps to that natural fashion
no changes to cause attraction.
She appeals to me — through simplicity,
if is the last thing I have to say
Hand me the redhead girl everyday.
So it is the redhead, redhead,
oh that is what I said,
I must catch a redhead before I dead.

— Lord Kitchener, ‘Redhead’

I WERE ENGAGED to a Yankee soldier. I were going to New York, it were all arranged. Then one Saturday morning my friend Martha came round to the house and said there were going to be a West Indian dance at The Cosmopolitan and did I want to go. I said, ‘Yes, why not?’ Martha loved music, but she loved the black American soldiers even more. Sometimes we’d go to The Blue Bungalow in Moss Side, or The Red Spot, where the black GIs would be drinking and listening to their be-bop music. We’d dance and drink beer, sometimes they even took us to the Army base in Warrington with them.

We wore pencil skirts and sleeveless bodices, high heels. I were very slim and had bright red hair in those days. Martha were an Irish blonde with a full bosom; oh she were gorgeous, our kid. It’s at The Blue Bungalow one night that I got together with one of the soldiers and we got engaged and I’d promised to go to America when he was discharged.

When Martha and I got to the Cosmopolitan that night it were already busy. At that time, The Cosmopolitan were one of the few places in Manchester where everyone — black or white — could dance and get along. Because of course, in those days, there weren’t many places where you go and jive or jitterbug; most places had signs saying, ‘No Dancing’.

I didn’t know anything about calypso, nothing at all. I had heard about it, yes, but I didn’t know what it were, not really, or where it came from. They didn’t play it on the radio in Manchester, so I were curious. Then I saw this tall black

man with a lovely yellow hat walk across the floor and stand by the side of the stage. I could tell he were a performer because he had a guitar, and people were shaking his hand and patting him on the back. Then the master of ceremonies got up on the stage and said, 'Ladies and gentlemen, welcome please the calypso king from Trinidad, Lord Kitchener!' And the man started to sing and well, he were very good, charming, very tall and handsome.

I didn't understand a lot of what he were saying; one song were about a comb or something, another about a woman called Norma, but they were so catchy, and he were so funny how he sang them. Martha and I were near the front, so he would smile and wink at me while he were singing, but I weren't thinking it were anything; all singers did that. But during the intermission he came over to our table and asked for a dance, and while we were dancing he were asking me my name, telling me how he loved red heads and asking me, 'Where do you live?' 'What do you do?' 'Are you married?' all sorts of questions. I told him I were going to America with a soldier that November and he said, 'No, you don't want to go to America, it's a bad place.'

I said, 'How'd you mean?'

'They're very rough in America. They don't know how to treat their women, especially those soldiers, and a delicate thing like you? No, don't go there.'

He said he were supposed to go back to London the next day to play another show but if I'd go out with him he would cancel it. I said, 'You'd do that just to go out with me?'

He said, 'Yes, why not?' And he stayed in Manchester till Monday.

We'd only known each other about six weeks when he said, 'Let's get married.'

I said, 'You're sure? That's so quick.'

He said, 'Yes, let's get married at Christmas.'

I said, 'But you're crazy, you hardly know me. Are you sure you can live with me?'

He said, 'Yes, I'm sure'

But my father wouldn't allow it. He said it were too soon and we should wait a bit.

So we waited a few weeks and we got married on the 12 of May 1953 in the registry office in Albert Square. I wore a beautiful white wedding dress my father bought me from Lewis's on Market Street, with a silver tiara, pearl necklace, veil, white gloves, white shoes. Kitch wore a blue serge suit with a white shirt, black bow tie. Afterwards, we went to The Cosmopolitan where Mr Makonnen had laid out a spread for us. There were a long buffet table with all sorts of food; cheeses, hams, little sandwiches, roast chicken, lamb, Chinese food. Upstairs they had cleared the chairs so people could dance and Kitch played there that night with a local band.

Mr Makonnen said, 'Marge, Kitch, don't you worry, I will take care of everything.' And he never charged us a penny because when we got married we didn't have much at all, no furniture and only a little money. Kitch were popular in London with the West Indians, and in the clubs, but when he moved to Manchester, it took a while for him to start getting regular work.

There were a fair-sized black community in Manchester at that time, with the port at Liverpool nearby, and the Americans who came during the war. There were a lot of African students too, and black families, mostly in Moss Side, where we lived, and Kitch knew them all. There were a lot of clubs in the area, and once Kitch got in, he were never short of places to play. He were playing bass in those days, Jazz, not much calypso, but he would sing a few of his own songs when he got the chance.

When he weren't at The Cosmopolitan he were at The Belle Etoile or the Forum, or playing with Granville Edwards in Salford or Stockport, or he'd be in London recording or playing at some club in Soho or Notting Grove. He played all kinds of music but he loved Nat King Cole, Louis Jordan, he loved Edmundo Ros and we had a lot of Jazz records at the house; Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis. He was always busy but he weren't making enough money so I still had to work. He said, 'O Marge, I don't want you to work, can't you stay home and look after the flat?'

I said, 'You can't even make the rent most months and you want me to stay home? Stay home and do what?' He didn't like it, but what could he do?

Marjorie I am tired of you
For you are not really true.
For every time I walk down the strand
I can hear you were loving up some Yankee man.
Ah going to beat you — he was a big Yankee man.
Ah going to beat you — he was a rough Yankee man.

— Lord Kitchener, *'Marjorie's Flirtation'*

WE USED TO GO to the clubs and get the darkies to buy us drinks. Mr Smith's Cabaret on Whitworth Street, Maples, The Brunswick Tavern. We'd sit on their knee and smoke their cigarettes, we'd dance with 'em. Those days were all stiletto heels and pencil skirts, big hair. Marge were a beauty she were, with that red hair and her figure, all the boys liked her. And Marge, she never had children, so once the fellas got to know that, they were after her like flies.

But she loved that Kitchener, she did. And once he started to make good money he would buy her expensive clothes, Ermine, silks. He'd take her to London with him, to the Mayfair Hotel, the Dorchester. She met Nat King Cole, she met Paul Robeson, Shirley Bassey. But loved the English girls, so we'd take them down to Alexandra Park. I used to say, 'Marge, it's not good to go with the Black GIs, you're a married woman now.'

It could be midnight and a GI might say, 'Hey, let's go for a ride in the jeep, let's drive to Bolton and back, let's go to Rochdale.' And going up those motorways at that time of night, when it were quiet, with just the radio on and the forces station playing that Jazz, them were good times. We'd get to Rochdale and find some after hours speakeasy where the drink were cheap and where we could dance. Somehow we always made it back to Moss Side before morning. I don't know what she told her husband.

We looked out for each other in those days. When I were working and didn't have a babysitter, Marge would look after my little boys. If she made a few bob and I didn't, she'd give me a few pounds. And I've never seen a woman love a man as much as she loved Kitch. When she knew that he were coming back from London she would always be dressed her best, waiting for him at Piccadilly Station.

We were living together in a two-room in Chorlton, near Old Trafford. It were hard to get flats in those days, as a mixed couple. I used to have to go and see flats by myself and tell the landlords that me husband worked in London, and only came home on weekends. Otherwise, when they saw Kitch they would say we were too late, the flat were taken.

That first place were terrible. Just two rooms we'ad; bedroom and kitchen, toilet outside. We had a little two-burner oil stove and we used to cook everything on that; rice, meat an' porridge. Paint were peeling from the bedroom ceiling, the wallpaper were fusty and mouldy and the whole place smelled pissy and old. I think someone must've died in there. When his friend Spider came and saw the place he said, 'But Kitch, what's wrong with you? You're mad? You can't have a nice woman like Marge living in a place like this.' It really were a grotty little flat. Damp, cold. But we spent our first Christmas together there.

Then I remember there was a Mr Shallit who came to see Kitch one evening. He owned a record company in London and he came all the way up from London to beg Kitch to leave the record company he were with to go with his one. They were sitting in the little kitchen and dining area we had and Kitch told him he would sign with him, but before he could sign anything he needed a new place to live, and he asked Mr Shallit to drive him across to Heywood Street in Moss Side, and he showed him a house and said, 'That is the one I want.' And Mr Shallit wrote him a cheque for £500 right there, to put a deposit on the house. That's how we managed to move out of Chorlton and buy the house in Moss Side.

But I had to go and apply for the mortgage on me own because banks in those days wouldn't give a black man a mortgage, much less a musician. I told them my husband were at work in London, which were true. Eventually Halifax gave us a mortgage and we moved to Heywood Street, and that's when things started going a bit better for us.

In fact, most of the calypso boys are ordinary chaps, ruffians, nondescript fellows in the community with no status. In this sense I'm talking about a mass-culture in the West Indies, because the masses were setting the pace. Not a particularly big pace either, for if you really knew your high-life songs and transcribed the patois into English, you would find it frustrating; they all boil down to sex and woman talk. Now, there may be higher forms in some of the islands but generally when you take these famous calypsonians like Lord Kitchener, and strip down their material, there's nothing else.

— Ras Makonnen *Pan Africanism From Within*

KITCH WENT THROUGH a lil' phase when he was living in Manchester, when he was very influenced by Ras Makonnen and the whole Pan African thing. He start to go to meetings at The Forum, he start to wear pillbox hat and sing about Africa. At that time, it had a lot of black communists also living in Manchester, and Kitch start to seek them out.

Many nights we sit in Ras Makonnen office, upstairs The Forum, talking about African independence and West Indian self-government. This was the African Service Bureau, men like Padmore and Dubois, Nkrumah pass through there. But Kitch was a country bookie, boss, he wasn't no scholarly fella, he don't have time to read book. So when them big boys start to talk heavy politics and throw highfalutin word, Kitch used to just nod, 'Umm hmm, yes, yes, that is true' But he bluffing, he don't know one arse. All Kitch know is how to squeeze white woman breast and sing calypso. He singing cabaret for all them white people in fancy hotel but he want to talk about if you black and if you brown. I used to be shame sometime to hear him talking to men like George Padmore, men who really know what the hell they talking 'bout.

Just so in a meeting Kitch would make a brash statement, like: 'Fellas too lazy in Trinidad, boy, them scamp only want to drink rum and eat roti. They not ready for self-government.' Once, he even tell Makonnen, 'If God make we black, it must mean something.' And Makonnen leggo one laugh, but he watching Kitch.

Once, Kitch tell us how a mad woman knock off his hat when he was walking through Chinatown in Manchester, and how he get so vex that he accost and cuss up the poor woman. He convince that the woman don't like him because he black. I say, 'Kitch boy, don't say that. She apologise to you?'

He said, 'Well yes, she apologise, but these people, they deceitful you know.'

Makonnen and I watch each other and smile. Kitch wanted the woman charged. He wanted to go to court. He liked them kind of thing, to dress up in a new suit and go to court, and he want to defend himself, he want to talk. He had another thing he used to do. Kitchener would see a policeman and then start running, and when they run him down and hold him, he would say, 'What, a man

can't run or what?' Or if the police stopped him he would say is because he black.
Or they jealous because he married to a white woman. Then you hear him sing:

We give our love to Africa - me and Roy Ankrah
That's why I want to come back home - Africa
That's why I want to come back home - Africa
Lord, I tired roam - Africa
I want to come back home - Africa

It's a very good calypso but how much of that you think Kitchener really believe? You feel he really see Africa as his home? Never happen, Trinidad is all Kitchener see as home. Sometime Melodisc will tell him, 'Kitch boy, so and so happen, sing about that.' And he will compose a kaiso; for him is easy. Sometime he hear something on the radio, BBC World Service, something happen in Africa, Nkrumah say something, Eric Williams say something in Woodford Square, and he catch inspiration, he put his mind in that place and he write a song.

Now, it not hard, as a black man, no matter who you is, to find your place in the struggle, but Kitch only going there for three or four minutes then he coming back out. Don't get me wrong, he make some great tunes, but Kitchener was a performer, he in that barrel there, he not *really* active politically. Not like Makonnen, or even someone like Edric Connor, C.L.R. James. Kitch was a man around, he know plenty thing, but he wasn't no deep, political thinker.

News of the World, June 14, 1953

Calypso Kitchener Fined £25

“Lord Kitchener” the Jamaican calypso singer who has appeared on radio and TV, mentioned at Manchester an interview he had with police two days ago after his marriage. He told the magistrate : “The police accused me of living on immoral earnings.” He added that he had never received money from his wife, whom he married seven weeks after meeting her. Charged in the name of Aldwyn Roberts, aged 31, he was fined £25 on the charge of living, in part, on the earnings of prostitution. He pleaded not guilty.

Mr J. Goldstone defending, said Roberts had no need to resort to immoral ways of getting a living as he was the greatest composer and singer of calypsos in the world and earned money as an entertainer in London and Manchester clubs. He also had an income from the B.B.C. for sound and television engagements and got copyright fees for gramophone records he had made. Mr Goldstone handed in several records which he said featured “Lord Kitchener.”

Mrs Roberts, an attractive, well-dressed blonde, told the court that her husband never received any money from her. Mr. W.K.G. Thurnall, prosecuting, asked : “Isn’t it a fact that you are a known prostitute?” The magistrate, Mr F. Bancroft Turner, interposed: “Is that necessary?” and Mr Thurnall said he would not put the question. Roberts agreed in evidence that when arrested he had only a half penny in his possession. He also agreed that he owed £100 on his car.

The magistrate said: “Here is a professional calypso singer who marries a professional woman, who continues with her profession after they are married. “If a husband enjoys a joint income with a prostitute then he must be living in part on immoral earnings.” Mr Goldstone said Roberts was unaware of his wife’s mode of living. Imposing the maximum fine of £25, the magistrate said that in his view it was inadequate. He allowed Roberts 14 days in which to pay.

On a further charge of being concerned in keeping a disorderly house in Upper Brook Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock, Manchester, he was found not guilty. A similar charge against Cyril Campbell, aged 37, of Upper Brook Street, was dismissed too, and Dorothy Okaikoi, aged 30, also of Upper Brook Street was not found guilty on a charge of assisting Campbell.

1953, Sonny Greene

HOW YOU MEAN *if* he was doing it? Kitch was a hustler, he was poncing. But them days those things was prevalent plenty, you broken, you not working nowhere, but you have to look good when you going out with the boys, so you pick up some spare English mopsy in the Safari, or some bar in the Grove and firstly, they don’t mind black man, and second, you moving round, you know, you don’t have two six pence to rub, but you giving she what white man cyar give she, so she say she love you, she even defy she father for you, and next thing she have to leave home and come in your bachie; your one lil’ bedsit room where you cooking rice under

your bed, and sleeping right there and she saying how she will do anything for you. Where she will go now? The family disown she. What you go do? You have to ponce she.

People hawking up sandy and spitting on she when she pass because she with you, but she love you. Lord, next thing you know, she on the game and you collecting, you making sure she safe, nothing special. The Jamaicans was the worst but the Nigerians wasn't too far behind in that.

It easy to scorn but a man can't get work, can't get a decent room. Some days you lucky for piece a'chicken even, to put in your belly. You in the people country, it not yours. Then winter hold you in London with just the garbadine coat you get from the Salvation Army, and it have no lining. But you have a big prick and when you shave and brush back your hair and you splash some aqua velva on your neck, and you put on the dog teeth pants with the penny loafers and step out in Soho, when you finally catch a craft you say, 'Well, is fire for you.'

Now, a fella, if he have the experience, as soon as he walk in the club he could spot the one that love black man, just from the way she look at him, something in she eye, from the way she put she mouth. She may have a lil' kink in she manner. She may give you a smile. So you go over and ask her for a dance, and she will talk and skin and grin an' thing, and she buying drinks. These is woman who love nothing more than to lie down under nigger man. I see some tests getaway bad when it come to these women; man will break bottle and shank one another, they will fight in the road. Another thing you find is that some white man will bring their wife to a club 'cause they like to leggo black man on them, like beast, they like to watch their wife get bull and break, to see she leg shake up.

It have two kind of fellas: those who into the white scene, and those who in the black scene. Kitch? He was in the white scene; I never know a man who could eat white meat so. Even when we was in Trinidad, he love nothing more than them big bottom red skin woman, then love the blonde, the redhead, time he hit England he leggo a lion in their tail.

That house on Brook Street. Two up two down and is ketch arse season. The woman up there doing all sorts of things. Kitch know she trade and he let that carry on because it bringing in a lil' change and he not making long money yet from calypso. Plus, Kitch is a man like nice thing, he like to flam, he have gambage to maintain as a calypsonian, so, what he could do? He let it run.

Neighbours start to notice and talk, they peeping through their curtain. A black musician and a white woman? Music playing all hours of the night and all kinds of fellas coming and going? The old Bill pay a visit one day and charge Kitch with 'living off immoral earnings.' It was in the papers. Is ponce that scamp was poncing in that house. Remember, Kitchener eh no imps, he used to live right inside the red light district in Port of Spain, then he pass through, Jamaica, so he know about whore and jamette, he know how to talk to them.

Eventually everything was alright, he pay the fine; he even sing about the whole incident.

*Your wife is my wife and my wife is your wife
The more we are together the merrier we shall be*

Then the recording people give him some good money and he buy a next house in Moss Side. Maybe he pay about eight or nine thousand for it, but it was a good house, and he was doing all right.

He had his ways. But he was very private, he talking to you in private but he not talking too much. 'Cause he have he lil' secret side too; he have his girls, and he playing horses. He's a popular man, and good looking, so women want to climb all over him. Poor fella. What he could do? He might have a beer, or a wine, but he wasn't no drinker. He might have a pull if it pass, but he wasn't no smoker. Pussy, that was his vice, and horses.

Eugene Warren, 1955

I USED TO BEAT PAN for a side on Henry Street, a steelband call 'Dem Boys', and I remember Kitchener used to send down songs every year from England. 'Mango Tree' we beat that. 'Old Lady' get beat. 'Nora,' we beat that. But that man sing a calypso in England, in 1955, and he send the calypso down and it reach Port of Spain on Carnival Sunday. Imagine that. So when we in the barrack yard on Henry Street one of the boys come and he say, 'Ai, Kitchener now send down a 45.' And he bring it out with a lil' record player for we to hear it.

It was a big thing in the yard to hear this tune that Kitchener send and we make a lime out of it; fellas come with rum, some bring their pan, woman come and sit down. And on that record, one side had a tune call 'Constable Joe', about a Grenadian that paint a mule in Cumuto so he could thief it and all this kind of stupidity. But on the other side was a tune call 'Trouble in Arima', and when we hear *that* tune we bawl! We couldn't even catch we self, a fus it sweet. Big men was jumping, 'Play it again, play it again, gi'we!' As pan men we want to play it.

But was Carnival Sunday eh, fellas painting costume, some painting pan, getting ready for jourvert in the morning, and my band captain was there in the yard, and he stand up and say, 'Who could play it? Allyuh feel allyuh could play it? You could play it Scholar?'

'Yeah man, I could play it, but what about the tune we done prepare to play?'

He say, 'Forget that.'

So we arrange the whole tune one time, right there in the yard, and jourvert morning, as foreday dawning, we band we head and the band hit the road, we beating the tune and singing:

*I go fight them - is trouble
in Arima - is trouble
if they beat me - is trouble
well is murder - is trouble
Tell me mooma - is trouble
and me sister - is trouble
and me brother - is trouble
no surrender - is trouble*

When we coming down George Street now, heading into town, Casablanca band block we. They coming up and we going down and they stop right in the middle of the road so we cyar pass. We have followers; mostly women, and Casablanca have plenty followers too, an' them from Belmont, they irascible. One badjohn walk up and he say, 'Allyuh cyar go in town with that tune. Best turn and go back up the road, go back Henry Street.' Behind him Casablanca waiting like an engine to start sharing cut-arse, and we was only a small band compared to them. So my captain say turn back. And as we going back up in the barrack yard on Henry Street, everybody still singing:

Is trouble - in Arima
Is trouble - is manslaughter
Is trouble - tell me mooma
And me papa - trouble

And would you believe? The people with Casablanca start following us, they leave their band and come, and we had a big jam session on that one Kitchener tune, right there, outside the barrack yard on Henry Street.

LORD, THE TROUBLES WE HAD in Manchester. Not from my family; they were Irish and they'ad no problem with Kitch at all. My mother liked him, even my father thought he were a decent man. Kitch weren't a bum, he were always working, he were always well dressed, presentable, a gentleman. But it were the people in the area, in the town that gave us the most trouble.

Kitch used to buy me beautiful frocks and I used to dress quite pretty. But people used to spit at us. What could you do? You could say something but then they would call you a 'nigger lover,' or 'a whore,' it were hard times we went through. One time, just before we got married we were walking down Deansgate going to the pictures and a man passed us in the street and he spat at me. I were so upset, and angry. But Kitch said, 'Leave it.'

I said 'What do you mean "Leave it"?' The man just spat at me. Aren't you going to do anything?' But he didn't, he never did.

Once Kitch were performing at a hotel in London with Edmundo Ros and it were my birthday. So as a treat Kitch brought me down to London with him and we were staying at the same hotel. It were quite a fancy hotel and oh Kitch used to love it when everybody looked at me in this bloody hotel, when we came down for breakfast in the morning.

One morning I came down wearing this red suit he'd bought me in Swan & Edgar in Piccadilly. Kitch were in a suit and tie, as usual, with the hat. I said, 'We're only going down for breakfast Kitch, why are you bothering to dress up?'

He said, 'You have to dress good around these people.'

I said 'Oh, OK Kitch.'

That's how he were. Always concerned about how people saw him, how he presented himself. He used to tell me his father, Mr Pamp were the same, he always had to be the best-dressed man in the village, and it used to drive his mother potty. We were having breakfast in the hotel dining room and this man were sat facing me on another table, behind Kitch, with his wife. He looked like about fifty, short, a fat man. He looked at me and Kitch and then I heard him whisper to his wife, 'Disgusting, isn't it?'

She didn't answer. She just gave a little glance back. But then the man turned up his nose and went like to spit at me. I thought, *Lord, what have I done?* I didn't say anything. I just sat down with me breakfast. Kitch didn't know what were going on, he hadn't seen. But the man were staring at us, with his knife and fork in his hands. He mumbled something. So Kitch looked at me and then he turned round and looked at the man and said, 'Sorry, I didn't hear.'

The man put his knife and fork down: 'You hard of hearing, darkie? I said its disgusting isn't it, the two of you together; this is a five star hotel.' And then he just continued eating, he didn't even acknowledge Kitch. He said something to his wife and she looked back and smiled at me. Kitch was still looking at the man. He was sitting on the edge of his seat as if he were going to get up and do something, so I put my hand on his and said, 'Leave it Kitch, leave it.' But I wanted him to do something. I wanted him to get up, to hit the man, to let him have it!

He said, 'This is my wife you know, so mind your mouth.'

'Your bloody wife? Come off it, mate, she is not your wife.'

That's when Kitch stood up. He said, 'W-What you saying? You mad?' He was stuttering like a baboon, I'd never seen him so angry. But the man's wife wouldn't let him get up. That bitch. And I s'pose when the man saw how tall Kitch were, he didn't want to anyway. So he and his wife left.

When we were going back upstairs, Kitch went to the concierge and told him that the gentleman had been rude to me. The concierge said he would speak to the manager about it, but nothing ever came of it. Nothing ever did.

If You're Brown

KITCH SITS BLINKING AGAINST sleep in the light of spring flashing through the train's windows; the swish of green, the crooked and unbroken slur of wooden fences lining the undulating fields. He is alone in the compartment, with his suitcase on the cold steel rack rocking above his head like a broken metronome. The sound of the engine hissing steam and the wheels tumbling along the tracks is like the sound of the forge where the anvil is beating. His father Pamp, with his hard back bent over the bench, with a mallet swung in the smoke billowing up from his tempering basin, *kikuyu, kikuyu* he tempers the steel, the iron singing when he brings the mallet down,

BUP dee dip BUP dee dip BUP de dip BAP

This music fills the smithy with a swirl, sparks of sound, perforates the paraffin night as young Bean stands behind his father, watching the muscle flux of his father's back, the shirt tight with sweat, he watches the elegant strength of Pamp's straight legged stance before the crucible. Outside in the yard, chickens make their beds in the guava tree, frogs croak in the dasheen streams and a lone corn bird sits on a barbadine vine and waits for an opening in the music so she too can sing. But the whistle that blows is the whistle of the train, rolling across Hertfordshire. Merging, the landscape changes, from fields to warehouses, to the backs of suburban towns, neat gardens, chimneys and shops, cars waiting at railway crossings, and he wipes the sleep from his eyes with the back bones of his thumb.

At St Pancras Station he walks with the crowd under the dull light of the terminus. There is no colour here, just the brusque bustle of bodies and the smell of burnt oil and smoke. A man approaches him, his head bent slightly to the side, 'Singer for the Chesterfield? How you do? You just got in? Good trip? Everything all right then? Let me give you a hand with that.'

The driver's eyes are drawn close together, a bushy black brow spans them. Furrows run deep in his forehead and then the black hair greased tight to his skull with Brylcream, dull not sheen, the bald spot peeping from the top. He wears

a stiff grey blazer with a metal badge on the left breast pocket, black pleated trousers, low crotched and tapered at the heel.

When they are driving along the Euston Road, the driver suddenly swings his head around, 'Where you from then?' he asks.

Kitchener turns from the window to answer. 'Trinidad' he says. 'You know where that is?'

'Where?'

'Trinidad.'

'No mate, sorry, never heard of it. Where is it, Africa?'

'You know where Venezuela is?'

'Heard of it, yeah. South America?'

'Well Trinidad right there at the top of Venezuela.'

'Don't know those parts at all me, never left England, well, except once I went to Dublin on the ferry, don't count though, does it? Not really.'

Marylebone Road, passing Madame Tussauds, Baker Street Station, red brick townhouses with white rimmed verandas. The driver startles him, 'Never had one of you in the cab you know, not once. Don't get me wrong, I think people deserve a chance, and if you can bring something to the table then all right then, no problem. I have nothing against anybody really, just the lazy ones.' A crucifix swings on a bead chain from the rearview mirror.

Once, in the butchers' shop on Withington Road, not far from his home in Moss Side, Kitchener was talking with the butcher and the butcher was cutting fat from lamb. Then, swinging his cleaver down, and drawing all expression from his face to show his sincerity, the butcher spoke, 'Nig-nogs are people too, pardon my language like, but some of yours' are good, hard workers. I mean, I wouldn't want me daughter bringing home a darkie but I wouldn't say they're bad. The other day an old darkie come in here, I said, "What can I do for you ma'am?" She said, "Three pound a shank." I tell her, "Them is expensive shanks," she say, "A'right, I want them," so I cuts them and then she starts to moan about the price. I said one pound fifty, she says "Gimme for 90 pence." 'I said, "Look love, this ain't the jungle, if you want prime shanks you have to pay, we don't barter with bloody shells here!"'

Then the butcher brayed, from the back of his throat. And Kitchener heard himself laugh too, but not as loud. The butcher wiped his bloody hands on his

apron. 'And what can I do for you today young man? The tripe is fresh, fresh ox tail, lovely pigs trotters they are, lovely'

'So you're performing tonight at the Chesterfield? Fancy spot that is, the Chesterfield, I never been in myself, but I've worked the route, you know, picked up people, dropped them off there. They got doormen and ushers there, plush carpets, you know, that sort of thing, Champagne. That's a good gig you got there, I'll give you that. People like Doris Day and Louis Armstrong goes there, you like Louis Armstrong?'

Kitchener leans forward, he can smell the beeswax on the driver's scalp. 'I hear Princess M-Margaret is coming, to the Chesterfield tonight for the show. Y- You know about that? '

'Princes Margaret? Coming to the Chesterfield to see *you* mate? Never.'

'Well, is so I hear.'

'Can't see it. Who are you, Nat King bloody Cole?' You never know though, she loves the nightclubs, always in the papers at some speakeasy, cigarette in her hand, so maybe you're right, maybe she is going to the Chesterfield. But it won't be to see you, mate.'

West. The midday sun makes harsh shadows on the streets. The sky opens up and trees canopy the road. Kitchener remembers Hyde Park in that first green summer of 1948. He sees himself in the landscape of his remembering. How, in his melancholia for an imagined past, English streets became streets in Trinidad. How Bayswater reminded him of the rum shop roads through St James, Port of Spain. From his room on the fifth floor of the Chesterfield Hotel, he gazes emptily into the haze of the early afternoon. The busy road, the trees, glittering in the sunlit park, like the sun when it lay gauze bright along the northern range, above Arima, wild island countryside, and beyond the hills, the blue Caribbean.

Football Calypso

Princess Margaret—a calypso fan—has bought one hundred copies of the latest disc by Trinidad’s ‘Lord Kitchener.’ Thirty-four-year-old ‘Lord Kitchener’—real name Aldwyn Roberts—sat down at his Manchester home immediately after Manchester City’s 3-1 win over Birmingham in the F.A. Cup Final, and composed the calypso. Until recently the two Manchester teams, City and United, were deadly rivals. Then City won the Cup and United became Division 1 League Champions, and along came Lord Kitchener to compose a musical tribute to both teams. Result: “The Manchester Double” is expected to sell 150,000 copies in the next three months and will be used as a Signature tune at their football grounds next season by both teams. “Lord Kitchener”, who has been in England since 1948, has recorded about 100 calypsos including the highly successful calypso in honour of Princess Margaret’s Caribbean tour.

— *The Daily Gleaner*, June 15 1956

Sweet Home

WOOD BASS. It's lower bout is the low slung gait of a black market woman. Its curling scroll the bent head from ebony neck. The bassist leans against its curved shoulder. *Volute. Busetto.* The parabolic curvature of the bass back, and the balance beam leaning to the end pin, vamp of wind, the bassist gives a grin to the devil, stiffens, is devious in the face as he plays pizzicato, with a Baptist swing, humming its hymn. Something in the way he hums distils the pious centre of diasporic sound: the marrow between the beats. His whole body moving back and forth and sideways fastest, to syncopate, to roll. Till the groove bursts and notes hover from wood breast to his and then through the room. Wild island Jazz. Power in each brush, each stroke of wrist. Fingers, bent like the brown twigs of a guava tree. Another metaphor: the vines swinging in the face from the dance of the mask. The big string swinging its pendulum, settles still, is pulled once more, rattling the drummers snare. Its skin recoils - tsst t/t/t/ tsst - sound moving deeper into the ear. And the audience, at first so casual against the rim of the dance floor begin to shift in their seats. Men in blazers and low crotched khakis, red headed women making small steps in heels and a-line skirts, black communists in brogues. The saxophonist puts the mouthpiece to his mouth and blows, hard and high, and the heart is trembled, the sonnet leaps, the cry is sounded, the wound is pleased. The sound is a green river running through an orange field, with corn birds weeping above. *Sly Mongoose.* The saxophonist tilts his bell to drain the lung water from his horn. *Linstead Market.* Sweat buds on the bassists' forehead, he wipes his face with the sleeve of his shoulder, his shirt sticks to his wet back when he loosens his tie. Braces taut against his chest. He tips his hat brim back so that a warm palm can wipe the sweat, and then he looks out between the tungsten flare, at the faces in the audience. Tonight, in the musk scent of the bass wood he tastes the pull of home, he hears the ocean calling him. The trees rustling in the red rayo valleys of Lavantille, nights in the jungles of Port of Spain. Is so sometimes in the cigar smell of the bar's leatherette corners, or in a woman's dank liquor breath, he meets his memory leaving and arriving, between past and present, in the perpetual now. The drummer plays a paradiddle, rolls from hi hat to floor tom, cracking the snare with a sharp lick. The bassist pulls his hand across the strings, make them fumble,

then he fondles their slack and sway, until the instrument gives up its mystery notes. *Jourvert Barrio*. Outside on Oxford Road, rain washes the street, headlights burn holes through the spray. Later that morning in Moss Side, he will sit in his linoleum kitchen, with black coffee and a guitar, composing calypsos until dawn begins to whisper through the trees, until dew settles on the hillsides of Arima and pastures east of Wallerfield. The damp land in the country morning that calls him away from another winter. The semp bird sucking on the soursop fruit, the cow dung and frangipani scent of the countryside. A river, green with moss and young parakeets, oh Trinidad, wind through the trees.

Melodisc used to sell his records in Africa, so Ghanians, grow up on Kitchener, Nigerians too, and just like Trinidad, they look to England, and anything that come from England is good. So when you listen to highlife music you can hear a connection to calypso, is Lord Kitchener responsible for the birth of calypso and high-life music in Ghana. Kitchener had good musicians, he had good songs, good chorus; The Mighty Terror used to organise the chorus, and the sound of the music awaken the Ghanians. Kitch singing about Africa but he eh going there. He singing 'London is the place for me' but he don't know London. That is the creative mind, and that is something you find with many calypsonians who sing for tourists. You like it? They sing it.

—The Mighty Chalkdust

THAT RECORD, 'Birth of Ghana' he could've made a lot of money with that record. I remember when he wrote it. It were winter, 1956, and we were living in Moss Side. He and Mr Makonnen were always talking about Africa, and he called me in the kitchen one day and said, 'Margie, hear this one, I write a tune for Ghana.' And he sang it for me, tapping a box of matches on the table to keep time. He went down to London to record it and then when it were pressed we both went down to London so he could present it to the Ghanaian people.

We went to Mr Shallit's office on Shaftesbury Avenue, and there were an African man there, in robes and glasses, and so well spoken, quiet, well educated. He were there with a bodyguard and they both took photographs with Kitch. The African man were telling Kitch how he would arrange everything for him to go to Ghana for the independence celebrations. He said, 'Bring your wife, its not a problem at all, you will stay in the President's house, we will take care of everything, you will fly first class to Ghana.'

But Kitch just smiled and shook his head. He didn't want to go. Mr Shallit were shocked, he were saying, 'But Kitchener, you're making a big mistake, you should go, you will sell millions of records, you will make so much money!'

'I'm not going. Send The Mighty Terror instead, or send for Sparrow, he will go, Sparrow will go anywhere.'

I said, 'But Kitch, think about it, you're always singing about Africa and about Black people, why wouldn't you want to go to Africa?'

He said, 'Africa? Me? Go Africa? Go in that place, with all that bush? Not me.'

The Ghanian fellow heard him, he were so embarrassed, he smiled, 'No, don't say that, man. How can you say this?'

But no matter how they asked Kitch to reconsider, how they begged him to go, Kitch wouldn't go. 'Send over the record' he said, 'I don't have to go quite Africa. I really 'fraid them wild animal they have there, them Lion and Tiger cat.' They wanted him to go. But he never went.

PHILADELPHIA - Lord Kitchener, England's top calypso singing star linked with the Melodisc recording label across the pond, will be brought to this country early next month by Jolly Joyce. Joyce took Lord Kitchener under his managerial wing last month while in England looking after his prize rock and roll property in Bill Haley and the Comets.

Joyce is building an all-star calypso revue around Lord Kitchener for a nation-wide tour of theatres, clubs and concert halls kicking off April 19 at the Metropolitan Theatre in Brooklyn, N.Y., for a 10-day stand. Lord Kitchener's touring will point toward Hollywood where he's set for Sam Katzman's forthcoming 'Calypso' feature at the Columbia lots.

— *Billboard Magazine*, April 6 1957

Nobody could tell me
about New York City.
The place is a paradise
but the women an' them wouldn't treat you nice
The women - in New York City
The women - they have no sympathy.
Uptown, downtown, the village too,
boys, they have no uses for you.

— Lord Kitchener , “The Women in New York”

LOEW'S THEATRE WAS only half full. Geoffrey and Boscoe Holder there, Tito Puente, Maya Angelou and Lord Flea. The limbo dancers slipping and bending low under the limbo brim, and the bongo drummers beating up a boom. Maya come out and she sing she calypso, is Yankee calypso, but she perform it good, sing in bare feet.

Lord Flea come strumming guitar like is drum he beating and shaking his head like a madman. He gone down on one knee, he caray like a crab, he shake up. He and his trio make one set of mess with straw on the people stage. They call it Mento. All man in e/4 pants. The audience give him a roaring applause and he leave the stage hot for Kitchener. Kitchener come out in his suit and he sing his sing but like he can't get over. West Indians there, but is few, and Yankee people don't know what the hell Kitch singing 'bout. They may listen and laugh, 'kee kee kee' but they can't understand the *double entendre*, the leggo, the lavway, they can't count music in a 2-2 beat.

Poor Kitch. He stand up there by the side of the stage waiting call for encore. I playing fiddle in the quartet, we playing hard. We trying to excite the people to call him back but they clapping slack. *Bon'jé!* Geoffrey Holder come out clapping like a seal, 'Ladies and gentlemen, come on, the King of calypso, from the isle of Trinidad, give a hand for Lord Kitchener! Do you want to hear some more? Let me hear you! Encore, encore!' And out of politeness a little bubble of clap rise up and someone whistle and with that Kitchener run back on as planned. But the audience, it dead. Dear me. Interval.

When Tito Puente get on, he leggo one set of latin bacchanal on the timbales. His band was hot. Licks like fire. People in front get up from their seat and dancing, till the ushers had to come round and beg them sit, 'cause they blocking the people behind. Kitchener watching Tito from the dark at the side of the stage. He looking despondent so I tell him, 'Brother, don't worry with these people y'know, they don't know better, your calypso too pure for them. They want Lord Horse and Lord Platypus. They want Belafonte.'

Kitch watch me and then he turn away, 'I not taking that on. I come here to work so is OK with me.' But he bite up, I know it, and both of us could hear how Tito have the audience like fowl for crack corn, eating out his palm.

Geoffrey Holder come and run hug-up Kitch, he still in make up. In fact I feel Geoffrey put on this whole thing so he could prance round in cosquelle and costume. He telling Kitch how wonderful he was, how love his music, and how much of an honour it is to host him — a master calypsonian — in New York City. Is so Geoffrey is, he heart big, he gregarious, plus he cunning smart with mamaguy to make a dollar. When he un-brace Kitch he leave one set of glitter on the man tuxedo, glitter on Kitch face. But Kitch grinning like a snake, right through.

Kitchener Due For U.S. Tour

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Billboard Magazine, April 6 1957

Theo Brito, 1957

THE MINI BUS OLD, it smell like sixteen man piss in it. That is how we travelling. When we cross the turnpike and we reach New Jersey we go in a restaurant to eat and wait for Jolly Joyce. Joyce have the money. We go straight inside and sit down round a big table. Is seven musician; a mixed band, black and white. Menu on the table, the boys hungry.

But it have an old white man outside on the street, he put his palms together at the side of his eyes and he staring at us through the window. Kitchener ask me, 'Pico, why that man watching we?' I tell him the truth.

'Maybe they not used to seeing black people eating in here. Is a Italian place and Italian people funny.'

The waitress come across. She have buck teeth and heavy set, one set of spot on her neck; moles. She mouth slack from chewing too much gum and she underarm wet and rancid. 'Can I take your order please?' The fellas order. Kitch say he never had pizza so is pizza he want. He want ham and minced beef, onions, mushroom, plenty pepper. The woman look up from she note pad, 'Pepper? Like black pepper?'

'No, pepper sauce, hot pepper.'

'You mean hot sauce?'

'Yes, the hot pepper sauce.'

And we waiting for Jolly Joyce. Joyce say meet him at two, and it's minutes to three now, and it have people in the restaurant playing they eating but they watching us hard. Is like they watching us like we thief something and they know police get the tip off and coming, so they just giving us the side eye and waiting, they not approaching or saying anything, they waiting to watch us get bull. But I know them well, I know all their tricks.

I remember once I was playing with Lord Macbeth in Florida and some white boys give us words outside a cinema. They spitting on the road and hissing, 'Nigger - Nigger.' They threaten to hang us from sycamore. Macbeth don't want trouble but I have my dagger in my waist so I not afraid. If you show them you frighten these people will rough you up but if you brave, they gets confuse. And if you corner one alone, they like sloth, they can't walk on flat ground. So I tell Macbeth, 'Mac, walk tall man, walk on.' And as we walking past, I watch them reprobate straight and hard in they face, with just the handle of the blade showing. Not a man move.

It have a next old man behind the restaurant counter with a box jaw and a dirty apron, shirt sleeves roll up — must be the manager. He's a likeable cuss but he look like a'old police or Navy man, 'cause he glancing at us like hawk watching meat. But when the pizza come it come good, and people hungry, so we eat, it eating nice. We tender though, because the old man watching every bite.

Kitchener bend his whole pizza and put it in his mouth. I say, 'Kitchener, gosh boy, they don't eat pizza so,' and the juice from the pizza dripping — *plap plap* on the table. The rest of the fellas eating and talking like nothing happening. Anyone that watching would think these boys simple, that they not aware of the danger. But these is musician that travel through America, they know these situations and they aware of everything around them, so they ready to take in front before front take them.

The manager start to sing some jackass thing. He have a deep croon but he's no Pat Boone. Every second note cut rough and out of tune. He watching us, he wiping the knives and he watching us. Then he walk over to our table, wringing his hands in his apron like if he just castrate a pig. 'Boys, if you don't want anything else I'd prefer you to pay up and leave.'

The old man still muscular. The shirt pull tight, the muscle print, the forearms hairy, I sure he have a rifle behind the bar. The waitress staying behind

there now, she see big men talking. Then Kitchener put in and surprise everybody. 'But why we have to leave? We, we not causing problems. We waiting for somebody.'

But the old man disregard Kitchener, he look around the table and start to grind his jaw, 'Boys...'

No problem. When we're get back on the bus Kitchener say, 'One move and I woulda cap-capsized table, chair, juke box everything in there!'

I just laugh. I know if the Italian did only squeeze Kitch's throat he would've start to cry: 'Please, please mister, mister, please.'

We drive up quiet through New England; the old man sour the spirit. We heading north to Boston. Massachusetts white fence and lawn, dark coming down.

Jolly reach Boston with Bill Haley, just before showtime. He had all kind of excuse why he never make New Jersey. 'Bill here had a problem with his airplane, flight was cancelled; had to drive him up from New York myself. I'm sorry about that boys, but come on now, Jolly's in town, calypso time!' And he raise both hands in the air and start to shake his waist — one hand had a bill roll — good Yankee currency. He feel the boys laughing but they all skin teeth not grin; they not laughing with he.

AT FIRST HE WOULDN'T TALK about America. I'd ask him, 'Kitch, how was it?' And he'd just say, 'Oh, it was all right. It was OK.'

Eventually, after a few days, we were having breakfast and he said, 'America not for me. All they want is the Belafonte calypso. And so much racialism there, they beating people, it worse than England.'

He had made some good money in America but I don't think he were in a hurry to go back. No, something happened to him in America and I think it had something to do with how he were treated. He weren't treated like he were in England. In London, and in Manchester everybody knew Kitchener, all the musicians knew him and he could move around, in all the right circles. So he felt special here, he was the King of calypso, and I think he loved that. But in America, who is Lord Kitchener? Nobody knows. So when he performed I don't think he get a good response. I don't think people understood even what he were singing about.

I asked, 'So how were New York, the show you had there?' Because I heard so much about New York.

He said, 'New York? Imagine they bring this-this-this Yankee woman who say she is a calypso singer, she come out and sing in long dress, barefoot, she sing one set of cabaret. But she get encore, people want she come back. They bring the one they call Lord Flea, a Jamaican, what Jamaican know about calypso? Again, nonsense. But they love him, he could perform, I give him that, he even singing one of my songs! It have plenty fellas in America singing my calypsos and they not even putting my name on the record. Lord Macbeth for one. But this Lord Bee or Bush Bug, they want him for movie, they wan him for television. He travelling all over the country and calling calypso mento. But what is mento? Is just calypso turn upside down. They turn the rhythm upside down and call it mento. You think this Lord Flea could go Port of Spain and sing that? Never happen. Even Sparrow better than him.' And he went on and on.

'So what kind of show were it? I asked him. 'A cabaret?'

‘Well, yes, they had all kinda masks and costume,’ he say, ‘big performance, artistic. Is not to my liking, this ‘Bal Masque’ thing.’

I said, ‘But Kitch, it’s a cabaret show they were putting on so you have to expect that.’

‘Expect what? What Bal Masque have to do with calypso? When you call for calypso, put it high first, then after you could dance your dance.’

He wrote a few songs about America, one of them were ‘The Women in New York.’ Kitch, everywhere he goes he’s looking at women. But in that song I think you can hear that America were disappointing to him. So he were glad to come back to Manchester and he called Rupert Nurse, straight away so he could start recording again, as soon as he could get down to London.

Drink a Rum

Christmas 1957

BOSCOE CALLS INTO THE kitchen from the living room. ‘Sing for us Shirley, sing. But Shirley you should know, that song is not authentic calypso. You sing it well and Belafonte too, but you can’t fool Trinidadians with folk song and ballad.

*Day-o, me say Day-o
Daylight come and me want go home*

‘That is when they cutting down wood tree in Jamaica and want to go home. Duke Ellington say ‘Come Sunday’; same thing, Sunday come and they don’t want to work.

*Come Mr tally man, come tally me banana
Daylight come and me want go home*

‘That is when they pick banana branch and the boss man will count it to pay them, but that’s not calypso, Miss Shirley, you should know, you’re from Tiger Bay. Why they make you sing that song? Kitch, Kitchener, where you? Look how your guitar lean up there like it lonesome, man, and you call this a Christmas party? Pick up the damn thing, man, and show Shirley what real calypso is.’ But Kitchener is upstairs, looking for the bottle of rum he hid under his bed.

Shirley leans on the kitchen door frame with a jewelled hand on her hip. She tilts her head to a smile as she lights a thin menthol cigarette. When she pulls it from her mouth, and exhales she says, ‘Boscoe darling, I love that song. So what if it’s not a *real* calypso? It’s a lovely song.’

Walk into the kitchen where four women are seated at a table with wine and conversation. Their feet are crossed at the ankles and their dresses are blossoms and choruses. The sweet cinnamon scent of perfume hovers over them, among the haze of cigarette smoke. They hear when Boscoe stands in the middle of the living room and sings:

*Is trouble – In Arima
Trouble - If they beat me
is trouble
In Arima!*

His knees bend, his hip dips, he holds his glass high, with the small finger splayed.

*Oh, tell me mooma
and me poopa
is trouble
in Arima*

‘Now *that* is the real calypso.’

The women laugh. Marge is at the sink twisting ice from their trays. She has sprat fish frying on the cooker, the pan hisses pearls of flame when she cracks the ice and takes it into the living room. Tom Phillip there, from Jamaica, Kitch there, Boscoe dancing. When Marge returns to the kitchen with the empty serving tray, the drawer of gossip is shut. ‘Oh Ladies, the men are lonely out there, we should go in,’ Marge says. ‘Kitch is putting some records on, only Shirley’s dancing, come on.’

Snow falls and settles on Moss Side, Christmas trees blink from terraced windows. Car hiss on the wet road. Shirley is standing over the gramophone with a glass of whisky in her hand, watching Kitchener stack six 45s on the changer. Kitch straightens his back and a record drops from the spindle, the stylus arm, rising from its resting position, moves to bear down on the wax: Fats Domino: ‘Blueberry Hill’. Shirley sways her sequinned hips, sashays to the middle of the room to dance. Boscoe leans back in an armchair, sips his watery grog. Another 45 drops from the spindle. Boscoe rises from his seat to dance to Mr Lee, with Shirley, lightly holding her at waist and hand. With nimble feet he twirls her, his ankles bending out of his brogues, rocking on the balls of his feet. Kitchener, with a bottle of rum in his hand, cradled like a trophy. Starched white shirt and pleated navy pants, red bracers. He cracks the rum seal and lifts a window to splash the first taste to the earth. They toast to health and strength and raise their glasses, knock them there, under the tungsten chandelier.

Tom Phillip gasps dramatically from the sudden sharpness in his throat. ‘What kind of rum is this pardner? Is dead you want kill me?’

Boscoe scowls, coughs, ‘Wow, now this, this is the raw puncheon, the kinda rum the Indians drink when they’re cutting sugarcane. Where you get puncheon rum from pardner?’

‘I know somebody did coming up,’ Kitch say, ‘So I put in my order.’ Kitch circles with the bottle to refill their glasses. ‘Drink Tom, man, a big man like you, you fraid hard rum?’ But one sip is all Kitchener is taking himself. His glass can

sit on the window sill till morning, till it evaporates, he won't drink it, lest his gullet blaze, give him peardrax; Whiteways. He walks across to the sofa where Ruth and Beatrice are sitting. 'Miss Ruth, you don't want some rum?'

'No thank you.'

'Beatrice, you? This is good rum you know, from Trinidad, try a bit?'

Beatrice smiles and lowers her head, 'No thank you, rum affects me badly, if I drink that I'll get crazy.'

'Nothing wrong with that, you can get crazy if you want, all of us is friends here.'

Beatrice folds her legs and cups her knee with clasped hands. 'No, I better not.' Kitchener notices how her high heels hold her, to a point, her calves in a gossamer, nylon, like the swirl of a violin, perfect and holy, the curve of her thighs in her skirt. Then he goes to the gramophone to replenish the spindle with 45s. When Dizzy Gillespie's 'Tin Tin Deo' begins, Shirley, still in the middle of the living room, throws a hand into the air, twirling her wrist, her head leant back. And when Nat King Cole's 'Calypso Blues' follows, she pulls Kitchener like a drunk aunt at a wedding, and the sudden tug splashes his Whiteways of Whimple. 'Oh I love Nat King Cole! Dance with me!'

Kitchener is grinning so deep that the black gaps above the jaw teeth are showing. 'Miss Shirley I can't dance like you, take Bill, look-look, Boscoe want to dance you.' He is blushing like a buck toothed boy, dancing with her at arms length; the polite dance of a married man. But he cannot deny the musculature of her hip, the power in her proximity.

...to take me back to Trinidad

Marge comes from the kitchen with a tray of fried whitebait piled high and hot on a plate, and a bowl of mixed nuts. Then she pours herself a drink: small rum, lemonade, ice. She lights a cigarette and dances the slow dance of shaking hip and elbows raised.

...is black the root is blonde the hair...

They are all dancing now, except Boscoe, dyspeptic and sprawled on his soft chair, and Tom, sitting next to him, rolling ice round his glass, sipping his sip. When Kitch and Marge dance, fingers entwined, they move close and far, back and forth. The overhead light shines through the thinning hair at the top of his head like a torch in a forest. He turns from his wife to dance with Beatrice, palm

to palm, her waist all shimmy and shake, twisting her shoulders. He giggles at her prowess in the dance and leans forward to grin in her ear.

Boscoe rolls his head against his chairs' headrest to face Cyril, 'Where Beatrice learn to dance so boy? She can dance. Tell her if she's ever in London to look me up, I'm always looking for dancers. I'll tell you one thing though, cause you're my friend and I like you and I'm drunk.' He lowers his voice to a throaty whisper, 'But mind your woman with that fox mouth Kitchener. You see how she smiling, dancing with him? Watch him. He can hardly talk but when comes to woman he can talk sweet, plus his business long, if a man like Kitchener hold on to she, boy, tell you, you never get she back.' His laugh leaves his mouth open beyond the laugh's last sigh, rolling his head back around just as the next record drops from spindle to turning table. Marge has gone to the kitchen to finish her cigarette.

Tom cracks an ice cube with his wisdom teeth, he notices now, the gentleman's poise with which Kitchener pours Beatrice a drink of rum, like a butler, with his head cocked to one side, in supplication, how she takes it to her lips and then pulls it away from her face, as if its very scent were repulsive, but how she drinks it, straight. He wants her to look his way so he can indicate his displeasure, but her head won't turn left enough to view him.

Outside on Brooke Street, stars shine down into puddles of rain. A train grumbles in the distance. Marge comes back from the kitchen, wiping her hands in her dress. Glitter in the corner of her eyes. Blink/

and the scene will change.

I grew up listening to Kitchener; he was a hero to me, I always admired him. Growing up in Port of Spain, my father was one of his biggest fans, and so I get to know about him, hear all his songs. I even learn a few of them when I was coming up. When I win the calypso crown in '56, was \$40 and a crown from Angostura - but the result was, people start asking me to go here and go there. They ask me to go to England in 1958, and when I get to England now, I asking all about for Kitchener. They tell me Kitchener living in Manchester, he was a top musician there; not just calypso, he was playing bass in a nightclub. So I went to Manchester to meet him because I never meet him before and I want to know the big man. When I went to the club and finally meet him, I shook his hand and said, 'Mr Kitchener, I'm very pleased to meet you etcetera, etcetera.' And he look me up and down and he say, 'So-So you-you-you, you is the young fella they talking 'bout? Sparrow? But you-you don't look like much to me.' So I just make a joke and say, 'Well, Mr Kitchener, looks can be deceiving.' And he watch me.

— The Mighty Sparrow

SPARROW REALLY DIDN'T know Kitch, because when he start to make he name in 1955, Kitch was in England almost eight years already. But he had heard about Kitchener because Kitchener was a genius, he knew the history. Plus, Melodisc used to send Kitch records down to Trinidad as soon as they press. Bam! Radio Guardian get it, bam, Tripoli Steelband playing it, and everybody in Port of Spain talking about the new Kitchener record. Fellas used to wait on that, and when it drop, was like a bomb.

Kitch knew about Sparrow too, of course. He hear about this new singer, he hear Sparrow music, he know Sparrow getting popular in Trinidad and calling himself the 'Calypso King of the world'. But good as Sparrow was, the old man know he could always outshine him with his compositions. One night we upstairs in The Belle Etoile playing All Fours and somebody put on a Sparrow record. Kitchener say, 'What this Grenadian know about calypso?' The boys laugh, but men like Makonnen who from British Guyana don't find it funny.

Makonnen leaning back in his chair and give that half grin he gives when he vex, 'Kitchener man, you have to move away from that way of thinking, we is all one people. That kind of talk is what keeping us back from progress. This big island, small island stupidity, you realise how bad that is?' Kitch eh say nothing.

Kitchener have the brain and he know how to record, he could write good songs. But Sparrow had a sweet, sweet voice. It sweet but it strong. And he was a handsome fella too, woman love him. Another thing, Sparrow had a full head of hair, but poor Kitch was going bald, he always in hat. He would wear trilby and stingy brim, fedora, bowler hat, beret, all kinda thing. He wouldn't let people see he head so, especially women; by the time they see that, it too late. In England with how it cold and the rain and dew, it make sense to wear hat, no problem. But all that was ruse, because when men losing their hair they does develop a liking for all kind of exotic hats, fur hat, top hat and baker boy. If you have hair on your head you never wear so much hat. Some man have it in the centre and they good on the side, some taking it from the front but the back good, some have it in the crown lord, but once it start to go no matter how you beg, it eh giving you nothing

back. Kitch had it both ways, front and crown, so I know he used to watch Sparrow head, he envy Sparrow muff.

I feel in fact they envy each other. Sparrow envy Kitch because Kitch is the master calypsonian. Kitch could write calypso about a mango tree, a big stone, about a woman who tongue tie, anything, he have melody like rain. Sparrow can't do that, not like Kitch, never happen. Kitch now, envy poor Sparrow because Sparrow have the golden voice and the charisma, he have the seppy.

While Kitch was in England he keep hearing how Sparrow doing things back in Trinidad. Sparrow come and win the Calypso King in 1956 - he had 'Jean an' Dinah' — don't mind they say that was Lord Blakie song he thief when he an Blakie was in the house of correction, and he come out first and say is his. People does say all kinda thing.

1957, he come with 'Carnival Boycott' and 'No, Doctor No'; good compositions. He start his own record label and putting out music. He have top musicians working with him; men like Roderick Borde and Cyril Diaz. He come and he win the Road March in '58 with 'Pay As You Earn'. Kitch can't deny the song good. Sparrow is King in Trinidad, and Kitch? Kitch up in Manchester in the kiss-me-arse cold. The old man know the young boy could croon, but he want me to say it, He ask me, 'Rudy boy, you find he good?'

And I have to mamaguy Kitchener, to lie, 'He green in calypso man, he don't know nothing, pop song he singing there.' But I used to buy all Sparrow record as soon as they come out. I can't tell Kitch that. Then Sparrow sing, 'Jack Palance', an' even Kitch had to bawl, 'Oh lord, that is kaiso.'

WHEN WE REACH THE STUDIO and come to record, Rupert Nurse will just hand you the chart, and if you mouth slack or your knowledge fail, when the chart say blow G and you blow B he will just watch you cut-eye and smile to make you know he hearing. If you a semitone out he know, that mean don't do that again. He's a old army band man, he don't mess around. Al Jennings bring him from Trinidad with the All Star Band in 1945. 1-2-3 and he watching you frankomen in you face. Play B again, see what will happen.

'Sorry Mr Nurse, I just learning the tune.'

'But this is not a school, and I am not your teacher. You don't come here to learn, you come to play, and you getting pay. OK, 1-2-3 let's go!'

Men like Willie Roach and Joe Harriott who like to play free had to straighten up and fly right, because when it come to recording, Kitchener don't like to waste time or money. He will hum the bass how he want it or he will play it himself if he have too. Sometime them English musician, their rhythm twist, they can't play calypso. It have a way Kitch does want to bass to rally with his voice. He play bass on 'My Wife Nightie' same way; the bass man couldn't swing the rhythm right, so Kitch say 'Gimme the bass lemme try.' And the try was the take.

He will lean on the piano and skin teeth with Russ Henderson. He will sing the song one time and Russ will know exactly where the changes are; like he could read Kitchener mind and transcribe, make Kitchener say, 'Ah red man, you get it one time.' And the Creole will smile and tinkle the ivory.

And when you see Kitch ready to sing, he don't take long at all. He twisting his face and rolling his eye when he singing. Does be hard not to laugh, but your mouth on the reed and Mr Nurse watching you. No. One two take and we done, then only chorus to overdub. But if you ask Kitchener tomorrow what he record today he forget. So he was. Once he done with one session he mind gone on new songs he ready to wax.

Rupert Nurse had an innovative way of arranging when it come to Kitchener, is like he mixing up Jazz and Latin music inside the calypso. Plenty music. Sometimes he giving you a lil' space to solo. Nurse making a six-piece band sound like a whole orchestra, and he paying proper rates, he not cutting

musician throat. But if he say play so and you can't play the how he ask, well, crapaud smoke your pipe.

The early part was at 73 New Bond Street, Levy Studios. Most of the big numbers like 'Ghana', 'Redhead', 'Saxophone', 'Be-Bop Calypso', all that record there. And then later on, we was right in Bayswater, coming down by Holland Park, Dennis Preston had a studio in the back there. When it have a session now, you line up waiting outside the studio in the morning and Mr Preston would check the budget; whether is £7 an hour or £4 an hour they paying. And you pulling Kitch or Rupert jacket for a session. And Rupert will call you, 'Alleyne, Henderson come, Coleman, Neville, Bramble,' like he picking you for football team. Preston himself would supply the boys with the first bottle of rum.

After the session, Nurse and Mr Preston would always come out to where the fellas relaxing and ask if everyone was happy with the recording. Some fellas like to listen back to the recordings, some don't. Kitch like to hear the playback, always. Me, I don't give one arse, when I blow out I done, so just pay me my money and let me go. I doh lime. I gone Soho to get drunk, gimme rum, bring scotch. Either that or I gone Chinatown for the soya chicken, gone in the brisket of beef.

IT WAS A WEDNESDAY night in January when London cold like dog nose. I was working at the Riffifi in Mayfair. I get a residency there, five nights a week so I make a trio - piano, bass and guitar - and I singing, working the crowd with the big sombrero and two shac-shac. My tunic full with decal and glitter, my pants have gold embroidery down the side. I even paint Mexican moustache on my face. I used to call myself 'Rudy Calypso.'

Them days my money was long. Sometimes I make fifty pound in one night. Next time, eighty, sometimes one hundred a night in tips on top of my fee. Money like peas. I always ready to extempore on white people head. I would make up song on them gentlemen head when they come in the club to eat a meal with their mistress. Before the show the manager, Mr Corsini might show me, 'This one is a Duke, this one is a shipping magnate, this one is a Professor of Law, that one is the Greek High Commissioner, this lady from Switzerland; she's a Princess.' Once I get the information I take my microphone on the long cord and I start to walk around the room, I going all between the tables, singing on people. Well, one two liquor and money used to flow, tips in the hat.

The trio was hot. I put Neville Boucarut on bass, Fitzroy Coleman on guitar and the great Cyril Jones on piano. Now, understand, I have a band for dancing so its not just calypso. We playing cha-cha-cha, bolero, rumba, Frank Sinatra. I used to do things like 'Love Me Tender', 'Yellow Bird' and 'Guantanamo.' But when is time for calypso, them boys used to cause ruction in the Riffifi.

That Wednesday night the club full and we just about to start the second set. And as I stand up by the side of the stage with my scotch I hear Neville say, 'Ai, look Kitchener.' And in walk Mr Kitchener, like a lord with the big hat and the Mackintosh, he lean up by the bar, he eh see me yet so I go in his arse.

'But a-a! Kitch, what you doing here? You in London and you eh even call me. I didn't know you coming down. You recording?'

But he can't be recording. Any recording doing in London either he or Rupert would make sure and tell me 'cause is me have to round up the boys. Kitch tip his hat back, 'Is some business I have with Mr Chilkes. Contract business with the label, boy, a quick trip. But I know you singing here and I want to hear good calypso, so I come to surprise you.' He laugh, he looking round the place.

'Who you staying with? You staying with Connor?'

'Nah, I staying in a hotel down Piccadilly.'

'But Kitch you coulda stay by me, man, what wrong with you? Why you paying hotel? You know it have space by me.'

'But I don't like burden people.'

'Burden? Kitch? How you could burden me? Anyway, what you drinking?'

'I will take a stout.' He say, and he looking round the place.

I call for the barman, but I watching Kitchener, old time smart man. The black suit with the crisp white shirt, red paisley tie, bracers, and the big felt hat bend to one side. Mr Corsini come just so, 'Rudy, when are you starting the show? Intermission's over, I don't want people to leave, come on.'

'Yes, we starting now, two minutes. This is my friend Lord Kitchener, he just come down from Manchester.' And Mr Corsini bend his head and look at Kitchener from over his glasses frame, he shake his hand, he grin deep. But he nod at me and I know what the nod mean. So I say, 'Kitch boy, I have to start the second set, let we talk after.' And Kitch lean up on the bar drinking his brew. But he must be see Neville big wood bass shine up on the stage like a woman backside and his eye get big. He pull Nev sleeve, 'Nev boy, gimme a lil tush on the wood nah?'

Neville laugh, 'Ah boy, no problem with me, but you have to ask Rudy.'

I say, 'No problem.' Because I know Kitchener could handle he self on the wood, and as long as Corsini hearing music he don't care which darkie playing what. As we stand up there by the side of the stage, a white woman come from the side of the bar and touch Kitchener shoulder, Kitchener spin round, 'Ai, you reach?'

'Hello darling.' Big kiss on Kitch cheek. Is now I understand why Kitch in London. The woman short but she well appointed. A blonde. She have

she business in place, in front and behind. She wearing a red, low neck dress, with a big pearl necklace, bangles, and even I feel I could deal with she if I get the chance, to break. But Kitch rubbing the woman back while she stand up there, and she watching him fix in his eye. He grinning sideways at me like a hairy snake. The woman say, 'You remember my friend Anna?' And she pull for the Anna. Anna step forward, she lil' taller, slimmer, black hair, and she mouth sneer and slack, like I like. She look like she wash down 'bout six Cherry Brandy. She watching me but I have to work, I not on pussy.

I say, 'Kitch, we have to play, if you on the bass you have to come now.'

He say, 'Sure.' And he give the blonde mopsy his jacket to hold.

The stage is just a little raise platform enough space for a trio. Kitch climb up, he heft the bass, he pluck up the string, he start to manhandle the damn thing. He turn to Cyril, 'What we playing?' And he roll up his sleeves.

Cyril say, 'Coconut Woman'

Is a easy gig. The atmosphere relaxed. People just want a little light entertainment after they eat, is not a feté. And very few people does get off their seat to dance. Saturday night perhaps, when they tipsy, but not a Wednesday, not really.

But when we start to jam the vamp in truth, the crowd get active. Even Cyril, who usually quiet, bouncing on the piano stool and playing the thing like a drum. Even Corsini get excitable. He stand up by the bar clapping hand like a penguin. Kitchener behind me on the bass, sweating like a bull, he eye close, the smile spread open with teeth. All the two craft cheering. They wining on their bar stools sipping Blue Curacao.

When we step out in Mayfair, was about 2 o'clock in the morning. The ground wet - rain fall while we in the club. The band come out, Neville, Cyril, Coleman. Each man say their farewell and go their separate way. Tomorrow night, we back again. Kitch and I stand up outside the club. I say, 'Kitch, what you for? It have a lil' after hours place in Leicester Square we could go? Tests does be playing Jazz there. Russell down there tonight, you for that?'

He say, 'Rudy boy, me eh k-k-know, I have to see the them Melodisc people early in the morning, if I go after hours club now...Rudy boy.'

I know Kitch waiting on the two women to come out the club, I know. So I wondering now, if Kitch and I could parry them. I don't mind parry. But the women come out with their big coat on, stepping high over water and they eh even notice me, they tipsy. The blond one lean she head on Kitch shoulder, the short one drifting behind. Kitch touch me on my arm, 'Rudy boy, a go pick up with you tomorrow. You go be home?'

I say, 'Yes, I will be home.' But all this time I grinding like a sugar mill. And I watch that man Kitchener pull he overcoat collar up and hail down a black taxi, and he and the two craft jump in, they gone Piccadilly. The thick one have arse like horse, and Kitch eh give me none.

THERE WERE A YOUNG woman who used to come into the shop, she were pregnant and having the child adopted; she already had two. I said to Kitch, 'That girl that's just been in the shop, she's getting that baby adopted.'

He said, 'Oh, what a shame.'

'Oo I'd love that baby.'

'Do you want it? Really?'

I said, 'Yes.'

That was in 1962. I'd been to the hospital to find out why I couldn't have children. All my mates were married same as me and they were having babies. The doctor said, 'I can't see anything wrong with you; send your husband.' But Kitch wouldn't go.

He said, 'Me? Go hospital? An' let them people interfere with me?'

But this young woman used to come in the shop and I used to give her a few bits, 'cause I knew she didn't have a lot of money. I used to give her things for her kids. She was from Salford. I told her that I wished I could have the baby, but I had to speak to Kitch first. Kitch were there one day and I said, 'Tell Kitch what you told me.'

And she said, 'Oh, I wish you'd have this baby.'

Kitch said, 'We'll have that baby.'

He done that for me. And he must've thought, well, she won't be bothered what I get up to if she has a baby to look after. And when that girl came out of hospital she just came to the house and gave us the baby. The social services came around when he were eight months old and said that although he were happy with us, if we wanted, they could place him elsewhere. But Kitch said, 'Leave him right here, he looks like Edmundo Ros.'

In 1945 Lord Invader had a song, 'Rum and Coca Cola', and it was picked up by the Andrews Sisters, and Invader made so much money. Then Harry Belafonte picked up Lord Melody song, 'Mama look a Boo Boo' in 1957 and had a hit with it. So in '58, me and Melody say, 'Leh we go New York and see if we could get some money from Harry.' So after Carnival in Trinidad, we went up via the Virgin Islands, did a few shows there, and then we reach up in New York. We get to meet Belafonte and he was very pleasant. He gave Melody some money, I don't know how much, but Melody was happy, and Belafonte kept Melody to work with him as a partner up there, in New York. So I came back to Trinidad, alone. Melody was my partner eh, my good-good friend. Melo and I had a lil' rivalry going in the '50s. But that rivalry was just to get people in the tents to see if me and Melody was going to fight. So when I came back from New York I start to look around to see who I could have as a picong partner, here in Trinidad, now that Melody gone. It had a fella call Christo and we try with him for a while, but he wasn't as radical as Melody, he wasn't as debonair. So we start to look towards Kitchener who was in England at the time, because Kitchener was a big name, he was a favourite of the people.

—The Mighty Sparrow

KITCH USED TO SAY, 'Oh, I don't like to fly, I hate flying.' But after he and Pretender fell out, Preddie told me that that were a lie, he said, 'Marge, the only reason Kitch likes to travel by boat is because he can have long romances with women, not because he's afraid of flying. All those single women on the boat with nowhere to go and he will romance them, invite them to his cabin and serenade them.'

'Serenade them? You mean sleep with them?'

'What I could tell you Margie? What you want me to say?'

'Preddie, you can't tell me anything that I don't know already.'

And in 1962 when he went back to Trinidad for the first time he went by BOAC, and that were an eight hour flight. He wanted to take the boat. I said, 'Don't be stupid, Kitch. How do you think people in Trinidad will look at you coming off a boat; the great calypsonian, Lord Kitchener, coming home from England on a boat. They would laugh. Especially those calypsonians, you know what they're like - that Sparrow, he would laugh. Let them buy a ticket for you, you should fly.' He turned to me, 'How you mean, "Sparrow will laugh"?''

Kitch never intend to stay in England. He was a young man when he went England and young men have young ideas. He love England yes, is the mother country, but he didn't want to remain in England and dead like a nit and just a telegram reach Trinidad, 'Oh, Kitch dead, that one gone.' Nah, Kitch love Trinidad too much, and he wanted to go back home; nobody eh *make* Kitch go back to Trinidad.

Kitch went because he had enough of England. And when he see how Sparrow, Blakie and them young calypsonians was successful in Trinidad, that must've make him think 'What I doing here in England then? Money not flowing like it used to, calypso like it dead in England, records not selling, is only cabaret work fellas getting, and now them Jamaican turn calypso upside down, and their thing getting popular.'

If Kitch did stay in England he woulda never become the great that he became. People knew him in England, but he wanted people in Trinidad to know how great he was, so he had to go.

— Leonard 'Young Kitch' Joseph

The London Gazette, 7 May 1963

ROBERTS, Aldwin, of 48, Brooks Road, Old Trafford, Manchester, 16, Lanes, SINGER, lately residing at 23, Heywood Street, Moss Side, Manchester, 16, Lanes. -Court—HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE. Date of Filing Petition—12th Feb., 1963. No. of Matter—174 of 1963. Date of Receiving Order—1st May, 1963. No. of Receiving Order—320. Whether Debtor's or Creditor's Petition—Creditor's. Act of Bankruptcy proved in Creditor's Petition—Section 1-1 (G), Bankruptcy Act, 1914.

Part Three: The Grandmaster

Come along my boy
everything is changed
you eh got to beseech nor to bow
this is just the time, you must come back home
Trinidad is independent now.
— Lord Kitchener, ‘Come back home my boy’

People will tell you all kinda thing, but is me went in England and beg Kitchener to come back home. Because I want a partner, now That Lord Melody gone. He say, 'Nah boy, they-they treat me bad in Trinidad, in '46 and 47, I don't want go back there.' I said, 'But is different now, Kitch, things not like before, the people love you there, you must come back home.' And he agreed to come back. And I get the people I was working with in Trinidad to send him a ticket. But when he come back now, and he land in Piarco, one set of people around him. They embrace him, 'Kitch! Kitch!' And they kept me out, I couldn't get close to him. When I eventually got to him, to talk to him, I said, 'Ai, Kitch, wha'happening? Is me, Sparrow.' And he just watch me, and say, 'My people here,' and he walk away.

—The Mighty Sparrow

IN THE CALYPSO WORLD, Kitchener coming back to Trinidad is a big thing. Anybody will glad to go meet him, even people who don't like him. So when we hear that Kitchener was arriving we went straight to the Airport. And when they say the plane land we press up against the railings in the waving gallery to catch a glimpse of him. And when he come down from the BOAC jet, if you see him: khaki safari suit, neck tie, hat, briefcase, winter coat on his arm, walking tall across the tarmac like the lord in truth. Somebody shout 'Kitch!' And he look up and he wave his big teeth and we clap like we was children watching a matinee show.

Sparrow there, Lord Melody there. Melo been drinking since we leave town, so he spontaneous an' start sing 'Trouble in Arima'. Somebody have a rum bottle and a spoon, somebody have a cuatro and we making noise in the people airport. Kitch come out from customs and he walk out in the open and he wave, journalists there, cameras flashing. A lil' brown-skin young girl from The Trinidad Guardian push in front and ask him, 'How it feel to be home, Mr Kitchener?'

And everybody waiting to hear him talk, to hear how the lord will talk, to hear if he will sound like a Englishman, now that he living in England. Is years we eh see him. We expect that, is nothing; the man spend fifteen years in England, change bound to take place. But we want to know, we want to hear. He stop by the bureau du change to answer the girl, people in his waist, reporter on his shoulder flashing camera, he say, 'How you mean? I glad to reach home. I feeling good.'

He was staying at Hilton Hotel in Port of Spain so we set off in a convoy behind him. He in the big Ford motorcar the Carnival Development Committee send for him, chauffeur an' thing. I was travelling with Commander and Lord Tie Head. Tie head driving, hear him: 'I see Fellas calling for Kitchener who don't know the man music. They know 2-3 song and say they know Kitchener. All they know is the songs he send down from London, and they bawling "Kitch, Kitch!" as if they and Kitch is friend. But they don't know half the music the man make, they don't know the man.'

Hear Commander, 'I know Kitchener when he was poncing in La Cour Harpe, he cyar play he doh know me.' And we laugh like we shy, going down the

highway. When we reach Hilton, they put we in the garden, by the pool, and the waiters bring out a few drinks for Kitch and the entourage. They bring champagne, they bring rum, they bring wine, cider and soft drink. And calypsonian don't need no invitation to drink. Mr Samaroo, the promoter, get up and give a toast. Then he pass 'round pouring champagne like is water he sharing. And yes, after that Samaroo hand Kitchener a guitar and ask him to sing a couple song. All the while he singing I watching every part of his face. The few line in the corner of his eye when he laugh, one eye lid heavy. The big teeth. The moustache trim neat like barber shape it. I watch the gold watch on his wrist. The two gold ring, the buck teeth. How his suit back ramfle from sitting down so long, the hat how it twist at the lip where he pinch it, and when eventually he take it off to fan his scalp, how he was going bald bad from the corners and the crown.

When people come down from England or America they does look different. They does glow. And no matter how they try to behave like they never leave, a local will know, 'Ai, he doh live here.' Yes, no matter what they do, people does know they live abroad. How? Is they skin. It doesn't shine. And as I watching Kitchener carrying on with the boys, singing and laughing, I see him loosen himself and drink two glass of ice water quick-quick, he grinding ice, he patting his neck with kerchief. The skin pale. I could tell he eh taste this kinda heat in a long, long time.

But he looking good, he tall, he strong, and them calypsonians eating every word that come out his mouth, like cat licking butter. The Mighty Sparrow sitting on a couch there talking to Blakie and Duke, just so he lean forward and knock his empty glass on the table, he catch everybody attention, 'So Mister Kitchener, I know you have Road March material, a'mean, I hear 'The Road' and it good, it very good, but what about the big yard? You going in the big yard for Calypso King? Dimanche Gras? You have to sing for King kaiso y'know. What you have?'

Kitch just laugh and roll his head back, he watch around as if to say, *What the arse trouble this man lord?*

Blakie start to laugh like he kill a man and get away. He done drunk and gargling that sweet laugh he have, but he see that Kitchener don't want to answer Sparrow so he help out the ol'man. 'Sparrow leave the man please, you eh see the

man now reach? Leave the man. Leave competition for Dimanche gras night. Is then you will see what he carrying; now is to celebrate.'

Sparrow stand up, he stick his chest out, to grand charge, he mischievous, but joke he making. 'Who talk to you Blakie? Let the damn man talk, Kitch could talk for himself, he's a big man, he finish growing. Age before beauty, let the old man speak.' And everybody laugh, but we laugh like we frighten.

Samaroo looking 'round nervous, he don't want no bacchanal in Hilton. But Sparrow like Cassius Clay when he start and he want to picong poor Kitchener right there. He say, 'Big yard not easy y'know. You have to know your politics, what going on in the country. You away so long boy, Kitch, a bet you don't know Trinidad get independence this year.' And he laugh.

Kitchener just stretch back in his club chair, he clasp his hands behind his neck and cross his legs. He laughing with us, he laughing with Sparrow. He stutter, 'W-w-when Grenada getting independence?' Everybody bray like drake duck.

Sparrow *steups*, he turn to the boys, 'Where the Whiteways? Superior? You drink all the Whiteways? Gimme it here, man. Is only Peardrax and Champagne I drinking tonight. Kitch boy, to you, health and strength. Doh vex with the Sparrow, we go clash on the savannah stage, but the birdie have to go to the studio, now, right now.' And he raise his glass in a toast. 'Health and strength, old man, health and strength.' And the calypsonians there to support it with a chorus of glasses they raise.

But Kitch not taking basket. He smile and raise his glass, bow his head slight to say thanks and then he break away from the lime and gone down to his room. Well things filter out quick after that. But I stay there drinking with Commander, Superior and Tie Head, till the last bottle of rum done, the champagne done, till the people in the hotel eh bring no more.

THE PNM PARTY came to prominence in January 1956. Eric Williams was the leader, and they were starting this revolution sort of, about getting rid of England and colonial rule, looking to Independence and so forth. And that Carnival, in '56 was when The Mighty Sparrow came with 'Jean and Dinah.' espousing exactly what Eric Williams was saying.

*Doh make a row
the Yankees gone
and Sparrow take over now*

Now, calypso is a lyrical kind of tradition, so the voice isn't necessarily an asset. If you have it, nice, if not, well. But Sparrow came with the voice *and* a kind of vibrance, a speed, and the country was ready, and Eric Williams embrace him, of course, smart politician that Williams was, and Sparrow became, for a while, like the mouthpiece of the PNM. I don't think Sparrow fully understood that at the time, but he became very popular, and powerful, and as a result, everybody else, all the other calypsonians, including myself, suffered.

Eric Williams didn't want to deal with the calypso as a movement, because remember, in the colonial days, we were the unofficial opposition, is we stick our necks out and say, 'the higher authorities must do so and so and so.' Is we who attack them. They used to jail and censor us for that, they had all kinds of laws. And Eric Williams, historian that he was, knew that.

But in 1958, when Williams had to introduce the income tax in Trinidad, Sparrow is the man who did it for him with 'Pay As You Earn'. Williams couldn't ask for better, and that was a Road March as well, so imagine the whole nation singing that. Sparrow also sang things like 'Leave The Damn Doctor', 'William The Conqueror' and many, many others. So Sparrow didn't want Kitch to come back to Trinidad.

Now, the tradition in calypso is that calypsonians should compose their own calypsos, be composers, good bad or indifferent, that was the tradition that we met. So if you're not doing that, you psychologically feel less than a calypsonian. Sparrow, as we found out much, much later, used ghost writers. That

was a secret he kept, and it made him insecure, because he knew he was going to look bad, in the eyes of other calypsonians, and the people, if he was not what he said he was supposed to be. And people start calling for Lord Kitchener, being the greatest thing that ever come out of Trinidad and Tobago, in terms of calypso, to come back from England to deal with this situation we had here with Sparrow.

It so happen that Sparrow had a falling out with Leslie Samaroo, who owned the Strand Cinema in Port of Spain where they did a lot of the calypso recordings in Trinidad. They also had the RCA franchise. It was rumoured that Sparrow cuff the man or slap him or something. And they were powerful people. Samaroo decide to spend money, and bring back Kitchener, to get even with Sparrow.

That is how Kitchener came back in December 1962. And that is how he ended up in Guyana a few days after where he take that famous picture in the hotel room with Lord Melody and Brother Superior. These Samaroo people had the Strand Cinema in Port of Spain and they had the Strand in Georgetown. So they arrange for Kitch to perform in Guyana, to warm up before he face Sparrow, and the Carnival pressure, here in Trinidad.

The Road

Somebody going to frighten bad,
because Kitchener come back to Trinidad
— Tiny Terror, 'Tribute To Kitchener'

First Movement

THE BULL BROWN SKIN drum beat and it blow. The blood is beat is the heart and the drum and the road and the wood and the rhythm of people working, and the motion of people walking, so many miles in the grinning heat of Port of Spain on Carnival Monday, pushing up from Marine Square up through Frederick Street in search of saturnalian ointment, between beads and strewn sequins of the Queen perspiring in her second skin, the cosquella the dame lorraine, the glitter bands passing and the lascivious love-making in sequences and creases leaning against walls that stench with urine where some cocksman burst or some head run blood there in the blood hole from blows and bottle for nose, but that is Carnival: the sacred and the stink, the profane and the sin and you sit down on the culvert sick spewing rum frustration while the tar band, the mud mas, the oil, the burrokeets passing, or the fancy sailor in a tasseled sombrero playing real mas, so he throwing sweet talcum powder on anyone who join the band or pass near the midnight robber on the corner of Park and Frederick with his mouth spitting convolutions of language that twist your head for coins to fall in his collection box, and so he goes in his black cape with the skull and bones crossbow and the embroidered stars and the glittering, and as you reach by the Royal Jail you hear that song that Lord Kitchener sing,

*I hear how they planning,
for Carnival coming*

Yes the road make to walk and so we walking behind we mother till we reach Oxford Street corner where it have people living for Carnival in a wooden house there with French louvres, and the house low on the ground so it taking the full strain of the Carnival vibration, and they open out the costume rooms of their tailoring shop where costumes still to collect and hang up from the wooden beams

and the smell of paint still strong on them and the tailor still stitching mas boots for the grand Tuesday parade and I hear how they flinging sound from a gramophone and how it spill out on the street like old iron and bone wood and bamboo drum, and before Kitch even reach his chorus you singing:

*The road make to walk
on Carnival day
Constable I doh want to talk
but I got to say*

Was so we going up Frederick Street with music and people and colour from every street and alley side till when we reach the cenotaph at Memorial Park and see the dust rising in the savannah ahead from a steelband coming to come down from Belmont through those narrow avenues and gingerbread yards, across the mossy ravines that wash down swill from the shack hills of Lavantille where galvanise sparkling, and the distant murmur of the steel getting louder as it coming, and Mammy, still a few steps ahead of us carrying a basket of fried chicken pelau, Kool Aid and coconut drops, till she catch the sound of the band an' she turn, 'Ah hearin' Kitchener tune.' So her walk is different now, in its pivot and pelt of hip it anticipates the swing of the approaching band. She is oblivious now to everything but the pan, to the small iron and spoon contingent outside the museum, to the moko jumbie's wooden feet knocking on the hard road make to walk, nor the trebly speaker hissing from the Chinese restaurant, no, Mammy like nothing more than pan. Leave the ole mas, the pretty mas, the jab-jab, the oil mas, the brass and the mud, all Mammy want to hear is iron and only iron could make she dance like this.

But what else could the steelband band from Belmont play but this song that have everybody spirit lift this Independence Carnival of red, white and black? An' you see, you see, you see now how Kitchener pick his time good to come back from England? An' you hear now how the band beating hard when they reach the Barber Green in front the savannah? Is a whole lot of people that pushing the band along on racks and wheels and bunted canopies, because is their band and they from behind the bridge and they bad like yaz, so nobody could tell them nothing, and the sound ringing bright, and Mammy inside the band, and I hear somebody singing then I realise was me.

*I hear how they planning
for Carnival coming*

*I hear how they planning
for Carnival coming
They say they go beat people
and they doh care what happen
but tell them doh worry with me
is a different thing 1963
Because the road make to walk
on Carnival day
Constable I doh want to talk
but I got to say
any steelband man
only venture to break this band
is a long funeral from the Royal Hospital*

Second Movement

The road like it really make to walk eh? Look how far I walk an' me eh even realise. A vaps take me last night. I was sitting down in my bachie up on Salvation Hill, listening to the radio. I never intend to go in their bacchanal, because once I hear pan in the savannah on Saturday night, I satisfy. But as I sit down there in the gallery, drinking my stout an' smoking my thing, I hear Bob Gittens say, 'Radio people, this is the song that everybody's talking about. Lord Kitchener is back with a Road March contender, this is 'The Road.'

An' when I hear that song like I get a spirit in me, an' I put on my clothes and grab a flask of babash I was holding since Christmas. I pass through Corbeau Town, come down by Marine Square, an' when I reach there I meet some fellas beating bottle and spoon an' they leggo rum and is there I bounce up Rosalind. Rosie who sweet an' round like a kaisa ball, a reds, she from John John. I hook she an' she hook me an' is so we going through Port of Spain; when we meet up with music we take a wine. Jourvert morning, we coming down.

We leave Marine Square an' we ease up Frederick Street. We follow pan an' brass three miles round the savannah, then we go down to New Town by Bradley, was white rum an' gouti. But Rosie say she don't wants no old man lime, so we go through the back of St Clair, down Tragerete Road an' we bounce up a ol'mas band; men with posie on their head an' rum in baby bottle. We jump with them, they leggo grog an' from there we gone down by Harvard, an' as we going over the bridge for St James, Rosie bounce up she child father an' she gone with he, so I follow Invaders steelband through Woodbrook - sun come up on me an'

my head twist an' I end up back by the savannah, lord, I really walk like a jackass
all 'bout town, I had to lie down lil' bit.

Anywhere I pass I hearing Kitchener. 'The Road'. They playing Sparrow
and they playing Blakie, but you hearing Kitchener more. Is a good song for
when you walking on carnival day, you take a lil' dance then you walk again. But
Kitch like he put something else in that song. What it is? I don't know much about
Africa, but if you listen you could hear like people beating big African drum with
bone in there.

Well I drink till I stupid an' I lie down in the savannah like a mook, sun
beatin' my back an' a watching all them tall arse woman pass.

1963, KITCHENER WIN THE Road March with 'The Road', nobody come close. He come second in the Calypso King; Sparrow beat him with 'Dan is the Man' and 'Kennedy.' But the people welcome him, he make his money and he was in all the fetes; anywhere you go you see Kitch. Come Panorama, the steelbands playing his music, people offer him land, motorcar, roast duck, wild meat, woman give him leg, but he have his house and his wife in England, so he went back after the season. Then in '64 he came back again - he take the Road March with 'Mama this is Mas', kaiso, in town people singing:

Because the bands will be passing down Frederick Street

With a ping pong beat, in the burning heat

He bring his wife Marge this time. A white woman, attractive. But you know how Trini people does talk. They watch things like that and say, 'Oh, Kitch can't find a nice black woman to marry. So much woman in Trinidad and he gone quite England to find this maaga white woman to say he love?' An' like the poor woman get to know what people was saying, and even though it had plenty English people in Trinidad at the time, I think it was hard for her to feel like she could fit in with them. That could've been a class thing too; the white population in Trinidad have money, they have land - and from what I could see, Marge didn't come from that culture.

Mango Tree

HE WATCHES HER ASLEEP, as the mists on the mountain clears, leaves dew on the leaves of the red croton plant. Here moist heat sticks to the skin. Earth scent like rancid paraffin copper, sunlight sweeping over the Petit Valley hills, cow dung, river scent, frangipani.

The noise of the house: creak of wooden floor, electric hum of the fridge, a dying cicada buzzing in the roof. He watches her sleep, on her side, with her legs drawn up under a blue sheet. Her red hair against the pillow's white, her pale and slender arms, hands clasped under her cheek, her lips slightly open, creases in the corner of her eyes, like the timid veins of a leaf.

Yesterday, when the plane had broken through the clouds, and the land below appeared, saturated with deep shades of blue and green, and the russet red of African Tulip blossoms on the high ridges of the range and the sunset light splashed like turmeric on the northern range, she had turned to him and asked, 'How big is Trinidad?'

'It small,' was all he said.

But he could not be sure of the islands' dimensions, he had not contemplated this before, as miles to be measured, or distance across. He was merely repeating what he had often heard: Trinidad small. But as he looked through the polarised window of the airplane at the hills and valleys of his island, at the geometric patterns of cane field and gardens, he found himself suffocating tears. For in the joy of returning there is also the pain of a detained departure, the implicit loss, of being torn away, again, and each return anticipates this anguish.

Walking in the hills above the house. Walking tall in the morning, the earth and air moist where rain had fallen during the night. A brown dog appears on the track and follows him up the incline at the rear of the house where the dirt is ochre brown, moist and slippery. Upwards the hillside and the ground dove nests, water sprinkling from the pomcetre tree, white lice and aphid on the Governor plum tree, the dog alongside, parting the grass for a scent.

He walks past Miss Vero's house; the last before thick mountain bush reclaims the land. There is a small path on the right, beside Miss Vero's wooden wall, the dirt there pressed smooth and rich by feet, pebbles and random grass

along it, red ant canyons. The back of Miss Vero's wooden house rests on the mountain, two tree trunk pillar posts support the front. An old nutmeg tree hangs over her galvanise roof and scrapes the edge when the wind blows. Her sloping yard keeps thyme, lime, pawpaw and chataigne, and an elegant Julie mango tree with its green fruit on the lower branches. He sees one ripe yellow-red Julie, hanging from a branch, ripe and straining the branch down, ready to fall, bound to drop out of season.

Four Shouter Baptist flags: secret colours. He could not name them.

A figure coming down the mountain brushing the way with a three canal cutlass, like substitute for hand, its tip so blatant and churlish, curving up, the edge well grim and silver against the black iron shank. The man is old, sinewed in his arms and face. He wears a brown trilby, bent and stained smooth where the fingers have pulled it right for years. Age and the hills have made outside callipers of his knees, his mouth, slack and ragged when he says, 'Morning.'

He is dressed for the bush in black wellington boots and ragged khaki pants tucked into the top of them, stained with the milk of tubers and bleeding vines, torn at the rear pocket, the seat bruised and blackened. The calypsonian notices all this. The grey nylon shirt open down to the navel, rolled to the elbows, one size too small, with airplanes. The old man does not turn his head towards Kitchener as he passes, he does not care who is who. Bush does equalise you.

At the top of the hill, where the calabash and the breadnut trees grow tall, the sky opens and the land spreads majestic from horizon to jetty. Peninsulas and the islets on the outskirts of natural waters. Insurance offices and the fisheries. Narrow streets, warehouses and dusty yards. Anglican churches. Catholic spires. A mess of ideas, a babel of scents down there in the pulsing heart of Port of Spain. Then to the left, grooving up the side of the mountain: shack wood and tenements yards, government housing, water works in the hill towns of Lavantille and Morvant, his eyes settling back into the familiarity of things, thinking how it look like you could just step down on these roofs to the sea.

At the airport, when the immigration officer stamped his passport and lay back in his chair to grin, he said, 'But a-a! Kitchener, you didn't bring nothin' from England for me? You come with you two hand swinging'? Not even a lil' sweet biscuit self you don't bring for your boy?' He had been stunned by the pungency of the officer's voice and could not find the right words to respond

quickly enough, he blinked and stuttered, 'Yes yes, no, is so, nothing boy, yes, next time,' but he knew that the officer, with his mouth slightly open and smiling still, had watched him and Marge, and had noted the moment, had written it into memory and opinion.

Coming out of the airport, to the Indian almond trees in the airport forecourt, the taxi drivers pressing their horns and shouting, 'Kitch, Kitchener, where you going?' 'Come with me man?' 'Port of Spain?' They spoke to him with their airport voices; tinged with faux Americanisms reserved for tourists.

He turns, and heads back down to the house. Taking care. The earth still slippery from last night's rain. And now a drizzle, gossamer light, a passing cloud. Coming down, passing through Miss Vero's land again, holding on to the knobbly branches of her cassava trees, with the scent of chicken shit and mud, and chickens in the coop, pecking at their prison wire. The Julie mango dream, gentle on the branch, glistening, heavy in the rain. This is the mango he will place next to her sleeping head, the perfumed flesh that will wake her, the sticky sap of the stem oozing onto the pillow. It swings heavy there: pregnant fruit. The stem twists easily in his hand.

In them early days, people used to spread a lot of rivalry, they try to put so much ol'talk about the whole small island thing. An' like Kitchener get caught up in that and he didn't even want to share the stage with me at the Young Brigade tent. He say he prefer stand up outside, in the road with his guitar and sing, than to come inside and sing with a Grenadian.

—The Mighty Sparrow

WHEN I CAME INTO CALYPSO in the early '50s the two main bards were Lord Melody and the Mighty Spoiler. There used to be a kind of friendly rivalry between them, nothing serious. Then Spoiler died and it became Melody and Sparrow in the early 60s. They would sing on each other, who more ugly, who is a scamp. They would even sing about each other's wives; Melody sang, 'Belmont Jackass',

*When your wife walking, people say she shaking,
she should get a corset for the goods she carrying.
She should wear a harness, she face like a mas.
That is why the boys does call she Belmont Jackass*

Sparrow come back the following year and sang on Melody's wife with 'Madam Dracula', classic kaiso.

*Then you bring the Yankee woman back to Trinidad
But none of your friends don't like she
She too old and hard
People say she husband nose perpendicular
So everybody does call she 'Madame Dracula'*

But Melo and Sparrow were good-good friends and this rivalry thing was just to sell records. That is part of the historical tradition in calypso. Then, when Kitchener came back to Trinidad in '62, it became Sparrow versus Kitchener and that was the end of friendly rivalry in calypso. Their war became personal and real; it was a less palatable rivalry.

In 1964 Sparrow had a song, 'Clear The Road Mr Kitchener', and he record that song so it is there to document his thoughts about the man, at that time:

*I cyar understand some of them old time calypsonian
It's a different era now, they come back here making row
They regret they beg me for war
I go beat them like a child, 1964
Clear the road lemme pass, Mr Kitchener
You stepping out of your class
Kitchie boy you gone too far
Old timer you're gone
I say your days done
clear the road lemme pass, Mr Kitchener*

Sparrow actually sang that song in the Calypso King competition in Queen's Park Savannah on Dimanche Gras night in '64. Kitch sing in that same show and he was very hurt by Sparrow's lyrics. While Sparrow was on stage Kitchener called me to his dressing room, he asked me, 'But why Sparrow have to sing that song? He have nothing better to sing? He does take things, Sparrow does take these things too far. He can't do better than that?'

What could I tell Kitchener, I say, 'Kitchie boy, don't worry with him. Is just a song. He don't mean those things. Is just picong he giving you, you know how Sparrow is, it don't mean nothing.'

Kitch was vex, 'You ever hear me sing anything on him like that? I feel to go right now, forget with their blasted show.' He was ready to walk out, yes, and I had to beseech him to stay. But when Sparrow sang the last verse of that song, I myself had to wonder if Sparrow was serious:

*Calypso is me and I am calypso I this country
It is I does carry the load every year with a set a tunes on the road
Kitch aint got a thing to loss
He come like Mentone, once upon a time he was a good horse
But now that he old, and I am the Calypso King of the world!*

And Sparrow prancing and carrying on - if you see him - he grand-charging on the stage. Eh heh? When the mark bust both he and Kitch lose to The Mighty Bomber. Bomber first, Composer second, Sparrow come third, Kitch take fourth. But the rivalry had become bigger than them and I don't know if they even realised at the time.

Sparrow versus Kitch represent the two sides of Trinidad people. We have the jamette, the winer girl, the smutty calypso, the saga boy with the women, the village ram, the loud mouth, the bacchanal, the performance, innovation, well that is Sparrow and that is Trinidad. Then you have the more respectable suit and tie people, the traditionalists who try to talk 'proper' English, who will try to straighten their children nose with coconut oil, who see England as the mother country, and aspire to that, to discipline and decency; they willing to work within that system. Well, that is what Kitchener represent to a lot of people, and that is Trinidad too.

In 1965, Kitchener came down from England to sing at the Revue. Jazzy Pantin was managing that tent, Samaroo was the promoter. But Kitchener fall out

with Samaroo and say he not singing at the Revue, he going to sing in Sparrow tent. Now, that confuse a lot of people, because after Sparrow sing that hard picong on Kitch in '64, the last thing anybody expect is Kitchener to go behind Sparrow backside in the Young Brigade tent. But they say they make-up, they 'joining forces,' 'one hand don't clap' and all of that. And Sparrow of course, like nothing better than to have Kitchener in *his* tent.

Well, it didn't last. They fell out, and Kitch decide he not singing in the tent. And I will never forget seeing Kitchener on Carnival Friday night, across the road from the Young Brigade, on Dundonald Street, stand up under a lamp post; the jacket, the tie, the hat, the light shining down on him. A crowd of people surround him – people who going to the tent and come across the road to see what happening. And Kitch have his guitar an' he singing:

*Is my pussin, she said, 'Is my pussin, she said
'Is my pussin, it's my pussin
I feed her, mind her, raise her from small
Man, take off your hand from she
don't touch meh pussin' at all*

You could imagine that? You could imagine the great Lord Kitchener, the grandmaster, my friend, to be on the street singing for the people? He wouldn't cross the road and go in Sparrow tent, no sir. People stop out their car, people stop where they going to big fete and pageant in the savannah when they see was Lord Kitchener singing there. I couldn't bring out one word to him that night. I just stand up there like everybody else and listening and when is clap to clap I clapping. That is calypso.

That year he win the Road March again, three years in a row. He had another song, 'Hold On To Your Man' — the melody sweet like red sugar cane. Pan Am North Stars play it in the steel band competition and they come second, it run second in the Road March, so Kitch win first and second in the Road March; he capture the people again. Radio Guardian had him on their hit list, so every half an hour you hearing Kitch. He with his wife in high class fete, white suit and white shoes. I hear he was building a house in Diego Martin. Things were going very well for him. But it have a zwill in the madbull tail.

SOMETIMES HE HEAR SOMETHING; I put in a chord, what they call a passing chord — a tension chord - and he will go, ‘What-what what chord is that?’

‘Well, that’s a G-diminished or a D augmented 7th’

And he will say, ‘Oh ho, it sweet.’

Or if he don’t like it he will say, ‘That chord eh good. Doh put it there again.’

Kitchener didn’t know to read music, he never study music. But he know when he hear it if he like it, and he was a genius when he put music together. He would start with the melody and match the words to fit, perfectly. He had a gift to do that.

In terms of performance, though, when he came back to Trinidad, Kitch was playing catch-up to Sparrow. Sparrow would dance, he would go in the audience and interfere with people. The jamette wine, the Village Ram, all that was Sparrow personality. Kitchener now, he come from another tradition, from the days of Growling Tiger and Invader, of Roaring Lion and Executor, when bards used to stand up in their suits in front the microphone — they wouldn’t move, they wouldn’t touch the mic. So he had to adapt, he had to catch up.

I used to be ‘fraid for Kitchener. Kitchener was a big 40 something year old man, but he would dive on the floor and roll, he would jump. Kitch had his own style; the way he would dance and kick out a leg, that was his thing. And he could dance like Joe Tex when he ready; I see Kitchener spin and drop on his knees, do splits, do boogaloo.

But still, calypso tradition didn’t call for no set of dancing or jumping about, is more a theatre type atmosphere where people come to listen to what calypsonians had to say. Even the music not that important. The musicians just there to accompany the calypsonian, so people wouldn't give one fart if the bass man could make the bass grumble, or if the guitar man hand sweet. They come to hear the words, what they not hearing on the news.

But Sparrow was one of the people that change the whole performance of calypso. We have to say yes, we acquiesce. He raised the tempo of the music and he would put on a performance for people. Kitchener wasn’t backward though, and he had a rhythm in his music, and a vocabulary that people related to, so

during this time, the mid 60s, he was with Sparrow neck and neck. Come Carnival time, nobody listening to any of the other calypsonians, is just Sparrow and Kitchener that selling records.

I don't think Kitch was ready for too much domestic life; he was never home. He prefer go down St James and lime with the boys lil' bit, eat souse, go in the Oval, watch cricket. At that time Kitchener in his mid forties; he feel he could still make moves, he living fast, he is a big boy in town. But when Marge went back to England, Kitchener went up there like a mamapool behind she and beg the poor woman to come back to Trinidad.

But Kitch wasn't no easy man to live with, because calypso life is plenty pressure, you have to be always on the fire, you have to be composing all the time, because once you make two-three song one season, you can't sing that next year, you have to come with new things every year, and the standard have to be consistent if you want to make money when Carnival come, or if you want to travel up the islands and work that circuit: St Thomas, Grenada, Grand Caricou, all have Carnival and nightclub; money to make.

But if you is a fella like your grog, you like puncheon rum. Or you like plenty-plenty woman, and your standard drop or you lose your zeal, it have many mediocre calypsonian waiting to suck out your eye and take your place. And my friend, if one year your songs don't make the grade, you may find yourself scrubbing bench in the tent; the manager won't let you sing, or you footey don't make tent at all. Calypso life? You will catch your aunt, uncle and nenen before you get through.

When you get to the level of men like Kitchener and Sparrow, or a Lord Blakie, Melody or a Terror, then you make the grade, nobody could tell you you can't sing in the tent. Your songs might'n be good as last year, but people respect you as a bard and you have gambage, you know, you have charisma and a presence, when you appear, and people will pay to see you.

Kitchener was a great calypsonian is true, but he wasn't a great entertainer; he kind of shy. Like he can't come out of himself. Sparrow would come out his car; he had a Opel Kapitan, an' lime on the corner. He could ol'talk with the fellas on the block about any damn thing; woman, cricket, politics, music, anything. But Kitchener was never comfortable with that kind of thing and I feel is partly because he used to stutter so bad. You having a conversation with Kitchener and

you there ten, fifteen minutes, waiting for the man to done. And you can't say nothing; is Kitchener.

When Kitch was building that big house in Diego Martin, Sparrow used to come in the tyre shop where I was working and say, 'Fearless boy, I feel Kitchener making a mistake putting all he money in that house in Crystal Stream.' Because when Sparrow build his house he get a bar licence right away, and he used to have fete there every week, bringing down people from America, Jamaica, wrestling, boxing, fashion show. So he make enough money to pay back for his house quick-quick. But Kitchener now, Kitchener come and build his house in a middle class area; prime real estate, one big ostentatious house. Then, when he wanted a bar licence, the neighbours kick against it. They say, 'No, we don't want no riff raff here! If Kitchener open a bar, next thing will be gambling and loud music, prostitution, delinquency.' And no matter how Kitch try, he couldn't get a bar licence. So all he money went in that mansion and stay right there.

Kitchener was a gentleman, he was a nice chap, is true. But while he twirling cane Sparrow making all the money. Every other month Sparrow going New York, Holland, Toronto, England. Kitchener would go Virgin Islands, he would go Curacao, Grenada, St Kitts, he would go New York and Canada too, but he wasn't famous like Sparrow, outside of Trinidad.

Then he get in big time company, horses, he liked race horsing. He would go in Queen's Park Savannah and watch horse train, so he know how to put his money when races come. I went to his house in Diego Martin and he even had some racehorses in a pen there, and he put on Wellington boots to feed them. I say, 'Kitch, you does gamble?'

And he laugh and dash a bucket of disinfectant in the pen.

The Mighty Scamp, 1967

IF YOU GO TO ST THOMAS to play a few shows, you have to stay there for a while, you have to go to church, to market; you have to become part of the place, people have to get to know you before you could pick up with a local craft. Virgin Islands was a strict little kind of religious place; no prostitution, so it hard to catch women. As you land, everybody know that you there, they know who you is, where you going; they have a network to monitor your movements. If you land in the morning, by the night everybody know you are there and what you doing, or trying to do. So when we went to the Virgin Islands to perform, Kitch and I used to fly across to Puerto Rico to chase women there. That was part of the whole calypso business in those days; a lot of loose women around, women chasing you, what you going to do?

Patsy used to keep his car under our house and he used to say, 'Marge, if you ever want to use my car you can use it.' He were a calypsonian, in Kitch's calypso tent and he were building a house near Sparrow, in Petit Valley, and not far from where we lived in Semper Gardens. He said, 'Miss Margie, I'm having a big house warming party, you gotta come'.

I told Kitch I wanted to go and he said, 'Don't go to that party, you wont like it'

I asked, 'Why? Why wont I like it?' But he wouldn't say. Kitch were always reluctant to take me to certain places in Trinidad. I was convinced it were because he didn't want me and his mistresses to meet. But I were fond of this lad, Patsy; he were only a youngster, and we got along. He had lived in the States for a while and were used to white people. One carnival he brought a white girl from America and she were walking round in a bikini everywhere she went, I had to tell her, 'Darling, Trinidad is not that kind of place.'

Kitch didn't want to go to the party, he was never a party person, but eventually, because I moaned at him so much, he said, 'All right, you want to go, we will go.' Patsy had built a lovely little house up on a hill, you could see all the valley. I got dressed up, I didn't get to go to parties often, and my hair were all done up. But as soon as we got there everyone were, it were all, 'Oh Kitch, Kitch.' So I left him in the yard chatting and I went inside.

When Patsy saw me he came and he put his arm round me, 'Oh Miss Marge, come, come let me show you the place.' It were all soft lighting inside, there were African carvings, masks on the wall, a little African shield, incense burning. There were a tall rubber plant in one corner, wicker chairs around the dining table where drinks were laid out; whisky, rum, cherry brandy, a bowl of ice. Another calypsonian were playing records on the gramophone — not calypso, American music, Chubby Checker, Ray Charles.

The women wouldn't talk to me. The black Trinidadian women turned their noses up at me when I walked by. They just looked me over as if to say, 'What is she doing here?' I knew a couple of them, one woman even lived a few houses from us in Semper Gardens; she kissed Kitch on both cheeks, but she

pretended she didn't know me. Even the few white women there wouldn't speak to me, and when they did it were only to know if I were wealthy. They didn't have anything to say. I thought, my gosh, what have I done? The men spoke to me fine though, so I just sat on the balcony with Preddie and Bomber, smoking cigarettes and talking. Kitch came and asked me why I wasn't inside and I pulled him aside by the elbow, 'These women, they wont speak to me. What have I done to them?'

And he laughed, 'You see, you-you, you wanted to come to party and now you see, I didn't want to bring you, now you see how Trinidadian people is, they are funny people, they does jealous you.'

I said, 'Please, take me home.' As we were driving back I were asking myself, 'Why did I leave England? What's the point of living here then? To be with Kitch? Yes, but he were never home. Kitch would wake up in the morning, take a shower, drink a glass of egg nog, eat a slice of bread. He would polish the car, and then he'd be gone till the evening. I never knew where he used to go or what he were doing. I knew sometimes he were going by other calypsonians, to see Bomber or Terror, or to the studio to see Art De Coteau. Sometimes he and Pretender would go to Arima where he had horses, but mostly I'm sure he were frolicking with women all over Port of Spain. I would always find out.

Once we fell out over something and he were outside washing his car in the driveway and he were telling a neighbour, Mr Henry, a civil servant, 'Look, look how this woman is. Is me put she in house and give she luxury and she wouldn't even do the laundry!' He made such a row that I couldn't show my face in Semper Gardens for a week; I were so embarrassed.

It were a lovely house though; the house he built for us. It were split level, three bedrooms we 'ad. A pantry, a library, a big kitchen. The newspaper came to interview him there once and they took photos of the house from the drive way, they even took photos of the three of us in the front room.

Sometimes when Kitch were out, the neighbour Miss Sankar, a retired headmistress, would come over and sit on the porch with me. She had just got a divorce from her husband. We'd have a coffee, some biscuits and we would talk. She used to bring *The Bomb* and *The Express* and show me pictures of Kitch in Port of Spain cavorting with all sorts of women.

Once she told me, 'Trinidadian men are all the same. They have a lot of sweet words, and they can be the nicest men in the world, the most loving, but you

can't trust them when pretty women are around; their eyes are too long.' And I laughed, but she were right. She leaned forward and asked me, 'How come this man leaves you alone in this house with the child? Why don't you leave his arse?'

I said, 'I don't know what to do, Miss Sankar, I'm so confused. I leave but he begs me to come back, I just don't know, I love him.'

She said, 'Why don't you go and talk to someone? A lawyer maybe, just to get some advice. You know what, I will arrange for you to see my friend Mr Prieto. You can't live like this.'

LORD KITCHENER ACCOST ME in Chinese Association fete. I thought Kitchener woulda beat me, no joke. I by the bar cool-cool; me and meh lady friend, Lorna. I buy two beers, a nip of scotch, and I good. I real good. 1 o'clock in the morning and fete hot in the yard, Mano Marcelin band blowing brass hard on a lil' stage under the big Tamarind tree. They have guitar, sax man and organ pumping, tempo, they hot up the place.

Whole week we advertising the fete on the radio, so Mr Fung send everybody in the radio station free tickets. Now, is bourgeois people fete eh, decent people thing, Chinese association don't have no ol'nigger in their fete, so that is the fete to bring your woman to. Me? I like the jam up and the ruction that the brewery fete does have but Lorna say she eh going no more fete where man does chook one another in their waist with break bottle, and where badjohn does cut people with razor blade wipe with garlic. So she want to go Chinese Association fete. I say, 'OK.'

But if you see woman in the fete. I glad I come. Woman more than man. Woman in hot pants and strap up heels, woman hototo! Them big breast French Creole and them Yankee woman who cyar wine, shaking their long backside trying to learn, an' you know how Trinidad man is? They round them like fly. Yes, the place have people for so. People all in the road and they cyar come in, fete sell out, Chinee money overtake money.

Anyway, I there by the bar as I say, with Lorna, drinking my beer, 'cause me eh like to dance just so. Gimme a small wine on the side first. Lemme drink two, three Scotch, a couple stout, let me badden my head and *then* you will see Benny Reid wine. When I see Lord Kitchener come in the fete, I touch Lorna, 'Look Kitchener'

'Kitchener, where?' and she stretching she neck to see. Kitch come in like the star boy in a Western. He dress all in white; white shirt, white bell bottom pants, white hat, pointy white shoes. People gang around him. He shaking hand, he laughing — is only teeth you could see. He talk to some white people that liming by the gate, he talk to the fella who selling salt an' fresh nuts by the palm tree. He rock back and laugh. Then he stand up in the centre listening to Mano

Marcelin. I watch him walk round the side a the fete, where they have a drain and people taking chance to smoke a little tampi in the bush against the wall, and the herb smell sweet in the air when the wind blow, and sometime a woman get brush right there against the fence overlooking the ravine and nobody don't know. I see Frankie Macintosh, the arranger, join Kitchener there and they pat back and shake hand and laugh hard, like old man. I watch Kitch coming round by the bar where me and Lorna is. He watch me frankomen in my face, like if is me he been looking for but surprise to see me so he not prepared. But he come right where I lean up by the bar and want to shake my hand, 'Benny Reid, how life treating you?'

And I surprise now, because even though I meet him before in the radio station, me and Kitchener eh no friend. I hear he fuck up, how he doh eat nice. And the way he say my name, 'Ben-ny,' like something sharp not far behind. But I shake the hand. 'Ai, the Lord boy, how you doing? You come for a lil' jump up?' And I grinning, because people watching, '*A-A! Benny Reid and Lord Kitchener is friend? Benny big!*'

I suck my beer, 'You singing with Mano tonight?'

'Nah, I eh singing tonight. But I want talk to you.'

I dip my chin, '*Me?*'

'Yes, you self.'

He call for a Mackeson at the bar, and I watching him; everything. I watching the veins on his hand when he take the \$10 bill from his wallet, how the bill old, like it in there for years. I watching the bellbottom pants, how the seam sharp, white embroidery down the side; must be stage wear, he must be now come off stage in the tent. He turn to Lorna and he smile, 'Hello, Madam, nice to m-meet you.' And he give a lil' bow and shake Lorna hand.

Lorna watch him up and down, 'Nice to meet you Mr Kitchener.' And she done with that. She see a friend in the crowd and she wave she purse in the air. 'A gone over so Benny,' gone she gone. Mano done blow and the DJ playing now, a good Lord Nelson tune, People getting on. They pack up in front the big speaker, Lorna there dancing. I want to go too but Mr Kitchener in my arse, delaying me. He take a sip from his stout and as the bottle going up he watching me hard in my eye. Now that Lorna gone he free to stutter, he say, 'Who-who you like for the r-r-r, for the r-r, for the Road March?'

But I cool, Benny eh no fool. I don't want to look like a mook, or like I 'fraid; my woman around, is a public place, and I know how calypsonian is. I bow my head an' rub my chin, 'Well, it really have some good calypso this year, it hard to predict, but I like your one, 'Batty Mamselle', 'The Bull' nice too. Whole album nice, Sparrow have a good song too —'

'You like Sparrow? Oh ho. But like is only Sparrow you really like in truth, because, because, you eh playing my songs much on your radio station at all.'

I laugh, I have to shout, music loud, 'NAH MAN KITCH, HOW YOU GO SAY THAT? YOUR TUNES PLAYING. ALL THE FELLAS IN THE STATION PLAYING THEM, NOT JUST ME, THE ALBUM HOT, HIT PARADE, YOU TAKING THE ROAD AGAIN THIS YEAR, EASY.'

Kitch have a half grin on his face, like he waiting to hear more. Same time one thick red woman come and start to wine back on him. She have open teeth and a plastic cup in she hand — it smell like rum, straight, I could smell it on her breath, cigarette in her mouth, she giving off heat. She wearing sandals and her hair straighten, she big on top and behind, her skirt tight and ride up on her leg and my prick hard just from watching. Kitchener laughing but he eh really wining back eh, nah, he just leaning on the bar and the bar rocking because the red woman throwing some hard waist on him. Kitchener whisper something in her ear and she bust out one scandalous laugh, then she gone, she gone in the crowd, with she drink and the cigarette in the air, when she hear Lord Blakie song.

Kitchener turn back in my arse now, 'I sit down in my gallery with my radio today, Terror was there, you, you could ask him — we sit down there almost whole day ol'talking and allyuh only play 'Batti Mamsele' two time, whole day, two time. I hear Duke, I hear Sniper, Melody, I hearing plenty Sparrow, plenty, plenty Sparrow, so much Sparrow until I get so vex I dash the damn radio on the ground. Ask Terror. Allyuh have to play fair boy, fair. I fling it down boy, I tell you.' And he showing me how he mash up the radio, the man eye big in his head. 'Ah tell you, I fling it on the terazzo boy, my good hundred dollar Redifusion radio I buy in Huggins.'

I still smiling, tight like a puss, because I don't want people know is me get Lord Kitchener vex. He start again, 'How much Sparrow payin' allyuh eh? How much he paying? You know how much money, how much money I spend on

producer and studio, me one, musicians, arranger fee, then to press the damn record, eh? Like Radio Trinidad don't want Kitchener to eat. It does baffle me boy, is a bafflement. I know Sparrow paying allyuh, I know.'

I want to laugh, because Kitchener stuttering so bad that foam coming in the corner of his mouth. And I done know - long time - since Christmas - that The Mighty Sparrow taking the Road March in '69. I like Kitch, but I not really a Kitch man. Some people is Kitch, some people is Sparrow people. I more prefer Sparrow myself, because he have that bacchanal spirit.

Last year Kitchener catch everybody with 'Miss Tourist', all the big steelband play it in Panorama and he win Road March, easy-easy. The year before he had '67', he mash up town with that, sweet music. But nobody could beat Sparrow this year with 'Sa Sa Yea'. Nobody. Kitch lucky if he come second. A mean, 'Sa Sa Yea' is a masterpiece in calypso. I hear they ban it in Dominica, they ban it in Guadeloupe, St Lucia too, because is patois Sparrow singing and French Creole people could understand it. My grandmother does talk fluent patois but even she refuse to translate it for me, *sa sa yae, sa sa yae bonje, me sa oka chu eh mwe*.

Big man like Kitchener. With his English wife and the big house in Diego Martin. He win five Road March already, he have thousands of dollars and he still giving radio DJ pressure. Hear him: 'Allyuh does down press people in this country man. Carnival is next week, the radio should play everybody equal and let people decide which song they like best for Carnival. Is so Road March should be. Not to push one man all the time.'

The beer gone warm in my hand, I suck the dregs, 'Doh worry man, Kitch. Jourvert morning watch, all them steel band go be playing 'Batty Mamselle'. You have it again Kitch, you is the Road March King, everybody know that.' But the ol'bull still guffin' up.

Was Lorna had to come back and help me. She mamaguy Kitchener, she lyrics him, 'Oh I love your outfit Kitch. You know, my cousin in Canada gets me to send up all your records for her...oh, you know I studied nursing in England, in Middlesex.'

And is that cool Kitch down lil bit. He start to chat sweet with Lorna now, he sizing her up. He laugh, smart man laugh. Any woman that pass by Kitch mouth could get bite, mine and all. But then he put down his empty bottle on the

bar. 'Benny boy I gone, it have people waiting on me over so.' And he gone, like if was just a casual chat we had. Lorna say, 'Kitch give you ol'talk about what playing on the radio? I hear him.'

I suck my teeth, 'Steups. Let Kitchener haul he muddercunt yes! If he want more airplay why he eh put some good English pounds in my hand, eh? Let him just pass round the station with some proper cash and then everybody go play he stupid tune.'

Later on I taking a little dance with Lorna, I see Kitchener leaning on the wall by the drain, chatting to the same red woman. He watching me cut-eye. Same time the DJ play 'Sa Sa Yea' and the crowd break away.

I scrub bench to get a recording. When you get a recording as a calypsonian, is like you suck the golden apple. Young fellas like me couldn't get no recording. The first man to record me was Kitchener, 1967. Kitchener call me one morning and tell me we going to record. Just so. Was myself, Composer and Power, and he took us to a studio to do the recording. But I can't ask Kitchener how much I getting pay. I shame. I just glad to get a recording. So he told us to prepare a song to record and he told the record man, 'Take these fellas, these fellas good', and I record a song call 'Write that down in history'. It was a big thing for us. Kitchener told us that RCA would pay us. RCA had their office by the La Basse and I went across there about once or twice and the man there said he would check how much money he have for us but when I went back the company had dissolved. Kitchener say they rob him too and he would try and get some money for us but of course, that never happened.

—The Mighty Chalkdust

Easter in Trinidad

‘YOU SEE THAT MANGO there? Look where I pointing, you see it? By morning that one will be ripe. That’s starch mango, the best mango, mango father.’

The child angles his head, straining his eyes against the fading light to see the fruit, in that gap between dusk when night falls like a swathe, chasing colour from the earth, and the hills fade from deep green to black against the mango tree in the neighbour’s yard, up the incline, up the hill, where the leaves shiver in the cool breeze that blows the scent of burning sage, and sound of a radio, around the valley, beside the slippery ground near the chicken coop where Miss Sylvia plant galvanise for a shower curtain, rooted slant to croton palms in the reddish dirt, where her two pot hounds bark and rattle their bitter chains; black back crapaud still weeping in the gully.

Blackout.

No current in the valley. No electric light in the room. The power cut sudden. A steelband that had been playing in the indefinable distance tumbled, tinkled and stopped. The pan men cursed. Dogs barked and grumbled. Night; dark and rich with starlight creeps up the hill, and the moon, bruised like an eye that has cried, has no light to share tonight.

It is the second time this week that the people on this hill have to light pitch oil lamps and candles and wait for electricity to return. It excites the boy. For him this is an adventure. Darkness like a room to hide in, the scent of candle wax, sitting on the veranda in the long cool darkness. He had been eating his dinner when the power went. His mother had suggested he go to bed, but he had cried to be left awake. It was only 7.30, and he wanted to experience that magical moment when light sprang back open in the house; lights no one remembered were on, the radio, and the fridge to hum, to hear the voices that would praise the light all around Semper Gardens.

While they wait, his mother lights candles in the living room and the kitchen. She lights an elegant paraffin lamp and places it on the dining table, and they all sit on the veranda, on corrugated iron chairs, the three of them, watching night come to the Maraval valley, stars in their constellations and the firmament of heaven above. And from the high, civilised mountain side, on the other side of the

valley, where squatters build their shacks higher to the apex amongst the spindly pines, pitch oil lights blink in windows coming down.

The boy sits on his father's knee, resting his head against the man's chest, smelling the rancid copper scent of his perspiration. The father puts both his hands on the boy's small shoulders and leans forward to his right ear. 'If we get up early in the morning we could get that mango. You will come with me to pick it?'

'We could pick it?'

'Yes, as long as Miss Rose don't see we. We have to be smart; you smart?'

'Yes, I smart.'

'Well, you should go and sleep then, if you want to get up early.'

'But I want to see when the lights come back.'

'We doh know when current will come back though, it might be morning.'

'When light come back you will wake me up, Daddy?'

'OK, if you want.'

'Promise?'

'I will wake you.'

The hill still black with just the blink of yellow lamp light, but the pan band start back to play again, by flambeau, gently, from a ripple to a melody.

They sit there now, as man and woman/silence between them, with just the pious glow of the lamp and the sandflies around it to hum the darkness shut.

IS SO MUCH THE Grandmaster teach me, so many things. I remember once when I was staying with him there in Semper Gardens, learning at the master foot, I went to a dance in Woodbrook and I play myself till morning. I smoke tampi, I get high, I drink babash, get drunk, a fella had some bush meat, some quenk, I eat that. I wine on woman and woman wine back.

When I reach up in Semper Gardens was four in the morning, and as I going up the incline to the house, I see a light on in the dining room. When I reach up inside is Kitchener who there on the couch with his guitar strumming and singing. Was composing the master composing. I say, 'Morning, good morning.'

He say, Ai, you a'right?' and he gone back in the tune. And I stand up in the kitchen watching him build the song. How he tapping his foot, and sometime one kick out and he have a little tape deck he pressing. His head rolling back and his eyes fluttering, and when he don't have the words, he humming. He was making Road March while I was playing saga boy in a four dollars fete; and I call myself a calypsonian. He was making 'Margie'. And when she hear that, you know Margie come back in truth? Is so many things the Grandmaster teach me, so much.

IN 1969 MY MOTHER SENT ME money for a ticket and I left Kitch and went back to England. It were too much, all these women, and living in Trinidad. So I took my little boy and we went home. But Kitch came all the way to Manchester to beg me to come back. He came to the shop, he said, 'O gorm, Marge *doux-doux* darling, those stupid women don't mean nothing to me. Please come back, I miss the boy.'

So I agreed to go back, but when I got to Semper Gardens my neighbour Miss Sankar met me from the taxi, 'The coolie's in,' she said, 'Miss Marge, soon as you turn your back he bring this coolie girl here.'

And it were true, when I went upstairs there were a skinny Indian girl in the house, in my kitchen. I asked him, 'Kitch, are you mad? What are you doing with this girl? Why is she here? And you didn't even tell me?'

He said, 'I know you would be vex. You didn't expect me to cook and clean for myself did you? I had to get these people in, somebody have to iron my clothes, you know I don't have time for that.'

I said, 'Well I'm not unpacking my suitcase until she goes.'
And she did, she packed her things and left, she never said a word.

KITCH FALL OUT WITH ME in 1970 because he hear me tell a journalist that I'd like Blakie to win the Road March that year, to break the monopoly of him and Sparrow. I thought, well, give somebody else a chance; is only Sparrow and Kitch winning the Road March since 1963. And Blakie had a good song called 'A Simple Calypso' and he was hitting them hard in the tent with that song, radio was playing it, it was in the fetes. So I tell the newspaper boy, 'Yes, I like Blakie for the road, it would be nice for Blakie to win.'

And Kitch find out I say so and he didn't much like that. He meet me backstage at the tent one night, 'I hear you was in the papers boy.' As soon as he say that I know what coming next, was to share some licks, so I get shy now, 'You hear so? Who tell you that?'

'What, you feel I cyar read or what? I see you like Blakie tune for the Road March.'

'Well, I think Blakie tune good, you eh find so?'

'Well, yes, the tune nice.' And he gone his way.

When the mark bust, you know Kitchener come and win the damn Road March with 'Margie'. Blakie, Sparrow, everybody get bad licks on the road. For a while it look like Blakie was leading; plenty steel band playing his song. But when people find out that 'Marge' was really about Kitchener wife, and how he missing she, asking she to come back, the ballad touch the people heart and it run way with the road march crown, and everybody surprise.

Ting Tang

Carnival Monday, 1970

RENEGADES STEEL BAND coming across Keate Street beating 'Margie'. Fire in front, fire behind. The Mighty Duke, a boss calypsonian, stand up watching the band from the side of Memorial Square. Right where bottle does pelt and break, and moko jumbie does wine. Scope Duke pose in a deep green bellbottom jumpsuit; gold trim, the front zip down to his hairy navel. Duke, standing there like Tom Jones, hands on his hips, one leg push out in front so his totee print out long on his thigh. Afro, side burns and moustache, the master cocksman, horse teeth and head back, grinning in the sun. Duke, with his people buzzing 'round him like flies. They get hip by association, so they coasting plenty style, talking loud, liquor in hand, any music blow they throw a wine.

A white woman wrap her arm round Duke shoulder, her leg around his thigh, the other hand rubbing Duke belly like a harp. She see him sing and win the calypso crown in the Dimanche Gras last night and her blood take him one time. She ready to leave her husband. But Duke see Kitchener across the street, shuffling behind Renegades, and he peel her off to call out across the sound of the iron band beating, 'Kitchener!' A wave and the gold bangle jingle; thick country gold, rings on three fingers of each hand, the band passing close, black people deep in the iron section, cowbell and hub cap ringing — ting tang — music in your pweffen. The two calypsonians embrace, hear Duke, 'You passing the monarch straight or what?'

'I eh even see you there boy.' Kitch say, the English tang still in his craw. 'I see you beat them bad last night. Bad licks you share. How much crown you win now, two in a row?'

Duke grin, 'Three,' and he watching Kitchener from head to toe. The long stones man, the English man, the khaki pants, the Hawaiian shirt, the eyes that big and seeing everything, the brain that bringing in inspiration from air. Duke watch him. And then he say, 'They thought they had me, Composer especially. But is not yesterday I start to sing calypso. I know what I doing. You will compete next year? We miss you and Sparrow in the competition this time. You must come back again.'

‘We will see. If they organise proper, then maybe. Boy, I have to catch up with the band boy, people waiting on me.’

As Kitchener walks away, Duke, as if remembering what he had meant to say, calls out behind the band, ‘The Road March is yours. Is yours. Is a beautiful tune you have there, that ‘Margie’. And Duke spread out his stance in the middle of the government road, to watch Kitchener go. The big man going up the road, he chipping in the pan, woman in his arm, arms round his waist, they playing his song.

Carry him.

Carry him go.

Come and carry him.

Imagine that man make a ballad a road march, have people wining and falling in love all over Port of Spain.

Black Power

AUGUST. TOWN STILL TENSE with Black Power. Lord Kitchener in the white hot afternoon, on the corner of Independence Square and Chacon Street, outside the stone washed Maritime Insurance building, leaning on the bonnet of his Jaguar, wrist across wrist, talking to Manny who sells beef pies and mauby under the shade of a oversized red and blue umbrella. Kitchener wipes his lips with his handkerchief, he wipes his fingers, 'Gimme a next one dey Manny, the pies eating nice.'

The vendor sits on a rickety wooden stool behind his grease-stained glass display, his gold teeth glint in the sunbright. His speech is slow and casual. 'Dem fresh. Is 4'o'clock this morning I get up and make dem pies. I knead my dough, rise it twice, grate my cheese, season my beef.'

'You have sweet hand; is how long you making pies?'

'Kitch boy, is a long time yes, my mother — yes man, mauby you want?'

An office worker. So Manny pours a styrofoam cup of the sweet brown drink. As he gives it to the worker he grins, ragged at the gills. 'Loosen the tie lil' bit man, let the mauby go down, loosen it.'

The young man follows the vendor's advice, grinning, unstrapping the knot of the tie, letting the beads of sweat that were waiting on his neck run down to his chest. Ice rattles gently in the cup as he throws it back and drains it dry, sighs, wipes his lips with the back of his hand and walks away across Chacon Street, by the Treasury, upwards in the city. Kitchener and Manny watch him, retightening his tie as he hurries between the traffic.

Manny wipes the metal counter top, 'How the motorcar running? Parts must be expensive eh?'

'It expensive yes, but nothing doh go wrong with Jaguar so, if you care it.' From where they stand Manny and Kitchener can see the tangled masts of ships in the harbour, streets that run north-south and end at the jetty, at the old colonial port and fisheries where fish gut and shrimp stalk wash up and stinking, between the buildings to the right of the square where the sky opens up above the sea.

A woman walks along the square from the east coming down. Her afro is tall on her head, she wears dark sunglasses. Her hips swing, they dance in the stride. She is no older than 25. She wears a slim white bodice and a red mini skirt that rides up higher at the back, and high heeled, calf-high boots. Kitchener, facing her, sees her before Manny does and he leans on his bonnet with his chin cupped in the warmth of his right palm, watching the woman emerge through the crowd of faces, and the noise, and the scent of rotting fruit and silt in the drains, the car horns, the tangible mess of the city, and he composes spontaneously, translating the image into song:

*She was walking down the street.
Woman swing your waist,
coming down the road.
Brown sugar sweeter, sweeter than the white.
- bee dip bee dam pee pam pam...*

The young woman seems to be looking directly at him as she approaches. She moves past the book shop like a beat, the Sea Men's rum bar, the fried chicken shop, and a grin begins to spool across Kitchener's face. Manny is serving another customer, he turns to see what Kitchener is looking at and almost over pours the customer's mauby. The woman stops on the other side of the Jaguar's long bonnet. Kitchener stays bent where he is, resting his head on the hood. He pinches the brim of his hat down to the side, Cuban style, grins, crocodile style.

*One thing I know
brown sugar sweet
It sweet, it sweet like —*

'Are you Aldwyn Roberts?'

'Yes, that is me. What you want darling?'

'Marjorie's husband? Mr Roberts, from Semper Gardens?'

'Yes *doux-doux*, that's right. How I could help you?'

The woman comes around to his side, shakes his hand, she takes a brown manila envelope from her bag like a fan unfolding. 'Then this is for you.'

As he takes the envelope, the smile fades from Kitchener's face, slowly, like the sun edging behind a cloud. The woman steps back, as if to admire the Jaguar's bright red sheen. 'This is your car?'

'Yes, is my car.'

'Nice car.' And she gone with that.

Kitch turns the envelope over, it is addressed to him by name alone, *Aldwin Roberts*. Hand-written. There is no address.

‘Wh-wh-what is this?’

But the woman is already at the corner of Frederick Street. No glance back. Manny stands behind his cabinet, admiring the curvature of her, wiping the glass case with a rag. ‘What she give you dey boy? Accounts? Bills? Worries?’

Kitchener does not answer, he opens the envelope and reads the first lines of the letter. He hears himself speaking, the words seem to come from some far distance within, and echoing back, collapsing on themselves, ‘I get serve boy, M-M-Manny, divorce.’

‘Oh shit, pardner, you get catch,’ says Manny, as flies buzz round his pies.

Kitch, Take It Easy

MR PRIETO'S OFFICE was upstairs in a building on Maraval Road, set back from the main road in a gravelly yard. Downstairs, there was a long closed secretarial school. Its last tenant, Miss Arteley had defaulted on the rent and rowed back to Grenada with 4,000 Trinidad dollars in student fees she thief. Dust settled on the louvres there, spiders squatted webs in the recess gullies. On the right of the building there was a black railed stairway to the second floor. An air condition unit hummed on the wall there, dripping cold water onto the stairs, and a vast, Africa-shaped Jack Spaniard nest hung from the eave. Clients for the lawyer upstairs had to negotiate passing, or they might get bite, especially in dry season when the sun burning hard against noon and the asphalt road became soft and Picoplats and Blackbirds perched on electric wires, flapping their wings to cool themselves.

To the right side of the building there was a small pharmacy, on the left, a Sissons Paint shop. On the opposite side of the road there was a row of neatly painted shops: Ali's Rum shop, Mr Mac's One-Stop Grocery, Tasty Chicken, Stay Clean; the Portuguese laundry, Chex Bakery with the scent of cinnamon, coconut drops and hops bread baking, and lower down, as the road begins to bend into Port of Spain, a gas station.

Everyday for the past eight years, Ma Mable Mad-no-arse has sat on a stool in front of the pharmacy selling lottery tickets and fanning flies from a syphilitic wound on her left shin bone — and everybody said how when sore foot weeping so it don't heal. Sometimes she hummed hymns to herself, and sometimes she blew shrill songs with paper and a comb. Her face showed shallow rivers of age and long time scars from maccoing people business and over-smiling in the blinking heat, her eye lids drooped from Amerindian lineage in her blood. Ma Mable mad, but she see all that happened along that stretch of road. She saw the signal red Jaguar sedan when it swerved into the gravel yard in front of the office building, spitting stones behind. Was a Monday morning, bright and early, and how the engine grumbled and then ceased with a groan. She saw the tall long

mouth man in a seersucker shirt and a black fedora hat who stepped out, slamming the door shut behind him. Mable saw him climb — two stairs at a time — up the unprimed concrete stairs to the Lawyer's office. Where he grip the balustrade, silver glint. 'Oh lord' she sighed, 'Oh Lord, look trouble reach.'

Ursula, the receptionist sat at her desk filing her nails. To the front of her desk three empty chairs sat priestlike below shut louvres. There was a small table in the midst of the chairs, with dog-eared magazines and old newspapers on top. Kitch was blowing hard from his sprint up the stairs. 'Prieto there? Where Prieto? Prieto!'

'Sir, Mr Prieto is on the phone in his office at the moment, please take a seat, I will let him know you're here.'

'I doh need no blasted sit down, I need to see Prieto, call him for me nah? Please. Let him come, tell him is Kitchener.'

About two week ago, Marge had sat there, in one of those chairs, waiting to see Mr Prieto. It was drizzling the morning she came, and yet the sun was bold and fearless in the sky. People say when you see that it mean the devil and his wife fighting for a ham bone. And when Mr Prieto came up the stairs, swinging his black briefcase and wearing a navy blue suit with gold buttons open over his gut, he had seen Marge sitting there between two women, each waiting to consult him.

The Indian woman on the left of Marge was reading an expired *Trinidad Guardian* magazine, her ankles were crossed beneath the chair. She was a middle aged woman, with sunken cheeks and jet black hair pinned back by clips. The woman on Marge's right wore black, square rimmed glasses and a green garbadine dress with a mother of pearl broach pinned to the left breast. She did not smile with Mr Prieto when he walked in; her troubles were too close to her skin. She looked at her watch and sucked her teeth, '*Steups*, quarter to blasted eleven and he just reach.' The other women giggled, politely. Marge folded and unfolded her arms. Her face was a pallid sigh. The veins of her eyes were strained, red. She had dressed quickly that morning, yet still stylishly, in a sky-blue blouse and matching skirt with brown, patent leather court shoes. She had brushed her hair back in a band.

‘Good morning ladies, sorry for being late,’ Mr Prieto said. He was a good looking French Creole, about 48 or 49, with heavy eyelids and a neatly trimmed beard, his shirt open to his sternum. ‘I had to deal with something, friend of mine in some trouble, you know how it is sometimes, wife giving him pressure, just give me a few minutes eh, to catch myself.’ He paused over Ursula’s desk as he passed, collected his mail, then he went to his office.

The three women sat in the waiting room, waiting. The receptionist entwined her manicured fingers on the desk and spoke: ‘Miss Roberts? Mr Prieto wants to see you now.’ The other women looked quizzically at each other.

Above Mr Prieto’s office door there was a framed sign, written in ornate, vine-like calligraphy, *In God we trust, in man we bust*. Marge knocked.

‘Marge, what are you doing here?’

‘Mr Prieto, the two women out there, they been here before me.’

‘I know, but I can’t have Kitchener wife sit down out there with them rab. How it go look? Kitch go beat me if he find out I make you wait out there. So tell me, what you doing here?’

Outside in the reception area, the Indian woman leaned forward in her chair, she bite up. ‘That woman reach here last and Prieto seeing she first, you eh see that?’

‘Yes, he must be feel because she white she cyar wait like normal people. Is so they stop.’ She pushed her glasses frame up the bridge of her nose and continued, ‘She is Lord Kitchener wife, you know?’

‘Lord Kitchener wife?’ The Indian woman recoiled. ‘I don’t give one arse who she is, she could Eric Williams mother, is 5’o’clock I wake up to reach here from Chaguanas this morning.’ She turned to the receptionist. ‘Excuse me, Miss, Miss, how come that woman getting seen first? Me and this lady was here before her.’

The receptionist raised her head and said, ‘I’m sorry Madam, I’m sure Mr Prieto won’t be too long.’

The Indian woman sat back in her chair, ‘This not fockin’ right at all-at all. She really Kitchener wife?’

‘Yes child, is white woman he love, you don’t know that?’

‘I vex, this Mr Prieto reach a hour late and then call in the white woman first.’

‘Is a’right, she sit down here weepy-weepy. Let she go first, poor thing.’

The Indian woman sucked her teeth, ‘*Steups*. Poor thing? Let every blasted jackass bear he own burden yes.’

Mr Prieto motioned for Marge to sit, then he sat on his leather swivel chair, crossing his ankles; argyle, Governor’s socks. ‘Kitch know you here?’

‘No. He’s in St. Kitts.’

‘So you want to go through with this? You sure?’

Marge’s lips trembled, ‘Yes.’ The muscles in her stomach clenched, a heat came over her, ‘I can’t take it anymore, Mr Prieto. He’s picked up with this young dancer girl from his tent. And she’s only 17, what does he want with such a young girl?’

‘Well, Marge, you know how some men get, when they older, y’know, they like to feel they’re still young.’

‘Well, it’s enough, I want to go back to England. I can’t do it.’

Kitchener’s eyes bulge with rage. Beads of sweat begin to build just under his hat line. He walks past the receptionist’s desk, oblivious to her protests. He opens the office door without a knock and finds the lawyer sitting, with his legs stretched out at the side of his desk, speaking on the phone and adjusting his tie with his free hand. Kitch puts his hands on the desk and leans forward, ‘Is you give Marge divorce paper? Eh? You mad?’

Prieto rises, cupping the phone’s receiver with his palm. ‘Kitch please — Miss Dass, listen, I’ll have to call you back, I know, OK. Kitch sit down nah, come man.’

‘You gi’ my wife divorce paper?’

‘Oh gosh, Kitch, why you so? You does get vex easy eh? Oh gosh man, relax.’

‘How you go-go behind my back and do such-such a thing? Is mad you mad? To break up my home? You want me strangle you?’

Mr Prieto sits back in his chair. ‘The woman come here crying, Kitch, what I could do? I promise to help she out. I can’t tell her, Oh I can’t help you, because you is Kitchener wife. Is a business I trying to run here y’know, she pay me hard cash. Plus I have a duty to —.’

‘Duty? That is my wife boy, my wife! If she come to you asking for divorce you have a right to call me one time. One time.’

‘But how I could do that to a client eh? Is private, confidential matters.’

Kitchener’s hands form fists. Spittle foams like frog spawn at the corners of his mouth. He licks it moist, makes growling guttural sounds, thumps his chest. ‘Private? You put she in house? Is me Kitchener put she in house, me one!’

Prieto shifts uneasily in his chair, the swivel creaks. ‘Oh gorm Kitch, take it easy. What you expect me to do?’

‘You fockin’ me up man! You-you, you will have to drop the case!’

Prieto leans forward with his elbows on the desk, he smiles. ‘Things in motion already pardner, I can’t stop that. Listen man, Marge not stupid. She know about all them woman you friendin’ with in town. I was shock, she know all your business boy, like she have spy on you. She come here crying to me, Kitch. She say how you does leave she home whole day and go and hunt woman. She lie? People does talk. What I go do? She does see you in the Bomb.’

‘You-you-you asking me what you go do? You confuse?’ And with that Kitchener grips the protruding edge of the desk, where the laminate top meets the base, and he heaves it upwards. The desk capsizes backwards. The drawers slide out like life rafts from a shipwreck, sending the papers on the desk fluttering. The typewriter slides and rattles to the floor with a jangle of knots and vowels. The lawyer leaps from his chair and spreads himself against the window, or else the desk would bend the angle on him and break his damn foot. Instead it falls on the chair, breaking both armrests. Prieto’s mouth is open like a jug top, his face, a poem with no words.

Kitch swings the office door open so hard the handle punctures the partition wall. Outside in the white hot gravel car park he looks at his watch, 12 noon. He drives off, wheels spitting stones from the driveway. Ursula hurries down the corridor, but in her narrow skirt she can only make short steps. She leans into the office and seeing the desk and the damage done, puts a palm to her mouth. ‘Oh my God, Mr Prieto, are you alright? Should I call the police?’

Mr Prieto is at the window, he can feel his thighs trembling in his slacks, his heart beating, he watches Kitchener’s Jaguar shoot its red flash down the Saddle Road.

‘Nah,’ he says, ‘doh call no police,’ his eyes still fixed upon the hot road.

Mamie Water

HOW LONG HAS SHE BEEN standing in the kitchen, looking up at the blue-green hills, and the grey clouds above?

In the last drawer of the wardrobe where she keeps blouses and frocks she no longer wears, there is a heavy, ring bound photo album. Several of the pages have broken away from the binding, and the corners are curling in layers. Inside, there are photos stuck neat under cellophane: Manchester, 1953, wedding photos, faded black and whites of Kitchener and her at the Cosmopolitan, or glancing back, walking towards Old Trafford, with Ras Makonnen, with Adelaide Hall and Shirley Bassey, backstage at the Manchester Hippodrome, with the Mighty Sparrow on his first trip to England, with Edric and Pearl outside the 509 club in Battersea, with Nat King Cole at the Piccadilly Hotel.

There was a time that these images were part of the accoutrements that kept them together, proof of what they once were. To look at them now is to enter each moment again, but also to remember the darker moments on either side.

She sits in the living room. The radio is always on. Birdsong in the peak of trees. Cicadas and a cormorant in the breadfruit tree. Blackbirds on the wire she would throw rice to. She is peeling each photo of them together, out from the album's pages.

On Diego Martin Main Road the sky darkens again. She continues towards the sea, turning right into Carenage, where the sea can be glimpsed like blinks between fisherman shacks, in blue fragments, the scent of fresh fish. Here the sky expands the way it does when the sea is near. The road rises and the land falls away to her left, a sharp drop, a plummet to stone. Lightning cracks and forks like veins over the dark and deep ocean.

On her right the hills rise, tragic blue, blue in green, monolithic against the gossamer fog of clouds threatening to burst. Shacks on these hills, and shacks

further up with bachelor galvanise trembling in the wind. Thunder falls from these hills like rock stone tumbling.

She turns the car left down a gravel road with tall bush on both sides; Bain Avenue. A man with a bucket of blue crabs is coming up the track with a cutlass swung from his waist. He wears the clothes of a labourer. Muddy Khaki trousers rolled up over Wellington boots, a dirty white sleeveless vest. He is whistling and the crabs in the bucket scratch at the sides of it. When Marge passes he waves his free hand.

The car tilts on the rugged terrain and then stops at the crest of the cliff — vista of the island's western peninsula, curling round to the right like an arm to the Gulf of Paria, extending out to darkness on the horizon. Once, one Sunday, Kitch hires a boat and its driver, and takes her cruising among the Bocas, the islets west of the mainland. As they pass each island he names each one. 'That is Carrera, is a prison. That is Gaspar Grande, people say it have pirate treasure there. That is Chacachacare, is a leper colony.'

Another Sunday they had been to Chaguramus. She remembers, walking, late in the afternoon, further out into the sea than she thought possible. The shore seemed half a mile behind, but the silky clear water still reached her thighs. He had held her hand because the sand beneath their feet was like wet clay she could sink into. On their way back home, with the sunset so crisp and fried red, he had pulled into this same gravel road, Bain Avenue, along the coast from Carenage, to show her the true expanse of the island and the infinite swoop of the ocean; its sheer breadth, its power in death and beauty.

Now, with the oppressive sky pressing down from the weight of an impending storm, and the ocean rippling and bucking against the stone below, she walks to the edge of the cliff where a wooden barrier is all that separates this life from the next. White pine of the barrier, aged smooth and cool to the touch.

And in that sudden moment after she throws the photographs over the precipice, she regrets it. She wants them back. But they flutter on the wind and release like birds from an opened cage

... ..

spiral and wing and buffer by gust and float away on the foam.

Too Late Kitch

MARGE CAME DOWN the stairs which led from the veranda to the driveway. Her walk was light and brisk like the pages of a newspaper being turned by a gust. She did not wave to the neighbours. She did not say goodbye to the dogs, or stroke their heads. She sat in the front seat of the car, in dark shades of silence, smelling of talcum power.

Kitchener lifted her suitcases to the trunk and said hello to the neighbour, Mr Henry, who had that moment stepped out of his car to open the gates to his yard. Kitchener started the car, glancing across at Marge, exciting the engine more times than necessary, and looking for some capricious glint in her face, some uncertainty which he could exploit. There was none. The boy sat silently in the backseat.

At the airport he decided not to watch her and his son depart from the waving gallery. Instead he stood on the grassy embankment in the car park with his hands shut behind him, palm within palm, watching the runway through the wire fence; the aircraft like a flock of giant fireflies, pulsing in the dusk. He could see passengers walking across the tarmac and up the stairs to the blue and white Boeing 707, but the noise of the engine dulled his sight. The airplane taxied and rolled, out of sight, to the edge of the world. And then it returned with a rush, lifting, straining into night. He watched its white wing lights blink and dissolve into darkness.

In the first days after she left, the momentum of his arrogance sustained him and he would call on his calypso friends; the old one marble-eyed test from Lavantille, the tobo foot one from Besson Street Estate, the big eye journalist who does talk plenty-plenty, the one who never let anyone forget that he had a diploma in journalism from a correspondence school in London. They would gather in his garden to drink and lie, and to re-thread calypso lore. Then there were the women who sometimes came with these men: loud women with quick, stinging tongues and heavy thighs that made men's eyes spring water when they crossed and

uncrossed them. Women who would stand up like man to piss, with their arms akimbo, and suck beers raw from the bottle. Women who would sit on his lap and stroke the back of his neck.

On those Sunday mornings, with Scotch and soda in the red mountain soil of his back-yard, beneath the washing lines and the lime tree branch, someone would lean a ladder on the dwarf coconut tree to pick a branch of the sweetest yellow nuts. Someone else would cleave each with a cutlass and pour the water into a mug. Kitch would bring ice, cups and cutters like salt nuts and salt pork. He would lean back on an iron chair and strum random chords and parang rhythms on his guitar.

The big eye journalist would pull his chair closer to Kitch's, 'Kitch how you quiet so today, you sit down there you not saying nothing. You have tabanca or what?'

'Me? No man. You think is now I know to deal with woman?'

'I know when man get a good tabanca they does feel to just lie down on the cold ground, anywhere, and they not talking to nobody. When my wife leave me I cry long tears. I get weak, I not shame to tell you. All the time I telling she "Why you eh go, eh? Go your way, go!" Eh heh? One day I come back from work and the woman did really gone. I bawl like a cow. Is a process boy, you does get over it. It does take time. But I see you with a young girl in the car the other day, so seem like you doing a'right ol'man.'

One overcast morning he went down the driveway to retrieve his mail from the box. Miss Sankar was watering her flower garden with a hose. She looked up, 'Good morning.'

'Morning Miss Sankar.'

'Marge leave you again?' She sprayed the geraniums, the marigold, the big aloes plant.

'I don't think she eh coming back this time, she leave me here with all this cleaning to do.' And he laughed.

Miss Sankar, looked over her glasses, she released her thumb from the nozzle of the hose so the water rolled, full and soft to the earth. Then she bent to tighten the faucet shut. 'You could blame her? If it was me I left you long time. Get a maid. I hear you have a young girl; let her clean and cook for you.' And with that she left him standing on the incline, with his letters in his hand.

The Mighty Chalkdust, 1971

IT HAVE TWO FELLAS in calypso will tell you if you singing damn stupidity. Is Kitchener and Duke. And I suppose Duke get that from Kitch. Kitchener never used to put water in his mouth to talk, he will tell you plain, 'That song is shit.'

A fella call Doctor Zhivago singing. He get about three encores in the tent and when he finish sing he come back stage, Duke and Kitchener there. He ask Duke, 'Duke, what you think of the song boy?'

He expecting Duke to say, 'Well, wow, great, you get three encore.' But Duke say, 'That song eh good you know. That song eh good.'

Zhivago frown, he turn to Kitchener, 'That eh good...Kitch?'

Kitch say, 'That song eh good boy, stupidity you singing, bullshit you singing there.' Kitchener was that kind of fella. He was a straightforward critic and calypsonians respected him for that.

Another time, Allrounder singing in St Thomas, he singing in a dress. He get about nine encore. He come backstage now, Kitchener and I in the back there talking. Well, from the time I see Allrounder I done know what he coming for, so I bow my head. He come to me, 'Chalkie, you hear me? How I went?'

I say, 'Well, you get plenty encore so that must mean you went good.'

He make the mistake of asking Kitchener, 'Kitch, how I went, you like it?'

Hear Kitch: 'How you went? You is a disgrace to calypso!'

It had another fella call Wonder Boy. He meet Kitchener on Henry Street and telling Kitchener he want to sing in the tent. So Kitchener say, 'OK, sing your song let me hear,' and they walking together.

Wonder Boy say, 'But Kitch, oh gorm, how I go sing the song just so in front all these people on the street?'

Kitch say, 'If you cyar sing in front of me and these people you feel you could sing in front the audience in a tent?' And Kitchener dismiss him. After that Wonder Boy stop singing calypso *oui*.

After Trinidad Carnival Kitch would go to St Thomas. From St Thomas he going Miami by boat, then New York by train. He stay in New York till labour day

Carnival, after that he come back to Trinidad to prepare for the next year Carnival. He had a routine, we used to tour together. A fella from St Kitts came to me once and tell me he trying to get Kitchener in St Kitts and Kitchener wouldn't go. But the man hear me and Kitchener close, so if I could talk to him. He say, 'Chalkie boy, I paying the man 7,000 US dollars.'

I say, 'Well yeah, I could ask him.' Because 7,000 US dollars, is good money. So the guy say, 'Look, a leaving the money for Kitchener with you.'

I say, 'What? Why you don't give him yourself?'

He say, 'You give him nah, you give him for me nah Chalkie? He will listen to you.'

I say, 'Well pardner, all I could do is talk to Kitchener. I cannot promise anything.'

He say, 'Yes Chalkie, just talk to him for me nah man, and offer him the money, give him the money straight away.' Cause if Kitchener in St Kitts, the fella know the whole of the island coming out.

But 7,000 US dollars in a paper bag in my car. I frighten.

I go by Kitchener, he was watching TV. 'Kitch, wha'happening?'

Everything all right?' So and so we ol'talk lil bit. Because I cyar go and talk to Kitchener about no show in St Kitts just so. I have to soften him up first. After a while I say, 'Well Kitch, this fella Kenny Bell, he eh talk to you? About the show in St Kitts?'

Kitch say, 'Yeah...'

I say, 'Well, he want you go St Kitts and he give me the money to give you.'

Kitch say, 'He-ee-ee he give you money to g-g-give me?'

I say, 'Yes man, he give me 7,000 dollars and I have it right here for you.'

Hear what Kitchener tell me: 'Chalkie, if I going St Kitts with you, Stalin or Sparrow I going. But he want me to go St Kitts and s-s-sing with some jackass, some Lord Jooking Board.'

Kitchener not going on a show with some reggae boy. Or some jump up fella, or some quack calypsonian from England. If you want Kitchener to go on a show at Goldsmiths University, Kitchener not asking how much you paying him, nah, he asking you, 'Who else on the show?' And if you tell him is somebody from England or some St Kitts calypsonian, he eh going, he eh going!

KITCH WOULD ALWAYS remind you he live in England. He would say, 'Is sixteen years I live in England you know? Sixteen years.' And he use that like a social currency. Somebody would say, 'cow milk,' and he'd say, 'Oh, when I uses to live in England, I used to get fresh milk deliver every morning, fresh cow milk!' He ready to tell you how he met Princess Margaret, how she buy sixty copies of a record he make, how he used to perform at the Savoy and how his salary was £100 a night plus tips.

But he don't like plenty TV or radio interview because of the stuttering and he will eat up tape if you wait on him to finish. And sometime when they interview him he would forget he in Trinidad and say things like 'My *mate* Freddie' or how this or the other was 'brilliant' or 'excellent,' and people would watch him, and talk behind his back. Vocabulary. Women would point at him with their mouths. 'A-a! You eh hear he? He feel he is a Englishman, he feel he bright.'

'Yes, once they go away little bit and marry white woman is so they does come back.'

But the Kitchener I know to work with is just a country bookie; he like country people, the smell of manure, river lime, bush meat, he like them things. He is a man like to keep money in mattress. I used to tell him, 'Kitch, if you want me to do accounts work for you, I could do that, put your money in the bank, invest it.' But he harden.

It had a time we used to lime down Wrightson Road, what used to call the Gaza Strip in the '50s; that strip of road from Gatachre to Colville Street. It had about five nightclub along there, rum bar, brothel and frolic house. If you have a lil' money you could get action, you could gamble, drink whisky, buy pussy, do business, anything. If you want to hire a hit-man or some vagabond to bust somebody head for you, is there you go.

And all the big boys used to lime there; all the top calypsonians. Men like Tiger, Duke, Blakie, Sparrow, even Lion with the monocle and the cane. When them movie stars come to Trini the strip was the first hotspot they hitting. Robert Mitchum, Tyrone Power, Eli Kazan, Chubby Checker, even Sidney Poitier was

down there, yes, Sidney Poitier was there one Carnival, and Belafonte too. Remember Melody was writing songs for Belafonte at one time so he bring him down from New York.

Melo had everybody laughing that night when Belafonte was there. Melo like to show off, he was a joker and a scamp. We was sitting on the roof veranda of the Caribou Club, firing some Scotch in the moonlight, shit talking, relaxing. Now, even though we carrying on, everybody kinda nervous because Harry Belafonte there. People downstairs want to come up for autograph, to meet him, but the manager lock off the rooftop with a chain, so only VIPs up there; big men talking.

Melody had just come back from America and was leaning on the wall overlooking Wrightson Road, wearing these jackass baggy pants that he said was the latest style in New York. But the crotch hanging low like Melo had donkey stones. So naturally, the fellas were making laughs at it. Kitch was the first one to say something, 'Melo, what kind of pants is that boy. How the crotch long so?'

Melody say, 'Ai, you leave my pants alone. You old timers don't know a damn thing about style.' He say *st-yle* like it have two syllables.

Kitch lean back, 'A'right crotch, you talking fashion but I never see you in a good suit yet. Only seersucker and hot shirt, not one good suit you have. Like is a fisherman make them pants for you.'

Well, we laugh like drake duck. And for the rest of the night we call Melo 'Crotch.' Melo laughing too but he 'fraid the name stick. He play he vex, he start to steups. But remember, Melody is a master of picong, so his mouth not nice. He raise off the banister and he say, 'Haul allyuh mother arse. Kitchener, you playing you don't know why I have to wear these pants? You see it a'ready, is a child foot I carrying here, so my ballroom must have room to move. You wearing suit with long jacket because your ballroom small and you have to hide it.' And Melo start to walk around the veranda like a duck, like if his knees so bandy from the weight, they couldn't straighten. The fellas laugh till they get weak.

Belafonte lean across an' hug-up Melo, 'See, see, that's what happens when you mess with Lord Melody.'

When the waitress come with a tray of drinks and cutters, Melody walking the same stupid way behind the girl; the poor girl almost drop the damn drinks.

She was bulling there too, yes; it had rooms in the back. Black girl. Black like molasses. She wasn't a pretty girl, but she was talented.

That night me and Kitch leave the club with two women. Venezuelans. We badden their heads with Scotch. Kitch driving the Jaguar he bring down from England. Leather seats, wooden steering; a good car. We head east up Wrightson Road, and cut across by the electric factory, we going round the savannah because Kitch want to eat a chicken roti from Miss Dolly before he go and bull. And he driving like a beast because it late and the road clear, and he drink two stout. When we reach Maraval Road, by Stollmayer Castle, we hear a siren. Light flashing. Police. One of the women say, 'Go, go! No stop. No, no stop, no passport.' But the way the squad car coming up behind us was to stop. The women jump out and run down in the hollows by the botanical gardens, they gone. Good money waste.

The police drive up beside us and a indian lean out the window, 'Where allyuh going so quick? Switch off your engine.' Kitch switch off and come out the car; he step out broad, the look on his face like the police delaying him from some important business. The officer come out his car, is he one alone, a black Indian, he build tough, thick moustache, muscular. Before he could open his mouth Kitchener was on him,

'Yes officer, what you want with me? What I do? I do something?'

The officer explain to Kitch that he was driving without headlights on, and speeding too.

'Speeding? Nah, I wasn't driving fast, you mad or what? You stop me for shit.'

The officer stop taking notes and watch Kitch, 'I mad? You driving without headlights on, with two prostitute in your car and calling me mad? You want to spend the night in jail? What your name is?'

'My name? You don't know who I is?'

'No sir, I don't know you, what name you have?'

Kitch laugh, 'Man, you making joke. You, you doh know me? You doh recognise me? Where you come out from?'

But Kitch had to tell him, 'Aldwyn Roberts'

'Licence and registration? This is your car?'

Kitch didn't bother to answer him. He just reach behind the sun shade and take out the papers give him. The fella turn in my arse now and flashing his torchlight in my face where I sit down in the front seat. He ask me my name, I tell him. He write it down. He check Kitch documents. 'Yes, Mr Roberts, how much you drink tonight?'

All this time people passing on Cipriani Boulevard and slowing down to see. Kitch grinding like a sugar mill. He don't want people recognise him so he pull his hat right down over his eyes; he cussing and mumbling, and when he vex so he does stutter bad-bad. 'Officer, look 'ere, let me go my way please, let me go my way. Is one blasted stout I drink. One s-s-stout and a nip of rum. I look drunk to you? Eh? A big man like me, you s-stop me for nonsense. Is these things does m-make me want to go back England. Look, look, I going my way,' and he go to open the car door. The corporal get belligerent, he say, 'Boss, move from the car, I eh finish with you yet. You feel you could guff up on me? You don't know I could carry you down to the cells right now for solicitation and obstruction of justice. You feel because you have big car you above the law?' And he put a hand on he holster. Revolver there, the handle peel back like dog prick.

When I see that I talk, 'Look now, look, Mr Officer, Kitch, all yuh ease up nah man. Let we live in peace. Officer, this is Lord Kitchener, you must know is Kitchener; it eh no criminal.'

The officer laugh and shake his head, he taking his notes. 'You could be Haile Sellasie or Doctor Kildare, you can't drive so in town.'

Kitch vex. He feel insulted because the black Indian treat him like a stepchild. When the man satisfy with we he give Kitch back his documents, he say, 'Allyuh best go from here now, go now before I lock up your arse. Turn on your headlights. Go, go from here now.' And we just pull out, and go.

So much years I know Kitchener I never see him get vex so, except one time in '66 when he kick off a sink backstage at the calypso tent because the MC make a joke on how he tongue tie. And Marge tell me how sometimes they used to be home cool-cool and he get vex for the slightest thing, like how the house looking untidy, or how his soup too hot to eat, so Marge have to blow it, or he will capsize table and fling plate. He wasn't easy you know. It take him a lil' while to settle back in Trinidad and for a while it seem like he was vex with everything.

Eugene Warren, 1973

YOU KNOW HOW WHEN you playing mas you does get some good vibes? Well, I could remember how in 1972 they put off Carnival till May because of the polio epidemic. And up to when they announce that, Kitchener was leading the Road March race with a tune call 'Mrs Harriman'. Kitch release that the previous December, as usual, in time for Carnival. He don't know Carnival getting postpone. And smart-man Sparrow come late in the season — in late January, an leggo 'Drunk and Disorderly.' Lord, well that mash up everybody, including Kitchener, an' Sparrow take the crown.

*Drunk and disorderly
Always in custody
Me friends and me family
All man fed up with me
cause a' drunk and disorderly
Every weekend I in the jail
Drunk and disorderly
Nobody to stand meh bail.*

The next year now, 1973, Kitchener write on that; how Carnival get put off till May, and how rain wash it out. The song was 'Rain-O-Rama'

*An' they start to jump around, and they start to tumble down,
and they fall down on the ground, if you see how they gay.
But what was so comical, in the midst of bacchanal,
rain come and wash out mas in May.*

Ice in your ice boy, that was tune! Town went mad, and Kitchener take back the Road March crown. Nobody, not even Sparrow coulda compete with that one. Was eight bars in the verse, sixteen in the chorus.

I was playing guitar pan with the Marubunta Steel Band, and that year we come out in fancy sailor outfit — white bell bottom suits, shirt jack with the glittering green trim, and we throwing powder and we blowing whistle. We beat 'Rain-O-Rama' all through Port of Spain; Adam Smith Square, Tragerete Road, St James.

That was a Carnival, them days was sweet, sweet mas.

Valerie, 1974

FOUR ROADS. I was walking up Four Roads, Diego Martin. I was 17 and working at Fernandes in Lavantille, and every day I used to have to pass through Four Roads to go home. One afternoon I minding my own business walking. When a-a! I hear a car horn blow behind me. Then the car slow down on the road next to me, so people have to drive around it. Is a fancy car. When I look inside: two old man; both of them in hat and suit. The one driving I recognise was Lord Kitchener, the calypsonian. The next man just sit down there grinning. Kitchener lean across, 'Darling, where you going? You want a drop?'

I say, 'Well no, I going home, no thank you.'

'You going home? Where you living? Let me drop you nah? What is your name?'

'Valerie, but is OK. I will walk.' And I keep walking, because I not going in no man car just so.

'A nice girl like you, Valerie, you shouldn't be walking this dangerous road on your own. You could get bounce, these drivers so careless. You want iron bounce you?'

I laugh. So he stop the car and asking me one set of question. Where I coming from, if I have boyfriend, where I working? When I tell him I working Fernandes, he say, 'Oh ho, you working Fernandes? OK, well tomorrow I have to drop somebody in the airport and if, if I passing by Fernandes, I might, if, if I have time, I might come and pick you up, and bring you home, because I not living far from here. But you have to give me your phone number.'

I say 'Well...OK, no problem.' But I confuse and I watching him. What Kitchener want with me? He ask me how old I was, I tell him 18.

You know the next day when I come out from the factory I see the car park up outside the gate. I get frighten. I was with some friends and I go amongst them and hide to pass. But Kitchener see me and he know I see him, so he call, 'Valerie,' but I run.

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By the time I reach home the telephone ringing. My father say, 'A man on the phone for you.' It was Kitchener, but I couldn't tell my father that. Kitchener was vex. Oh, how I leave him there like a imps and embarrass him. How he is a big man and he was only being kind, and how he went out of his way to pick me up. He want to know who is the fellas I was with, he want to know why I treat him so.

The next day he was there again. I get in the car this time, and is so things start. But it take a long, long time; it take about two years before I really let my family know, before I say 'OK, Kitchener is my man.' Because I didn't want no old man, I wanted to meet boys my age. But he was very charming and polite, he was a gentleman.

He told me he was married to an English woman. But he tell me and his wife was having problems and that he was going to leave her. I never meet her. Those evenings I was doing a course in Port of Spain, and he used to come and pick me up every night — if he was in the country — and bring me home. One night he pick me up and say he left his wife. He said she was going back to England and that they were selling the house. But he could see that I didn't believe him so he took me outside and opened the car trunk and showed me he had one plastic bag of clothes in there; a couple shirt, socks, some drawers. I say, 'That is all the clothes you take with you?'

'Yes, I will go back for the rest.'

'So where you will live?'

And he close the trunk and say, 'Doh worry.'

I know for a while he was staying with Pretender; maybe Errol Peru help him, and then the government gave him one of the new houses they were building in Mt Hope, and I went to live there with him. But when I got there, the walls not paint, is bare cement, no furniture, no stove, just a bed. I thought, *Lord, I leave my parents house for this?* But we bought some chairs and a couch, a chest of drawers, I fixed up the kitchen, and we made it a home the best we could.

Next thing coming now is tour. He have to go to Aruba, St Thomas, New York, Montreal and he want me to come. I say, 'All right.' He carry me town to take out my passport, get visa, injection. When we hit New York, I remember, we was on a boat on the Hudson River and there was a calypso party on the boat. And that year, 1973, the dance was 'the bump', so people disco dancing an' bumping

on the deck. I hear Kitch start to hum, and anytime I hear that, I know, he get a melody, he composing.

He said, 'When I get back to Trinidad I going to write a tune for this dance. I go write a bump.' And as soon as we land back in Trinidad that August, he gone, was to start recording next year Carnival album. Art De Coteau produce and arrange, The Sparks sing the chorus. That album was, 'Tourist in Trinidad' and the last song on that album was '1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 Bump'

Then he start to organise the tent. 1974 the Calypso Revue was in Princess Building, right by the savannah. He had a dancer there to dance the bump but like she wasn't able. One night he ask me if I could dance it, and if I would consider dancing in the tent. So I told him I would think about it. Because even though I could wine, I don't know nothing 'bout dancing on stage. But I see it was worrying him eh. Carnival coming and he have this big 'bump' tune but nobody to dance it. So I said I would give it a try.

He took me to the seamstress in Belmont to get a gold hot pants outfit make. He carry me to the newspapers, on T.V. the radio, advertising the tune and the tent, and when the tent open, it sell out. People all down Chancery Lane waiting to get in. When it was my turn to dance the crowd went crazy. Next day, the pictures was in all the papers.

Epilogue

So for this Carnival
when you're jumping up take a break
Try and take in this song I make
To remember for old times sake
— The Mighty Sparrow, 'Memories'

When you get to know well its gonna
break your heart.
— Lord Kitchener, 'Tribute to Spree'

THE CARNIVAL BEFORE, I was in Trinidad, and I went to look for him at his house in Diego Martin. He was so glad to see me, he say, 'Let's take a drive.' And we went up by Fitzroy Coleman in Lavantille. Coleman had some chickens there in a coop, and he gave us some eggs, and then the three of us sit down in the gallery talking, sun going down, we looking out over Port of Spain and we could hear a steel band practising.

The talk turn to reminiscing on England. I ask Kitchener if he miss England and he lean forward so I could hear, 'Sometimes boy, I does miss the life we used to live up there, fellas I used to lime with. I had a ball in England, but I don't miss the cold, couldn't take the cold. That weather bound to make anybody run back home.' He turn in my tail now, 'And you, Gus, you eh think is time you come back home? You don't miss Trinidad? A good sea bath, a good wild meat. Since the 50s you up there. Why you don't come back? You want to dead in England?' And I watch him.

But is how he say, 'You want to dead in England?' That stay with me. And when I hear my good friend sick, I catch the first flight to Trinidad. And when I reach in the hospital I see him lying there. He seeing me, he hearing, but he couldn't even talk. His Madam there, sopping his head. Time I reach back in London, is dead he dead.

I used to always think he would outlive me. He is a fella never smoke, never was a big drinker, he eat good, he care himself. I always thought I woulda go before him. But every year the Grandmaster consistent, since 1940-something he making kaiso, and that is over sixty years. And every year he coming good, up until the last. But the old bull was breaking down, and people was talking; he was weak. He must've known he was sick, but that scamp never tell nobody.

The Inconsolable

IS REAL TEARS that rolling there; that man really crying. Surround him, with fifty calypsonian, with cush-cush musk and lily of the valley. Wipe the tears from his funeral suit. Steady him before the microphone, so he can sing, hold him, he can't bear to face the Grandmaster casket. And the chorus, help him sing it:

*Grandmaster, wherever you are compé,
just for you, we coming
with real fire this year*

Because he did love the man. Madly. With a vengeance and a fire. With the sweetest verse of picong in his throat. *Mauvais langue*. 'Small island, Grenadian, nowherian, go from here with yuh calypsong, that aint calypso.' Road March Champion, Calypso King. Help him. He can't open his mouth. The muscles of his jaw are turning to stone, to keep his water from running out.

He was there, *compé*, December.1962. When the Grandmaster land at Piarco Airport and couldn't step a stride without camera flashing and calypsonian swarming like wood lice, to touch the master hand. Who don't know him, to hear him, to see how England weather brutalise his skin. Well, is so they surround the Grandmaster casket at noon at The Trinity Cathedral. And is so they surround the master great rival, with heat and dust suffocating him in the pew. Sing with him, sing the minor with the Sparrow, prop his sorrow, wipe his face.

*Sugary, peppery,
Kitch was never ever one for class.
Grandmaster, Where ever you are compé
just for you,
we come out with real fire this year.*

Carnival Tuesday, 1987

WE NOW REACH TOWN and taking that legendary walk up Frederick Street, through mas and muscle and every junction blazing. We pass through Raoul Garib band by Park Street; woman in silver bikini wining by the Royal Jail, jumbie peeping over the wall, and all about is horn you hearing and bass rattling the road. Round by Memorial Square, we see Peter Minshall band coming up Keate Street with masqueraders a thousand deep. And when you see Minshall that mean David Rudder and Charlie's Roots on a truck somewhere near behind.

The great King David was there in truth, hanging out the side of the band truck with a towel round his neck, bringing in the chorus:

*This is not a fete in here, this is madness!
This is not the kinda jam where you stand up like a moomoo,
de riddim go jam you.*

Is so we end up crossing the big yard stage with Minshall and Roots, to find ourselves chipping through the savannah dust on the other side, in the trample out, still dancing, hip flinging, sweet in the paradiddle of the moment — there we was — dust kick and coming across the green to Queens Park West where the snow cone stands and beer and roti stalls line along the road. Smoke and scent of roast corn and sunburnt grass, wind blowing down sweet from the St Ann's Hills, sunlight glancing on sequins and glittering breast plates, Olmec helmets and spears, scattered and gleaming in pieces and beads on the asphalt where we walking, among the debris of Carnival Tuesday afternoon, looking to see where the bacchanal would lead us. That is where we was.

Now, across from the savannah was Marli Street, where the US Embassy was, and where black people would line up from dark foreday dawn everyday, to catch hope in visas to escape this island. But on that burning day we was walking cool round there, not begging them white people for nothing, in fact we was wining, praising our birthright to mas and pissing on those white walls. Tomorrow, Ash Wednesday, the line would come back long.

Well, is in front there he was. Standing between the dust, and the green haze buzzing round his shin bone were the grass flies and the burning ground and the savannah, swirling round him on all sides of the circle, but where he stood was calm, savannah ghost, with his hands shut behind him and his trouser legs

billowing in the breeze like fish still flapping, his yellow shirt stripe with blue and starch and it dapper, his canvas trilby tilt to the right, against the sun, so that it cover at least one eye, and even from the back we knew it was him. I turned to Noel, 'That look like Kitchener.' And we side up long side him, 'Mr Kitchener?' And he turned to face us, looking down. He shook both our hands, he blinked. Then he swung his hands back behind and rocked back and forth on the balls of his feet, grinning in the dust.

We knew that this private meeting with the master was both precious and impossible, and so we slowed our vibration to bask in the glare and presence of his myth. And as not to let any awkward silence seep and give him reason to walk the few yards to the street and to be lost, onwards down among the blam and the flutter of the Carnival, I strained to engage the master in an unscripted interview. I asked him, 'What you think of the calypsos this year? I mean, who you like for Road March?'

His big teeth were brown at the roots in the recess gullies of his gum. His impediment was folklore. We expected it. 'S-S-Stalin have a good song. D-Duke song good too...T-T-Thunder.'

Noel blinked hard in the sun, was awkward in the limbs, he was asking, 'What you think of Iwer George song?' Because by then, Iwer was fresh and in serious contention for the Road March title, and it was curious that the Grandmaster had not mentioned this, nor any of the other jump an' wave anthems for '87. Well, is this debate what make Kitchener engage and explain on what was real calypso and what was not, on how Stalin does sing good. Duke and Relator too. How he not sure about the Tambu and the Blue Boy and the Iwer and the jump and wine calypso but he like David Rudder tunes. He speak on ray minor and sans humanite, on true-true kaisonians that used to sing in the golden age; bards like Growler and Invader, Roaring Lion and Beginner. He sang a few lines. Teach us how to know the difference between major and minor.

'Ja!

That is the major.

No

ja

That is the minor.'

no

All these mysteries get unravel down, till we left him standing there in the dusty field, with mas and gladness all around. He said he was watching the parade of the bands, he fixed his hat and leaned back in the heat. The master there, coasting a role.

We rejoined the multitude behind Roots who start back to jam down Cipriani Boulevard, Tragerete Road and cut across to Ariapita, and settle beside the Mas Camp Pub. Was a blood and rebellious mas that year, like the history of a people was exploding in the full bright. Mad glitter, buzzing heights, bass to rock foundations, cuss words to bust fire like carbide.

See we in St James that night, seeking the last beating heart of the Carnival. Is bitter sweet sadness to let go, but the spirit must go back up to the hills. Then we hear a steel band, far, like it far, far in the distance. But it coming to come and when it reach we start to jump with them, jump because this might be the last proper dance we have before the spirit gone. Invaders. They had a flag man leading, clearing the way — let the damn band pass, further more, tell the DJ to stop spinning record so the kiss-me-arse people can hear the sweetness of the pan. What wrong with you?

As the steel band passing through the back roads of Woodbrook it taking people with it. Till what at first was a trickling crowd become a mighty gang of las' lap revellers all seeking that last sweet lagniappe.

Invaders tired but they beating sweet. We tired too but we carrying a joy. And as we rounds by the Oval they start to play 'Pan in A Minor', the Grandmaster big pan tune for that year. That was the minor so melancholy, that was the zwill in the mad bull tail. Chip we chippin' behind Invaders, following them into the myst of darkness, into the heart of the damn thing self.

All this get write in my copybook that night, as I write this down here now. Same way. Yes. Is there we was.

This is how we know they used to play mas in Trinidad.
— Lord Kitchener ‘Play Mas’

The Liminal Text: Exploring the Perpetual Process of Becoming, with
particular reference to Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and
George Lamming's *The Emigrants*

Introduction

Critical Context: Liminal, Hybrid or (Both)

The Pathé footage of Lord Kitchener's 'impromptu' rendition of 'London is the Place for Me,' on the deck of *The Empire Windrush* on June 22 1948, captures several liminal moments.¹ There, standing in a symbolic interstice between land and water; no longer in the Caribbean, but yet to touch English soil, and framed by an eye that emphasises their alterity, Kitchener and the men gathered behind him, occupy a symbolic threshold; a contested, temporal space identified by Bill Schwarz as 'that moment in which the colonial subject was becoming an immigrant.'²

Although Kitchener, a 26 year old calypsonian from Trinidad, has never left the Caribbean; he celebrates London, and knows, that it is 'the place' for him.³ But his optimism contrasts with the greyness of the morning and with the expressions of his compatriots, who, aware by then that theirs was an unwelcome presence, stand in that liminal gap and border between 'mother country' and colony. This argument is concerned with these gaps, and with the margins that demarcate them.

While theories of hybridity and creolisation have been applied to the post World War II period by writers such as Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha and Edouard Glissant, the era remains under-theorised in terms of liminality. Similarly, while writers such as John Cowley, Keith Warner and Gordon Rohlehr have made detailed studies of the calypso and its role in Trinidadian politics and society, auto/biographical writing on calypso artists, singers and musicians have been

¹ According to Lord Kitchener, the song was composed, 'when the boat had about four days to land in England' (Lord Kitchener quoted in Mike and Trevor Phillips, 'Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multicultural Britain (1999) p.66)

² Bill Schwarz, 'Unspeakable Histories: Diasporic Lives in Old England' in Peter Osbourne and Stella Sandford (eds.) *Philosophies of Race and Ethnicity* (London: Continuum, 2002) p.91

³ For the purposes of this thesis I am using the geographical demarcation provided by Franklin Knight and Colin Palmer as 'the islands from the Bahamas to Trinidad, and the continental enclaves of Belize, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana.' (Franklin W. Knight, and Colin A. Palmer, *The Modern Caribbean* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989). p.3

significantly less visible in mainstream or academic publishing.⁴ *Kitch*, the creative element of this thesis, responds to this absence. This critical argument replies to the former, by applying liminality as an overriding trope to discuss the migratory fiction of the *Windrush* era. I argue, that liminality theory provides a valid means of exploring the ways in which such texts depicted the conditions of separation, migration and assimilation. With relevance to the creative element, this thesis also argues that fictional biography represents a correspondingly liminal medium. It is this medium which I have used to tell Lord Kitchener's remarkable story.

While not the central focus of this study, it is worth noting here, that as Sandra Courtman reminds us, the retelling and memorialisation of *Windrush* era immigration has been predominantly masculine.⁵ Courtman suggests that a rereading of the migration narrative is necessary, and challenges the often repeated, but incorrect statistic, that 492 Jamaican men arrived onboard the *Windrush*. As Courtman points out, there were 941 adult passengers of which 257 were women. Of these, 69 were accompanied by their husbands, with 188 travelling alone. Of the 108 first class passengers, several were women, including the famous American writer and activist Nancy Cunard who was returning home to the UK from Trinidad. Yet, as Courtman rightly argues, 'The *Windrush*'s multiple narratives of class, race and gender are occluded within the "492" male Jamaicans.'⁶

⁴ I am referring here to studies such as John Cowley's *Carnival, Canboulay and Calypso: Traditions in the Making* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), Donald R. Hill's, *Calypso Calaloo: Early Carnival Music in Trinidad* (University of Florida, 1993), Gordon Rohlehr's *Calypso and Society in Pre-Independence Trinidad* (1990) and others which will be discussed later in this thesis.

⁵ Sandra Courtman 'Women Writers and the *Windrush* Generation: A Contextual Reading of Beryl Gilroy's *In Praise of Love and Children* and Andrea Levy's *Small Island*' in *EnterText*, "Special Issue on Andrea Levy," 9 (2012) pp.84-104. Also see Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie and Suzanne Scafe (eds.) *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (1985) for further discussion of women's contribution to the *Windrush* and postcolonial narrative in the UK. For further analysis of Caribbean women's writing during this period see Joan Anim-Addo's *Touching the Body: History, Language and African Caribbean Women's Writing* (2007) and *Framing the Word: Gender and genre in Caribbean Women's Writing* (1996) and Curdella Forbes's work on gender in *Sam Selvon, George Lamming and the Cultural Performance of Gender* (2005)

⁶ Courtman, 'Women Writers and the *Windrush* Generation, p.87

In a comparative analysis of Beryl Gilroy's novel *In Praise of Love and Children* (1996) and Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004), which also considers the political and historical conditions resulting in the relative absence of women from the *Windrush* narrative, Courtman shows how both Levy and Gilroy were able to provide alternative and distinctly feminist retellings of the era in their respective novels. For Courtman, such alternative accounts provide useful 'counter-narrative strategies' which address, 'the need to give voice to women's experiences,' and which challenge the depictions provided by male writers, in which the roles of women are often distorted by sexual and racial stereotypes.⁷ Courtman argues that the most celebrated literary accounts of the *Windrush* era; by Selvon and Lamming for instance, focus on individual or groups of male characters engaged in narratives in which women play only secondary roles. Gilroy's *In Praise of Love and Children*, according to Courtman, was 'one of the first works to depict the estrangements of a Caribbean transnational *family* moving across three continents.'⁸ (my italics).⁸ It was also the first to provide a female perspective of the era, preceding Levy's celebrated *Small Island* by seven years.⁹

In a 2000 essay, Lola Young argues that, 'the stories of the women who came before, the mothers, daughters and sisters who joined later, the women left behind, and the women who stowed away should be seen as integral to the communal act of re-memory.'¹⁰ But these stories have for the most part, remained under-told in relation to those of men. Young makes the additional point, that the 'act of infiltration' by Averilly Wauchope, a dressmaker from Kingston who stowed away on the *Windrush* is 'symbolic of black British women's attempts to

⁷ Courtman, 'Women Writers and the Windrush Generation,' p.88

⁸ *Ibid* p.85

⁹ According to Courtman, Gilroy's *In Praise of Love and Children*, though written in 1959 was 'lost until 1994.' It was first published, internationally, in 1996 by Peepal Tree Press (Courtman, p. 83)

¹⁰ Lola Young, 'What is Black British Feminism?', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 11:1-2, (2000) 45-60 (57). Relatedly, Toni Morrison uses the term 'rememory' in her 1979 novel *Beloved* to signify the re-collection and re-gathering of memories which have been dispersed or lost. For further explication on this concept see Kathleen Marks's *Toni Morrison's Beloved and the Apotropaic Imagination* (2002)

create spaces for themselves from which to speak,' and also, of 'black feminists striving to embed themselves, often by stealth, in academia.'¹¹

According to a story in the *Star* newspaper published on June 22 1948, the evening of the *Windrush's* arrival at Tilbury, 'Averilly' Wauchope was 'a 25 year old seamstress' from Kingston who was discovered seven days into the voyage. The article concludes, 'A collection was raised to pay her fare, and Nancy Cunard, who was on her way back from Trinidad, took a fancy to Averill and intends looking after her.'¹² According to Stuart Hall, however, Lord Kitchener himself 'helped organise a concert to raise funds' to pay Averill's passage.¹³ In an undated interview with Mike and Trevor Phillips, Lord Kitchener claimed to remember the woman stowaway but does not name her. He does however, confirm that a 'concert' was held onboard to pay her fare.¹⁴

But these claims, it appears, are only minor discrepancies in contrast to a more significant debate which aims to confirm Wauchope's 'actual' name and identity. In a 2008 interview with Matthew Mead, Sam King, one of the *Windrush's* most famous passengers and later, the first black mayor of Southwark, suggests that the female stowaway was in fact 'Eva Buckley', a seamstress who 'failed to raise the funds for her fare with the sale of her Singer but who, desperate to "get off the Rock", sneaked aboard while the officer in charge turned a blind eye.' King suggests that Eva 'had about two different names.'¹⁵

A search of the *Windrush* passenger list seems to confirm King's suggestion, even as it complicates the story even further and questions the 'official' accounts of the lone female stowaway. There are in fact two stowaways listed: Samuel Johnson, a 30 year old Trinidad and Evelyn Wauchape, a 39 year old 'dressmaker' from Jamaica. No proposed address in the UK is noted for either. It is possible, as both Sandra Courtman and Sam King have noted, that both

¹¹ Young, 'What is Black British Feminism?' p.46

¹² *Star* newspaper, London June 22 1948, quoted in Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*, pp.275-276

¹³ Stuart Hall, 'Calypso Kings', 2002 <<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/jun/28/nottinghillcarnival2002.nottinghillcarnival>> [accessed 3 November 2015] no pag.

¹⁴ Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, p.65

¹⁵ Matthew Mead, 'Empire Windrush: The Cultural Memory of an Imaginary Arrival,' *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, (2009) 45:2, pp.137-149 (141)

‘Johnson’ and ‘Wauchape’, as illegal passengers may have sought to conceal their true identities¹⁶. My suggestion here is that by infiltrating the already liminal sphere of the *Windrush*, with its symbolic narratives of departure, voyage and arrival, Wauchape, in her aliases as Wauchope, Evelyn Wauchbe, Eva Buckley or Aversely Wauchope emerges as the quintessential liminal neophyte; resilient, adaptable and ambiguous, qualities which echo the characterisation of Lamming’s depiction of the tragic Queenie, discussed briefly in chapter two of this thesis, and which unsettle the *Windrush* narrative of a homogeneous group of men, by its individuation of Wauchape.

Matthew Mead’s comments on Wauchope echo both Lola Young and Toni Morrison, explicating the inaccuracy of the predominantly male pioneer myth which has surrounded the *Windrush* and its accompanying narratives of migrations:

The story of Averilly Wauchope becomes a history of the marginalized within the marginalized. [...] Not only is Wauchope in a minority but she is hidden, confirming the pioneer visibly as a male figure. [...] This episode is instructive, both in terms of what unequal power relations might produce as historical knowledge, and how these details might be recuperated in the writing of otherwise marginalized histories, albeit at the risk of misrepresenting the subjects of those histories.¹⁷

Hence, while readings of the *Windrush* narrative which foreground the naming and identification of Wauchape do challenge and contrast with the myth of a homogeneous male *Windrush* narrative, they do so partly by the positioning of a vulnerable, hidden and infiltrative female, one who must nevertheless rely on the assistance of her fellow male passengers or liminars to ensure her passage along the liminal strait through which they must all pass. This, I suggest, is also echoed in Lamming’s ultimately tragic portrayal of Queenie, and the other female characters of *The Emigrants*.

In Lamming’s novel, the pursuit of individuation is often, with a few exceptions, reflected in promiscuity and manipulative or predatory behaviour, in the case of the female characters such as Queenie, Peggy and Una, and in seduction, symbolic emasculation and fetishism by the white gaze - for males such as Dickson, ‘castrated’ by a white woman’s gaze, and Higgins, whose life unravels

¹⁶ Courtman, p.87

¹⁷ Mead, p.141

after he is arrested carrying an aphrodisiac for the white Frederick. A.J. Simoes da Silva has also questioned Lamming's depictions of women as 'agent(s)' in 'sexual transactions', in which the novel's female characters demonstrate their 'capacity for survival' via the use of their bodies, while for the male characters, their exploitation comments on their ability, or inability to be viable participants in a wider nationalist struggle. For da Silva, this disparity, represents a problematic aspect of Lamming's depiction of women in *The Emigrants*, women who ultimately emerge as victims of their own sexuality, and whose contributions to the political impetus at the heart of the book is negligible.¹⁸

It is to partly counter the male centred approaches which have become prevalent in representations of this era, that *Kitch* adopts a polyphonic structure which attempts to equalise its narrative voices. Though their voices are fewer within the text, those female characters which populate the work are significantly engaged and equally invested in the reconstruction and depiction of Kitchener's life. However, in the musical world and cultural milieu of calypso, traditionally associated with men, and, in a biography with a male artist as its central figure, negotiations of gender become a problematic task which my efforts in *Kitch* can only begin to address.

Relatedly, we can observe that women are even less represented than men in the marginal field of calypso auto/biography. As of writing, apart from an important documentary feature on Calypso Rose, no commercially available, stand alone biographies or autobiographies of female calypso or soca artists have emerged.¹⁹ Those women that have managed to succeed in the genre - such as Calypso Rose, Singing Francine, Denyse Plummer or Singing Sandra, have often done so under tremendous personal and professional struggle, as Cynthia Mahabir points out in her article 'The Rise of Calypso Feminism: Gender and Musical Politics in the Calypso (2001).' According to Mahabir, those gender imbalances which have characterised calypso derive from attempts by men to compensate for the effects of socio-economic emasculation during the post-emancipation period. According to Mahabir, the result of this emasculation was that men resorted to 'aggression or violence in relationships with women, and using wit and humour to

¹⁸ A.J. Simoes da Silva, *The Luxury Of Nationalist Despair*, p.113

¹⁹ *Calypso Rose: The Lioness Of The Jungle* (Trinidad & Tobago: Pascale Obolo, 2011) DVD

reduce to absurdity anyone who might be seen as threatening.’ It is under such circumstances, Mahabir argues, that women became ‘the butt of musical satire for the amusement of male calypso fans’, and in turn, came to be depicted as ‘sexual commodity’ in calypso, as ‘prostitutes, unfaithful schemers, and deceptive Eves’.²⁰

Fortunately, the international success of soca, a genre which while being still significantly marked by its sexualisation of women, is also equally less gender restrictive, has meant that artists such as Alison Hinds, Faye-Ann Lyons, Debra Garcia, Denise Belfon and others, have emerged at the forefront of the genre, become visible and internationally acclaimed performers. Moreover, as Mahabir writes, in terms of the more traditional calypso:

[...] although many gender inequalities persist in the tents, women’s calypso enjoys the respect of the public and the calypso fraternity. Women calypsonians have helped to forge an incipient social movement for profound social change with respect to women’s oppression and ethnic pluralism in Trinidad-Tobago.²¹

My application of liminality in this thesis will draw primarily on the work of Victor M. Turner, who in his writings of the late 1960s and 1970s expanded on those of ethnographer Arnold Van Gennep whose seminal studies analysed ritualised transitions between ‘place, state, social position or age.’²² In a comparative study of such rites, collected in *The Rites of Passage*, originally published in 1909, Van Gennep suggests that ritualised sequences of transition were common to all societies, and, consisted of a three phased schema of separation (*préliminaire*), liminal (*liminaire*) and aggregation (*postliminaire*).²³

Turner’s studies and writings, beginning with his 1964 essay, ‘Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*,’ expanded on Van Gennep’s work by placing particular focus on the liminal, ‘period of margin’ or

20 Cynthia Mahabir, ‘The Rise Of Calypso Feminism: Gender And Musical Politics In The Calypso’, *Popular Music*, Vol. 20, No. 3, Gender and Sexuality (Oct., 2001), pp. 409-430 (412)

21 *Ibid* p.428

22 Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites Of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960) p.11

23 Victor W. Turner ‘Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*’ (1964) web. <<http://www2.fiu.edu/~ereserve/010010095-1.pdf>> p.47

‘interstructural’ phase.²⁴ In *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (1974) Turner offered this definition of the liminal condition:

The state of the liminar becomes ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification; he passes through a symbolic domain that has few or none of the attributes of his past or the coming state.²⁵

In the same study, Turner suggests that two kinds of liminal personae are distinguishable within the liminal phase of a social transition. ‘Ritual liminars,’ according to Turner, are those individuals - ‘shamans, diviners, mediums, priests [...] hippies, hoboes and gypsies’ - in a state of ‘outsiderhood,’ a condition of being:

either permanently and by ascription set outside the structural arrangements of a given social system or being situationally or temporarily set apart, or voluntarily setting oneself apart from the behaviour of status-occupying, role-playing members of that system.²⁶

Marginals, on the other hand, according to Turner, are ‘simultaneously members [...] of two or more social groups whose social definitions and cultural norms are distinct from, and often even opposed to, one another.’²⁷ Marginals are also, ‘betwixt and between, but unlike ritual liminars they have no cultural assurance of a final stable resolution of their ambiguity: they will never be fully integrated into the one side or the other.’²⁸ I am suggesting that these categories, as defined by Turner, find correlation with postwar Caribbean migratory narratives in Britain. Authors such as Homi Bhaba, Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy have each sought to address the metamorphoses of postcolonial subjectivity, and the impact of migratory transition on personal and cultural identities. While not explicitly framing their work within liminality theory these theorists do utilise concepts of transition and mutability to explain the personal and societal conditions of postcoloniality and migration which find correlation in the work of Turner and

²⁴ Turner ‘Betwixt and Between’ p.46

²⁵ Turner, *Dramas, Fields, And Metaphors* (Ithaca [N.Y.]: Cornell University Press, 1974) p.232

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.233

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.232

Gennep.

Bhabha's theorisation of hybridity in *The Location of Culture* (1994) has emerged as a key hypothesis for understanding negotiations of identity and visual culture in postcolonial studies. Beginning with an analysis of the American artist Renée Green's use of a stairwell in an art installation, Bhabha argues that the stairwell, and the passage it implies, as metaphors, for 'a liminal space, in-between the designations of identity' which 'prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities.' For Bhabha, this movement back and forth opens up the possibility of 'a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.'²⁹ For Bhabha, this hybridity represents, a 'third space', suggesting that:

It is in the emergence of the interstices - the overlap and displacement of domains of difference - that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nations, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.³⁰

Bhabha also locates the 'third space,' allegorically, in the interaction of coloniser and colonised, and suggests that this hybrid state unsettles essentialist notions of cultural purity and authenticity which support and reinforce dominant or 'powerful' cultures.³¹ Bhabha's theories, however, have been criticised as being over-reliant on essentialist or fixed notions of culture. Antony Easthope argues that Bhabha's concept of hybridity relies too strongly on an 'adversarial discourse' which does not take into consideration the relativity of identity. Accordingly, Easthope suggests that, 'hybridity has no definition except in relation to non-hybridity'.³²

Sumana Ray also challenges Bhabha's application of hybridity, suggesting that the multiplicitous state of the liminal is more heterogeneous than Bhabha's concept. Ray argues further, that Bhabha's use of hybridity is, 'largely premised on the coloniser-colonised context and is primarily based on a male model of thinking, using Frantz Fanon as his influence.' in which 'the role of women is

²⁹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge) 2010, p.5

³⁰ *Ibid* p.322

³¹ *Ibid* p.83

³² Antony Easthope, 'Bhabha, Hybridity And Identity', *Textual Practice*, 12 (1998), 341-348
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09502369808582312>>

marginal or even insignificant.³³ In an effort to move beyond hybridity theory, Ray suggests that ‘the concept of “liminality” allows for a richer and more nuanced consideration of questions of gender’ and applies liminality theory, as an alternative, in her study of ‘new generation’ black and Asian women writers and artists in the Midlands.³⁴

Relatedly, Carol Boyce Davies has argued that the rhetoric of hybridity represents a contemporary form of ‘mulatto studies,’ which seeks to create ‘a “hybrid” population that did not necessarily belong to Africa anymore but now tried to settle themselves accordingly in the new location without reference to a past.’³⁵ She warns that Bhabha’s hybridity theory may also bear too close a resemblance to the ‘passion of the science of colonizing that saw the “New World” as a laboratory of sorts.’ Boyce Davies rejects hybridity and syncretism in favour of theories of ‘repetition and memory,’ in which transformation is sought ‘through memory, vision of alternative worlds, transformed existences, even in the critique of limitations of present or past existences [...]’³⁶

My reading of liminality in this argument differs from Boyce’s concept of ‘repetition and memory’ in that it is not based on the repetition and re-creation of diasporic memory, which then seeks to create ‘other systems, other modes of being’ which challenge the historical continuum and remain politically and aesthetically bound to the African diaphora. It also differs from Bhabha’s theorisation of the ‘in-between’ as a locus of hybridity. Bhabha’s notion of hybridity is primarily focused on the contemporary or postcolonial milieu, where

³³ Sumana Ray, 'The Rise of the 'Liminal Briton': Literary and Artistic Productions of Black and Asian Women in the Midlands' (Unpublished Thesis (Ph.D.) University of Warwick, 2011. p 6

³⁴ *Ibid* p.33

³⁵ Carole Boyce Davies, *Caribbean Spaces: Escapes From Twilight Zones* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013) p.192

³⁶ Carol Boyce Davies, ‘Transformational Discourses, Afro-Diasporic Culture, and the Literary Imagination’ in *Macalester International* Volume 3 ‘Literature, the Creative Imagination, and Globalization’ Spring 5-31-1996, p.203
For a further critique of Bhabha’s model of hybridity see Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan’s *Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Location* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) who argues that since hybridity is a product of first world thinking it may bear traces of cultural imperialism. In *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects* by Anjali Prabhu. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007) Prabhu argues for an active and practical, as opposed to theoretical application of hybridity.

hybridity is seen as the result of historically opposed 'identities of difference.'³⁷ My suggestion here, however, is that in the migration novels of Samuel Selvon and George Lamming we observe not only a 'third space' created from the 'temporal movement' between 'fixed identifications,' but also a process in which a multiplicity of positions exist simultaneously within the text. The work these writers produced in this period, did not create a new, hybrid literary form, rather, as I will argue, their writing is implicated in a perpetual processes of becoming, which gives voice to the liminal, threshold experiences they both observed and experienced in postwar Britain.

Most importantly, whereas Bhabha suggests that hybridity facilitates 'elements which are neither the One ... nor the Other ... but something else besides' (ellipses in the text),³⁸ I align my argument with Victor Turner's suggestion that rather than being 'something else', liminality offers the possibility of being 'that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both.'³⁹ This condition or realm of 'both-ness' is what I suggest is expressed in Stuart Hall's admission of being 'prepared by a colonial education,' and of arriving in England in 1951, 'knowing' the landscape without having seen it, as Hall explains:

It was like finding again in one's dream, an already familiar idealized landscape. [...] I knew England from the inside. But I'm not and never will be "English." I know both places intimately, but I am not wholly of either place.⁴⁰

What is significant in Hall's account, is his use of the phrase 'not wholly of either place,' to situate himself 'between' England and Jamaica. Hall is not, I suggest, situating himself within a hybrid or 'third space' here, rather, he is suggesting that while he belongs to neither location, 'wholly,' he considers himself to be part of both places. This is the duality witnessed in Lord Kitchener's aforementioned performance on the deck of *The Empire Windrush*, rendered in the migrant sensibility of that liminal gap between knowing and unknowing, between imperial

³⁷ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.5

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 41

³⁹ Turner 'Betwixt and Between', p.49

⁴⁰ Stuart Hall, 'The Formation Of A Diasporic Intellectual: An Interview with Stuart Hall' in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds.) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996) pp. 484-504 (493)

propaganda, colonial education and the grim ‘reality’ of Tilbury at dusk, in which, like Hall, Kitchener felt he knew London ‘intimately’ enough to sing its praises.⁴¹

Hall’s premise, of a transformative but equally constitutive encounter is, I suggest, related to Glissant’s theorisation of *relation* and ‘limitless métissage’ in his seminal *Poetics of Relation* (1997). Glissant suggests here that in the Caribbean, the phenomenon of creolisation, in which the Creole language is its most ‘obvious symbol,’ is not merely ‘an encounter, a shock [...] a *métissage*, but a new and original dimension allowing each person to be there and elsewhere, rooted and open, lost in the mountains and free beneath the sea, in harmony and in errantry.’^{42 43} The use of the word ‘dimension’ here is significant, since, it refers, I suggest, to Glissant’s conceptualisation of a metaphorical ‘location’ rather than a distinct and measurable position or outcome, as Heather Ann Smyth has noted in relation to Glissant’s thought:

Glissant bases his idea of creolization on the fluid and centrifugal motions of the Caribbean Sea, hence emphasizing that creolization is a process, rather than a state of being.⁴⁴

In this way, Glissant’s theorisation of ‘relation’; of creolisation as a process of ‘limitless métissage’ in which elements are diffracted with unpredictable outcomes, provides one alternative to Bhabha’s hypothesis of hybridity.⁴⁵ Whereas Bhabha’s notion of hybridity foregrounds ‘the impossibility of purity,’⁴⁶ and therefore continues to suggest a new yet stable state, Glissant’s approach instead favours a simultaneous, dynamic and equal ‘relation’ between alternate positions.

⁴¹ Lord Kitchener, ‘London Is the Place for Me’ in *London is the Place for Me: Trinidadian Calypso In London, 1950 - 1956* (London: Honest Jon’s Records) CD

⁴² Édouard Glissant and Betsy Wing (tr.), *Poetics Of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997) p.34

⁴³ A further exploration of the relationship between ‘nation language’ and the process of creolisation is presented in a dialogue between Glissant and Kamau Brathwaite, published as ‘A Dialogue: Nation Language and Poetics of Creolisation’ in Ineke Phaf (ed.) *Creole Presence in the Caribbean and Latin America* (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert Verlag, 1996) pp.19-35

⁴⁴ Heather Smyth, *Creolization And Coalition In Caribbean Feminist Cultural Production* (Alberta: University of Alberta, 2001) <<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk3/ftp04/NQ60349.pdf>> [accessed 28 May 2015]

⁴⁵ Glissant and Wing (tr.), *Poetics of Relation*, p. 34

⁴⁶ *Ibid* p.4

Glissant's thought echoes my application of liminality in this thesis, as a hypothesis of co-existing difference, predicated on a process of perpetual and simultaneous transformation and reconstitution. Glissant's creolisation then, while not explicitly drawing on the work of Van Gennep or Turner as I do in this thesis, comes to represent a site-specific, Caribbean variation of those interstitial spaces which liminality is also concerned with.⁴⁷

In the opening paragraph of *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) Paul Gilroy argues that 'Striving to be both European and black requires some specific forms of 'double consciousness.'⁴⁸ For Gilroy, this double consciousness — a term he borrows from W.E.B. Dubois, manifests itself in 'stereophonic', 'bilingual' and 'bifocal cultural forms originated by, but no longer the exclusive property of, blacks dispersed within the structures of feeling, producing, communicating, and remembering [...]'⁴⁹ For both Gilroy and Bhabha, hybrid forms of cultural production and identity are a *result* of the interaction between opposing entities; an interaction which produces a new, hybrid form of cultural output or identity.

For Gilroy however, the starting points or origins of these interactions and reformations are not 'fixed' or essentialist positions since they have both undergone, and continue to undergo reconfigurations over time, a process to which Gilroy equates the chronotope of a ship, those 'mobile elements that stood for the shifting spaces in between the fixed places that they connected.' The ship, as Gilroy writes, also echoes the triangular movement of the middle passage, and 'the half remembered micro-politics of the slave trade [...]'⁵⁰ I would like to suggest that the ship also returns us, to the iconography of *The Empire Windrush*, and to those fictional vessels found in the novels of Lamming and Selvon, liminal

⁴⁷ In her essay 'The challenge of Liminality for International Relations Theory', Maria Malksoo, rightly suggests that rather than foregrounding differences between these theories, liminality could act as a 'bridge concept' by which to 'deepen the interdisciplinary theoretical dialogue' between disciplines of hybridity, interstitially, carnivalisation and creolisation. (in Horvath, Thomassen, and Hydra (eds) *Breaking Boundries: Varieties of Liminality* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2013) pp. 226-254 (228))

⁴⁸ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993) p.1

⁴⁹ *Ibid* p.3

⁵⁰ *Ibid* pp.16-17

chronotopes of departures, passages and arrivals, upon which Gilroy's study does not fully theorise.⁵¹

In the work of Selvon and Lamming, as I will show, London itself functions as a threshold or liminal space of becomings, both in the process of assimilation into British culture — hence, 'becoming' British or black, but equally, concomitantly becoming distinctly 'Caribbean' through exile, an idea echoed in Kamau Brathwaite's assertion that, 'You don't become a Caribbean person until you leave the Caribbean.'⁵²

It was in London, according to Lamming, that West Indians first 'came together,'⁵³ it was there that they learnt what it meant to be 'Caribbean,' and, it was in London that the novel emerged, 'as an imaginative interpretation of West Indian society by West Indians.'⁵⁴ My argument here is that rather than occupying Bhabha's 'third space' or Gilroy's 'double consciousness' those West Indians who migrated to the UK in the mid 20th century, *Windrush* era, inhabited dynamic, mutable positions in which it was possible to be 'both' immigrant and colonial subject, to be within and yet apart from the predominantly white British communities they lived within.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* has been critiqued for not considering the contributions of Asian cultural production within the diasporic framework he presents in *The Black Atlantic*. See Gayatri Gopinath, 'Bombay, U.K. Yuba City: Bhangra Music and the Engendering of Diaspora', in *Diaspora* 4.3 (1995): 305. Further critique from Paul Tiyambe Zeleza has addressed its oversimplification of the African American experience and Gilroy's 'androcentrism in privileging male figures in the construction of Atlantic, blackness and modernity, despite its ritual gestures to gender.' (Zeleza, 'Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic' in *African Affairs*, Vol. 104, No. 414 (Jan., 2005), pp. 35-68. For further critique of Gilroy's over-aestheticised Black Atlantic model see Laura Chrisman's essay 'Journeying to Death: A Critique of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*' in *Race and Class: A Journal for Black and Third World Liberation* 39/2, 1997, 51-64

⁵² Brathwaite made this comment at a personal meeting in London in 2005

⁵³ George Lamming, 'The Occasion for Speaking' in Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh (eds.) *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature* (London: Routledge, 1996) pp. 253-260 (258)

⁵⁴ Pancaribbean.com, 'Interview With George Lamming,' 2015 <<http://www.pancaribbean.com/banyan/lamming.htm>> [accessed 24 November 2015]

⁵⁵ The poet Grace Nichols explores these notions of thresholds being crossed

Stages of the Argument

Chapter One, 'Fragmented Symmetries,' is in two parts. I begin, in part one, by examining the means by which Caribbean writers and scholars have addressed or challenged definitions or assumptions of the region which have been foregrounded in notions of fragmentation and discontinuity. I attempt to show how the work of Antonio Benítez-Rojo, Wilson Harris, Kamau Brathwaite and Sylvia Wynter have provided alternative methods of 'seeing' or 're-reading' the Caribbean. I demonstrate how their thought relates, as frame and theoretical context, to my own application of liminality in this thesis. In part two, 'Writing in the Interstice,' I provide an outline of the development of Anglophone Caribbean fiction, from the mid-1800s abolition of slavery in the British Caribbean, to the late 1950s. My aim here is to give a broad but necessarily selective, historical and theoretical context for my readings of Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and George Lamming's *The Emigrants* (1954), which follow.

In Chapter Two, 'Liminal Migrations,' I present close readings of Lamming's *The Emigrants* and Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, showing how significant degrees of liminality can be read in their forms and narrative strategies. My analyses of both novels are framed by structures inherent in rite of passage theories. In my examination of *The Emigrants*, each book is aligned to a ritual phase; the first 'A Voyage' to 'separation,' the second, 'Rooms and Residents' to 'margin' or liminal, and the third, 'Another Life' to the 'assimilation' phase of a rite of passage. My study of Selvon takes another approach, by analysing aspects of liminality in turn, in the characterisation, settings, structure and language of the novel. In addition, I explore the influence of calypso upon Selvon's novel, arguing that this influence is stylistic rather than structural. The chapter draws upon existing scholarship on Lamming and Selvon by writers such as John Thieme, Susheila Nasta, Michael Fabre, Sandra Pouchet Paquet and James Procter. I also draw on the work of Hollis Liverpool, Jennifer Rahim and Gordon Rohlehr with regards to the societal and literary potential of the Trinidad calypso.

Chapter Three, 'You See Me Alive': Notes to a Calypso Biography' begins by providing a broad historical overview of the Trinidad calypso, before moving on to a discussion of the marginal genre of calypso biography. This leads to a critically reflective analysis of *Kitch*, which I begin by providing a brief outline of

Lord Kitchener's biography and musical legacy, before contextualising his work within the wider history and tradition of the calypso. I investigate the genre of fictional biography, examining the interstices and liminal spaces between fiction and biography, and providing contexts for the literary and theoretical frameworks which underpin my experimentation in *Kitch*. In particular, I consider how aspects of liminality have informed the methodology, planning, research and writing of *Kitch*.

By way of comparison, I consider Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter* (1975) alongside *Kitch*, showing how both books occupy similar but distinct positions within the genre of fictional biography. I offer a brief discussion of how feminist approaches to biography and post colonial, counter-discursive critique, along with the work of writers such as Earl Lovelace, lend support to my use of polyvocal form in *Kitch*. This leads to an explication of the creative decisions, strategies and methodologies involved in the project, before concluding with an overview of the structural aspects of the text.

My conclusion aims to bring the strands of my research and writing together, showing how the migratory experience from the Caribbean to Britain during the the post-World War II period of 1948 - 1958 was framed by liminal processes, and how these experiences were reflected in Caribbean fiction of this period. I evaluate the claims of the thesis and propose the need for further collection and publication of auto/biographical material on calypso artists and musicians such as Lord Kitchener.

Chapter One
Fragmented Symmetries

Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that
love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole.
- Derek Walcott⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Derek Walcott, *The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993) p.12

Part One: The Archipelago Becomes a Synonym

Mister West Indian politician
I mean yuh went to big institution
And how come you cyah unite 7 million?
- Black Stalin, *Caribbean Unity* ⁵⁷

Any historicisation or overview of Anglophone Caribbean literature must first grapple with the task of defining the Caribbean itself. We have been told that the region is discontinuous; fragmented in its history, language, religion, culture. This is the view of Louis James, writing as recently as 1999:

[...] the region would appear unlikely ground for literature. It is rural, and economically poor. It is fragmented into islands, many of them very small, and discontinuous areas on the rim of the American continent. There is no common language.⁵⁸

Ralph Premdas even suggests that the Caribbean is an ‘imaginary region’ and that ‘the Caribbean as a unified region that confers a sense of common citizenship and community is a figment of the imagination.’⁵⁹ According to Premdas, Caribbean identity, ‘exists everywhere in the hearts of individuals in the divided diaspora and nowhere in reality. [...] It is in this respect a divided if not schizophrenic identity, dwelling in several locations simultaneously.’⁶⁰

But it is this ‘schizophrenic identity,’ this discontinuity, this ability to be, what Fe Iglesias Garcia calls, ‘simultaneously diverse and similar’, that I suggest, defines rather than precludes definition of the region.⁶¹ This thesis rejects fragmentation as a way of considering the Caribbean, since within the region’s diversity and ‘disunity’ there are, I suggest, complex unifying systems and

⁵⁷ Black Stalin, ‘Caribbean Unity’ (Trinidad: Makosa, 1979). vinyl recording

⁵⁸ Louis James, *Caribbean Literature in English*, (London: Longman, 1999) p.1

⁵⁹ Ralph Premdas, *Ethnicity and Identity in the Caribbean: Decentering a Myth* (Indiana: Kellogg Institute for International Studies, 1996) <<https://kellogg.nd.edu/publications/workingpapers/WPS/234.pdf>> p.2 [accessed 13 March 2015]

⁶⁰ *Ibid* p.47. Premdas’s comments are, I suggest, equally applicable to postcolonial African and Asian diasporic communities.

⁶¹ Fe Iglesias Garcia, ‘Demographic and Social Structural Changes in the Contemporary Caribbean’ in Carrera Damas, B. W. Higman, Franklin W. Knight and Bridget Brereton (eds) *General History of the Caribbean* (London: Unesco, 1997) p.401

interrelations of histories and cultures. It is my argument, that liminality offers a more suitable alternative. In the following pages, I discuss some of the ways in which writers and scholars from the region have sought to challenge and provide alternatives to fragmented hypotheses, showing how each of their approaches, by foregrounding continuities rather than fragments, bears relation to liminality theory and leads to a reconsideration of the region's postwar literature.

In his introduction to *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (1992) Antonio Benítez-Rojo suggests that the regions' reputation for fragmentation and syncretism, though justified to some extent, partly derives from the expectations of an external gaze. According to Benítez-Rojo, the main obstacles to any 'global' study of the Caribbean, are 'exactly those things that scholars adduce to define the area', such as its fragmentation and discontinuity.⁶² Hence, attempts at a 'globalising' hypothesis of the region, which applies the 'dogmas and methods' of an external system fails to offer a cogent definition. Instead, as Benítez-Rojo argues, 'they get into the habit of defining the Caribbean in terms of its resistance to the different methodologies summoned to investigate it', and thus, the region's fragmentation, its discontinuity, its randomness is foregrounded.⁶³ Applying Chaos theory to his analysis of the region, Benítez-Rojo argues that the Caribbean must be 're-read' as a 'meta-archipelago,'⁶⁴ and that Caribbean literature, which he suggests, can be read as 'a *mestizo* text [...] a stream of texts in flight', belongs to a wider system of continuances and reverberations which reflects this meta-archipelagic and repeating, Chaos system at work throughout the region.⁶⁵

Rather than simply 'ironizing a set of values taken as universal', Caribbean writing, according to Benítez-Rojo, is infused with the turbulent history which produced it, reflecting and memorialising 'the swirling black hole of social violence produced by the *encomedia* and the plantation'.⁶⁶ My application of

⁶² Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, (Durham: Duke University Press) 2006, p.1

⁶³ *Ibid* p.2

⁶⁴ *Ibid*

⁶⁵ *Ibid* p.27

⁶⁶ Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, p.27

liminality in this argument is foregrounded in these turbulences and traumatic oscillations. It is this turbulent and perpetual creation of new paradigms which I suggest, is reflected in the *mestizo*, syncretic and liminal forms adopted by many of its authors. Benítez-Rojo uses the term ‘peripheral asymmetry’ to describe the relationship Caribbean literature shares with the West.⁶⁷ The term itself, with its resonance and implication of both threshold and indeterminacy, suggests a liminal, position bordered by an indefinable or unstable border or demarcation which bears some relation to limbo, as condition and/or as dance.

In his 1993 essay ‘Limbo, Dislocation, Phantom Limb,’ Nathaniel Mackey examines the Guyanese author Wilson Harris’s assertion that ‘a native tradition of imaginative response to cultural dislocation or “historylessness” does in fact exist and that this tradition provides models and cues for the Caribbean artist.’⁶⁸ Drawing on Harris’s seminal 1970 essay, *History, fable and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas*,⁶⁹ Mackey’s discussion centres on Harris’s theorisation in that essay, of *limbo* (italicised in the text) as ‘a certain kind of gateway to or a threshold of a new world and the dislocation of a chain of miles.’⁷⁰

As Mackey points out, Harris’s application of *limbo* concatenates its relation to ‘Africa-derived Anancy tales,’ which feature a spider trickster-god, *limbo* as dance; ‘born in the holds of the slave ships’ and hence, featuring an ‘outspread, spiderlike crawl’, and also, with the resonance of a treacherous physical ‘passage’ between Africa and the Caribbean.⁷¹ Such theorisations support an application of liminality in which the ship or conduit becomes a both a metaphor and the physical representation of a liminal space, since within the hold of the ship the captured, enslaved peoples are ritual *liminars*, they have no identity, no status, they are chattels, currency, a people between realities. To carry

⁶⁷ Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, p.27

⁶⁸ Nathaniel Mackey, *Discrepant Engagement: Dissonance, Cross-Culturality and Experimental Writing* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1993),p. 168

⁶⁹ This essay, the text of Harris’s 1970 Edgar Mittleholzer Lectures was revised and expanded by Harris in 1995.

⁷⁰ Wilson Harris, *History, Fable & Myth In The Caribbean And Guianas* (Wellesley, Mass.: Calaloux Publications, 1995),p.19

⁷¹ Mackey, *Discrepant Engagement*, pp.168-169

the metaphor even further, in the dance, the limbo stick, held by two dancers on its horizontal axis creates another border, and the body is in limbo as it enacts its precarious passage beneath. But this passage is fraught with significant risks. There is the danger of falling back, or in cases where the stick is lit, of being burnt. In the ritual/dance of limbo, the dancer moves between psychic locations, re-enacting a transit from past, to the future, from mystery to suspense, to a new, celebratory, even triumphant state as he or she emerges and returns to the vertical world. In Harris's essay he also argues for a pun, *limb*, on the word *limbo*, 'as a kind of shared phantom limb.' As Harris suggests, this 'phantom limb' which connected the Caribbean to Africa, and which was antecedent to the development of 'formal West Indian theatre' became visible on Boxing Day when 'the ban on the "rowdy" bands (as they were called) was lifted for the festive season.'⁷²

Mackey expands on this metaphor, suggesting that Harris's abstraction of a 'phantom limb' is related 'to amputation, or in this context, geographical and cultural (yet another pun) dislocation.'⁷³ In Harris's thought, *limbo*, in all its connotations and extensions of metaphor emerges as a transformational, historicising ritual, and Harris observes renewing reenactments of these rituals in voodoo and in Trinidadian Calypso. Such transformations, transcendences and transitions bear relation to rite of passage theories put forward by both Van Gennep and Turner.⁷⁴

A similar transformational process, which is again facilitated by the limbo dance, is articulated by Kamau Brathwaite in 'Caliban', a central poem in the 'Limbo' section of *Islands* (1969), the third book of his *Arrivants* trilogy. 'Caliban's' tripartite structure echoes rite of passage theory; each section corresponding to the stages or phases of rituals theorised by Van Gennep,

⁷² Harris, *History, Fable & Myth*, p.19

⁷³ Nathaniel Mackey, *Discrepant Engagement: Dissonance, Cross-Culturality and Experimental Writing* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1993) p. 168-169

⁷⁴ Lord Kitchener's rendition of 'London is the place for me', on the deck of the Windrush can also be interpreted as a similar moment of transformation in which the 'phantom limb' of calypso tradition is transitioned to metropolitan surroundings. In the Pathé footage of the Windrush's arrival, Kitchener's impromptu rendition, with its syncopated rhythm and 'tropical' melody acts to destabilise the expectation of its intended, British mainstream audience. In the process, Kitchener himself undergoes a personal transformation; geographically, from Trinidad to England, and politically, as Bill Schwarz has pointed out, from colonial subject to immigrant. (see Schwarz, 'Unspeakable Histories,' p.91)

suggesting a form of transcendence or transition from the physical to the spiritual plane via the limbo dance. In the first section of the poem, the 'separation' phase, the Caribbean is positioned as a place of exile, poverty and stasis:

out of the living stone, out of the living bone
of coral, these dead
towers; out of the coney
islands of our mind-

less architects, this death
of sons, of songs, of sunshine⁷⁵

In the second, the 'liminal' stage, cultural artefacts such as steel pan, carnival and limbo are seen as panacea, helping to make sense of historical trauma. Here, the formal aspects of the poem also suggests a downward spiral:

Cal-
iban
like to play
pan
at the Car-
nival;
pran-
sing up to the lim-
bo silence
down
down
down
so the god won't drown
him⁷⁶

The final section of the poem represents the reintegration of Caliban into his society. Here, the layout suggests a return to the horizontal, physical world.⁷⁷

knees spread wide
and the dark ground is under me
[...]

⁷⁵ Brathwaite, 'Caliban', *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p.191, 10 -15

⁷⁶ *Ibid* 38-50

⁷⁷ For further explication of this poem see Eric Doumerc's 2014 essay 'Caliban Playing Pan: A Note on The Metamorphoses of Caliban in Edward Kamau Brathwaite's "Caliban"' available at <http://caliban.revues.org/664>. See also John Thieme's essay *Caliban's New Masters: Creolizing Archetypes in Kamau Brathwaite's Arrivants Trilogy*. in *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, SP5. (2003) pp. 27-39. available at <http://www.academia.edu/964181>
Caliban_s_New_Masters_Creolizing_Archetypes_in_Kamau_Brathwaite_s_Arrivants_Triology.

out of the dark
and the dumb gods are raising me.⁷⁸

Like Harris, Brathwaite sees the reenactment of the limbo as a link between the diaspora and its source. In a discussion of Harris's theorisations of Caribbean cultural traditions, Angela Brüning has pointed out that in Harris's work, such traditions are ongoing and transformative creative processes which are enacted and reenacted in Caribbean societies. 'For Harris,' Brüning writes, 'it is the imaginary that can connect the different traditions and cultures in the Caribbean archipelago. The Middle Passage can thus be regarded as a passage of creation and transformation.'⁷⁹

The middle passage and the sea as conduit, are powerful metaphors for Harris. And the sea, with its iconography and semiotic of ships, departures, journeys, harbours and discovery emerges as a pivotal liminal space. For Harris, and for Brathwaite, the subconscious historical resonance of these spaces are unifying structures.

In her essay 'The Unity is Submarine: Aspects of Pan-Caribbean Consciousness in the Work of Kamau Brathwaite', Bridget Jones analyses Brathwaite's attempts to establish a theoretical field of continuity which uses Africa as the fulcrum, and which is 'grounded in a shared African homeland'.⁸⁰ In Brathwaite's work, Jones argues, a pan-Caribbean vision emerges which can be read in a 'celebration of affinities' and in the 'pleasure in recognition', between pan Caribbean cultural practices. This is not a 'superficial uncritical collecting' however. According to Jones, Brathwaite's 'values are heightened by awareness of a shared historical process, marked by alienation and loss,' and in the shared relation to the sea which surrounds the region.⁸¹ This sense of a submarine or sea-based unity is pivotal to Brathwaite's pan-Caribbean vision. It has been

⁷⁸ Brathwaite, 'Caliban', *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) pp.191-195 (195) 24-25, 38-39

⁷⁹ Angela Brüning, 'Caribbean Connections: Comparing Modern Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean Literature, 1950s - Present', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Stirling, May 2006) pp.141-142

⁸⁰ Bridget Jones 'The Unity is Submarine': Aspects of Pan-Caribbean Consciousness in the Work of Kamau Brathwaite', in *The Art of Kamau Brathwaite*, Ed. Stewart Brown (Mid Glamorgan, Wales: Seren, 1995). pp 86-100 (87)

⁸¹ Ibid p. 97

foregrounded in his use of ‘tidelectics’ as an alternative to what he considers as the primarily ‘western’ logic of dialectics.⁸² His vision emerges as well, in poems such as ‘Calypso’ (1967), in which the image of a stone flung from Africa and skimming on the ocean’s surface, is at the heart of an idiosyncratic creation myth:

The stone had skidded arc’d and bloomed into islands:
Cuba and San Domingo
Jamaica and Puerto Rico
Grenada Guadeloupe Bonaire

curved stone hissed into reef
wave teeth fanged into clay⁸³

By *Barabajan Poems* (1994) however, Brathwaite’s vision seems to have shifted from the centrality of Africa, to the ability of the Caribbean - in particular the sea which surrounds and contains the region, to delineate its own arc:

So I am growing up here and dreaming of how to write something that wd catch the gleam the word of water clink & pebble where th(e) wave folds on/to the sand, the fans of sunlight in the water, its various colours & histories, coralline grains settling/ xploding// fish crab sails empty shells whorls worlds of sea-floor sea-flour sea-flower sea-moss moses boats deeper more morose colours holiest grails. how evvathing flows underwater ... the waves comin in/ comin in/ tidelect tidelect tidelect con/nect/ing [...]⁸⁴

Brathwaite’s pan-Caribbean vision rejects fragmentation in favour of a ‘submarine unity’ which unifies the region. This conception was also pivotal in the formation of the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM) which he cofounded in 1966, with John La Rose and Andrew Salkey, as a forum for communication between Caribbean writers and artists, and remained central to his seminal work, *History of the Voice* (1984) which champions the validity and socio-political importance of ‘Nation’ languages.⁸⁵

Brathwaite is not the only Caribbean poet who has turned to Africa’s resonance in the Caribbean for a sense of unity and belongingness, and who has

⁸² Brathwaite explained this in a personal meeting in London in 2005

⁸³ Brathwaite, ‘Calypso’, *Rights of Passage* (1967) anthologised in *The Arrivants*, (Oxford: OUP, 1996) p.48, lines 1-7

⁸⁴ Brathwaite, *Barabajan Poems, 1492-1992* (Kingston: Savacou North, 1994). p.114

⁸⁵ See Anne Walmsley, *The Caribbean Artists Movement, 1966-1972* (London: New Beacon Books, 1992) for a thorough analysis of CAM and its milieu.

tried, to reconfigure its dis/unity by using the ocean as connective metaphor or liminal space. Jones notes that ‘almost every poet attempts reconstructions, finding metaphors for an arc of islands, a bow turned to Africa, a chain of shackles, a rainbow, a flotilla [...]’⁸⁶ Brathwaite theorisations of the ocean as repository of history and transformative potential however, are directly related to applications of liminality in which such locations are seen as temporal, amorphous thresholds, as Trisha Cusack points out in a discussion of the sea as ‘social space’: ‘The ocean could be regarded as a liminal space and the crossing a period in which old identities are unmade and new ones begin to be forged.’⁸⁷

Sylvia Wynter has also offered an alternative to theories which foreground a fragmented hypothesis of the Caribbean, providing an idiosyncratic application of liminality to the region. In an essay published in 1996, Wynter cites anthropologist Asmarom Legesse’s theorisation of liminality as being central to the development of her own thought:

[...] the liminal category is the systemic category from whose perspective alone, as the perspective of those forcibly made to embody and signify lack-of-being, whose members, in seeking to escape their condemned statuses, are able to call into question the closure instituting the order and, therefore, the necessary ‘blindness’ of its normative, in this case, ‘developed’ subjects.⁸⁸

Wynter offers an application of liminality which returns it to an etymology of ‘limbo’ as threshold and border, to the uncertain state of being *in limbo*. Like Wilson Harris’s, her vision foregrounds dislocation, indeterminacy and the idea of ‘limbo as purgatory’⁸⁹ Wynter widens the application of liminality significantly, by arguing that, ‘Western culture knows all other human others only in reference to itself,’ and that this ‘enables contemporary scholars to measure all other human

⁸⁶ Jones, ‘The Unity is Submarine’, p.86

⁸⁷ Tricia Cusack, ‘Introduction: *Framing The Ocean, 1700 To The Present: Envisaging The Sea As Social Space*’ in *Journal of Tourism History*, 7 (2015), 189-190 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1755182x.2015.1059048>> pp.4-5

⁸⁸ Sylvia Wynter, ‘Is Development a Purely Empirical Concept Or Also Teleological’ in Aguibou Y Yansané (ed), *Prospects For Recovery And Sustainable Development In Africa* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996) p.305

⁸⁹ Nathaniel Mackey uses the term ‘limbo as purgatory’ in his essay ‘*Limbo, Dislocation, Phantom Limb*’ to expand on Wilson Harris theorisation of the middle passage as a limbic or purgatorial state. which Harris ‘wants to be “born” in mind.’(Mackey, *Discrepant Engagement*, p. 168)

societies according to the single yardstick of technoscientific accomplishment [...]’⁹⁰ For Wynter, those peoples which occupy the limits or lines which demarcate European society from non European societies exist in a state of liminality or ‘conceptual otherness.’⁹¹ Wynter’s argument is relevant to the present discussion, not only as a response to fragmented notions of the Caribbean but also because her theorisation of liminality is applicable to the ways in which marginal positions have shaped Caribbean literature of the period. Exile, or what she refers to as ‘uprootedness,’ constitutes an indeterminately syncretic, liminal state.⁹²

Further, Wynter has argued that the ‘cultural myth’ of Europe supports ‘the economic and political power of Europe’, and this, according to Wynter, is based ‘on its exploitation of non-Europeans.’⁹³ Hence, the Caribbean writer who, as Wynter argues, is compelled to leave the Caribbean for Europe in search of ‘market and audience’ finds himself or herself in a predicament. Wynter outlines this position in a critique of Derek Walcott, in which she argues that such writers, become trapped by the ‘myth’ of Europe rather than by its reality. As Wynter writes: [...] *to be West Indian is to be syncretic by nature and circumstance, by choice. [...] The dilemma of being either West Indian or European is a false one. To be a West Indian is to accept all the facets of one’s being.* (italics in original text)⁹⁴

What Wynter describes here, is, I suggest, a liminal, in-between position which finds correlation with Turner’s theorisation of liminality, in which the ‘coincidence of opposite forces and notions in a single representation characterises the peculiar unity of the liminal: that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both.’⁹⁵ Accepting and incorporating all the ‘facets of one’s being’, then, results in this ‘both-ness,’ this composition of collages, and this, I suggests, offers another

⁹⁰ Wynter, ‘Is Development a Purely Empirical Concept,’ p.307

⁹¹ Wynter, cited in Lewis Gordon, ‘Fanon and Development’ in L. D Keita (ed.) *Philosophy And African Development* (Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA, 2011) p.73

⁹² Sylvia Wynter, *We Must Learn to Sit Down Together and Discuss a Little Culture - Reflections on West Indian Writing and Criticism* in Alison Donnell & Sarah Lawson Welsh (eds.) *Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature* (London:Routledge, 1996) p.307

⁹³ *Ibid* p.311

⁹⁴ Wynter, *We Must Learn to Sit Down Together*, p.312

⁹⁵ Turner, ‘Betwixt and Between’, p.49

alternative to theorisations of fragmentation which have been at times been applied to the Caribbean, and to the experiences of postwar Caribbean immigrants to the UK.

Part Two: Writing in the Interstice

The Caribbean's shared history of indigenous extirpation, plantation slavery and colonialism provides one unifying strand in historicisations of the region. But as the Trinidadian novelist Earl Lovelace has warned, there are dangers in defining Caribbean identity or the region's history solely by slavery or colonialism. Instead, Lovelace offers an alternative: 'Our history, if we have a history, is not colonialism and slavery, but rather, it is our struggle against these things.'⁹⁶

If we are to agree with Lovelace, 'Caribbean' literature could only truly begin, with the abandonment of slavery in the region in the mid-1800s. Before this, the education, the physiological or even physical freedoms needed to support local writers, or to forge a national or regional literary identity were not available to the majority black population, since, as Louis James has noted, 'literacy and book learning' remained 'privileges for the elite'; for the white or free black or mulatto minority.⁹⁷

Kenneth Ramchand has also pointed out that education in the immediate aftermath of slavery, 'was neither sufficiently extensive nor deep enough to create a public able to read or write [...] literary Negroes in the nineteenth century were exceptions among exceptions.'⁹⁸ Hence, as Kamau Brathwaite has noted, Anglophone Caribbean literature during the period of slavery was primarily the work of 'Englishmen or English-oriented creoles' who 'accepted slavery as something "given"' and produced what Brathwaite has called not 'West Indian' but 'tropical English.'⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Earl Lovelace, 'A Classic novel: The Dragon Can't Dance: Earl Lovelace in Conversation with Kevin Le Gendre,' *London Is The Place for Me: Celebrating 50 Years of Trinidad and Tobago Independence*, Renaissance One. Kilburn, London. 23 Aug. 2012

⁹⁷ James, *Caribbean Literature in English*, p.3.

⁹⁸ Kenneth Ramchand, *The West Indian Novel And Its Background* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971) p.19. See C. L. Innes, *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) for an extended study of Black and Asian writing from this period.

⁹⁹ Kamau Brathwaite, 'Creative Literature of the British West Indies during the period of slavery' in *Roots* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1996) pp 127-170. For more on the literature of this period see Peter J. Kitson, and Debbie Lee (eds.), *Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*. 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999) and Karina Williamson (ed.) *Contrary Voices: Representations of West Indian Slavery, 1657-1834*. (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2008)

In a 1970 essay Brathwaite suggests that while these works, such as Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko or the Royal Slave*, Michael Scott's *Tom Cringle's Log* (1829), the anonymously authored *Hamel, The Obeah Man* (1827) or J.W. Orderson's *Creoleana* (1842), were 'written from direct West Indian experience; or at any rate convincingly give that impression', they relied on British or European literary models and thus failed 'to record a truly convincing experience' of West Indian life.¹⁰⁰

During the 1700s and early 1800s, a range of polemical and autobiographical slave narratives were issued. Many, such as Briton Hammon's *A Narrative of the Unknown Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon* (1760), and Ukawsaw Gronniosaw's *A Narrative of the Most remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, as related by Himself* (1772) were oral narratives collected and recorded by white or Creole amanuenses. Works such as Ignatius Sancho's *The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African* (1782), Olaudah's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789), Ashton D. Warner's *Negro Slavery Described by a Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, a Native of St. Vincent's* (1831) represent early examples of 'non-white' Caribbean writing.¹⁰¹

During the first two decades of the 20th century, several novels and short story collections continued to be published, primarily in Jamaica, by Creole or white authors such as Tom Redcam, the pseudonym of Thomas H. MacDermot, whose *Becka's Buckra Baby* (1903) and *One Brown Girl And ¼* (1909) were both published by MacDermot's own All Jamaica Library, Jamaica's first indigenous publishing house which he founded in 1903. E. A. Dodd (writing under the pen-name of E. Snod) had his novel *Maroon Medicine* published in 1905 by the same

¹⁰⁰ Brathwaite, 'Creative Literature of the British West Indies during the period of slavery' in *Roots*, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1996) p.130.

¹⁰¹ For further analysis of this genre see Nicole N. Aljoe, *Creole Testimonies: Slave Narratives from the British West Indies, 1709-1838* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), John Ernest (ed) *The Oxford Handbook Of The African American Slave Narrative* and Kamau Brathwaite's aforementioned essay 'Creative Literature of the British West Indies during the period of slavery' in *Roots*, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1996) pp.127-170

press, as did W.A. Campbell with 1907's *Marguerite: The Story of an Earthquake*.¹⁰²

In his seminal study, *The West Indian Novel And Its Background* (1970), Kenneth Ramchand writes that the Jewish-Jamaican author Herbert De Lisser's first novel *Jane: A Story of Jamaica* (1913), represented the first West Indian novel in which the 'central character' was Black.¹⁰³ Published in the UK as *Jane's Career: A Story of Jamaica* in 1914, De Lisser's novel is a bildungsroman which chronicles the life of Jane Burrell, a fifteen year old country girl, who is sent to Kingston to work as a maid for an abusive white mistress.¹⁰⁴ According to Belinda Edmondson, De Lisser's novel is an early example of the 'proletarian, anti colonial, barracks-yard novel', an early precursor to similar realist works such as Alfred Mendes's *Black Fauns* (1935), C.L.R. James's *Minty Alley* (1936) and Roger Mais's, *The Hills Were Joyful Together* (1953) and *Brother Man* (1954).¹⁰⁵ De Lisser's novel does share with these works a desire to give voice to the underprivileged black population.¹⁰⁶ It is a desire he shares with his contemporary MacDermot. But De Lisser efforts to portray the world of black Jamaicans, in

¹⁰² For a historical overview and appraisal of the publications of the All Jamaica Library and other fiction from this period see J. Downing Thompson's Jr. essay, 'The Novel Before 1950' in James A. Arnold, Vera M. Kutzinski and Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger (eds.) *A History of Literature in the Caribbean: Volume 2: English- and Dutch-speaking regions* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2001) pp. 115-126. Kenneth Ramchand's *The West Indian Novel And Its Background* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971) also provides a useful overview of this period. Facsimiles of the novels of Redcam, MacDermot, Snod and Campbell are available at The Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC) <http://www.dloc.com/>

¹⁰³ Ramchand, *The West Indian Novel And Its Background*, p. ix

¹⁰⁴ For a feminist critique of De Lisser's novels see Donna-Marie Urbanowicz's unpublished thesis 'Representations of Women in Selected Works of Herbert George De Lisser (1878 - 1944)' available online via the University of Nottingham (<http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/28108/1/594952.pdf>) While not positioning De Lisser as what she refers to as an 'anachronistic black feminist radical', Urbanowicz nevertheless suggests that, 'feminism offers a useful starting point which allows one to debate the ways in which De Lisser continues to challenge the preconceived notions of colonial discourse in order to foreground women as builders of a nation.' (Urbanowicz, p.9)

¹⁰⁵ Belinda Edmondson, *Caribbean Middlebrow: Leisure Culture and the Middle Class* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009). p.34

¹⁰⁶ De Lisser's novel includes the use of creole, or 'dialect' as he calls it in his 'author's note, since, "That is how the people of the class dealt with in this story habitually speak [...] Rude dialect, hardly intelligible to the stranger and scarcely to be rendered by the written word". (De Lisser, *Jane's Career*, p.10) This statement alone signals his position in relation to the characters he wishes to give voice to.

novels such as *Jane's Career* and *Susan Proudleigh* (1915) and like MacDermot's before him are less than convincing.¹⁰⁷ J.

Thomson Jr also argues that De Lisser's novel's 'sometimes invaluable insights about workers do not lead to an overarching radicalism that would seek to transform society.'¹⁰⁸ Hence, despite his authentic and colourful portrayals of peasant life, De Lisser emerges as a colonial conservative, writing as a middle class Creole, from what Sylvia Wynter has called, 'an Archimedean point outside the historical process.'¹⁰⁹ Hence, De Lisser, as a white middle class Creole writing about the black working class occupies a liminal position; simultaneously within and yet outside of the community he wishes to portray; a community he can never be completely assimilated into and which he observes externally. Similarly, the eponymous Jane Burrell occupies a transformative, liminal space in *Jane's Career*, as a naive rural girl navigating a troubled life in unfamiliar downtown Kingston.

Hence, even in this nascent period, Anglophone Caribbean writing was predicated on the liminal tension between colonialism, social division and exile.¹¹⁰ While these works used the Caribbean and its people as setting and subjects, their white or Creole middle class authors, were ideologically, economically and socially removed from the majority black population. While this is understandable, given that the region was - at least politically - within the British Empire, the writing these writers produced - though valid expressions of their own unique experience and vision was limited in its portrayal of the region's predominantly black population. Such works were also predominantly produced by male writers.

As Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh have noted in relation to this, the dominance of 'critical agendas based on the male writer-in-exile' inevitably

¹⁰⁷ See J. Downing Thompson Jr's essay 'The Novel before 1950' for a comparative critique of De Lisser and MacDermot's work. (Albert James Arnold, Vera M Kutzinski and Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger, *A History Of Literature In The Caribbean: Volume 2: English and Dutch-speaking Regions*(Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 2001) pp.115-125

¹⁰⁸ J. Downing Thompson Jr. pp. 115-126.

¹⁰⁹ Sylvia Wynter quoted in Alison Donnell, *Twentieth-Century Caribbean Literature: Critical Moments in Anglophone Literature*, p.25

¹¹⁰ In the 1920s, authors such as Alexander MacGregor James (*The Cacique's Treasures and Other Tales* [1920]) and Herbert T. Thomas (the semi-autobiographical, *The Story of a West Indian Policeman or Forty-Seven Years in the Jamaica Constabulary*, 1927) also published fictions set in Jamaica.

marginalised Caribbean women writers of the pre-World War 1 period.¹¹¹ During the mid-1800s there were several important publications by Caribbean women born into slavery but it was arguably not until the 1934 publication of Jean Rhys's, *Voyage in the Dark*, that a significant fictional work by an English speaking Caribbean woman was published.¹¹² While there were several important female poets and short story writers active prior to, and during this period, there appears to be an absence of publications from Caribbean women novelists during the period between the abolition of British slavery and the mid 1930s. This paucity of publications was not of course limited only to female writers. But, as Sandra Courtman has remarked, during the early 20th century, 'Women writers were adversely affected by prevailing literary tastes that combined with strong patriarchal networks,' hence, 'the path to publication was eased for male West Indian authors who seemed able to satisfy the growing curiosity about other cultures.'¹¹³ Like the white Creole writers discussed earlier, women writers of this emergent period, occupied liminal peripheries. They were both 'distanced from, yet bound up in' the communities they sought to commemorate, critique and memorialise.¹¹⁴

Rhys has been a divisive figure. Critical debate has often centred on whether Rhys - born in Dominica of Welsh and Scottish heritage - can be considered a Caribbean writer.¹¹⁵ As Helen Carr has pointed out however, 'it is Rhys's race that calls her status into doubt,' not her origins or the conditions of her

¹¹¹ Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh, 'Women Writers and the Canon' in *The Routledge Reader In Caribbean Literature* (London: Routledge, 1996).p.218

¹¹² In her study of 19th Caribbean women writing, *Women Writing The West Indies, 1804-1939*, Evelyn O'Callaghan suggests that Una Marson's publication of her short story 'Sojourn' (1931) in *The Cosmopolitan*, a magazine she [Marson] edited, represented the first time since Mary Seacole's *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands* (1857) that a 'non-white' Caribbean woman was published, a gap of seventy years.(O'Callaghan p.1)

¹¹³ Courtman, 'Women Writers and the *Windrush* Generation, p.92

¹¹⁴ Evelyn O'Callaghan, 'The Outsider's Voice: White Creole Women Novelists in the Caribbean Literary Tradition' (*Journal of West Indian Literature*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (October, 1986) p.76

¹¹⁵ For more on this debate see 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism,' in which Gayatri Spivak offers a comparative critique of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1918), Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) suggesting that Rhys's novel can be read as a 'reinscription' of Jane Eyre. (244). See also *Jean Rhys* by Elaine Savory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

exile.¹¹⁶ Also problematic has been Rhys's self confessed ambiguity towards black people in her private life. In an interview with Elizabeth Vreeland for *The Paris Review*, when asked whether she had written about her relationship with black people, in her native Dominica, Rhys responded:

I was a bit wary of the black people. I've tried to write about how I gradually become even a bit envious. They were so strong. They could walk great distances, it seemed to me, without getting tired, and carry those heavy loads on their heads. [...] They had swarms of children and no marriages.¹¹⁷

And her publisher Diana Anthill has commented that Rhys often adopted a querulous or indignant tone towards black Dominicans, 'like any other old exiled member of the Caribbean plantocracy', questioning 'why had they [black Dominicans] hated 'us' [the white plantocracy] so much?' Rhys's liminal position within colonial Dominica is made clear by these comments, which help to illustrate why she remains a divisive, liminal figure within Caribbean letters.

In a 1974 essay Kamau Brathwaite argued against Rhys's inclusion in the Caribbean literary canon, suggesting that:

White creoles in the English and French West Indies have separated themselves by far too wide a gulf, and have contributed too little culturally, as a group, to give credence to the notion that they can, given the present structure, meaningfully identify or be identified with the spiritual world on this side of the Sargasso Sea. [...] That spiritual world is essentially the culture of the black ex-African majority.¹¹⁸

Brathwaite 'clarified' his position in a 1995 issue of the journal *Wasafari*, referring to *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a 'great Caribbean novel, and writing, almost apologetically, that his earlier comments were directed against those whom he saw as using Rhys's novel as a weapon to attack 'African barbarism and darkness' in

¹¹⁶ Helen Carr, 'Jean Rhys' in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*. Bill Schwarz (ed) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) pp. 93-113 (94)

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth Vreeland, 'Jean Rhys: The Art of Fiction,' in Philip Gourevitch (ed.), *The Paris Review Interviews III* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2008) pp.195 - 214 (206-207)

¹¹⁸ Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the Caribbean* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1974) p.38

writers like himself, at a time when Caribbean literature was struggling for recognition.¹¹⁹

Evelyn O’Callaghan has argued however, that while Brathwaite locates ‘the basis of culture in the Caribbean’ in the ‘folk’ or African centred tradition - an opinion also shared by Earl Lovelace - the ‘outsider’ voice of the white or female Creole writer, remains an ‘integral part of a Caribbean literary tradition.’¹²⁰ Female Creole voices, like their black counterparts also help to counter and challenge male dominance of *Windrush* era literature.¹²¹ Furthermore, the interstitial positions which writers such as Rhys have occupied - and which contemporary Creole writers such as Robert Antoni, Amanda Smyth and Monique Roffey continue to occupy, are valid, and necessary for forming a composite and inclusive view of the Caribbean experience, an experience which as we have seen, is essentially liminal.

In *History of the Voice* (1984), Brathwaite writes, ‘Our native literature begins with McKay in exile.’¹²² The book Brathwaite refers to, *Banana Bottom* (1933) was Claude McKay’s third and final novel and the first to be set in

¹¹⁹ Brathwaite quoted in Carr, ‘Jean Rhys’, p.94. A similar attack was made against the African American playwright Lorraine Hansberry, by Amiri Baraka who in his initial assessment of Hansberry’s 1959 play *A Raisin in the Sun* claimed it was “middle class” and focussed on blacks “moving into white folks neighbourhoods” when most black folks were just trying to pay their rent in ghetto shacks.’ Baraka later revised his original views, after seeing a 1986 revival of the play, suggesting that he and much of the Black Arts Movement had ‘missed the essence of the work’ and that Hansberry had created ‘a family on the cutting edge of the same class and ideological struggles as existed in the movement itself and among the people.’ (Amiri Baraka quoted in Margaret B. Wilkerson, ‘Political Radicalism and Artistic Innovation in the Works of Lorraine Hansberry,’ in Harry Justin Elam and David Krasner (eds.) *African-American Performance And Theatre History* (Oxford [England]: Oxford University Press, 2001) pp. 40-54 (41-42)

¹²⁰In his essay, ‘The Emancipation Jouvay Tradition and the Almost Loss of Pan’, published in 2004, Lovelace explores the contributions of the disenfranchised black population, concluding that ‘Few have failed to realise that that much vaunted cultural creativity expressed in Trinidad and Tobago has come principally from the ordinary African descended people at the bottom of the economic ladder.’ (in Milla Cozart Riggio (ed.) *Carnival: Culture in Action - The Trinidad Experience* [New York: Routledge, 2004] pp. 187-194 (189)

¹²¹ Evelyn O’Callaghan, ‘The Outsider’s Voice: White Creole Women Novelists in the Caribbean Literary Tradition’ in Donnell and Welsh (eds.) *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*, pp. 276

¹²² Brathwaite, *History Of The Voice* (London: New Beacon Books, 1984) p.42

Jamaica.¹²³ As in De Lisser's *Jane's Career*, the main protagonist is female; a young woman, Tabitha 'Bita' Plant who is raped as a child and adopted by white missionaries who send her to England to be educated. Bita returns to Jamaica after seven years in England and struggles to form 'an identity that reconciles the aesthetic values imposed upon her with her appreciation for her native roots.'¹²⁴ In her essay 'Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom: A Fictional Return to Jamaica*', Gianfranca Balestra notes that while Bita makes a symbolic return to Jamaica, McKay himself did not return to Jamaica after he left in 1912, and neither do the protagonist of his previous novels *Home to Harlem* (1928) and *Banjo* (1929) which are set in Harlem and Marseille respectively, and which feature primarily itinerant male protagonists. Balestra argues that Bita provides McKay with a 'fictional return', but suggests that McKay's rendering of the female protagonist as a woman who, 'renounces the pursuit of an intellectual life in favor of body, instincts and family, however sympathetically depicted, can be read as well, as part of a male fantasy of femininity.'¹²⁵ Balestra suggests that while *Banana Bottom* remains flawed, unable to 'fully realize its subversive potential', it nevertheless 'foreshadows some of the crucial issues addressed by post-colonial theory and is especially representative of the Caribbean experience of hybridism, migration, displacement, colonization, and slavery.'¹²⁶ I want to suggest that even in his absence, and possibly *because* of his exilic absence, McKay was intimately aware of the simultaneity and liminal tension at the heart of the Caribbean psyche.

¹²³ A 1941 manuscript of McKay's fourth novel remains unpublished. For more on this 'lost' novel see Felicia Lee, 'Harlem Renaissance Novel by Claude McKay is Discovered', *Nytimes.com*, 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/15/books/harlem-renaissance-novel-by-claude-mckay-is-discovered.html?_r=0> [accessed 12 November 2015]

For more on McKay's life and work see Wayne F Cooper's *Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987). Kotti Sree Ramesh and K. Nirupa Rani's, *Claude McKay: The Literary Identity from Jamaica to Harlem and Beyond* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006) and Tyrone Tillery's, *Claude McKay: A Black Poet's Struggle for Identity* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992). Also see McKay's memoir *A Long Way From Home* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007)

¹²⁴ Freda Scott Giles 'Claude McKay's Life', 2015 <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/m_r/McKay/life.htm> [accessed 20 June 2015].

¹²⁵ Gianfranca Balestra, 'Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom: A Fictional Return to Jamaica*' *RSA Journal* 12 (2001) pp. 5-16

¹²⁶ Balestra, p.14

Another important pre-World War II writer, resident primarily, like McKay, in the United States, Eric Walrond is primarily associated with the Harlem Renaissance, having migrated from Guyana - via Panama, to New York City in 1918, part of a significant wave of British Caribbean immigration to the US during this time.¹²⁷ Walrond spent ten years in New York, where his celebrated short story collection *Tropic Death*, was published in 1926. Kenneth Ramchand has called the collection, 'one of the startling treasures in the lost literature of the West Indies.'¹²⁸

The stories in *Tropic Death* detail a range of often tragic, early 20th century Caribbean experiences. In 'Drought' for instance, set during a period when Barbados was plagued by a prolonged water shortage, a group of Barbadian peasants struggle against the forces of nature and colonialism with dire consequences. In the eponymous, coming of age story 'Tropic Death', Walrond recounts the experiences of young Gerald Bright as he travels from Barbados to Panama to find his father who has gone to work on the Panama Canal but who has fallen into perilous moral and physical destitution.

Foreshadowing the mid 1950s experiments of Samuel Selvon, Walrond utilises a combination of dialect and standard English throughout the stories in *Tropic Death*. As Parascandola suggests, this strategy, of 'using language to probe both the European and the African aspects of Caribbean identity' reinforces the 'split consciousness' at the heart of Walrond's Caribbean subjectivity.' According to Parascandola:

Walrond, a Black immigrant living in America, often felt a duality somewhat akin to the split consciousness Du Bois ascribed to African Americans. Walrond took great pride in his heritage, celebrating his culture and language, yet he was also aware of the potential rewards (and frequent dangers) of identifying with the language and ways of white folks.¹²⁹

With the movement of subjectivities signalled in the shifting registers of language in *Tropic Death*, and with his own itinerant biography, Walrond's life and work echo

¹²⁷ For more on Walrond's life and work see James C Davis, *Eric Walrond: A Life in the Harlem Renaissance and the Transatlantic Caribbean* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015)

¹²⁸ Kenneth Ramchand, 'The Writer Who Ran Away: Eric Walrond and *Tropic Death*' *Savacou* 2 (Sept.1970) p. 67.

¹²⁹ Eric Walrond and Louis J. Parascandola (ed.), *Winds Can Wake Up The Dead* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998) p.26

the liminal, simultaneous positions which characterise the diasporic and interregional migrations of those Caribbean people he depicts in his stories. Walrond captures the Caribbean subject at a symbolically transitional and liminal point; as the region and its people begin to move out of the immediate aftermath of slavery and into the beginnings of Caribbean nationhood. And this, I argue, is related to Turner's suggestion, that as liminal personae or neophytes move between physical or symbolic locations they inhabit states of simultaneity, of conditions of being which are neither one or the other but which are 'both', or at the very least "betwixt and between" all the recognized fixed points in space-time of structural classification.'¹³⁰ It is in relation to these notions of transition, transformation and simultaneity that I suggest Parascandola echoes here:

The history of the Caribbean is one built on migration, both voluntary and enforced. [...] Like many people from the Caribbean, Walrond became a permanent migrant, always having a sense of home while simultaneously feeling the loss of it.¹³¹

The handful of Caribbean literary magazines and journals which emerged during the 1930s and the mid-20th century also played a crucial role in the development of the region's literature.¹³² They also played an important political role, as Helen Tiffin has pointed out, by 'encouraging local writing both through publication and reviews and by creating a climate in which literature was part of the national or local scene and an integral part of the political agenda of independence.'¹³³ Three journals were particularly significant: the Barbados based *Bim*, a quarterly journal edited in Barbados by the literary editor, writer and artist Frank Collymore which first appeared in December 1942 and is still, as of writing, in publication.¹³⁴ *Bim* was instrumental in developing the nascent careers of writers such as Samuel

¹³⁰ Victor W. Turner 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*' (1964) web. <<http://www2.fiu.edu/~ereserve/010010095-1.pdf>> p.49

¹³¹ Walrond and Parascandola, p.36

¹³² Apart from those discussed here, Edna Manley's *Focus*, first appeared in Jamaica in 1943 and continued with infrequent publications, until 1960, and A.J. Seymour's journal *Ky-over-al*, was published in Guyana between 1945 and 1961.

¹³³ Helen Tiffin, 'The Institution of Literature', in *A History Of Literature In The Caribbean: Volume 2: English and Dutch-speaking Regions*, (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 2001). pp.41-68 (61)

¹³⁴ There was a hiatus in publication from 1996 to 2007 when the magazine was relaunched as *Arts for the 21st Century*.

Selvon, James Berry, Edgar Mittelholzer, John Figueroa, and Kamau Brathwaite who, beginning with the poem 'Shadow Suite' in *Bim* 12 (June 1950) published seventy-five poems in the magazine between 1950 and 1972.¹³⁵

In Trinidad, the short lived *Trinidad*, which was founded by Alfred Mendes and C.L.R. James ran for two issues between 1929 and 1930, and its successor, *The Beacon*, which ran for 28 issues between March 1931 and November 1933.¹³⁶ *The Beacon's* editor Albert Gomes also edited, *From Trinidad: Fiction and Verse* (1937), the first anthology of Trinidadian writing, and a final issue of *The Beacon*, published in November 1939.¹³⁷

From the beginning both *Bim* and *The Beacon*, encouraged writing which was distinctly, indigenously Caribbean in matter and style. In the fourth issue of *Bim*, Collymore made this clear, asking potential contributors to submit work written from their own 'viewpoint and experience.'¹³⁸ This call, echoed in Trinidad by Albert Gomes, that 'the sooner we throw off the veneer of culture that our colonisation has brought us the better for our artistic aims' contributed significantly to the development of a distinct 'Caribbean' literature.¹³⁹

According to Hazel Carby, Alfred Gomes's initiation of *The Beacon* in 1931, 'is generally considered to be the moment of the integration of the political struggle to achieve independence and the creation of a national literature in

¹³⁵ A closer look at the list of *Bim's* contributors reveals, however, that there was a comparative absence of women writers published in the magazine. (See Sander, 1976) As previously noted, this imbalance was related to the wider marginalisation of women writers during this period. In addition, Alison Donnell notes that during the fifteen year existence of the BBC's *Caribbean Voices*, only twenty percent of the short stories broadcasted were contributed by women.

¹³⁶ For an authoritative, socio-historical and literary analysis of both *The Beacon* and *Trinidad* magazines see Reinhard W. Sander's *The Trinidad Awakening: West Indian Literature of the Nineteen-Thirties* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988). Sander has also compiled 'An Index to *Bim*, 1942-1973' a comprehensive list of *Bim's* contributors and their submissions. (R. W. Sander, 'An Index To *Bim*, 1942-1973', *The Programme of Commonwealth Literature*, 11 (1976), 1-41 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/002198947601100101>>.)

¹³⁷ See Jeremy Taylor, 'Albert Gomes: Missing In Action' *Caribbean Beat Magazine*, 2004 <<http://caribbean-beat.com/issue-68/missing-action-albert-gomes#axzz3h7dj8z8N>> [accessed 27 July 2015]

¹³⁸ Frank Collymore, *Bim* Vol. 1, No.4, April 1944, quoted in Heidi Lee LaVine, 'Paradoxes Of Particularity: Caribbean Literary Imaginaries'

¹³⁹ Alfred Gomes quoted in *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*. ed. Alison Donnell and Welsh Sarah Lawson. (London: Routledge, 1996.) p.113

Trinidad.¹⁴⁰ *The Beacon* was controversial, politically focussed and iconoclastic. In his 1974 biography, *Through a Maze of Colour*, Gomes refers to the magazine as a ‘debunker of bourgeois morality, obscurantist religion and primitive capitalism.’¹⁴¹ The journal published polemical articles which provoked considerable controversy in Trinidad. The July 1931 issue for instance, included a short poem by Albert Gomes entitled ‘Black Man’, which attacked racial discrimination in the United States and urged black men to resist and retaliate, ‘to fight the white man’s fury.’¹⁴² The colonial authorities were appalled, interpreting Gomes’s poem, perhaps rightly, as a critique against colonialism and a cry for revolt. The police visited the offices of *The Beacon*, the first of several visits which severed only to enlarge the periodicals’ readership.¹⁴³

The *Trinidad*, and subsequently *The Beacon* helped to facilitate the emergence of the realist, ‘barrack yard’ story, according to Leah Rosenberg, ‘the most influential genre of Trinidad’s emergent national literature of the 1930s’. C.L. R. James stories, ‘Triumph’ and ‘Turner’s Prosperity’, both published in the inaugural issue of *Trinidad* in December 1929, were two early examples of the genre. Both stories are set among the black working class of Port of Spain, and feature underprivileged characters, who, as Sylvia Wynter has written, ‘refuse to accept their value of nothingness.’¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Hazel V. Carby ‘Proletarian or Revolutionary Literature? C. L. R. James and the Politics of the Trinidadian Resistance’ in *new formations* Number 10, Spring 1990 pp. 99-108 (100) <http://www.amielandmelburn.org.uk/collections/newformations/10_99.pdf>

¹⁴¹ Alfred Gomes, *Through A Maze of Colour* (excerpt) in *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*, Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh eds, (London: Routledge, 1996) pp. 166-171 (169)

¹⁴² Albert Gomes, ‘Black Man’, quoted in Victor Chang, ‘West Indian Poetry’, in *A Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry*, Neil Roberts ed. (Oxford: Blakwell’s Publishing, 2003) 235-248 (239)

¹⁴³ Sander, *The Trinidad Awakening*, p.30

¹⁴⁴ Sylvia Wynter, ‘Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception: The Counterdoctrine of the Jamesian Poiesis’ in Paget Henry and Paul Buhle, *C.L.R. James's Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), p. 76. CLR James’s novel *Minty Alley* (1935), Alfred Mendes’s stories ‘Her Chinaman’s Way’ (1929), ‘Sweetman’ (1931) and his novels *Pitch Lake* (1934) and *Black Fauns* (1935) are also significant examples of the social-realist or ‘barrack yard’ genre, as are the short stories ‘Clipped Wings’ by Kathleen Archibald which appeared in the 1937 anthology *From Trinidad: Fiction and Verse*. For an analysis of the genre see the chapter ‘Short Fiction’ (pp. 46-70) in Reinhard W. Sander, *The Trinidad Awakening: West Indian Literature of the Nineteen-Thirties* (1988) See also Leah Rosenberg’s essay ‘Man Sweet, Woman Stronger: Calypso’s War with Yard Fiction’ (Kingston, Jamaica: Journal of West Indian Literature, Vol. 9, No. 2 (April 2001), pp. 18-50

Both *Bim* and *The Beacon* were critically influential, contributing to definitions of Caribbean identity and literature which are still relevant today. Moreover, their editors anticipated aspects of Caribbean writing which later writing would articulate and expand upon. And, it is this anticipatory phase, preceding the proliferation of Caribbean literature which would follow in the 1950s, that I suggest represents a crucial, 'in-between' or liminal state from which Caribbean writers began their journey, from enslavement towards what Franz Fanon has referred to, as a 'revolutionary' or 'national literature.'¹⁴⁵

Like the Caribbean people they documented in their writing, Anglophone Caribbean writers of the early 20th century occupied symbolic locations; between the Caribbean and England, and correspondingly, between their own emergent Caribbean literary voices and the tradition, history and practice of English literature. Writing in 1968 on the role of England in shaping Caribbean literature, Louis James's comments, are equally applicable to the machinations of the colonial enterprise throughout the British empire:

Only an extremist would deny the positive contributions to West Indian social life made by England. [...] England opened up a cultural heritage which reached beyond England to Europe, and Asia and Africa. It provided a highly developed tool of language with which a writer like Walcott could explore his own unique predicament [...]¹⁴⁶

In challenging this view, Sylvia Wynter has argued that the 'unique predicament' which James refers to, was created by England itself in its own 'economic interest.' As Wynter explains, the pursuance and preservation of these political and economic interests profited England, and, 'the more they profited her, the less they profited the West Indies.'¹⁴⁷ The result was economic and political disenfranchisement. The solution, for the writer seeking literary recognition or economic success was exile.

George Lamming and Samuel Selvon arrived in London on the same ship, in 1950, at the beginning of a significant wave of Caribbean writing in England. Prior to their arrival, only a small amount of fiction by black Anglophone

¹⁴⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin, 1990) pp. 178-179

¹⁴⁶ Louis James, *The Islands In Between: Essays On West Indian Literature* (London: Oxford U.P., 1968) p.25

¹⁴⁷ Sylvia Wynter, *We Must Learn to Sit Down Together*, p.310

Caribbean authors had been published in the UK. CLR James's *Minty Alley* (1933) was one of the earliest. The following year, Alfred Mendes's *Pitch Lake* was published, followed by Mendes's second novel, *Black Fauns*, in 1935. In the year of Selvon and Lamming's arrival, London's Hogarth Press published Edgar Mittelholzer's second novel, *A Morning in the Office*, an event which, according to J. Dillon Brown, signalled 'the inaugurating moment of the Windrush generation's literary efflorescence.'¹⁴⁸

The concentration of several Caribbean writers in Britain in the mid to late 1940s, and the interest generated by the BBC's groundbreaking *Caribbean Voices* program, spearheaded and produced by the Jamaican feminist, activist and writer Una Marson, led to a proliferate spate of publications during the decade from 1948 to 1958. During this period, Lamming, Selvon, V.S. Naipaul, Jan Carew, John Hearne, Andrew Salkey, Roger Mais, John Hearne and V.S. Reid all had novels published in London.¹⁴⁹

This departure into exile, the movement of these and other pioneering writers, across geographic and symbolic spaces facilitated the development of a literature which, as will be shown in the following chapter, embodies those dislocated and liminal experiences which characterised the *Windrush* era and which can be observed in the Pan-Caribbean vernacular Selvon creates in *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and in the destabilising modernism of Lamming's *The Emigrants*.

¹⁴⁸ J. Dillon Brown, *Migrant Modernism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013) p.51

¹⁴⁹ For a comprehensive bibliography of Caribbean fiction written between 1903 and 1967 see Kenneth Ramchand's 'Author Bibliography' and 'Year by Year Bibliography' in *The West Indian Novel And Its Background* (1970) pp. 274-286. For a more thorough explication of Caribbean writing in the UK during this period see Susheila Nasta's essay 'Voyaging In: Colonialism and Migration' in Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls, eds. *The Cambridge History of Twentieth Century English Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp. 563-582

Chapter Two

Liminal Migrations: Aspects of Liminality in George Lamming's *The Emigrants* (1954) and Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956)

A population that undergoes transformation in a distant place is tempted to abandon pure collective faith.

– Eduard Glissant¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999)p.15

Part One: George Lamming's *The Emigrants*: The Novel as Liminal Chronotope

In the following section I will provide a close reading of Lamming's 1954 novel *The Emigrants* which applies liminality theory to the novel's themes, structure and narrative strategies.¹⁵¹ My argument here, which draws on Turner's writings on liminality, is that Lamming's methodology in *The Emigrants* corresponds to a 'rite de passage' in which the emigrants progress through a ritual transformation, and in which each phase of the ritual embodies those liminal processes. I have organised my analysis in accordance with these three phases. Part one, 'A Voyage' corresponds to the separation phase of the liminal process, the second, 'Rooms and Residents' to the 'margin' or 'limen' phase, and the third, 'Another Time,' to the aggregation or assimilation stage.

The Separation Phase: A Voyage

Lamming's first novel, *In The Castle Of My Skin* (1953), concludes as its eighteen year old protagonist 'G', in alienation and despair, prepares to leave Barbados for the more cosmopolitan and liberal society of Trinidad, a conclusion which, as Leah Pate argues, 'suggests that perhaps the only way the colonized can revolt against the developmentally paralysing conditions of colonialism is through exile,' even though, in the case of 'G', that exile is intra-colonial rather than a departure to the centre of imperial centre.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ There has been extensive scholarship on Lamming. For a more wide-reaching literary and critical appraisal of Lamming's fiction see Sandra Pouchet Paquet, *The Novels Of George Lamming* (London: Heinemann, 1982), Anthony Boxhill, *Critical Perspectives on George Lamming* (Pueblo: Passaggiata Press, 1986), Supriya Nair, *Caliban's Curse: George Lamming and the Revisioning of History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), A. J. Simoes da Silva, *The Luxury Of Nationalist Despair: George Lamming's Fiction as Decolonizing Project* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), Anthony Bogues (ed.) *Caribbean Reasonings - The George Lamming Reader: The Aesthetics of Decolonisation* (Kingston [Jamaica]: Ian Randle Publishers, 2011), Curdella Forbes, *From Nation To Diaspora: Samuel Selvon, George Lamming and the Cultural Performance of Gender* (Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, 2005) and Ian Munro's essay 'George Lamming,' in Bruce King (ed.) *West Indian Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1979) pp.126-43

¹⁵² Leah Pate, 'At Home In The World: Masculinity, Maturation, And Domestic Space In The Caribbean Bildungsroman' (Unpublished PhD thesis, Arizona State University, 2012) p.19

Lamming's second novel, *The Emigrants* begins at the symbolic point at which *In The Castle Of My Skin* ends; as a group of Caribbean men and women begin their two week journey to England. They embark upon *The Golden Image*, from a bleak French-Caribbean port, 'in the greyness of the evening,'¹⁵³ upon an ocean the narrator describes as 'dark and sinister and suggestively horrific.'¹⁵⁴ In this first section, 'A Voyage', which at 115 pages is by far the longest of the novel's three sections, the ocean itself functions as both a symbolic liminal location and dramatic personae. In her study of the novel's sea journey, Maria Paola Guarducci has argued that, 'the sea journey is an essential part of the migrating process, in which the sea proves to be a site of mingling.'¹⁵⁵

In the 'process' of transit, in the physical and symbolic movement from the Caribbean to England, there is, what Turner has referred to as, a 'period of margin.' In this 'intervening liminal period,' Turner writes, 'the state of the ritual subject (the "passenger") is ambiguous; he passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state.'¹⁵⁶ Thus, while the ocean, as Guarducci argues, cannot perhaps be interpreted as a 'frontier,' in *The Emigrants*, it does I suggest, represent a threshold or, to borrow a phrase from Wilson Harris, a 'limbo gateway,' over which the passengers are crossing, metaphorically, and physically, and in the crossing, also embodying, the indeterminacy which characterises the liminal phase. Hence, the journey is both departure and marginal crossing.¹⁵⁷

Early in the novel Lamming draws attention to the uneasy ambiguity and liminal suspension inherent in the voyage, by the narrator's repeated variation of the phrase, 'waiting for something to happen.' With each repetition the phrase is modulated, from 'We were all waiting for something to happen,' evolving into, 'We were still waiting for something to happen', 'We waited to see what would

¹⁵³ George Lamming, *The Emigrants* (London: Allison & Busby, 1980) p.9

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.11

¹⁵⁵ Maria Paola Guarducci, "'Only The Ship Remained": The Sea Journey In George Lamming's *The Emigrants*,' *Textus XXIII* (2010), pp. 339-354. (350)

¹⁵⁶ Turner 'Betwixt and Between' p.47

¹⁵⁷ As discussed in a previous section, Wilson Harris uses the term 'limbo gateway' as a metaphor for 'a certain kind of gateway to or a threshold of a new world and the dislocation of a chain of miles.' (Harris, *History, Fable & Myth*, p.19)

happen', 'We waited sure that something would happen', and 'We were all going to wait to see what would happen'.¹⁵⁸

Waiting itself is transitional. And with his foregrounding of 'waiting', Lamming seems to imply that the passengers of *The Golden Image* suffer from a certain degree of inertia or helplessness. Imre Szeman has also suggested that Lamming's imposition of 'waiting' is linked to 'the phenomenological *weight* of the Caribbean (my italics),' and that waiting highlights a distinction between the measured, quotidian past and the expectant journey into an uncertain future. For Szeman, the repetition of 'waiting for something to happen,' 'establish everything that will follow in the novel as the site of agency and action by comparison.'¹⁵⁹

Supriya Nair has also suggested, that the repeated lines echo the sense of 'ahistoricity on the islands,' and that:

the liminal tensions one perceives in the 'small islands' are therefore not dissolved at the end of the rainbow, but rather reconfigured into a new ambivalence that also rejects celebration.¹⁶⁰

A similar liminal suspension is also reflected in Lamming's use of a shifting, discontinuous point of view. The first-person narrator, the 'I', which is first encountered in the novel's opening pages is possibly a representation of Lamming himself; a Barbadian teacher, like Lamming, who has spent four years in Trinidad, and who has 'scrambled fifty pounds from three sources and set sail for England.'¹⁶¹ The narrator, whose identity later merges with that of the writer Collis, describes *The Golden Image*, its passengers, and its embarkation but then abruptly shifts, with a section break, into a third-person omniscient viewpoint. This first person narrator is not encountered again till much later, in the novel's third and final section when he meets a fellow passenger, Lillian, on a London street, before morphing into the omniscient once more.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Lamming, *The Emigrants*, pp.10-29

¹⁵⁹ Imre Szeman, *Zones Of Instability: Literature, Postcolonialism, and the Nation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003) p.87

¹⁶⁰ Supriya Nair, *Caliban's Curse: George Lamming and the Revisioning of History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996) p.57

¹⁶¹ Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p.15

¹⁶² *Ibid*, pp.223-229

Nair suggests that, 'the gradual disappearance of the 'I' repeats a characteristic narrative strategy of Lamming's, combining the individual and the collective to indicate a representative situation: all of them in the same boat, figuratively and literally speaking.'¹⁶³ Conversely, the 'disappearance' of the first person point of view could also represent more specifically, the fragmentation and loss of individual identity.

Nicholas Robinette comments that Lamming 'uses the sea to figure hostility, disruption and disturbance.' Robinette writes: 'The liminality of the voyage is not pleasurable, but an ordeal in which the characters strain to discover the concrete content of their new lives. [...] The ship and its passengers struggle against the horizons and the unraveling of their familiar worlds.'¹⁶⁴ Hence, the arduous journey on which we witness this 'unravelling,' emerges as the quintessential liminal experience.

In Turner's theorisation of liminality, the initial phase of a rite of passage is marked by 'symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions (a 'state')'¹⁶⁵ This, I suggest, is related to the prolonged and traumatic isolation of the passengers onboard *The Golden Image*. The passengers have been separated physically, from the Caribbean, and the narrator reinforces this dislocation, as the ship finally steers away from the islands on its journey north, until 'Only the ship remained.'¹⁶⁶

As Claire Alexander suggests, the rendering of the voyage as a 'suspension of both time and place,' and 'a movement into the "beyond"', as well as the transition and transgression implied by the journey, 'negotiates and contests absolute and essentialist notions of origin and nation, belonging and citizenship,

¹⁶³ Nair, *Caliban's Curse*, p.59

¹⁶⁴ Nicholas Robinette, *Realism, Form And The Postcolonial Novel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Pivot, 2014) p.22

¹⁶⁵ Turner 'Betwixt and Between,' p.47

¹⁶⁶ Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p.36

through a performative articulation of reimagined perceptions of temporality and spatiality.’¹⁶⁷

Hence, during the Atlantic crossing, the claustrophobic third-class dormitory where most of the male passengers spend their time in discussion and conflict, echoes the cramped holds of the ‘middle passage.’¹⁶⁸ Passengers are seen only briefly in the open space of the deck. Instead, they seem confined, and somewhat imprisoned below in the cramped, cocoon-like isolation of the dormitory, on bunks separated by ‘the space of two bodies,’¹⁶⁹ trapped, ‘as though they were in a cage with the doors flung open,’¹⁷⁰ but from which they could not ‘release’ themselves, even as the ship arrives at Plymouth.

Szeman has suggested that the ‘cage’ ‘acts clearly as a metaphor of the colonial condition’ and that what makes departure difficult or even impossible is the absence of ‘any space *outside* of the cage.’¹⁷¹ Szeman writes, ‘All that exists outside of the cage is a void, a space without things, a space that is comprised of nothing [...] The impossibility of leaving the cage is formulated as a logical proposition: escape from the colonial cage can only occur if there is a space of things one might enter.’¹⁷²

The iconic Pathé Footage of *The Empire Windrush*’s arrival at Tilbury is also framed to emphasise a sense of containment and isolation. As Dagmar Brunow points out, while the Hollywood actress Ingrid Bergman, whose arrival at Heathrow features in the first part of the newsreel, is presented as ‘an individual whose coming to Britain is justified by her professional role as an actress, the passengers of the *Windrush* are represented as a homogenous group, as “500 Jamaicans.”’ Furthermore, as Brunow argues, ‘The use of long shots lumps the most diverse individuals together into seemingly homogenous groups, while

¹⁶⁷ Claire Alexander, ‘Rivers to Cross: Exile and Transformation in the Caribbean migration novels of George Lamming,’ in Russell King, John Connell and Paul E White (eds.) *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration* (London: Routledge, 1995). pp.57-69 (58)

¹⁶⁸ John Clement Ball, *Imagining London: Postcolonial Fiction and the Transnational Metropolis* (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto Press, 2004).p.112

¹⁶⁹ Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p.34

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p.105

¹⁷¹ Szeman, *Zones Of Instability*, p.94

¹⁷² *Ibid*

having the tendency to distance the spectators from the immigrants.’¹⁷³ And, it is this distance, I suggest, which acts to contain the arrivants, to isolate them on the deck for scrutiny, that initiates a process of othering, to set them in liminal space.

Schwarz has suggested that the Pathé footage of Lord Kitchener’s performance of ‘London is the Place for Me’ captures the precise moment ‘in which the colonial subject was *becoming* an immigrant (my italics).’¹⁷⁴ Correspondingly, in Lamming’s novel, the arrival of *The Golden Image* at Plymouth, and the subsequent train journey the arrivants undertake into London, signal similar moments of separation, arrival and transformation.

The Margin or Liminal Phase: Rooms and Residents

The second book of *The Emigrants*, ‘Rooms and Residents,’ directly corresponds, as I will show, to the second, marginal phase in a rite of passage. Turner has theorised this stage as an ambiguous, ‘intervening liminal period’ during which the neophyte ‘passes through a realm that has few of the attributes of the past or coming state.’¹⁷⁵ In this section, I will consider three such ‘realms’ or locations in *The Emigrants*. All are significantly ‘marginal,’ ‘intervening’ spaces of confinement, clandestine activity, and isolation.

The scenes in ‘Rooms and Residents’, alternate back and forth between locations, each one becoming the site of some unsettling or traumatic encounter. At the beginning of ‘Rooms and Residents’, a group of men, passengers from *The Golden Image*, are depicted descending into Fred Hill’s barber’s salon via a dark, dilapidated staircase. The description of the descent is suffused with imagery which suggest a descent into the underworld:

The stairs descended uncertainly like raindrops trickling down the wounded face of a rock. [...] It was dingy and damp, a hole which had

¹⁷³ Dagmar Brunow, ‘Rethinking Remediation and Reworking the Archive: Transcultural Reappropriations of Documentary Images of Migration’ [PDF] Centre for European Studies at Lund University (2013) Available at:<<http://transculturalmemoryineurope.net/Publications/Rethinking-Remediation-and-Reworking-The-Archive-Transcultural-Reappropriations-of-Documentary-Images-of-Migration>> [Accessed 3 April 2015]. p. 1-24 (10)

¹⁷⁴ Schwarz, ‘Unspeakable Histories,’ p.91

¹⁷⁵ Turner ‘Betwixt and Between,’ p.47

lost its way in the earth; and they put their hands out along the wall
and over the floor like crabs clawing for security.¹⁷⁶

Lamming's use of the stairway is significant since it designates a passage between the superterranean and the subterranean, from what James Procter has identified as, 'horizontal to vertical trajectories', from 'movement across to movement down', to the vertical liminality symbolised by the loss of footing and control, and bounded on either side by the thresholds of doorways.¹⁷⁷ Homi Bhabha also uses the stairwell, metaphorically, as a liminal, transitioning space. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha writes, 'The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white.'¹⁷⁸ Hence, as the men descend along the disorienting stairway, emerging into the damp room where the barber works, where there is a single narrow window, 'railed perpendicularly with bars of iron,' they enter into a space of camaraderie, but one which is no more accommodating than the unwelcoming metropolis above. Neither location offers sanctuary.

For James Procter, the depiction of the contentious but revealing nationalist debate which the men are engaged in in the basement illustrates Lamming's use of the enclosed space as, 'much more than a simple site of incarceration,' but as a location which, 'accommodates the possibilities of an emergent black consciousness.'¹⁷⁹ Hence, in the confines of the underground salon, we observe the men in what Turner referred to as 'communitas'; the phase of liminality in which liminal personae form, 'an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated 'comitatus,' community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual leaders.'¹⁸⁰

Leaving the oppressive damp of the barber salon, the succeeding scene finds Collis in another traumatic, belittling encounter, at the opulent home of the

¹⁷⁶ Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p.127

¹⁷⁷ James Procter, *Dwelling Places: Postwar black British Writing*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)p.32

¹⁷⁸ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.5

¹⁷⁹ Procter, *Dwelling Places*, p.38

¹⁸⁰ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p.96

white Pearson's. Procter has pointed out that the Pearson's apartment allows easy passage between 'the private domain of the house and the public world outside,'¹⁸¹ in contrast to Fred Hill's secluded barber shop. The scene opens however, not in this room, but with Collis seated in the lavatory, where he has gone not 'to relieve himself, but to rescue his sanity.'¹⁸²

Procter has pointed out that whereas the places occupied by Collis's fellow West Indians are 'communal, group territories,' the Pearson's home is a distinct 'space of individuation marked by a strong sense of ownership and possession.'¹⁸³ In this space, Collis, like his fellow passengers at the beginning of the novel, is also 'waiting for something to happen.' And this suspenseful waiting, within the transitional realm of the apartment, is an integral part of the liminal process.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, The vulnerability and unease felt by Collis in this scene is indicative, I suggest, of the powerlessness and lack of individual cogency which characterises the liminal stage of rite of passage rituals.

Following the events at the Pearson's, the reader is drawn into yet another confined, 'womb' which the world...was not aware of,' at Miss Dorking's small apartment which she runs, illegally, as a hairdressing salon.¹⁸⁵ My analysis of this scene provides an opportunity to consider not only its liminal aspect, but also to focus on the wider question of how women and sexual activity are depicted in *The Emigrants*.

As the scene opens, a group of Caribbean women are seen seated around a table; a homogeneous group which we are told, speak, with 'one voice in four or five keys.'¹⁸⁶ Like the men in the barber salon, the women are sequestered from the outside world. In contrast to the strained conversation at the Pearson's however, the women at Miss Dorking's apartment are vociferous, and there is a sense of community between them. It is significant however, that while both the

¹⁸¹ Procter, *Dwelling Places*, p.40

¹⁸² Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p.135

¹⁸³ Procter, *Dwelling Places*, p.40

¹⁸⁴ See R. Sutton; D. Vigneswaran; H. Wels, 'Waiting in Liminal Space : Migrants queuing for Home Affairs in South Africa' in *Anthropology: Southern Africa*, 2011, 34(1&2) pp. 30-37 (30) for further analysis of waiting as a liminal act.

¹⁸⁵ Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p.145

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid* p.145

men in the barber shop, and the women at Miss Dorking's apartment inhabit enclosed, secluded and 'inferior' spaces, symbolically located beneath the exclusive, white territory of the metropolitan world, the men are afforded the cogency to speak on 'colonial concern,' and nationalist pride, while the unnamed women gossip, in unformatted dialogue, about topics which seem inconsequential: a botched hairdressing job, a 'malicious' English landlady who wants to know how black women get their hair, 'so straight at the top with the curls at the back,' and the undesirability of African men, with 'funny marks' or tribal scars on their faces.¹⁸⁷

It can be argued however, that their conversation performs a significant function by beginning at least, to address their own situation in England, as women. When the women engage in a debate regarding sexual politics in England, and the willingness of Caribbean men to pursue English women or 'continentals,' who will do what 'no decent girl from home would ever do,' England comes to represent the potential for loss or sexual devaluation.¹⁸⁸ This potentiality is seen perhaps most explicitly in the tragic figure of Queenie, introduced early in the novel as a 'dangerous' figure of desire, by the unidentified first person narrator who seems drawn to her.¹⁸⁹ A. J. Simoes da Silva has suggested that the sexualisation of Queenie, made explicit in her subsequent relationship with 'the captain of the ship taking her away from the Caribbean,' and the fated lesbian relationship which subsequently leads to her murder, demonstrates, 'her capacity for survival,' but one which, it would appear, is predicated on her willingness to use her body as both currency and agency.¹⁹⁰

Moreover, Da Silva has argued that Lamming's portrayal of Queenie, 'as the agent in the sexual transactions in which she is involved' highlights 'the problematic tone of Lamming's depiction of women,' whose tribulations, as

¹⁸⁷ Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p.149

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.147

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p.24

¹⁹⁰ A. J. Simoes da Silva, *The Luxury Of Nationalist Despair: George Lamming's Fiction as Decolonizing Project* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000) p113

‘appendices’ to the male characters, are with few exceptions, ‘politically meaningless.’¹⁹¹

It is my argument here, that the subsequent sexual activity in *The Emigrants* also signals Britain as a liminal realm where sexual fetishism and promiscuity are allowed or even encouraged.¹⁹² This can be interpreted as an indication of the ambiguous paradox which characterises the indeterminate liminal state. In this phase, liminal personae, as Turner reminds us, are ‘betwixt and between’ identities or social positions, and, in their movement from one position to the next, they are ‘withdrawn from their structural positions and consequently from the values, norms, sentiments and techniques associated with those positions.’¹⁹³

Sexual encounters in *The Emigrants* are presented as either illicit, dysfunctional or perverse. But, as Kezia Page has noted, they nevertheless provide a means by which Lamming comments on ‘the possibility of diaspora as a scattering that profoundly and intimately affects the being of the (erstwhile) migrant, the sender and the host nations,’ and on the ‘capacity’ for sex to ‘alter states of being.’¹⁹⁴ Dispersed into the abyss of London, the characters abandon what Glissant calls, ‘collective faith,’ in pursuit of an individuation which sexual activity appears to facilitate.¹⁹⁵

While the views of the group of women at Miss Dorking’s salon are framed in ways that reinforce their parochiality; they also challenge and unsettle notions of colonial reverence for England, while refusing to be used as sexual objects themselves.¹⁹⁶ Ultimately, however, like the male characters, who suffer

¹⁹¹ Da Silva, *The Luxury Of Nationalist Despair*, p.113

¹⁹² For further discussion on the sexualisation and exoticism of Caribbean immigrants (predominantly male), to the UK see Marcus Collins, ‘Pride And Prejudice: West Indian Men In Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain’ (Journal of British Studies, 40 (2001). See also Kate Houlden, ‘Sam Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), White Sexual Desire and the Calypso Aesthetic,’ in *Journal of West Indian Literature* 20.2, Special Issue: Sam Selvon (Apr 2012) pp.24-37, and Ali Rattansi, ‘On Being and Not Being Brown/Black-British: Racism, Class, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Post-imperial Britain,’ in *Interventions* 2, no. 1 (2000) pp.118-134.

¹⁹³ Turner, ‘Betwixt and Between,’ p.53

¹⁹⁴ Kezia Ann Page, *Transnational Negotiations In Caribbean Diasporic Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2011) p.32

¹⁹⁵ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, p.15

¹⁹⁶ Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p.145

psychic, sexual and spiritual devastation as the narrative ensues, the female characters in *The Emigrants* become entangled in complex webs of deceit and tragedy.

Da Silva argues that the unfortunate paradox of the female characters, is that while they appear ‘much more capable of handling the disruptions of the experience of migration than their male counterparts’ they remain ‘forever outside the discourse of pan-Caribbeanism the novel offers,’ and eventually, they are ‘physically eliminated from a narrative to which they never properly belonged.’¹⁹⁷

Assimilation/Aggregation: Another Time

The final section of *The Emigrants*, ‘Another Time’ opens on a sunlit afternoon, in a brief but significant respite from the darkened, underground spaces previously encountered. The first person narrator, unnamed but possibly Collis, originally encountered in the initial pages of the novel reappears briefly here, walking along a London street. Two years have passed since his arrival on *The Golden Image*.

The return of the first person ‘I’, is, as Procter comments, indicative of a shift from the communal ‘underworld,’ to a more ‘impersonal, exterior London,’ within which ‘the emigrant community [...] appears more internally divided and remote.’¹⁹⁸ But this shift is also indicative, I suggest of the wider implications of the liminal process the emigrants are involved and invested in. Having endured the rigours of the ‘in-between,’ indeterminate phase, the narrator, and his fellow immigrants, have begun a process of assimilation, to inhabit ‘another life’ which will ultimately replace the old. Turner theorises this phase as one of ‘consummation,’ in which the ‘passenger’ or ‘ritual subject’ is ‘once more in a stable state’ and ‘by virtue of this, has rights and obligations of a clearly defined and “structural” type, and is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary and ethical standards.’¹⁹⁹ Hence, the narrator, by assuming the

¹⁹⁷ Da Silva, *The Luxury Of Nationalist Despair*, pp.113-117.

For further feminist critique of Lamming’s fiction see Eudine Barriteau (ed.) *Confronting Power, Theorizing Gender: Interdisciplinary Perspectives in the Caribbean*, (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2003)

¹⁹⁸ Procter, *Dwelling Places*, p.44

¹⁹⁹ Turner ‘Betwixt and Between,’ p.47

individuation of an 'I', distinguishes himself from a potentially homogeneous group, and this separation accompanies a newfound sense of belonging:

I had walked this street for more than two years, at first curious, with a sense of adventure which offered me the details of the houses and the fences. Now it was my street. It seemed I had always walked it. It was a convenience which had been created for me.²⁰⁰

But the reprieve this day lit scene offers is short lived, as soon, the reader is again drawn underground to the Mozamba nightclub, a 'habitable pocket hidden somewhere under the dark heart of the city,'²⁰¹ where we find Philip, alone, contemplating his future after impregnating Julie, an Englishwoman, and Dickson; homeless, disheveled and mentally disturbed by a traumatic sexual event in which a woman and her sister uncovered his naked body, in order to see 'what he *looked* like,'²⁰² and Dickson's 'double', Collis, who is also experiencing a vision related trauma in which he loses the ability to differentiate between faces.²⁰³

Throughout *The Emigrants*, both Collis and Dickson embody autobiographical attributes of Lamming himself. Dickson, is 'a schoolteacher from Barbados,' alluding to Lamming's time as a teacher at El Colegio de Venezuela, a boarding school in Trinidad, during the late 1940s, while Collis is a writer who hopes for success in England.²⁰⁴ Lamming's use of these two characters, so closely aligned to his own personal history is, I suggest, indicative of a desire to represent subjective identity as elusive, amorphous and unfixed. Both Van Gennep and Turner have theorised that the liminal stage is often characterised by a loss or suspension of individual identity, which is supplanted by a *communitas* or group identity.²⁰⁵ My argument here is that, in *The Emigrants*, these liminal fluctuations and suspensions are symbolised, both by the dissolution and intermittent reappearance of an unidentified first person narrator, and in the ambiguous doubleness which characterises Lamming's depiction of Collis and Dickson.

²⁰⁰ Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p.223

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.230

²⁰² *Ibid*. p.256

²⁰³ *Ibid*, p.265

²⁰⁴ *Ibid* p.31

²⁰⁵ See Turner, 'Betwixt and Between' pp.49-50

First introduced during the initial pages of the novel leaping onto the ship as it begins to move away, and carrying an ‘artificial crocodile,’ ‘two water coconuts’ and ‘a bottle of rum in each back pocket,’²⁰⁶ a character known throughout as ‘the Strange man,’ makes an unexpected but significant reappearance at the Mozamba club, accompanied by a group of newly arrived and destitute West Indians. None of the group are identified; who remain in the cul-de-sac outside the club, while ‘the Strange man’ goes inside to find his friend the Governor, who he is confident will provide accommodation for the group there.²⁰⁷

Turner has suggested that in the liminal period, ‘the subject of ritual passage’ is ‘structurally, if not physically ‘invisible.’ Turner writes, ‘They have physical but not social ‘reality,’ hence they have to be hidden, since it is a paradox, a scandal, to see what ought not to be there!’ Accordingly, the group remain symbolically hidden from the reader’s gaze, and as Procter has pointed out, ‘the cul-de-sac signifies their larger confinement within a metropolis of racialised “dead-ends” and limits.’²⁰⁸ The group is therefore, synonymous with homogeneous liminal personae, who in their transitional state, possesses or owns nothing.²⁰⁹

The Governor’s refusal to accommodate them reflects both helplessness and a symbolic negation, the drawing of a line, between the past and the future, and equally, as Procter has pointed out, between ‘business enterprise and communal accommodation.’²¹⁰ But what is equally significant in this scene, and what Procter’s discussion misses, is the Strange man’s political evolution, signalled by his confession to the Governor, that he now believed in a pan-Caribbean unity; in ‘bein’ together.’²¹¹

That this ‘dream’ of togetherness is deferred is, I suggest, representative of

²⁰⁶ Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p.17

²⁰⁷ *Ibid* p. 267-268

²⁰⁸ Procter, *Dwelling Places*, p.45

²⁰⁹ Turner, *The Forest Of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1967) p.98

²¹⁰ Procter, *Dwelling Places*, p. 42

²¹¹ Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p.269

Lamming's comment on the ultimate failure of Caribbean reconstitution in the alien landscape of England; a project which in *The Emigrants* ends in dislocation or the madness which awaits, 'any man who chose one country rather than another in the illusion that it was only a larger extension of the home which he had left.'²¹² What the Strange man confronts at the Mozamba then, is as Sandra Pouchet Paquet suggests, 'the painful reality of a disintegrating West Indian community,'²¹³ symbolised by his failure to find an accommodating space.

The liminal, 'betwixt and between' condition they inhabit is summed up succinctly by the Governor who, in his private room at the Mozamba, muses on his own experiences as an immigrant in London and concludes that, 'It was wonderful to be removed from the crowd, to be with it, though not of it.'²¹⁴ By this, I argue that the Governor's views, and his symbolic separation from the group gathered outside the club, is synonymous with those of liminal personae who have begun to make the transition from a protracted liminal phase, to one of assimilation or aggregation.

The Strange man represents, in this reading, an archetypal joker or jester and as such, plays a pivotal role. In 'Liminality and Communitas,' Turner writes that the role of such figures is to 'strip off the pretensions of holders of high rank and office and reduce them to the level of common humanity and mortality.'²¹⁵ The Strange man does indeed, 'strip off the pretensions' of the Governor who, prior to the Strange man's arrival, had sat drinking whisky and 'surveying his triumph,' in his private room within the club; a secret space, a margin inside a margin, doubly liminal.²¹⁶ The Strange man's reappearance presents him with a moral dilemma which leads to his own exposure and disintegration.'²¹⁷ The Governor's subsequent violence, as he brutally kicks his estranged wife - now the Strange man's companion - across the floor, symbolises his own unravelling; but

²¹² Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p.228

²¹³ Sandra Pouchet Paquet, *The Novels Of George Lamming* (London: Heinemann, 1982)p.43

²¹⁴ Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p.260

²¹⁵ Turner, 'Liminality and Communitas,' in *The Ritual Process* (London: Aldine, 1969) available at <<http://faculty.dwc.edu/wellman/Turner.htm>> [accessed 10 August 2015] no pag.

²¹⁶ Lamming, *The Emigrants*,p.260

²¹⁷ Turner, 'Liminality and Communitas'

also the defeat of the *communitas* in achieving the ‘togetherness’ it seeks.²¹⁸

In the novel’s final scene, the Governor, aware that he may be arrested for his violent act, retires to his private room where he writes a note, before slipping out the back door, ‘unheard.’²¹⁹ The crowd of homeless emigrants remain in the street, awaiting the return of the Strange man, who, remains ‘where he was, silent, self-rebuked.’²²⁰ When he leaves, it is left to Collis to provide the novel concluding image, as he stands at a window, watching ‘the night slip by between the light and the trees.’²²¹ It is perhaps apt then, that the novel ends with what can be considered a liminal image: the point where night, passing into morning, passes into another day, as the characters painfully pass, into another life.

²¹⁸ Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p.270

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.271

²²⁰ *Ibid*

²²¹ *Ibid*

Part Two: Happy in the Mother Country: Liminality in Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*

Mooma, Mooma, would you like to join your sonny?
I am over here, happy in the mother country.
—Lord Kitchener, 'Drink a Rum'²²²

Samuel Selvon's 1956 novel *The Lonely Londoners* remains the most discussed chronicle of Caribbean migration and settlement in the United Kingdom. My analysis considers how aspects of rites of passage theory, with a particular focus on the liminal phase, are utilised in the novel. The structure of this study differs from my close reading of *The Emigrants*. Mirroring the episodic structure of Selvon's novel, and considering its liminal aspects thematically, I begin with an analysis of the novel's locations and settings. This leads to a discussion of the liminal aspects of Selvon's use of 'creolised' English in the novel. This is followed by analyses of liminality in the novel's characterisation, structure and to conclude, I investigate the novel's debt to the Trinidad calypso.

Viaducts and Liminal Spaces: Waterloo Station

As with Lamming's *The Emigrants*, liminality theory remains underused in theorisations of this novel. One paper however, which considers the novel's debt to liminality, is Graham MacPhee's paper, 'Recasting London's Liminality: Selvon's *Lonely Londoners* and the Invention of the "Immigrant."' ²²³ For MacPhee, Selvon's London functions as a liminal space or 'a paradoxically internal border or boundary which sets the limits of the nation, and as a cosmopolitan space which reaches beyond these borders.'²²⁴

In the *Lonely Londoners* Waterloo Station, where Moses goes to meet Galahad at the beginning of the novel, functions as a threshold or 'internal border,'

²²² Lord Kitchener, 'Drink a Rum' (London: Melodisc, 1954) 7" Record

²²³ Graham McPhee, 'Recasting London's Liminality: Selvon's *Lonely Londoners* And The Invention Of The "Immigrant,"' Unpublished paper, *Literary London 2008: Representations of London in Literature Conference*, 3 July 2008, Brunel University [accessed via email correspondence Aug 23 2015]

²²⁴ MacPhee, 'Recasting London' 'Abstract', Unpublished paper, available at <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/113052/LiteraryLondon2008Abstracts.pdf> [accessed Aug 23 2015]

within London itself; or as Susheila Nasta rightly suggests in her introduction to the 2006 edition of the novel, 'a migrant gateway to the city, a rite of passage.'²²⁵ As rite of passage it facilitates, in the liminal sense, the transition or 'passage' from one phase of social status to another, performing a similar function to that of Tilbury dock in Windrush iconography, and Plymouth harbour, in George Lamming's *The Emigrants*. Similar motifs, as port of entry as liminal thresholds or borders are also encountered in Beryl Gilroy's *In Praise of Love and Children* (1996), in which the point of entry into London is the 'frenetic panorama' of Paddington Station.²²⁶ In Andrea Levy's award winning *Small Island* (2004) the threshold is referred to as 'dockside' but is not specified; rather, the reader encounters the Jamaican Hortense already in central London. In accordance with the shift from separation to the liminal phase of a rite of passage, Hortense recounts her rite of entry in a brief analepsis, in which she describes watching fellow arrivants, leaving the station by crossing the symbolic threshold of the station entrance, 'walking off into this cold black night through an archway that looked like an open mouth.'²²⁷

As Graham Macphee points out, in its function as border in *The Lonely Londoners*, Waterloo Station also performs the task of 'othering' or designating West Indian British subjects as immigrants and aliens.²²⁸ Macphee also argues that this work of 'othering' or separation, which is an integral aspect of the rite of passage ritual, is also conducted by the journalist who interviews Tolroy and his family, and Moses, at Waterloo, looking, according to McPhee, 'for opportunities to frame the new arrivals in ways which will neatly fit the discourse of race and nation.'²²⁹

As McPhee rightly suggests, in positioning the port of entry into London at Waterloo, rather than at 'traditional' territorial limits such as Southampton, Liverpool, Heathrow or Tilbury, Selvon 'inverts the territorial arrangement of the

²²⁵ Susheila Nasta, 'Introduction', in Samuel Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* (London: Penguin, 2006) p.ix

²²⁶ B. Gilroy, *In Praise Of Love And Children* (1996) p.8

²²⁷ Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Review, 2004)p.10

²²⁸ McPhee, 'Recasting London's Liminality' p.6

²²⁹ *Ibid*

nation, turning the nation inside out by placing the border right in the heart of London.²³⁰ Thus, as ‘a place of arrival and departure [...] a place where you see people crying goodbye and kissing welcome,’ Waterloo Station is a key, liminal chronotope.²³¹ It facilitates both entry and exit, and, it supports forward and backward glances, offering those West Indians, like Moses, who live in London a glimpse and reminder of ‘home,’ while also acting as a portal into an uncertain future for those who arrive. This duality, which is itself an aspect of the liminal phase, is signalled also, by the sense of ‘homesickness’ that Moses feels on his arrival at the station to meet Galahad. Waterloo was the point at which he entered London,’ and, ‘it would be here he would say goodbye to the big city.’²³²

In *The Lonely Londoners*, Waterloo Station is also the site of what Turner has referred to as ‘public metasocial rites’ which facilitate ‘public liminality,’ as distinct from ‘secret affairs, performed in caves or groves or in lodges.’ According to Turner, such public rites, use ‘quotidian spaces as their stage; they merely hallow them for a liminal time.’²³³ In this way, Waterloo Station is equally, to use Marc Augé’s definition, a ‘non-place’; ‘a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity [...] but which is ‘surrendered’ to ‘the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral.’²³⁴

²³⁰ McPhee, ‘Recasting London’s Liminality,’ p.5

²³¹ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p.4.

²³² *Ibid*, p.5

²³³ Victor Turner, ‘Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality’ in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Dec., 1979), pdf. pp. 465-499 (467)

²³⁴ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995) p. 78

Creole-English or Mesolect as Liminal Location

I start to take a closer look at my phraseology and my spelling, and if I could find any grammatical errors or incorrect punctuations, but I didn't see any, it look just as good as anything Shakespeare or Billy Wordsworth ever write.

– Samuel Selvon, *Moses Ascending* (1975)²³⁵

In his thesis, 'Inside/Outside: The British Novel In The 1950s' James McClung rightly suggests, that in the language of *The Lonely Londoners*, 'what is narrated is not West Indian, not London, but something entirely both.'²³⁶ Selvon, aware of the 'authentic' Creole of his native Trinidad, his desire to give an honest rendering of it, *and* the engagement of his intended readership, has created in *The Lonely Londoners*, a lexicon which is simultaneously authentic, modified and mimetic, and which reflects the liminal processes and positions implicit in its creation.

In an interview with Reed Dasenbrock and Feroza Jussawalla published in 1992, Selvon confirmed that the language he employed involved modification, between authentic cadences and creative invention:

I think its both. I really try to keep the essence, the music of the dialect. [...] I don't do any phonetic spelling, and I try to avoid some words or phrases which I feel would be very difficult for an audience outside of the Caribbean to follow.²³⁷

Selvon then gives an example of the sort of semantic modification he employed, for instance, changing the Trinidadian Creole phrase 'Crapu smoke your pipe' to 'Monkey smoke your pipe.' According to Selvon, such concessions were criticised at the time for not representing 'true dialect,' but were necessary, since the 'authentic' 'Crapu' would, in Selvon's words, 'throw off' a non-Trinidadian

²³⁵ Selvon, *Moses Ascending* (London: Penguin, 2008) p.147. See *Sam Selvon's Dialectal Style And Fictional Strategy* (Vancouver [B.C.]: University of British Columbia Press, 1991) Clement H. Wyke, for a comprehensive and chronological list of interviews and articles which 'in part or whole' deal with Selvon's use of language which includes several of the texts cited here.

²³⁶ James E. McClung, 'Inside/Outside: The British Novel In The 1950s' (Unpublished PhD, University of Georgia, 2009) p.99

²³⁷ Feroza F Jussawalla and Reed Way Dasenbrock, *Interviews With Writers Of The Post-Colonial World* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1992) p.104

reader. The later phrase, according to Selvon, had ‘a much more universal appeal’ and brought, ‘a good visual image to the reader.’²³⁸

Apart from the liminality inherent in the linguistic creolisation which Selvon undertakes, my argument here is that we can also locate a liminal process in the reader’s interaction with the text. In this aspect, Michel Fabre has commented on Selvon’s strategy for ‘reducing the distance between the European reader and the characters’ and for accommodating his ‘double audience’ by creating ‘a literary language suited to cultural particulars while creating a bond of sympathetic immediacy with foreign readers unacquainted with West Indian culture.’²³⁹ For European readers unfamiliar with the syntax and phonology of Trinidadian Creole, the text creates a destabilising experience. On the other hand, for Caribbean readers, the rhythm, syntax and use of colloquialism represent, what Merle Hodge has identified as ‘language that is ostensibly SE [standard English] but which can be “heard” as Creole by the Creole speaker.’²⁴⁰ In an interview with Peter Nazareth, Selvon was explicit about how he hoped the text would be read:

[...] if you look at the book carefully, you would see that there are passages of street and standard English, and then suddenly, well, I hope not *suddenly*, it just seems as if you are reading that dialect without being consciously aware that the writer has started to use the dialect form.

I suggest that what Selvon articulates here by the phrase ‘without being consciously aware,’ signifies the liminal gap or indeterminate state the reader inhabits as he/she reads, in an interstice between ‘street’ (Creole) and ‘standard’ English. In this state, the parameters of both lexicons have shifted, and that which the reader encounters is, I suggest, a liminal morphology. The following passage is indicative of this oscillation between standard English and Creole registers:

Under the kiff-kiff laughter, behind the ballad and the episode, the what-happening, the summer-is-hearts, he could see a great aimlessness, a great

²³⁸ Jussawalla and Dasenbrock, *Interviews*, p.104

²³⁹ Michel Fabre, ‘Samuel Selvon,’ in Bruce King (ed.) *West Indian Literature*, 2nd ed. (London, Macmillan, 1995) pp.152-162 (153)

²⁴⁰ Merle Hodge, ‘The Language of Earl Lovelace,’ *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*: Vol. 4: Iss. 2, Article 5. (2006) p.2. Available at: <http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/anthurium/vol4/iss2/5>

restless, swaying movement that leaving you standing in the same spot. As if a forlorn shadow of doom fall on all the spades in the country.²⁴¹

Here, standard and almost ‘classical’ English phrases such as ‘a great restless swaying movement’ and ‘a forlorn shadow of doom’ are placed alongside those found in Trinidadian Creole syntax, such as ‘the summer-is-hearts’ or ‘that leaving you standing.’ These conjoined lingual registers are, I suggest, related to Victor Turner’s comments on the element of linguistic ‘play’ which emerges in the liminal phase:

Liminality is full of potency and potentiality. It may also be full of experiment and play. There may be a play of ideas, a play of words, a play of symbols, a play of metaphors. In it, play’s the thing.²⁴²

Perhaps nowhere is Selvon’s attempt to affect *how* the text of *The Lonely Londoners* is read more affirmed than in the extended, unpunctuated, un-paragraphed stream of consciousness passage towards the novel’s second half. In ‘A Note on Dialect,’ Selvon commented on his use of this technique:

I was boldfaced enough to write a complete chapter in a stream-of-consciousness style (I think that’s what it is called) without punctuation and seemingly disconnected, a style difficult enough for the average reader with ‘straight’ English.²⁴³

Selvon’s comments are revelatory, and articulate an awareness of his own ‘outsider’ status as a Caribbean writer and immigrant in 1950s Britain. On the surface, Selvon considers, (or pretends to consider) his use of stream of consciousness to be audacious, a technique that he would have to be ‘boldfaced’ to attempt. But at the same time he seems unsure of what the technique is actually called. Again, this may be duplicitous, but it symbolises further, how his lexical strategy aims to fulfil his literary ambition.

Selvon’s comments on his stream of consciousness passage also bears relation to Frantz Fanon’s suggestion, that within the initial phase of the ‘native’ intellectual’s aesthetic evolution, he/she ‘gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power.’ As Fanon writes, ‘His writings correspond point

²⁴¹ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p.138-139

²⁴² Turner, ‘Frame, Flow and Reflection,’ p.466

²⁴³ Selvon, ‘A Note on Dialect,’ in Anna Rutherford (ed.) *Common Wealth* (Aarhus: Akademisk Boghandel, 1971) p.124

by point with those of his opposite numbers in the mother country. His inspiration is European and we can easily link up these works with definite trends in the literature of the mother country.’²⁴⁴

For Nick Bently, Selvon’s work belongs to the third, or ‘liberating stage of a “revolutionary” or “national” literature and represents the ‘first moment’ of a ‘decolonising process as it begins to be articulated in literature.’ As Bently writes, ‘His (Selvon’s) writing expresses a kind of “trans-nation” literature, occupying a subcultural space between the ‘nations’ of the Caribbean and Britain, and before the emergence of a distinct black British identity.’²⁴⁵ This is in congruence with my argument here, that Selvon’s linguistic strategies embody the forms of doubleness indicative of the liminal phase. Accordingly, his stream of consciousness passage, and by extension the entire novel, can be thus interpreted as straddling both the first and third phases of Fanon’s model.

Robert Humphrey begins his 1954 study of stream of consciousness fiction by distinguishing between two levels of consciousness: the ‘prespeech level’ and the ‘speech level.’ Humphrey suggests that ‘the prespeech level ‘involves no communicative basis as does the speech level (whether spoken or written).’ Humphrey goes on to define stream of consciousness writing as that which is:

concerned with those levels that are more inchoate than rational verbalization - those levels on the *margin* of attention...there is a point at which they *overlap*, but otherwise the distinction is quite clear. (my italics)²⁴⁶

Humphrey’s articulation of points of ‘margin’ and ‘overlap’, I suggests, situates stream of consciousness writing within a liminal continuum, since, by articulating mental or narrative states *between* regions of speech and cognition, stream of consciousness writing is also concerned with thresholds and interstices.

As such writing does, Selvon’s passage bridges a gap between the ‘prespeech’ level, to use Humphrey’s term, and the level of articulatory speech at ‘the margin of attention.’ This articulation is ‘written’ as speech; speech which gives the semblance of oral storytelling but which is fashioned from both ‘literary’

²⁴⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin, 1990) pp.178-179

²⁴⁵ Nick Bently, ‘Form and Language in Sam Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners*.’ in *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 36, nos. 3-4 (2005) 67-84. (79)

²⁴⁶ Robert Humphrey, *Stream Of Consciousness In The Modern Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954) p.3

and oral morphologies. Secondly, Selvon's passage is also concerned with the interstices of English itself, located at what Gerald Guinness calls, an 'imaginary midway point in the continuum between Creole and Standard.'²⁴⁷ That the passage uses the voice and viewpoint of a socially marginalised black Caribbean character further complicates and politicises its usage and interpretation. As Bently has pointed out, the passage rejects 'the association of modernism to a specific readership educated within a white, middle-class, Western culture.' Which is perhaps why Selvon felt that he had to be 'boldfaced enough' to write it.²⁴⁸

Bently rightly suggests that Selvon's stream of consciousness passage also has a political impetus, reflecting 'the political representation of black individuals as a collective experience,' while at the same time acting to also 'emphasize the alienation felt by the black immigrant in the alien environment of London in the 1950s.'²⁴⁹ The passage therefore presents a liminal paradox; it is neither strictly an internal or external monologue, functioning instead, at the interstitial border of both.²⁵⁰

Selvon's characters, as I have suggested, are liminal neophytes inhabiting a city they are both within and outside of. Being a Caribbean 'tourist' or alien in London invites, as Maria Grazia Sindoni has identified, 'a temporary conspicuous consumption that nourishes the threatened ego and suspends all the economic and social pressures, which the tourist brings from home.'²⁵¹ While Selvon's characters in *The Lonely Londoners* are not tourists in the conventional sense, they do, as a *communitas* or community of travellers and outsiders, share traits which

²⁴⁷ Gerald Guinness, 'Divisions Made To Harass We' in *The Covers of this Book are Too Far Apart - Book Reviews for the San Juan Star 1977-1998* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: University of Puerto Rico, 1999) p.182

²⁴⁸ Bently, 'Form and Language in Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*,' p.72

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*

²⁵⁰ Regarding the dualist function of Selvon's stream of consciousness chapter, Kathie Birat has suggested that the voice in the passage is 'acousmatic'; appearing to come 'from both inside and outside the reader, transforming it into something which is both intimate and exotic.' (Kathie Birat, 'Seeking Sam Selvon: Michel Fabre and the Fiction of the Caribbean' *Transatlantica*, (2009) <http://transatlantica.revues.org/4259>)

²⁵¹ Maria Grazia Sindoni, *Creolizing Culture* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publ., 2006) p. 291

are consistent with the state of ‘increased emotional freedom and spontaneity’ which is consistent with the tourist experience.²⁵²

As a final point; the episodes the narrator recounts in the stream of consciousness passage are often of questionable morality, but the humour inherent in both the language and the scenarios seek to situate the narrative within the realm of play. This duality, which Selvon straddles throughout the novel, itself creates a form of liminality; a nether region between the comedic and the tragic. In ‘Frame, Flow and Reflection (1979),’ Turner writes:

To look at itself a society must cut out a piece of itself for inspection. To do this it must set up a frame within which images and symbols of hate has been sectioned off can be scrutinised, assessed, and if need be, remodelled and rearranged [...] To frame is to enclose in a border.²⁵³

Accordingly, my argument here, is that what Selvon does in the stream of consciousness passage, and indeed, throughout *The Lonely Londoners*, is to provide a frame and a border within which the reader may both observe and empathise. A border is a liminal device, and between the frame and the reader there is a liminal region.

The Liminal Londoners

Moses

In an interview with Alessandra Dotti, Selvon confirmed that the character of Moses was based on ‘a true figure, an alive, real figure.’²⁵⁴ And indeed, Moses Aleotta, is arguably the novels’ most developed character. As the central protagonist, Moses’s consciousness is most aligned with the narrator, who seems to speak as Moses himself might. Though, as John Thieme has pointed out, it would be erroneous to assume that the authorial voice *is* Moses, since ‘there are whole episodes of the text in which he disappears and in these sections there is a

²⁵² Marinus Gisof, ‘Liminality and Tourism’ Tourismtheories.org, ‘Liminality and Tourism’, Turismo En Teoría, 2015 <<http://www.tourismtheories.org/?p=700>> [accessed 15 September 2015])

²⁵³ Turner, ‘Frame, Flow and Reflection.’ pp. 465-499 (468)

²⁵⁴ John Thieme and Alessandra Dotti, “‘Oldtalk’: Two Interviews with Samuel Selvon,’ in *Caribana*, Vol.1, 1990, pp.71-84 (78)

similar breakdown of distance between the language of the authorial voice and that of *other* characters.’²⁵⁵ The ambiguous field between narrator and protagonist becomes, itself, another aspect of the text’s liminality.

Introduced at the beginning of the novel as he travels to Waterloo to meet Galahad, who is arriving from Trinidad, Moses is depicted as someone who is familiar with London, who, as we are later told, has been in London for ‘nine-ten years.’²⁵⁶ The specificity of detail with which the narrator depicts Moses’s journey to Waterloo foregrounds this familiarity:

[...] Moses Aleotta hop on a number 46 bus at the corner of Chepstow Road and Westbourne Grove to go to Waterloo to meet a fellar who was coming from Trinidad on the boat-train.²⁵⁷

But Moses is not a Londoner. As an immigrant, he too is simultaneously an outsider and insider, occupying a liminal position within the city. Following Victor Turner’s differentiation of the three types of liminal personae, Moses condition could be interpreted as ‘marginal,’ since he is simultaneously a member ‘of two or more social groups whose social definitions and cultural norms are distinct from, and often even opposed to, one another.’²⁵⁸ Turner suggests that this form of liminal experience is prolonged, with no ‘assurance of a final stable resolution,’ as opposed to ‘ritual’ liminality or ‘outsiderhood,’ which are for the most part temporal states.²⁵⁹

In introducing Moses, the narrator compares him to a ‘welfare officer,’ since it is Moses, to whom many newly arrived West Indians come to for advice or aid. It is Moses who introduces the ‘fellars’ to London; to its social systems and its geography, who helps them to find work and accommodation.²⁶⁰ Moses’s role

²⁵⁵ John Thieme, ‘The World Turn Upside Down: Carnival Patterns in The Lonely Londoners’ *Toronto South-Asian Review* (Vol. 5, No. 1, 1986) pp.191-204 (197-198)

²⁵⁶ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p.136

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.1

²⁵⁸ Turner, *Dramas, Fields, And Metaphors*, p.233

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*

²⁶⁰ While Selvon’s naming of Moses carries biblical connotations, Sir Galahad references the Arthurian legend of King Arthur’s knight, in gallant search of the holy grail; in this case, the London that appears just out of reach.

as elder or guide is confirmed in the religious references the narrator introduces in a scene set in Moses's room, in the final pages of the novel:

How many Sunday mornings gone like that? It look to him, as if life composed of Sunday morning get-togethers in the room: he must make a joke of it during the week and say: 'You coming to church Sunday?' Lock up in that small room, with London and life on the outside [...]²⁶¹

By this depiction, with 'London and life outside' Moses's room takes on the characteristics of a liminal threshold where only the walls of the room separate the *communitas* of immigrant men from the outside world. Such descriptions further reinforce, I suggest, the 'in-betweenness' of the men who are within, but equally outside London. Hence, Moses, in his role as elder and guide takes on the connotations consistent with his biblical namesake, whilst also foregrounding the patriarchal, male as explorer motif of *Windrush* era immigration to the UK.

Moses's sense of liminal suspension is also reflected in the narrators' depiction of him as homesick, yet seemingly unable to return to Trinidad. He describes London as 'a lonely miserable city,' 'but after the winter gone and birds sing and all the trees begin to put on leaves again,' he remains.²⁶²

In the closing sequences of the novel, Moses stands on a bridge at Embankment reflecting on the 'forlorn shadow of doom' which has fallen on 'the boys', and on his own uncertain future in London.²⁶³ Locating this concluding scene at the river's edge is powerfully symbolic since bodies of water, as boundaries, limits and causeways, are significant liminal spaces which symbolise transience, transformation and transport from one state, phase or location to another, or as sites, as Tricia Cusack reminds us, 'of socio-cultural as well as a geographical divide.'²⁶⁴

It is also significant that at this site, and with the novel's penultimate sentence, Selvon invites a metafictional reading of the preceding text: 'He watch a tugboat on the Thames, wondering if he could ever write a book like that, what

²⁶¹ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p.136

²⁶² *Ibid*, p.137

²⁶³ *Ibid*, p.139

²⁶⁴ Tricia Cusack (ed.), 'Introduction', in *Art And Identity At The Water's Edge* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012) p.3

everybody would buy.’²⁶⁵ Already closely associated with the narratorial voice, Moses is playfully positioned here as the possible writer of *The Lonely Londoners*.

Erin James has argued that the narrative functions here, both as ‘a record of a group storytelling session, in which many voices orally perform many stories,’ and, as ‘Moses’s literary account of the experiences of himself and his friends as they attempt to make London their home.’²⁶⁶ James’s comments further highlights the ambiguous and paradoxical relation between the novels’ narrator, and Moses, the central protagonist, and cites a passage towards the end of the novel as being indicative of this ‘free direct discourse,’ in which ‘the voice of the narrator mixes with the voice of the character to give voice to that character’s subjective experience.’²⁶⁷

Every year he vowing to go back to Trinidad, but after the winter gone and the birds sing and all the trees begin to put on leaves again, and flowers come and now and then the old sun shining, is as if life start all over again, as if it still have time, as if it still have another chance. I will wait until after summer, the summer does be hearts.²⁶⁸

Selvon’s formatting gives no indication that the final sentence represents the character’s inner monologue. Rather, the abrupt switch between third and first person disrupts the grammatical expectation of the text. As James points out, these strategies, ‘muddle the lines between characters and narrator, so that it becomes difficult to determine who speaks when.’²⁶⁹

Thus, in Selvon’s usage, metafiction becomes a destabilising device which distorts the subjective boundaries between author, Mose, the narrator and the reader, underling the ambivalence of the text itself.

Galahad

Henry Oliver or Sir Galahad, arrives in London, the reader is told, ‘stragglng up from the bottom of the train,’ half asleep and dressed in ‘an old grey tropical suit

²⁶⁵ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p.139

²⁶⁶ Erin James, *The Storyworld Accord: Econarratology and Postcolonial Narratives* (Lincoln:University of Nebraska Press, 2015) p.86

²⁶⁷ James, *The Storyworld Accord* p.83

²⁶⁸ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p. 137

²⁶⁹ James, *The Storyworld Accord*, p.86

and a pair of watchekong and no overcoat or muffler or gloves or anything for the cold.’ He has no luggage, except for a toothbrush.²⁷⁰ Selvon’s depiction of Galahad here is significant, and relevant to a reading of liminality in the text. It equates Galahad, symbolically, to a neophyte or ritual *liminar* at the separation or liminal phase of a rite of passage.²⁷¹ As Turner has written, such neophytes ‘have nothing, they have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship position (italics in text).’²⁷²

Read in hindsight, Galahad’s arrival also disrupts the iconography of similar arrivals in which Caribbean people are depicted arriving in 1950s London dressed in their Sunday best, accompanied by myriad suitcases, paper bags and cardboard boxes, as Tolroy’s family are depicted, earlier in the same scene, framed by what Stuart Hall has referred to as an enforced or ‘dominant’ reading.²⁷³ Such readings, Hall argues, have an ‘institutional/political/ideological order imprinted in them and have themselves become institutionalized.’²⁷⁴

Selvon’s depiction of Galahad’s entry also foregrounds his double marginality. He is firstly marginalised by his status as an immigrant, and is simultaneously set apart from other immigrants by the distinctive and odd manner of his arrival. This alterity is highlighted even further by Galahad’s detached and contrary response to London’s winter weather. As the narrator points out, Galahad, has come to London, on ‘a grim winter evening,’ without a winter coat, gloves or any warm clothing, and yet, instead of cold, he feels, ‘a little warm.’²⁷⁵

Hyacinth Simpson has rightly suggested that Selvon’s depiction of Galahad’s bodily antithesis, in which the expected conditions are subverted,

²⁷⁰ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p.12

²⁷¹ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p.143

²⁷² Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, p.98

²⁷³ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, pp. 8-12

²⁷⁴ Stuart Hall, ‘Encoding, Decoding,’ in Simon During (ed) *The Cultural Studies Reader* (London:Routledge, 1999) p.98. In his preface to Paul Gilroy’s *Black Britain: A Photographic History* (2011) Stuart Hall suggests that period photographs of West Indian’s arriving at British ports of entry and rail stations, such as those drawn from Getty Images were used to ‘illustrate stories in the popular press of the time [...] Their primary value lay in their informational content, their use of emotional impact to stimulate the viewer, or to exemplify the strange and exotic nature of their subject matter.’(Hall, 2011, p.6)

²⁷⁵ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p.13

‘upsets colonialist geographical tropes that locate non-whites firmly in tropical zones and presents cooler climes as the “natural” environment.’²⁷⁶ But I would like to suggest that Galahad’s inability to ‘feel’ the cold also establishes his ‘in-between’ or liminal state. In the interim of his arrival, before he has familiarised himself with his new surroundings, Galahad dress and detached cool appear out of sync with his *communitas* of fellow arrivants and immigrants. Moreover, even in the cold of London winter, Galahad’s body and clothing act to reinforce and enforce his Caribbean-ness. Later in the novel however, this is reversed, and Galahad begins to feel cold in the summertime.²⁷⁷

Galahad’s neophyte status is symbolised further by his first venture into the city. Lost in Bayswater, and suddenly overcome by ‘loneliness and fright,’ and the realisation ‘that there he is, in London, and he ain’t have no money or work or place to sleep or any friend or anything,’ Galahad suffers a destabilising existential crisis.²⁷⁸ In *The Ritual Process*, Turner writes in relation to this phenomenon:

The ordeals and humiliations, often of a grossly physiological character, to which neophytes are submitted represent partly a destruction of the previous status and partly a tempering of their essence in order to prepare them to cope with their new responsibilities and restrain them in advance from abusing their new privileges.²⁷⁹

My suggestion is that what Galahad, as a neophyte or ‘blank slate’ experiences is analogous to those ordeals or humiliations which according to Turner, accompany the ‘social limbo’ and temporary dissolution of identity synonymous with the liminal phase.²⁸⁰ Hence, Galahad’s first journey into the metropolis can be read as a ritual of initiation. On entering the liminal phase, Galahad has first to be tempered and indoctrinated; his indifference and naivety have to be stripped,

²⁷⁶ Hyacinth M. Simpson, *Race, Diaspora and Identity* in Michael Bucknor and Alison Donnell (eds), *The Routledge Companion To Anglophone Caribbean Literature* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011) pp.191-198 (194)

²⁷⁷ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* p.71

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.* pp.24 - 24

²⁷⁹ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p.103

²⁸⁰ Turner, *From Ritual To Theatre* (New York City: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982) p. 24

along with the emblems of his 'previous status'.²⁸¹ Significantly, it is Moses, as mentor and 'ritual elder' who comes to Galahad's aid when he becomes lost.

Galahad's neophyte status is continually reinforced by Selvon's depiction of him as an 'immigrant tourist,' as he navigates his way through London in the first few months after his arrival. Galahad is enchanted by London's tourist landmarks and imperialist artefacts; by the very fact of being in London.

As James Procter rightly argues, in *The Lonely Londoners*, London is simultaneously a site of 'dislocation and alienation' and a 'landscape of belonging.'²⁸² Hence, as a British subject, Galahad explores the city as an insider, one who belongs - albeit only politically - while his blackness and West Indian origins confirm his alterity.

Galahad's experiences of racism in *The Lonely Londoners* provide further readings of his liminal condition. In an episode towards the middle of the novel, Galahad is seen preparing to meet Daisy, an English woman, at Piccadilly Circus. Over two and a half pages the narrator describes how Galahad meticulously prepares for his date, shining his shoes 'until he could see his face in the leather' and putting on trousers with seams that 'could cut you.'²⁸³ But Galahad's reverie is disturbed by an encounter with an English woman and her young daughter, who shouts, 'Mummy, look at that black man!' Despite the potential trauma in this scene, Galahad, who we are told has 'skin like rubber at this stage' bends to 'pat the child cheek.' and he continues towards Piccadilly Circus where Daisy is waiting.²⁸⁴ Galahad's insouciance indicates that he has acclimatised to London's racism. But this acclimatisation, as the text later reveals, conceals a form of neurosis.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Frantz Fanon describes a similar encounter with a child on a train which gave rise to a 'third person consciousness'

²⁸¹ A similar motif, of the newly arrived, 'naive' West Indian becoming lost in London, is explored by Lord Kitchener in his 1950 recording 'The Underground Train' in which the song's narrator becomes lost in the underground system, vowing to walk in future. (Lord Kitchener, 'The Underground Train,' 1950)

²⁸² Procter, *Dwelling Places*, p.53

²⁸³ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p. 73-74

²⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.76

of the self.²⁸⁵ For Fanon, this objectification represents a ‘negating activity,’ which in turn leads to the racialised subject beginning to see his or her body as a distinct and potentially problematic entity.²⁸⁶

Accordingly, in contrast to almost casual acceptance of racism, Galahad is depicted in flashback, experiencing a form of psychic, pathetic trauma in which he addresses the colour black ‘as if is a person telling it that is not he who causing botheration in the place, but Black.’²⁸⁷ This split between consciousness and body, apart from its relation to liminal states of dissociative trauma, is also concerned, partly, with W.E.B Dubois’s concept of ‘double consciousness; ‘this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.’²⁸⁸

In *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) Paul Gilroy, expanding on Dubois, suggests that a ‘double consciousness’ can also emerge from what he refers to as ‘the unhappy symbiosis between three modes of thinking, being and seeing:’

The first is racially particularistic, the second nationalistic in that it derives from the nation state in which the ex-slaves but not yet citizens find themselves, rather than from their aspiration towards a nation state of their own. The third is diasporic or hemispheric, sometimes global and occasionally universalist.²⁸⁹

What Gilroy describes here is relevant, I suggest, for the way it delineates the interstitial spaces of subjectivity and liminality, and how they relate to what Homi Bhabha refers to as the ‘shifting boundary of otherness within identity.’²⁹⁰

Tanty

Introduced in the opening pages alighting from the ‘boat-train’ and, ‘tottering so much a guard had to help her get out of the train,’²⁹¹ Tolroy’s aunt, Tanty

²⁸⁵ Fanon, *Black Skin*, p.110

²⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p.112

²⁸⁷ *Ibid* p.77

²⁸⁸ W.E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994) p.2.

²⁸⁹ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p.126

²⁹⁰ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.73

²⁹¹ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p.9

Bessy nevertheless emerges, as Alice Ferrebe has pointed out, as the novel's only 'redeeming' female character in a novel where the female presence is peripheral.²⁹² As Ferrebe notes, Tanty is the only female character afforded comparatively extended focus, and one of the few characters - male or female - who possess 'an identity so strong she is able to impose it on hostile British surroundings.'²⁹³

While Selvon's portrayal of Tanty at times highlights her parochialism, her folkish wit and audacity equally signify her agency. Moreover, as Steve Padley points out, her 'refusal to bow to the cultural and social mores of her adopted homeland offer an affirmative alternative to the struggles to conform.'²⁹⁴ Lisa Kabesh has also suggested that Tanty's refusal to compromise, her reluctance to move beyond the 'village' of her Harrow Road community, 'promotes stillness as a powerful reaction against narratives of progress—narratives of “moving forward” in which colonial ideology and multicultural policy alike have been invested.'²⁹⁵

As Graham MacPhee has noted, in relation to her instigation of a 'trust' system in her community, Tanty is able to 'creolise' aspects of her experience in London. But these acts of creolisation do not entail mutual negotiation; they result from her resistance to change. In this way, I suggest, she represents a liminal figure who is reluctant to move too far away from her (new) *communitas*, her origins or traditions. Hence, in her Harrow Road *communitas* Tanty, as a marginal *liminar* is both insider and outsider, simultaneously; doubly marginalised, from the fraternity of 'the boys', and, as an immigrant.²⁹⁶

As Jennifer Rahim argues, Tanty's actions in her most significant scene at Harris's party, where she insists on dancing with Harris; her actions serving to 'dress down' the self-important Harris who till then has 'everything under

²⁹² Alice Ferrebe, *Literature Of The 1950s: Good, Brave Causes* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012) p.137

²⁹³ *Ibid*, p.137

²⁹⁴ Steve Padley, 'Samuel Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*', 2012 <<http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/culture/literature-and-creative-writing/literature/sam-selvon-the-lonely-londoners/content-section-5>> [accessed 24 September 2015]

²⁹⁵ Lisa M. Kabesh, 'Mapping Freedom, or Its Limits: The Politics of Movement in Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*,' *Postcolonial Text*, Vol 6, No 3 (2011)p.13

²⁹⁶ Turner, *Dramas, Fields, And Metaphors*, p.233

control,' place her, in contrast with Harris's attempts at Englishness, and 'in defiance of English ladylikeness.'²⁹⁷ Rahim argues that:

These counter-establishment performances signal the transgressive presence of West Indians bent on claiming the center on their own terms. In this regard, the calypso fete functions as a theater of crossroads, where complex cultural performances oriented towards several interdependent ends are played out.²⁹⁸

Rahim's argument is significant in the way it highlights the fete as a hybridised space in which Tanty's role as a transgressive figure is pivotal. Harris, in contrast to his earlier authoritative role as promoter of the fete, is rendered powerless under the older woman's will, while the other men become spectators, and the 'white girl' who Tanty pushes out of the way, we are told, can only 'stand up there helpless while Tanty take Harris away.'²⁹⁹

In her roles of advisor, counsellor, quasi-community representative, and as an advocate for the rights and protection of women, Tanty also exhibits traits associated with those of a ritual elder or instructor in a *communitas* undergoing a rite of passage. In *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (1967) Turner writes on the roles of ritual elders and on their relationship to neophytes in their *communitas*:

The authority of the elders is absolute, because it represents the absolute, the axiomatic values of society in which are expressed the "common good" and the common interest.³⁰⁰

Hence, Tanty, as an elder is able to impose her authority on her fellow ritual personae since she upholds what Turner refers to above as the 'axiomatic values' of her community; the importance of childcare, the need to maintain and manage the family home, the protection of women and the need to respect elders.

Tanty belongs to a constellation of similarly archetypal female characters which includes Merle Hodges' 'Tantie' in *Crick, Crack Monkey* (1970), 'Tanty Merle' in Paul Keens-Douglas's 'Tanti at the Oval', Tanti Merle Drapes', 'Tanti

²⁹⁷ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p.104

²⁹⁸ Jennifer Rahim, '(Not) Knowing the Difference: Calypso Overseas and the Sound of Belonging in Selected Narratives of Migration' (2005) *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*: Vol. 3: Iss. 2, Article 12 <<http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/anthurium/vol3/iss2/12>> pg.3 [accessed 3 November 2015]

²⁹⁹ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p.110

³⁰⁰ Turner, *The Forest Of Symbols*, pp. 99-100

and the Fire' and others stories, and Louise Bennett's 'Aunty Roachy' and 'Miss Lou' personas.³⁰¹ Such characters, characterised by their matronly wit, stubbornness and disregard for officialdom, often perform mentoring roles in fictional narratologies; they stand at the threshold to offer advice, amulets or guidance. They are, as Joseph Campbell suggests, 'protective' figures who represent 'the benign, protecting power of destiny.'³⁰²

Harris

Selvon's introduction of Harris immediately signals his liminal status:

Harris is a fellar who like to play ladedda, and he like English customs and thing. [...] And when he dress, you think is some Englishman going to work in the city, bowler and umbrella, and briefcase tuck under the arm, with *The Times* fold up in the pocket so the name would show [...] Only thing, Harris face black.³⁰³

This description of Harris, a Jamaican born, Trinidadian raised businessman and promoter Harris, with its wry, conclusive caveat, 'Only thing, Harris face black,' indicate 'Englishness' and 'blackness' as mutually exclusive or irreconcilable points between which Harris is torn. Accordingly, part of my argument here, is that Harris occupies a liminal position, which, not unlike Homi Bhabha's theorisation of the stairway as an 'interstitial passage' involves oscillation between two subjectivities.

While Harris's actions and speech signalise a form of mimicry, as Bhabha suggests in *The Location of Culture* (1994), mimicry may also embody a subversive or disruptive quality.³⁰⁴ For Bhabha, mimicry is also concerned with those liminal or in-between states which he theorises as 'ambivalence', or of being 'almost the same, but not quite.'³⁰⁵ In Harris's, 'performance', or 'camouflage,'

³⁰¹ See Merle Hodge, *Crick Crack, Monkey* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1970), Paul Keens Douglas, *The Best Of Paul Keens-Douglas* (Diego Martin, Trinidad: Keensdee Productions, 1997) and Louise Bennett and Mervyn Morris (ed), *Aunty Roachy Seh* (Kingston, Jamaica: Sangster's Book Stores, 1993)

³⁰² Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Novato, Calif.: New World Library, 2008) p.59

³⁰³ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p.10

³⁰⁴ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp.122-123

³⁰⁵ *Ibid* p.123

and in the dichotomy between his 'self' and the 'other' he wishes to integrate with, there are brief glimpses and gaps which reveal as a facade, what he wishes to uphold in his act of 'harmonising.'³⁰⁶

When Five asks Harris, ' You remember the night when Mavis make you buy ten rum for she, and then she went behind the rumshop and tell you to come,' Harris is disturbed.³⁰⁷ Similarly, Harris can only 'stammer' 'I'm afraid – ' when Tanty reminds him of his childhood in Jamaica, when he 'used to run about the barrack yard in shirttail.'³⁰⁸

Such encounters, I suggest, while acting to undermine and embarrass Harris by highlighting the conflicting elements of his persona, and by disrupting the performance he struggles to maintain, in the already liminal space of immigrant London. In this way, Harris's condition echoes both Du Bois's 'double consciousness,' and Everett V. Stonequist's theorisation of the marginal individual 'who through migration, education, marriage, or some other influence leaves one social group or culture without making a satisfactory adjustment to another and who finds himself on the margin of each but a member of neither.'³⁰⁹

Shamika Shabnam has argued that Harris's 'mimicry of neurosis' is related to Fanon's theorisation of racial trauma, in which the individual experiences trauma as a result of racial discrimination, and the postulation of 'negro myth' which equates blackness with negative qualities.³¹⁰ For Jennifer Rahim, Harris's mimicry and assimilation of 'Englishness', 'doubles as a product of his fear of rejection and as a survivalist strategy.'³¹¹ Rahim argues that Selvon's depiction of Harris, 'sets him up' as 'a representative of the schizophrenic subjectivity or uncomfortable hybridity sometimes symptomatic of postcolonial identities.'³¹²

³⁰⁶ Jacques Lacan, 'The Line and Light,' quoted in Bhabha, *Location*, p. 121

³⁰⁷ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p.105

³⁰⁸ *Ibid*

³⁰⁹ Everett V. Stonequist, *The Marginal Man: A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict* (New York: Scribner, 1937) p.3

³¹⁰ Shamika Shabnam, 'Traumas And Neuroses In Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*', 2014, available at <<https://www.academia.edu/9158424/>>, p.4

³¹¹ Jennifer Rahim, '(Not) Knowing the Difference: Calypso Overseas and the Sound of Belonging in Selected Narratives of Migration' (2005) *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*: Vol. 3: Iss. 2, Article 12. p.4

³¹² *Ibid*

This condition is signalled by Harris's fear that 'the boys' will 'make rab and turn the dance into a brawl.'³¹³ But, as Rahim also points out, far from being simply a 'one-sided accommodation,' Harris's 'core mission' is not to become British, but to occupy a space that is '*both* West Indian and British' (my italics).³¹⁴ As Rahim writes:

Mimicry and the organization of tourist-friendly versions of the West Indian fete are his primary means of negotiating his social and economic insertion. Harris, therefore, simultaneously functions as a kind of Naipaulian mimic-man and as an ambassador for the very West Indian culture that is the source of his insecurity.³¹⁵

Rahim rightly identifies Harris's performative modus in Selvon's description of him as someone who likes to '*play ladedda*.' It is also signalled by his act of folding *The Times* newspaper so just the name shows.³¹⁶ Implicit here, is the suggestion of Harris's deliberate enactment of a chosen role. Like a trickster figure, or perhaps more relevantly, as an actor, Harris is eager to keep up his act and tries to erect a symbolic barrier between 'the boys' whom he fears will 'make a disgrace' of themselves and his English guests at St Pancras Hall.

In this scene, the hall itself becomes a liminal region. The doorway, which Harris stands guard at, in his 'black suit and bow tie,' represents, I suggest, both a physical and symbolic threshold or border. Hence, while Harris, greets his English guests with 'a pleasant good evening and a how do you do,' he offers 'a not so pleasant greeting' to 'the boys' who he fears will 'turn the dance into a brawl,' warning them as they enter: 'See and behave yourselves like proper gentlemen, there are a lot of English people here tonight so don't make a disgrace of yourself.'³¹⁷

Stéphanie Françoise Decouvelaere has pointed out that in spite of, or perhaps because of Harris's precautions, the fete at St Pancras Hall emerges as a liminal 'theatre of crossroads' and 'one of the main sites of cultural mixing and adaptation' within the novel, becoming, as Decouvelaere, argues, 'something

³¹³ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p.104

³¹⁴ Rahim, 2005, p.4

³¹⁵ *Ibid* p.4

³¹⁶ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, p.10

³¹⁷ *Ibid* p.104

between a raucous Caribbean fete and a staid English affair through Harris's policing.' Read as such, both Harris's English guests and his fellow West Indians are seen to occupy a liminal, and at times transgressive space at St Pancras Hall.³¹⁸

Calypso Style

In his introduction to the 1985 edition of *The Lonely Londoners*, Kenneth Ramchand writes:

It has become usual to speak of the narrator's stance in *The Lonely Londoners* as being similar to that of a calypsonian, a harmless enough fancy had it not been accompanied by a willingness to concede that this book is loose or episodic.³¹⁹

As Ramchand rightly concludes, these approaches 'covertly' invite arguments which situate and restrict the novel to the oral tradition. While that tradition is, as I have shown, a significant aspect of the novel's phonological strategy, the novel's debt to orality does not, I suggest, constitute or signify a 'calypso form.' In a 2009 essay, Decouvlaere, for the most part, takes a thematic approach to what she sees as the novel's calypso aesthetic. Commenting on the lack of considered or 'serious' contemporaneous critique of Selvon, Decouvlaere laments what she calls 'blindness,' from 'members of the dominant establishment to challenges to literary conventions rooted in a cultural tradition not only non-European but also oral and popular.' Yet she speaks blindly herself, I suggest, when she refers to Selvon's use of 'calypso as a *formal* framework' (my italics) and his 'anecdotal type of storytelling' which 'rests on an aesthetic inspired by calypso music.'³²⁰ Decouvlaere does not expand on her claims nor does she offer an explanation of what such a 'formal framework' might resemble. Her assumption rests, I infer, on a familiarly homogenised view of calypso.

Decouvlaere's views, as Ramchand indicates, are similar to those of a range of other scholars. In a 2002 essay by Helene Buzelin we learn that, 'Calypso is no doubt the main oral tradition that shaped Selvon's aesthetics,' but Bezelling does not expand on this tradition or its aesthetics. Instead, she suggests that, 'The

³¹⁸ Decouvlaere, 'The Elusive "Better Break"' p.186

³¹⁹ Ramchand, 'Introduction', *The Lonely Londoners* (London: Longman, 1985) p.10

³²⁰ Decouvlaere, 'The Elusive "Better Break"' pp.223, 244

narrative unfolds as a *kind* of ballad with a rhythm that *seems* to follow the meanderings of the boys in the capital. (my italics)³²¹ This, I suggest, offers a limited view of both Selvon's accomplishment in *The Lonely Londoners* and of the Trinidadian calypso itself. In fairness, Buzelins' essay is not *about* calypso. Nevertheless, her irresolute references to 'rhythm' and 'ballad' suggest that she is unfamiliar with the aesthetic range of the calypso and how it relates, linguistically, to Selvon's novel.

Gikandi rightly argues that Caribbean musical forms, like calypso, 'are important because they challenge the very foundations of Eurocentric cultural codes and suggest an alternative hermeneutics.'³²² For Gikandi this subversion occurs at the level of language; specifically, as a result of the 'ideological and linguistic contestation' between the 'regimented formal language of colonial discourse and the subversive ironic or parodic "calypso idiom" [...]' This, 'mixture of disparate elements' according to Gikandi, 'reflects Selvon's indebtedness to the calypso aesthetic, especially its melodic lines, which come loaded with words and phrases *which appear to be unrelated* (my italics).'³²³

While I agree with Gikandi theorisation of the liminal, interstitial and subversive process embodied within Selvon's linguistic strategy, and its debt to calypso's socio-political role, I am less enthusiastic about his comments on calypso's 'unrelated' semantics. Such views, I suggest, again act to unintentionally reinforce ideologies which situate cogency within European literary traditions, and disorder, randomness and so-called 'episodic' 'unrelated' or 'loose' structures in those of postcolonial Caribbean literatures and 'folk' aesthetics.

Merle Hodge's comments, made in relation to the critique of Creole in Caribbean literature are, I suggest, applicable here, to calypso, as it is to Creole. Hodge writes, 'To discuss the language of a West Indian literary text which incorporates Creole, and very few do not, the critic must, at the very least, know

³²¹ Helene Buzelin, 'Creolizing Narratives Across Languages: Selvon And Chamoiseau,' *Canadian Literature*, 175, Winter 2002, pp.67-92 (71)

³²² Gikandi, *Writing In Limbo*, p.96

³²³ *Ibid*, pp. 115-116

what Creole is, and be able to recognize it.’³²⁴ Likewise, an understanding of what the calypso is, its forms, its socio-historical background, should be requisite to discussions of what constitutes a calypso form.

Calypso’s literary equivalent is poetry. Calypsonians write in verse; like lyricists within popular music genres, they utilise rhyme, repetition, alliteration, syllabic variation, hyperbole and meter; techniques which differentiate poetry from prose fiction. As Keith Warner reminds us, while ‘elements of the folk/oral tradition’ influences Caribbean literature, ‘The most obvious manifestation of this has been in the domain of poetry.’³²⁵ While Rohlehr agrees that ‘the calypso helped preserve and formalise a certain twist of mind, which [...] helped in the emergence of Selvon, Naipaul and Lovelace,’ those artists he identifies as bearing the influence of a calypso aesthetic, are not novelists, but the playwright, Errol Hill, and poets, Shake Keane, Paul Keens Douglas, John Agard, the ‘sound poet’ Brother Resistance and most potently, Derek Walcott, who Rohlehr cites as saying, apropos to this debate, ‘Nobody expects great poetry from calypsoes, but it is after all, a poetic medium and it can come pretty close, no?’³²⁶ Writing in 1971 essay, Rohlehr summed up Selvon’s ‘debt’ to the calypso as follows:

Selvon in his stories about Port of Spain urban/Creole life, is relating to the same tradition of style and rhetoric which produced calypsonians like the legendary Spoiler, Wonder, Panther, Melody, Lion, Tiger, Invader, Atilla, Kitchener, Beginner and Dictator, all figures of the forties. These artists had a special language which involved heightening the mundane and humdrum into melodrama, or ‘bacchanal’ as it is normally called. Gesture and mime reinforced speech. The language of the city was also the language of the small-time confidence trickster, the Brer Anansi figure who so often appears in Selvon’s fiction, and whose method is to spin words fast enough to ensnare his victim, or, in the case of the calypsonian to ‘capture’ his audience.³²⁷

³²⁴ Hodge ‘Language Use and West Indian Literary Criticism’ in Michael A. Bucknor, Alison Donnell eds. *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature* (London: Routledge, 2011) 470-480 (470)

³²⁵ Keith Warner, *The Trinidad Calypso: A Study of the Calypso as Oral Literature* (London: Heinemann, 1982) p.123

³²⁶ Rohlehr, ‘The Problem of the Problem of Form’ in *The Shape Of That Hurt And Other Essays* (Port-of-Spain: Longman Trinidad Ltd., 1992) p.29

³²⁷ Rohlehr, ‘Literature and The Folk’ in *My Strangled City And Other Essays* (Port-of-Spain: Longman Trinidad, 1992) pp.52-85 (64)

With these comments Rohlehr comes closest, I suggest, to defining the parameters of Selvon's calypso aesthetic. While describing the components and technical processes of a calypso 'form' may be problematic, since calypso cannot be homogenised and reduced to one singular, definable form, my argument is that it might be more useful to refer to Selvon's appropriation of a calypso 'style.'

To conclude, it is necessary, I suggest, to take into account what Selvon himself had to say on the influence of calypso on his work, since, as Kwame Dawes has pointed out, to read a calypso aesthetic *into* Selvon's writing, while useful and applicable, is nevertheless primarily an 'heuristic device,' since Selvon himself was clear that any such resonance was unintentional.³²⁸ In an interview first published in *Caribana* in 1990, Selvon was asked by John Thieme whether his work owed 'a particular debt' to calypso, he responded, as follows:

Yes, again that has not really been deliberate. My feeling is that it comes out that way, purely because of the society that I'm writing about. It's a Caribbean one and the people in Trinidad live calypso as part of their lives, their thoughts, their upbringing. And I suppose that this must necessarily come out in the writing.³²⁹

What is uncovered by enquiries into Selvon's use of calypso in *The Lonely Londoners* are again, the liminal aspects of a text from which no absolute certainties can be drawn regarding its language, structure or socio-political framework. It exists in an interstice; as neither, but both. Writing in London, about West Indians in London, Selvon transplanted the calypso style, using it as a socio-cultural conduit between Trinidad and the metropolis, as a way of subverting by parody the forms and manners of the English; the 'ladedda,' he refers to in relation to Harris's mimicry, simultaneously disrupting and creolising its literary conventions.³³⁰

³²⁸ Kwame Dawes, *Natural Mysticism: Towards a New Reggae Aesthetic in Caribbean Writing* (Leeds, England: Peepal Tree Press, 1999), p.71

³²⁹ Thieme and Dotti, "'Oldtalk'"pp.71-84 (72)

³³⁰ Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*,p.103

Chapter Three

‘You see me alive’: Notes to a Calypso Biography³³¹

Calypso: Roots and Representation

The origins of the Trinidadian calypso are, as most scholars agree, contentious, but in seeking a catalytic moment within Trinidad’s history, the proclamation of the 1783 *Cedula De Poblacion* by the Spanish colonialists, which granted all Roman Catholic foreigners the right to settle on the island with their slaves, can be considered significant.³³² The *Cedula* resulted in a significant increase in Trinidad’s population which rose from 3,000 in 1783, to around 18,000 by 1797, when the Spanish, unable to maintain or defend the colonies, were forced to capitulate the island to the British.³³³

At this time the population of the island was predominantly black. The new settlers, who were mainly French, from the Francophone Caribbean, outnumbered the Spaniards ‘by about six to one’ and both were outnumbered by the same proportion by a sizeable black population. It was among this mixed milieu of French, British and Spanish plantocracy, Africans - enslaved or free coloured African Creoles born in the French islands, migrants from Latin America, along with a dwindling but significant indigenous population, that what is now known as the Trinidad calypso evolved. Its development was syncretic; it grew, as Hollis Liverpool points out, from ‘a complex interplay of ethnic and class lines’ in which European traditions merged with equally resilient African forms; forms which were also used, ‘to resist the attempts by the British colonial government and the

³³¹ ‘You see me alive’ lyric from ‘No Melda’ in *Lord Kitchener* (London: RCA Victor, 1964)

³³² The *Cedula*, first introduced in 1776 but extended in 1783, awarded each settler 32 acres of land, and half that amount for each slave the settler brought to the island. With the beginnings of the French revolution in 1789, significant numbers of French planters, fleeing the effects of war, arrived in Trinidad. (See Michael Anthony, *Historical Dictionary Of Trinidad And Tobago* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1997) p.112-113)

³³³ Anthony, *Historical Dictionary Of Trinidad And Tobago*, p.p.112-113

elite to oppress and control them.’³³⁴ John Cowley has also noted, crucially, that these African forms ‘did not represent one “culture” but were drawn from many areas of that continent, adding to the evolving complexity’ of the calypso.³³⁵

I make these historical groundings to illustrate the extensive and rich history of the calypso, and to highlight the disparity between this history and the comparative scarcity of biographical material on calypsonians and calypso artists. As of writing, only four biographies of calypso artists have been published by commercial presses. These have all been issued within the last five years. My argument is not to suggest that calypsonians have earned the right to be biographised, though this *is* an implicit concern, more importantly, I want to suggest that the lack of biographical material on calypsonians is symptomatic of what Earl Lovelace has referred to as an ‘almost loss.’³³⁶ Writing in the journal *Small Axe* in 2001, Winthrop Holder held a similar view:

Although our creative thinkers and artists, novelists, poets, calypsonians, comedians and the like, provide the most telling insight into our sociohistorical reality, too much of their work is overlooked by social scientists. As such, in their quest to shed light on our political and historical essence, these experts provide us with, at best, incomplete knowledge. [...] Indeed, this venerable art form receives steady and serious treatment from analysts of the calypso and researchers in gender studies, yet too many academicians continuously overlook not only the calypso but also its literature.³³⁷

The scarcity of auto/biographical material on calypsonians manifests this ‘incomplete knowledge,’ it signals the potential loss of important primary sources and cultural resources.

However, as Caribbean music scholar and ethnographer Jocelyne Guilbault has pointed out, while numerous book-length biographies have been produced on reggae artists such as Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Jimmy Cliff, in calypso we find

³³⁴ Hollis Liverpool, *Rituals Of Power And Rebellion: The Carnival Tradition in Trinidad & Tobago, 1763-1962* (Chicago, IL: Research Associates School Times, 2001) p.ix

³³⁵ John Cowley, *Carnival, Canboulay, and Calypso: Traditions in the Making* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) pp.3-4

³³⁶ This phrase is taken from the title of a 1998 essay by Lovelace, ‘The Emancipation Jouvay Tradition and the Almost Loss of Pan’, in Milla Cozart Riggio (ed.) *Carnival: Culture in Action - The Trinidad Experience* (New York: Routledge, 2004) pp. 187-194

³³⁷ Winthrop R. Holder, ‘Notting Eh Strange: Black Stalin Speaks!’ *Small Axe* 5.1 (2001) 140-158 (158)

that ‘only small books locally produced focus on a few individual artists,’ hence, ‘most calypsonians and soca artists [...] have only been the object of biographies in book chapters or articles.’³³⁸

For Mike Alleyne, this disparity can be traced to the ways in which the calypso was introduced and marketed to international audiences during the genre’s early recording history. Alleyne, reiterating the work of Gordon Rohlehr and John Cowley, points to a commercially motivated, ‘process of sanitisation’ in which ‘the more dynamic aspects of the arrangements [of calypso] were de-emphasised to maximize its mass market appeal.’³³⁹ This ‘de-contextualisation’ and dilution, which was also a form of political censorship, has, as Alleyne suggests, limited calypso’s impact and commercial appeal since then, reducing it to a curio, and aligning it to the ‘stifling representation of tropical stereotypes’ and, restricting its relevance to ‘carnival related activities’ or ‘as a party supplement.’³⁴⁰

Moreover, as Guilbault herself has pointed out, ethnomusicology, prior to the 1970s at least, was primarily concerned with notions of ‘purity’ and with finding ‘uncontaminated’ sources of indigenous music/s. The calypso, with its syncretic and perpetually evolving *metisage* which borrowed from African, East Indian, Latin, European, as well as North American pop, folk, blues and Jazz, presented an anomaly.³⁴¹ In ‘The Musicological Juncture: Music As Value (1977),’ Charles Seeger makes a related point, critiquing what he saw, as an ethnocentric focus on ‘purity or authenticity’ within ‘static’ musical forms, and confirming that ‘ethnomusicology has tended to be archaistic rather than realistic in its approach to its field.’³⁴² Indeed, while individual stories of performers or artists do strikingly emerge in ethnomusicological studies conducted in Trinidad by Melville and Frances Herskovits in 1947 and Alan Lomax in 1962, in both, the approach is

³³⁸ Guilbault and Cape, *Roy Cape*, p.233 (n.1. p.233)

³³⁹ Mike Alleyne, ‘Globalisation and Commercialisation of Caribbean Music’ in Tuulikki Pietilä (ed.) *World Music: Roots and Routes* (Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, 2009) pp.76–101(77)

³⁴⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 81-82

³⁴¹ Guilbault made these comments at a private meeting at the University of Berkley’s San Francisco campus in April 2015.

³⁴² Charles Seeger, *Studies In Musicology, 1935-1975* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977) pp.51-52

thematic, or focussed on authentic forms and ethnic groups, rather than on specific individuals.³⁴³

The lack of auto/biographical writing by or on calypso artists provokes further questions. Does the scarcity of such works simply signalise the lack of critical or mainstream interest in them? Or is there something endemic in the calypso which precludes an engagement with auto/biography? Does the calypso's turbulent history of subversion, censorship, marginalisation and a resistance which shows itself in the calypsonian's appropriation of the mask of sobriquet, or in his or her historic relation to a clandestine *communitas* in which slaves were able to 'communicate secret messages to each other under the noses of their white masters,' act to resist the intimacy and openness auto/biography requests?³⁴⁴

The former, it must be acknowledged, bears some vindication, when one considers the commercial niche which calypso occupies. My argument however, is that such a theorem is untested since, as I will show, too few calypso auto/biographies exists in the commercial sphere to provoke a conclusion about its commercial potential. The latter, meanwhile, has not been my experience. While a commitment to secrecy may have been an aspect of the calypso during its embryonic stages, when calypsonians were subjected to bans, censorship and even violence, among the dozens of interviews I conducted as research for *Kitch*, I found that contemporary calypsonians were acutely aware of the lack of, and the need for biographical documentation, and so, were willing and ready to speak.³⁴⁵

³⁴³ Melville and Frances Herskovits conducted extensive field research in Toco, Trinidad between July and September 1939. See *Peter Was a Fisherman: The 1939 Trinidad Field Recordings of Melville and Frances Herskovits, Vol. 1* (1998) and *Rastlin' Jacob: The Music of the Spiritual Baptists of Trinidad: The 1939 Trinidad Field Recordings of Melville & Frances Herskovits, Vol.2* (2003) both released by Rounder Records. Lomax's extensive field recordings - over 17,400 digital audio files - are available online at the Alan Lomax Audio Archive < <http://research.culturalequity.org/home-audio.jsp>>

³⁴⁴ Marlene D. Allen, 'Tricksterism, Masquerades, and the Legacy of the African Diasporic Past in Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* in Marlene D. Allen and Seretha D. Williams, (eds) *Afterimages Of Slavery: Essays on Appearances in Recent American Films, Literature, Television and Other Media* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2012) pp.76-88 (80)

³⁴⁵ See Raymond Quevedo's chapter 'State Interference' in *Atilla's Kaiso: A Short History of Trinidad Calypso* (1983) for more on the attempts of English colonial authorities failed but often draconian attempts to censor, ban or regulate calypso in the first three decades of the 20th century. Also see Hollis Liverpool's *Rituals of Power and Rebellion: The Carnival Tradition in Trinidad and Tobago* (2001) which outlines the often violent struggles of the black populous in this period, to resist persecution and to preserve the carnival.

In *Governing Sound: The Cultural Politics of Trinidad's Carnival Music* (2007) Jocelyne Guilbault justifies her inclusion of five brief biographies, by suggesting that biographies of calypso artists are useful, not just to 'provide an archetype or the model of a heroic figure, but rather to show how people position themselves and are positioned socially in the space they live.'³⁴⁶ Guilbault then, as an ethnomusicologist draws her biographical studies, 'not to make visible and audible personae who have been overlooked in the literature on calypso,' but to 'destabilize notions of calypso as a unified field, as featuring one voice,' and because the artists 'have incited public debate about the very tensions that have figured prominently in defining the nation.'³⁴⁷ Contrary to Guilbault, my choice of Lord Kitchener as a biographical subject is predicated on the holistic desire to document the calypsonian's personal history, and, make visible what has been over or under-looked.

Brief biographies of calypsonians of course appear as chapters or sections in studies or reference works on calypso or Caribbean music. This is the approach of Guilbault in *Governing Sound: The Cultural Politics of Trinidad's Carnival Musics*, Donald R. Hill's *Calypso Calaloo: Early Carnival Music in Trinidad* (1993), Gordon Rohlehr in *Calypso and Society in Pre-Independence Trinidad* (1990) and Raymond Quevedo's *Atilla's Kaiso: A Short History of Trinidad Calypso* (1983), in which Quevedo incorporates aspects of his own biography and career, within the wider historical context of calypso.

In another approach, there are those works which anthologise interviews or brief biographies of calypsonians. Hollis Liverpool's self published volumes, *Kaisonians to Remember* (1987) and *From The Horse's Mouth* (2003) represent this category, as does Trinidadian author Rudolph Ottley's important but hard to obtain interview series, *Calypsonians From Then To Now: Parts 1, 2 and 3* (1995, 1999, 2008) and *Women In Calypso, Parts 1 and 2* (1992, 2005), which contain articles and interviews with over sixty major calypsonians.

Stand-alone biographies or autobiographies have also been privately published in the Caribbean as pamphlets or private pressings by local journalists

³⁴⁶ Guilbault, *Governing Sound: The Cultural Politics of Trinidad's Carnival Musics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) p.16

³⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.92

or academics. These are the ‘small books’ which Guilbault refers to.³⁴⁸ Such works, while undoubtedly important, are invariably published in limited quantities and are usually only available in their country of origin. This following list of publications does not therefore, claim to be exhaustive.

Louis Regis’ 55 page pamphlet, *Maestro: The True Master* (1981), represents one of the earliest stand-alone calypso biographies. It was privately published in Port-of-Spain in 1981. Regis is also the author of *Black Stalin: The Caribbean Man*, published, again privately, in Port-of-Spain in 1986. Another book on Black Stalin, Marie Diane Dupre’s *The Man...The Music: A Pictorial and Musical Journey* was published privately in 2008 in recognition of Stalin receiving an honorary doctorate from the University of the West Indies. While there are eight brief essays included, Dupre’s book is primarily pictorial. This mix of articles and photojournalism is also seen in journalist Keith Smith’s edited magazine booklet *Sparrow, the Legend: Calypso King of the World*, published in Trinidad 1985 and expanded in 1988. It includes, in addition to several interviews and articles on Sparrow, lyrics to over 100 of his calypsos.

University of West Indies lecturer Rawle Gibbons issued *No Surrender: The Growling Tiger* on his own Canboulay Productions imprint, in 1994. Playwright and cultural activist Zeno Obi Constance has published two studies on Brother Valentino, his pamphlet *Valentino, Poet & Prophet: Blues & Rebellion* (1984), and his fully expanded biography of the calypsonian, *The Man Behind the Music - Brother Valentino* in 2010. Barbadian author Odimumba Kwamdela’s *Mighty Sparrow, Calypso King of the World*, was privately published on his own Kibo Books imprint in 2006.

Three important biographies have appeared in the last eight years. Louis Regis’s *Black Stalin, Kaisonian*, expanded from his 1986 pamphlet was published in 2007, *King Short Shirt: Nobody Go Run Me: The Life and Times of Sir MacLean Emanuel*, was published in 2014 by Hansib Publications.³⁴⁹ Also in 2014, Guilbault’s excellent, exhaustive study of the life and work of calypso saxophonist and bandleader Roy Cape, *Roy Cape: A Life on the Calypso and*

³⁴⁸ Guilbault and Cape, *Roy Cape*, p.233 (n.1)

³⁴⁹ Dorbrene O’Marde, *King Short Shirt: Nobody Go Run Me: The Life and Times of Sir MacLean Emanuel* (Hertford: Hansib, 2014) no pag..

Soca, also appeared in 2014, and most recently, *Who Gabby Think He Is: The Story of the Mighty Gabby*, by Barbara Chase, was published, in Barbados by Caribbean Chapters Publishing, in June 2015.

It is significant that of these four, none are autobiographies. It is also worth noting that three of these authors refrain from referring to their respective works as biographies. Dorbrene O'Marde makes it clear that his book is not a 'pure biography' but, 'a history of the Antigua calypso, featuring Short Shirt.'³⁵⁰ Guilbault also refrains from calling her book a biography, referring to it instead, as 'an experiment in storytelling.'³⁵¹ In the introduction to his study of the calypsonian Black Stalin, Louis Regis confesses to his subject's reluctance to integrate aspects of his personal and professional lives and makes the following caveat:

The overall approach to the study is dictated by Stalin's own unbreachable privacy which rules out a 'strip-and-tell biography, and determines that the focus be Stalin, the calypsonian, in his public character, rather than Leroy Calliste the individual, in his private capacity.'³⁵²

Elsewhere, in the introduction Regis writes that, 'Leroy Calliste's family, although important to him, does not feature in his idea of a biography.' And later, in the first chapter, we are told that 'Stalin's memory, which is excellent on detail, fails him when he has to recall incidents which threaten the image he has fashioned for himself.'³⁵³ These revelations, which appear throughout the text explain perhaps, why Regis refers to the book, not as a biography, but as an 'essay' and a 'presentation' of his 'thoughts' on Stalin's work.'³⁵⁴

Kitch

In a career which spanned six decades, Lord Kitchener (1922-2000) was one of the most prolific, innovative and internationally known exponents of the Trinidad

³⁵⁰ O'Marde, *King Short Shirt*, p.8

³⁵¹ Guilbault, *Governing Sound*, p.16

³⁵² Louis Regis, *Black Stalin Kaisonian* (Kingston, Jamaica: Arawak, 2007) p.vii

³⁵³ *Ibid*, p.9

³⁵⁴ *Ibid* p.vi

calypso. By the time of his arrival at Tilbury, Essex on board the *Empire Windrush* on June 21, 1948, 'Kitch' was already a respected calypsonian in Trinidad; part of a newer generation of singers who were redefining the musical and lyrical parameters of the art form.

In the UK, contemporary interest in Lord Kitchener can be traced to the publication of Mike and Trevor Philips's *Windrush*, published in 1998 to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the *Windrush*'s arrival, and the accompanying four part BBC TV series. This, combined with the emergence of a significant wave of black British writers, such as Andrea Levy, Zadie Smith, Diran Adebayo and Courtitia Newland, indirectly led to an increase in mainstream and critical interest in the *Windrush* Era³⁵⁵ Moreover, the iconic Pathé footage of Kitchener singing 'London is the Place of Me', on board the *Empire Windrush*, have becoming synonymous with debates regarding 20th century immigration to Britain, multiculturalism and the syncretic nature of postwar British culture and music.

In 2002, the West London record label Honest Jon initiated their important *London Is The Place For Me* series which, over six volumes, has continued to reissue several of Lord Kitchener's long unavailable 1950s recordings to significant public attention. In a June 2002 article, to coincide with the release, and with the upcoming Notting Hill Carnival, Stuart Hall wrote a characteristically insightful article in *The Guardian* in which he examined the impact of Lord Kitchener and calypso, 'the first popular music transported directly from the West Indies,' upon the British consciousness of the 1950s and 60s.³⁵⁶

In his assessment of the compilation, Hall, repeating Hugh Hodge's assertion, suggested that the calypsos of the 1950s 'must be "read" and heard alongside books like *Lonely Londoners* by Sam Selvon,' since they offer, 'a

³⁵⁵ Kadija George Sesay has argued, that the emergence of these writers, 'not only coincided with Britain's moving into a new century, it came at a crucial time, when the notion of what constitutes British culture was undergoing unprecedented changes.' (Sesay, 99) Bruce King sees this process as beginning with the riots of the late 70s and early 80s. For King, these events signalled a shift in consciousness within minorities: 'from thinking of themselves as a diaspora idealising a homeland to which they would return; instead they were fighting to be recognized as British with the same rights as the majority. (King, 2004, p.127)

³⁵⁶ Stuart Hall, 'Calypso Kings', 2002 <<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/jun/28/nottinghillcarnival2002.nottinghillcarnival>> [accessed 3 November 2015] no pag. For a valuable and relatively recent analysis of the Trinidad calypso's impact and importance to the Caribbean and its diaspora, see Sandra Pouchet Paquet's *Music, Memory, Resistance : Calypso and the Caribbean Literary Imagination* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2007)

vibrant, piquantly observed and often hilarious running commentary on life for the newly arrived immigrant in the London of the 1950s.’³⁵⁷ To conclude, Hall identifies the lack of historical inclusion which has characterised the black British experience of the pioneer period, suggesting that *London Is the Place for Me*, ‘constitutes one of the best starting points for that rich, unfinished history of the black British diaspora and its intricate interweaving with British life that remains to be written.’³⁵⁸

But as yet, apart from the scant critical, scattered and somewhat superficial attention outlined above, interest in Kitchener has not resulted in a holistic study of Kitchener’s life, notwithstanding his significant contributions to British music, culture and society. Pearl Connor Mogotsi’s words in *Black in the British Frame* equally seem unfortunately relevant here:

In Britain there is no record of the contribution we have made to the performing arts. [...] There is no memory in Britain for us. There is a hole in the ground and we fall into it.’³⁵⁹

Anne Walmsley has also highlighted the absence of the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM) and its members from ‘cultural histories’ or ‘critical writing on Caribbean literature.’³⁶⁰ According to Walmsley, these absences have contributed to the tendency of black British writers and artists born after 1960 to believe that black arts in the UK did not begin until the 1970s. Likewise, many younger musical artists are unaware of the contributions of musicians such as Russell

³⁵⁷ Stuart Hall, ‘Calypso Kings’, 2002 <<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/jun/28/nottinghillcarnival2002.nottinghillcarnival>> [accessed 3 November 2015]

³⁵⁸ *Ibid*

³⁵⁹ Pearl Connor Mogotsi quoted in Bourne, 2001, p.90) In 1956 Mogotsi (1924-2005), a Trinidadian actress and cultural activist, along with her husband, the singer, actor and folklorist Edric Connor (1913-1968), also from Trinidad, established the Edric Connor Agency in London. The agency, which later became known as the Afro-Asian Caribbean Agency, ran for 20 years. According to Mogotsi, ‘[...] 90 percent of African, Asian and Caribbean people who wanted to join the acting profession came to us for help and advice. We’d let them sleep on the floor until they could find a place to live. Calypsonians, dancers, Lord Kitchener himself. All those people came to us.’ (Bourne, *Black in the British Frame*, p.88)

³⁶⁰ Ironically, CAM seems to have, in its inception at least, also failed to include the contributions of Caribbean musicians to the cultural landscape of Britain. Kamau Brathwaite, a fan of Jazz (Walmsley 56-57) had spoken at CAM meetings about the role of Jazz in Caribbean writing but had initially envisioned CAM as an organisation of ‘WI [West Indian] artists’ and writers’ group concerned about discussing WI art and literature. (qtd. in Walmsley 47)

Henderson, Sterling Bettancourt or Selwyn Baptiste, steel pan pioneers of the 1950s and 60s who were instrumental in introducing the instrument to UK audiences and in setting up the Notting Hill carnival. These absences are partly what motivated me to embark on the present project.

In January 2015, I researched and presented a BBC Radio 4 documentary which through interviews and music, attempted to present a condensed biography of Lord Kitchener.³⁶¹ And in June of the same year I presented a talk on Lord Kitchener at the London Eye, as part of the 32 Londoners project. The event, which occurred during one rotation of the London Eye itself was sold out several days in advance.³⁶² Kitch aims to continue the process begun with these presentations, to fulfil the absences and unwritten histories which both Pearl Connor Mogotsi and Stuart Hall have pointed to, and to draw together the disparate strands of Kitchener's life in Trinidad and Britain.

A Liminal Life, A Community of Voices

Kitch is a fictional biography. The inherent contradiction between fiction and biography is intentional, since the text occupies a decidedly interjacent position between the two genres. Before I discuss the form, methods and narrative strategy of *Kitch*, however, it is necessary to distinguish what 'fictional biography' refers to in this context.

In *From Puzzles to Portraits* (1970) James Clifford names five types of biographical text aligned along a scale of authorial subjectivity, from attempts at complete objectivity at the top tier, to what he refers to as 'fictional' biography, in which, 'the author relies on secondary sources and treats the life of the historical subject as a novelist would treat a character, adding and inventing as the author sees fit for the effects she is trying to create.'³⁶³ This is my approach here.

As Ina Schabert has pointed out, in the conventional or non-fictional biography, 'the statements of the narrative have to stand the test of factual

³⁶¹ 'Kitch' is as of writing, still available online as a BBC podcast at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04xp15m>

³⁶² For more info on this event see '32 Londoners On The London Eye - Lord Kitchener,' 2015 <<http://32londoners.com/lkitchener.html>> [accessed 3 November 2015].

³⁶³ James Clifford quoted in Catherine Neal Parke, *Biography: Writing Lives* (New York: Twayne, 1996) pp.29-30. See also *From Puzzles to Portraits* (Clifford, 1970)

verification.’ In its fictional counterpart however:

By the organization of the work itself, as well as by the label of novel, the reader of a fictional biography is led away from asking himself whether and how the details of the narrative square with his historical knowledge; his primary concern is to understand how they are related to one another in the over-all design of the work.³⁶⁴

In this regard, my work bears similarities to Michael Ondaatje’s 1976 novel *Coming Through Slaughter*, his poetic, fictionalised account of the life of pioneering New Orleans Jazz cornetist Buddy Bolden, which recounts Bolden’s story through a collage of discontinuous first person fragments, poetry, and pseudo-historical material. Speaking on the book in a 2014 interview, Ondaatje admitted to having only ‘half a page of facts’ about Bolden before he started, and having to ‘invent’ Bolden’s story:

[...] the book was a kind of mixture of fact and then, improvisation, the way a musician improvises on a familiar tune. I knew that this was not going to be the authentic biography of Bolden.[...] this was my jazz version of Bolden’s life.’³⁶⁵

Formally, both *Kitch* and *Coming Through Slaughter* present fragmented fictions. Both books utilise discontinuous and dislocated narrative voices - both homodiegetic and heterodiegetic - alongside a range of ancillary devices, such as newspaper clippings, historical documents and faux interviews. In this way, both books are experiments in literary collage and authenticity. Commenting on the organising principles which inform the structure of *Coming Through Slaughter*, Ondaatje has said:

The only way I could approach the story of Bolden, which came to me in a sort of splintered version in a way, was to write it in a splintered version. [...] That mixture of scenes clashing against each other [...] that mixture of styles, of time periods, all these things, was the way I felt I could approach the subject, in a 360° version of it as opposed to a 1° version of it.³⁶⁶

The ‘facts’ of Kitchener’s life, like Bolden’s to Ondaatje, came in fragments or

³⁶⁴ Ina Schabert, ‘Fictional Biography, Factual Biography, and their Contaminations’ in *Biography*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Winter 1982), pp. 1-16 (5)

³⁶⁵ SoundCloud, ‘Book Club | Michael Ondaatje Interview,’ 2014 <<https://soundcloud.com/kuaradio/book-club-michael-ondaatje>> [accessed 4 November 2015]

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*

‘splinters,’ and this is reflected in the manner in which the text is presented; as a series of shifting styles, perspectives and voices. Ondaatje’s comments also point to the limits of the ‘conventional’ biography, and are, I suggest, directly related to Lovelace’s theorisation of a community’s investment in a narrative, in which voices or characters - fictitious or otherwise, which surround a protagonist contribute, non-hierarchically, to the narrative being told, as opposed to the ‘traditional’ method in which a single narrator or protagonist relates a narrative.

Lovelace has argued that whereas the English language, and by extension, its fiction, depended on causality and ‘addition’ for its narrative thrust, Caribbean fiction could and *should* strive to represent, what he felt were the specific particularities of the Caribbean experience, specifically a form of simultaneous experience in which ‘everything is happening at the same time,’ rather than sequentially and where characters are equalised rather than heroised.³⁶⁷ As Lovelace himself explained at a lecture at The Bocas Literature Festival in Trinidad in 2014, his focus was not solely on the central figure or narrator but also with what or who lay on the periphery. Hence, while a scene may focus on the foreground in which some dramatic action occurs, the background can also be ‘glimpsed’ in which ‘something else may be happening.’ The challenge then, he added, is to include both foreground and background, to create a composite, simultaneous narrative which for him, is a truer representation of the simultaneity of the Caribbean experience.³⁶⁸ Such an approach, as seen in Lovelace’s fictions, *Salt* (1997) and more recently *Is Just a Movie* (2012), results in works which are kaleidoscopic in their scope, and which capture the stories of communities, even as they do those of individuals. And as Heather Russell has pointed out, this approach is part of a wider de-colonising strategy:

Lovelace’s de-centering of the traditionally privileged epistemological status of the narrating subject and his alternative positing of a shared discourse of narrating subjects become a metonym for the nation-building project.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ Earl Lovelace, Fiction Workshop, *Bocas Lit Fest*, Trinidad, April 2014

³⁶⁸ *Ibid*

³⁶⁹ Heather Russell, *Legba’s Crossing: Narratology in the African Atlantic* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009) p.25

In the introduction to his edited volume of Lovelace's essays, Funso Aiyejina comments further on another aspect of Lovelace's narratology:

[...] more voices/characters/periods (historical), while being narrated, have the option to directly contribute to the narration of their stories. This democratisation of the narrative focus also helps to demonstrate the eclectic and versatile nature of bacchanal aesthetics which allows for the coexistence of the profane and the profound, the highfalutin and the jagabat [...]³⁷⁰

Lovelace's position, as discussed above, has directly influenced my own strategy in *Kitch*. Lord Kitchener, the focal character in *Kitch* is de-centered, and provides no first person commentary on his own life. Instead, his narrative is witnessed - and carried - by a community of voices. While he remains at the centre of their stories, the community, or to use Turner's term - *communitas* - which reflects and constructs him, also reveal themselves in the telling. The reader is offered a glimpse of the socio-political and cultural background to Kitchener's life, and of the lives of those peripheral and/or significant characters within the milieu in which he lived, loved and worked. As I have shown in my earlier chapters, similar strategies of polyvocality are at the heart of Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Lamming's *The Emigrants*. Both novels feature non-linear structures populated by equalised casts of characters, from which none emerges as a main, sole or central protagonist.

Similar non-linear, multi-strand structures were used in my first novel, *The African Origins of UFOs* (2006) which utilised a three tier structure in which past, present and future were depicted in alternating chapters. In that book, the reader glimpsed communities populated by a myriad of characters at different historical periods, with a central but unnamed, amorphous, time straddling narrator as its focal point and connective thread.³⁷¹ *Kitch* develops on this methodology, approaching biographical fiction with similar objectives; to engage the community rather than a single individual in the telling of a story, to destabilise and challenge notions of narrative and character centrality which have their foundations in causal narratology, and to produce a work which straddles genres, in the case of *Kitch*, a liminal textology; existing at the interstice of both fiction and biography.

³⁷⁰ Funso Aiyejina, 'Introduction' in Lovelace, Aiyejina (ed.) *Growing In The Dark: Selected Essays* (San Juan, Trinidad and Tobago: Lexicon, 2003) pxvii

³⁷¹ Joseph, *The African Origins of UFOs* (Cambridge: Salt, 2006)

I am also concerned in *Kitch*, as both Lovelace and Selvon are in their respective works, with capturing and legitimising ‘the narrative voice of the ordinary people. For Lovelace the ‘power and integrity’ of this voice carries a significant political impetus and responsibility, part of which lies in resisting external, centrifugally European literary sensibilities which act to dictate the narrative form and structure of that voice.³⁷² And in a 1984 interview with Susheila Nasta, Selvon reiterated the validity and necessity of such an approach, in particular, for his own use of Creole, in *The Lonely Londoners*:

[...] it seemed to me that the only way to give expression to what happened to the original immigrant was by using this idiom, this language form that he brought with him. There was no other way [...] This idiom is so much a part of the people, so much a part of the characteristics of the people, that you cannot separate a language from the experiences.³⁷³

Selvon’s comments articulate his efforts to find a ‘form’ which matched the ‘content’ of his narrative; a form which was ultimately, a form of resistance to the homogenising forces of English literary tradition. Nick Bently also argues that Selvon’s writing exhibits a dual engagement, to a ‘culturally specific “resistance” literature related to his position as a marginalized Caribbean writer,’ and to what Bently sees as his desire to communicate to the wider, European audience, to be within yet set apart from the dominant institutions of western literature.³⁷⁴ As Bently rightly suggests, Selvon’s writing ‘represents an engagement with dominant literary practice in the West rather than simply an alternative that comes from the periphery.’³⁷⁵

Selvon was clear in his desire to produce a novel which retained the music, rhythm and semantic logic of Creole, while being comprehensible and engaging to non-Creole readers. But he was also clear in his reluctance to engage with those ‘universalizing discourses’ which sought to define the parameters of the novel, as he alluded to in an interview with Alessandra Dotti:

³⁷² Lovelace and Aiyejina (ed.) *Growing In The Dark* pp.102-103

³⁷³ Susheila Nasta, ‘The Moses Trilogy’, *Wasafiri*, 1 (1985), 5-9 (6)

³⁷⁴ Nick Bently, ‘Form and Language in Sam Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners*.’ *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 36, nos. 3-4 (2005) 67-84. (68)

³⁷⁵ *Ibid* p.68

[...] what is a novel? I never conceived of the book to take the shape of a novel. [...] the way I wanted to write it is just as it was written. I never had any feeling at the back of my mind that it was going to take the traditional form or style of what is conceived as the novel.³⁷⁶

A similar ambivalence is witnessed in *Kitch*. Apart from an adherence to chronology, the text does not follow a causal plot. Instead, the reader is presented with what Roland Barthes referred to as, ‘a space of many dimensions, in which are wedded and contested various kinds of writing.’³⁷⁷ *Kitch* challenges the definitions of biography and fiction and explores the interstices and slippages where those genres meet and overlap. *Kitch* represents an entry into the marginal canon of ‘fictionalised’ Caribbean biography; a work based explicitly on a historical figure but one which utilises the narratology and methodology of fiction, and which is distinct from a fictional biography, which presents a biographical account of an imagined life.³⁷⁸

As I have argued throughout, liminality represents a process rather than an outcome or a result. *Kitch*, by its polyphony of form and panorama of voices aims to reflect that process. It also aims to echo the perpetual becomings and marginality which I suggest, characterised the Caribbean experience in Britain during the post World War II period, while simultaneously presenting glimpses of colonial and post colonial Trinidad.³⁷⁹ In *Kitch*, Lord Kitchener’s as an artist and public figure who crosses over - to the colonial centre, via the most iconic symbol of post World War II migration - *The Empire Windrush*, and back - to the post

³⁷⁶ John Thieme and Alessandra Dotti, “‘Oldtalk’: Two Interviews with Samuel Selvon”, in *Caribana*, Vol.1, 1990, pp.71-84 (81)

³⁷⁷ Roland Barthes, ‘The Death Of The Author’ available at <http://writing.upenn.edu/>, 1967 <<http://writing.upenn.edu/~taransky/Barthes.pdf>> [accessed 10 November 2015] p.4

³⁷⁸ Jamaica Kincaid’s *Mr Potter* (2002), Ferdinand Dennis’s *Duppy Conqueror* (1998) and Monique Roffey’s *The White Woman on the Green Bicycle* (2011) are three noteworthy examples of works which are based largely on actual lives but which are presented as historical fiction. While not explicitly a work of biography, Marlon James’s *A Brief History of Seven Killings* (2014) utilises an expansive narrative populated by named or recognisable historical characters.

³⁷⁹ A similar attention to the simultaneity of time and space is witnessed in Grace Nichols’s debut collection *I is a Long Memoried Woman* (London: Caribbean Cultural International, Karnak House, 1983) which foregrounds the role of subjective and collective memory as a bridge between the traumas of the past and the present.

colonial public sphere, becomes a symbolic bridge, a ritual leader facilitating both migratory movement and the retention of historical memory.

This liminal potential of the calypsonian has also been noted by Everard Phillips, who argues that calypsonians represent a form of ‘liminal-servant’. For Phillips, whose 2005 thesis analyses this function specifically in Trinidadian society, but whose arguments are applicable as well to the historical role of the calypsonian, calypsonians act as intermediaries or mediators in conflict situations, using ‘verbal creativity’ and a ‘localised language [...] to sing on the prevailing socio-political and economic ills’ within their communities. Phillips refers to this process as ‘an indigenous, non-formal, community conflict management mechanism.’³⁸⁰

While I agree with Phillip’s theorisation of calypsonian as a ‘liminal-servant,’ I would like to suggest as well that his argument understates the ability of the calypsonian to instigate change or to occupy the role of a leader or catalyst. The calypsonian is also a ‘ritual leader’, whether situated within the society which is being critiqued or commented upon, or in diasporic exile, like Lord Kitchener, on the deck of the *Windrush*.³⁸¹

In the iconic Pathé footage of the *Windrush*’s arrival, arguably the most significant scenes involve Kitchener, surrounded by his fellow passengers, and introduced as ‘the king of calypso’.³⁸² In his role of group leader or representative Kitchener occupies a liminal border, a physical threshold - not yet in Britain but no longer in the Caribbean - and in his symbolic role of griot, both messenger and entertainer. His rendition of ‘London is the place’ here, is the first of many observations, critiques and praise songs he will record in the years after his

³⁸⁰ Everard Phillips, ‘Recognising the Language of Calypso as “Symbolic Action” in Resolving Conflict in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science 2005)

³⁸¹ While there are examples of artists such as David Rudder, The Mighty Sparrow, The Mighty Shadow who straddle the two forms, I make the distinction here between ‘traditional’ calypsonians - such as The Mighty Chalkdust, Black Stalin and Sugar Aloes, whose art usually involves local or internationalised social critique, and, soca artists such as Bunji Garlin, Alison Hinds and Machel Montano who, for the most part produce hybrid forms of dance music which are predominantly politically neutral. For more on this distinction see Guilbault, *Governing Sound*.

³⁸² A fictional treatment of this scene, ‘London is the place for me’ is featured in *Kitch*. See pp. 80-82

arrival. In songs such 'My Landlady', 'The Underground Train', and 'Sweet Jamaica' he - like Selvon and Lamming in their migration novels, articulated the liminality; the dual sense of adventure and apprehension, the traumas and pleasures at the heart of the post-war Caribbean migratory experience, while simultaneously, in exile, defining what it meant to be Caribbean.³⁸³

'Negotiated' Versions

Applying feminist critique to the field of auto/biography, Liz Stanley argues for the validity of a communal effort at producing a composite biography.³⁸⁴ In her 1992 study, *The Auto/biographical I: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/biography*, Stanley begins by arguing that while the genre of auto/biography lays claim to facticity, both are 'by nature artful enterprises which select, shape, and produce a very unnatural product' since 'no life is lived quite so much under a single spotlight as the conventional form of written auto/biographies suggests.'³⁸⁵ Furthermore, as Stanley argues, the genre has been predominantly concerned with 'great lives', which are invariably those of 'white middle and upper class men who have achieved success according to conventional - and thus

³⁸³ For further analysis of these recordings see Hugh Hodges's essay, 'Kitchener Invades England: The London Calypsos Of Aldwyn Roberts,' in *Wasafiri* 20.45, 2005, pp. 24-30. Also see Hall, 'Calypso Kings', 2002 <<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/jun/28/nottinghillcarnival2002.nottinghillcarnival>> [accessed 3 November 2015] no pag.

³⁸⁴ For further discussion and application of feminist critique to auto/biography see A. Donnell, P. Polkey (eds.) *Representing Lives: Women and Auto/biography* (2000, Palgrave Macmillan) Equally important are the works of Sidonie Smith, in particular *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992) and *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998) edited by Smith and Julia Watson which provides an overview of the theoretical critiques which have underpinned women's autobiographical writing. Susan Scafe has also explored the specific concerns of colonial and post colonial Caribbean women's writing in her work. In particular, in her essays 'Lives Written in Fragments: The Self-Representational 'I' in Caribbean Diasporic Women's Auto/biography' in *Life Writing*, (Vol. 10, 2, pp.187-206) and "'Let Me Tell You How it Really Was': Authority, Legitimacy and Fictive Structures of Reality in Contemporary Black Women's Autobiography" in *Changing English*. Vol. 17, 2, pp.129-139, which examines contemporary black British women's autobiographical writing in relation to a tradition wit roots in nineteenth-century slave narratives and early twentieth-century autobiographical bildungsroman.

³⁸⁵ Liz Stanley, *The Auto/Biographical I: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/biography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) p.4

highly political - standards.'

While Stanley agrees that the 'auto/biographical canon' is continually being 'contested and revised,' she argues that at its heart, 'The notion of the "reconstruction" of a biographical subject is an intellectual non-starter' since it proposes that the past can be recovered and known 'as it was experienced and understood by the people who actually lived it.'³⁸⁶

According to Stanley, one way feminist critique can question the veracity and gender imbalances which have plagued auto/biographical writing, is by challenging the viewpoint of the biographer; by asking: ' "the past from whose viewpoint?" "why this viewpoint and no other?"', and "what would be the effect of working from a contrary viewpoint?"'³⁸⁷ The past, like the present, Stanley argues, is the result of: 'competing negotiated *versions* of what happened, why it happened, with what consequence.' While biographers claim to recognise this, Stanley argues that they nevertheless see only *their* version, and consider it to be 'privileged' and somehow truthful 'because it comes at the subject and their life with more, and thus somehow less partial, evidence that the subject's contemporaries or the subjects themselves did', as Stanley asserts however, 'any biographer's view is a socially located and necessarily partial one.'³⁸⁸

Another related tenet of Stanley's argument is her assertion that the conventional, linear or chronological biography, with its focus on individuality, separates the subject from their peers or community by training a 'spotlight' on them. Feminist and cultural political approaches, on the other hand, like Lovelace's narrative strategy, aim to situate the subject within 'a range of overlapping social groups, rather than being portrayed as somehow different.' Considering the complex nature of selfhood, the task of a biography, according to Stanley, should be to recognise these 'competing estimations of character, motive, behaviour, intention' and, to 'document and present these versions concerning its subjects rather than try to eradicate them through searching for a seamless 'truth' about subjects and/or events in their lives.'³⁸⁹

³⁸⁶ Stanley, *The Auto/Biographical I*, pp. 4, 7

³⁸⁷ Stanley, *The Auto/Biographical I*, p.7

³⁸⁸ *Ibid*

³⁸⁹ Stanley, *The Autobiographical I*, pp.10-11

Feminist critique, according to Stanley, and as articulated by authors such as Susan Scafe and Sidonie Smith, also challenges considerations of ‘greatness’ or ‘importance’ which are invariably afforded to those auto/biographical subjects ‘at the top of stratification systems based on sex, class, race and religion.’ This has significant relevance to *Kitch*, since as Stanley points out, the ‘obscure’ can be equally, if not more historically significant than the ‘famous or infamous.’³⁹⁰

As Helen Tiffin has relatedly suggested, imperial literary discourse has foregrounded the alterity of the colonial subject in a ‘semiotic practice’ which held its perspectives as universal or as ‘common sense’. For Tiffin, these positions and readings were ‘learned, over and over’ by the colonial subject, reinforcing their inferiority; a point Fanon and Lamming have also explored.³⁹¹ Post-colonial literature, according to Tiffin is engaged in the process of de-colonisation by re-writing and investigating ‘European textual capture of places and peoples’ and in dismantling ‘canonically enshrined imperial texts.’³⁹² As Tiffin rightly argues, since European auto/biographical writing also represents a project of ‘othering’ of the Caribbean colonial subject by Europe, Caribbean auto/biography offers ‘a particularly appropriate site of post colonial resistance, since it is involved with “the self”, and particularly the writing of that self.’³⁹³

Kitch, with its focus on a significant but undocumented Caribbean life offers its own resistance and ‘counter discourse’, in response to the process of ‘othering’ which representations such as the *Windrush* footage have foregrounded.³⁹⁴

John Thieme, writing in 1984, responding to what he saw as a sense of ‘incompleteness’ in Anglophone Caribbean auto/biographies argued that such

³⁹⁰ Stanley, *The Autobiographical I*, pp.10-11

³⁹¹ See Fanon, ‘The Fact of Blackness’ in *Black Skin, White Masks* (pp.109-140) and Lamming in *The Pleasures of Exile* (1984). Simon Gikandi has also explored the impact of imperial literature on Caribbean writers in *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature* (1992)

³⁹² Helen Tiffin, ‘Rites of Resistance: Counter-Discourse and West Indian Biography’ in *Journal of West Indian Literature*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (January, 1989), pp. 28-46 (29)

³⁹³ *Ibid*, 30

³⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 29

works, *when* they emerged, were ‘more fragmentary and more foreshortened than most’. Thieme points to works such as Jean Rhy’s unfinished autobiography *Smile Please* (1979), Edgar Mittelholzer’s *A Swarthy Boy* (1963) and V.S. Naipaul’s ‘Prologue to an Autobiography’ (1984) as illustrative of the relative paucity of integrated and extended accounts of ‘a unitary Cartesian self’ among Caribbean writers.³⁹⁵

For Thieme, autobiographical writing - in the pre-independence period at least, was problematised by the predicament of writers who had their personal development and education suppressed, diminished and manipulated under colonial systems.³⁹⁶ Thieme argues that the success of autobiographical works such as Brathwaite’s *The Arrivants* and Walcott’s *Another Life*, in achieving a certain sense of completeness and expansion, lies in the ability of both poets to produce complex, self-reflexive works which investigate the processes by which art and selfhood are negotiated and constructed in the Caribbean, and which interrogate and challenge the notion of a unified, complete subjectivity.³⁹⁷ Such works, according to Thieme, succeed because the intertextuality of their art enables them to create new or alternate traditions and positions from which to write.³⁹⁸ Thieme sees this process as resulting in a literary existentiality which resides at ‘the interface of the various discourses that are combining together to bring the text into being.’³⁹⁹ This liminal, interstitial quality of Caribbean subjectivity, as this thesis has argued, is also present in the migratory fictions of Lamming and Selvon, manifesting itself both in literary form and narratology, and it is this which has

³⁹⁵ John Thieme, ‘Appropriating Ancestral Heirlooms: The Quest for Tradition in Derek Walcott’s “Another Life”’ in Doireann McDermott (ed) *Autobiographical and Biographical Writing in the Commonwealth* (Sabadell, Barcelona: Editorial AUSA., 1984) pp.215-221 (215)

³⁹⁶ In a discussion of the autobiographical fictions of V.S. Naipaul, Bart Moore-Gilbert points, correspondingly, to the lack of ‘reality’ at the heart of Trinidadian history. For Moore-Gilbert, this unreality ‘confounds the quest to ground Caribbean identity’, arguing that waves of migration into the region from Africa, China, Europe and India have failed to ‘fill this void’. (Bart Moore-Gilbert, p.74)

³⁹⁷ For further discussion on critical aspects of Anglophone Caribbean autobiography see Sandra Pouchet Paquet, *Caribbean Autobiography: Cultural Identity and Self-Representation* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002) and Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Life-Writing: Culture, Politics and Self-Representation* (London: Routledge, 2009)

³⁹⁸ Thieme, ‘Appropriating Ancestral Heirlooms’ p.216

³⁹⁹ *Ibid* p.217

equally informed the structure and approach of *Kitch*.

While *Kitch* is not autobiography, my own aesthetic subjectivity, as a Caribbean writer educated in the post independence period is predicated upon aspects of liminality which find their form in the fragmentary and polyphonic structure of my writing in *Kitch* and as I have pointed out, elsewhere in my work. In agreement with both Thieme and Tiffin, this work resides at the interface of Caribbean subjectivity and a 'counter-discourse' which aims to fulfil absences, as well as to challenge, expand and seek alternatives to 'canonically enshrined' European literary practice.

Kitch: Forms and Elements

Kitch does not claim to offer a comprehensive biography, since as Paul Mariani has rightly suggested, 'biography is only a beginning. For no biography can tell the whole story.'⁴⁰⁰ What I have tried to do in *Kitch*, is to offer one such beginning, to suggest one version of the many biographies Kitchener lived. I do this by taking into account the multiplicity of voices and versions available to tell that story, and by utilising these voices in the text.

Kitch is divided into three sections which correspond to temporal and geographical locations. This arrangement emerged as the most suitable method of dividing the text; tracing Kitchener's story within a wider political narrative which comments on the Caribbean experience in colonial Trinidad, postwar Britain, and finally, in postcolonial, independent Trinidad.

The first section 'Bean', named after Kitchener childhood nickname, is set in Trinidad between 1941 and 1947. It commences with accounts of Kitchener's life as a young, emergent and ambitious calypsonian in war time Trinidad, as he makes his way from rural Arima to Port of Spain, the island's capital city, and the creative and commercial hub for calypso, and then, to Aruba, Jamaica and finally London, in June 1948.

The second section, 'Lord Kitchener', is the book's most substantial section. It details Kitchener's arrival at Tilbury on *The Empire Windrush*, and his subsequent time in postwar London, as part of the first significant wave of

⁴⁰⁰ Paul L Mariani, *God And The Imagination: On Poets, Poetry, and the Ineffable* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2002) p.121

Caribbean migrants to Britain. Kitchener, as the most visible exponent of what was then Britain's most popular immigrant music, assumes the role of a 'ritual leader' in a rite of passage.⁴⁰¹ This section of *Kitch* recounts his pivotal recording sessions in 1948 and 1951, his German and American tours, his marriage to Marjorie Lines and his move to Manchester in 1953, then the center of an established Pan Africanist movement led by the Guyanese born activist and entrepreneur Ras Makonnen.⁴⁰²

The third book, 'The Grandmaster', recounts Kitchener's return to Trinidad in late 1962 and comments on the socio-political environment Kitchener encounters in newly independent Trinidad. It focusses on his professional and personal rivalry with The Mighty Sparrow, his deteriorating relationship with his wife Marjorie, his role as a father, and as a calypso icon now referred to as 'The Grandmaster.' This section concludes in the early 1970s, after the dissolution of his marriage, and the beginning of a new relationship. His death in 2000, is included in an epilogue which also includes a metafictional account of my only meeting with him in 1987.

Kitch utilises four narrative components:

1. *'Factual' First person Anecdotes and Monologues*

These brief chapters or episodes are transcriptions from a series of interviews I conducted between 2008 and 2015 with members of Kitchener's family, fellow calypsonians, musicians and friends. They are attributed by actual name to the speaker. The novel's opening vignette from Russell Henderson is an example of this, and is taken more or less verbatim from an interview with Henderson.

2. *Fictional First Person Anecdotes*

Unlike the above, these are either composite or fictional accounts. They are false documents. The episodes and anecdotes they communicate are based on historical events, but have been expanded and shaped into a narratives which are recounted by fictional characters. The interview 'Cricket Champions: Llewelyn Barrow

⁴⁰¹ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p.96

⁴⁰² For more on the Pan African movement in Manchester and the 1945 Pan African Conference held there see Hakim Adi, Marika Sherwood and George Padmore, *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited* (London: New Beacon Books, 1995)

interviewed in Harlesden, London by Michael Myatt' is an example of this technique.⁴⁰³

3. Third person, omniscient narratives

These chapters, titled after calypsoes by Kitchener, utilise a third person omniscient point of view. They are based on anecdotal and historic documentation but are rendered as fiction, using the language, lexical registers and structures of fictional narratology.

4. Documents

These include extracts from print media, interviews, and song lyrics by Kitchener and others which aim to provide an added layer of historicity to the text. As extracts from verifiable sources such as print or film media, these excerpts assert their authenticity. As Todd Heidt points out, such documents 'serve a documentary drive to catalogue the veracity of the narrative construction.'⁴⁰⁴ Appearing alongside both factual and fictional testimony and dislocated third person narratology, these materials also signalise further the intermedial, liminal intent of text which suggests that it is both a construct, and by the oscillating lens of its viewpoints, a form of literary documentary.

Methodology

In the process of my examination of Lord Kitchener's life, I conducted extensive research at the Newspaper Library in Colindale, collecting and analysing articles on Lord Kitchener and his milieu. This research helped to contextualise Kitchener within the wider field of calypso history and its journalism, and was central to my developing an understanding of the evolution, not just of Kitchener's career and public image, but also of the complex and often conflicting attitudes towards calypso in the populist press of the colonial period and postcolonial. I also consulted the Manchester Archives and Local Studies Library which holds a small but important selection of census reports, marriage records, private and professional telephone directories, fly bills, posters and local newspapers.

⁴⁰³ Joseph, *Kitch*, p.94

⁴⁰⁴ Todd Heidt, 'Image and Text, Fact and Fiction: Narrating W.G. Sebald's *The Emigrants* in the First Person', *Image [&] Narrative* [e-journal], 22 (2008)

Central to my research however, were the numerous interviews I conducted. On an August 2010 research trip to Trinidad, I interviewed several colleagues and contemporaries of Lord Kitchener, including the calypsonians Brother Superior, The Mighty Chalkdust and Black Stalin. I also visited La Cour Harpe, now Harpe Place, where Kitchener had lived in the 1940s. There I interviewed Beryl Baptise, an octogenarian matriarch of the enclave, who remembered Kitchener's arrival in the barrack yard in 1942. The steel pan player and masquerade artist Eugene Manwarren, who had lived close to Harpe Place, in a barrack yard on Henry Street, Port of Spain, also remembered Lord Kitchener's arrival in the city as a young calypsonian and provided important, detailed, first hand descriptions of barrack yard life and the steeple movement in of Port of Spain during the 1940s and '50s.

In Manchester I conducted interviews with Marjorie Moss, Kitchener's first wife whom he had married in 1953, and with whom he had returned to Trinidad in the mid 1960s. Her voice is essential to the narrative since it sheds light on aspects of Kitchener's private, domestic and social life. She also provided revealing information on Kitchener's political beliefs and their experiences as a mixed couple in 1950s Manchester and Trinidad. The story of their relationship provides a moving and ultimately tragic thread to the book's last section.

Leonard 'Young Kitch' Joseph had been a close friend and protégé of Kitchener for almost 60 years. The men were close friends. From Joseph, a retired calypso and cabaret artist, I learned about Kitchener's creative process, as composer and recording artist. Joseph was also able to explain certain intricacies of calypso composition and performance, and he was able to sing and explicate the lyrics of several calypsos by Kitchener, including 'Green Fig,' Kitchener's first major composition, which he [Kitch] never recorded. Joseph also provided me with several unpublished photos of himself and Kitchener. Apart from offering a revealing interpretation and analysis of his rivalry and eventual close camaraderie with Kitchener, the Mighty Sparrow provided generous accounts of tours and performances alongside Kitch in the mid to late 1960s.

In London I spoke extensively with Russell Henderson, a Trinidadian pianist and steelband pioneer who had recorded with Kitchener throughout the 1950s and 60s. I also conducted telephone interviews with Lord Kitchener's daughter Quweina Roberts and his widow Valerie Green, whose humorous but

moving story of her courtship by Kitchener, forms an important part of the novel's final sequence.

These interviews were open ended, and entered into with a list of basic questions. I was able to conduct interviews with fellow Trinidadians in creole. This, I hope, put my subjects at ease and enabled them to speak and to express themselves explicitly, in an environment of mutual trust. My interviews then, often took the form of informal 'limes,' which often extended beyond set times, and which were conversational and investigative.

With musicians and calypsonians especially, I drew on their natural inclination to be raconteurs, providing prompts and shape to the interviews but I also let interviewees dictate the scope and narrative thrust of their responses. Kitchener had been such a ubiquitous presence in calypso, that everyone I interviewed had had direct interaction with him in professional or social situations. They saw this project as historically important and were happy to contribute to it by providing both complimentary and critical appraisals. They pointed to gaps in Kitchener's mythology, they exposed his failings, his fears, the conflicting tenets of his politics and personality, the limits of his patience and generosity. All of this was integral in forming an honest, composite and critical representation of Kitchener, beyond his sobriquet.

Conclusion: Endless Limits

The critical component of this thesis set out to question whether liminality theory could provide an alternative to theorisations of hybridity which have been used to frame the postcolonial Caribbean, and how it could be applied to studies of the migratory fiction of the *Windrush* era. It has also, in *Kitch*, the creative component, been applied to questions of genre and practice for depicting the life of the calypsonian Lord Kitchener. In the process, liminality has also been deployed to address the lack of published auto/biographical studies of calypso artists.

As this study has indicated, theorisations which consider the Caribbean and its literature as fragmented and discontinuous often overlook the continuities and correlations which underpin the region. In the thought of Caribbean scholars such as Wynter, Glissant and Benítez-Rojo, the Caribbean emerges, not as a fixed, essentialised domain, which, in its adversarial relation to the West produces a new, ‘third space,’ or hybrid form of postcolonial subjectivity, but as what Benítez-Rojo has referred to as a ‘repeating island’ or meta-archipelago.⁴⁰⁵ While not theorised as such, these views reject fragmentation and hybridity in favor of theories which facilitate perpetual transformation and potentiality. They allow for the inclusive interstices and in-between spaces which have come to characterise Caribbean subjectivity.

Central to such considerations is the process of exile or migration away from the region. Accordingly, my application of liminality theory in this argument, has focussed on the postwar *Windrush* milieu, a period which saw a significant and sustained process of Caribbean migration to the UK. Hybridity has emerged in the last decade as an eminent trope in considerations of postcoloniality, but it is my argument that hybridity theory does not sufficiently address the contrapuntal

⁴⁰⁵ Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, p.2

and rhizomatic experiences of postwar migration. While such theorisations rightly identify the ‘outcome’ of the processes inherent in postcoloniality, of which the migratory trope is integral, liminality theory offers considerations of the process itself. Liminality is concerned with the separation, migration and problematic assimilations, also offers a valid means by which to discern how this process facilitates alternation between subjectivities which are unfixed, and in motion.

The Lonely Londoners (1956) and *The Emigrants* (1954) were written contemporaneous to the *Windrush* era, by writers who themselves were migratory subjects. Hence, in Selvon and Lamming’s respective novels, and in the music of Lord Kitchener, which provides its most applicable soundtrack, we witness and hear the liminal aporia of this period in its temporal actuality. As I have shown, Lamming’s narratology in *The Emigrants*, is closely aligned, in its progression from separation, liminality and aggregation, to rites of passage structures theorised by Van Gennep and Turner. In *The Lonely Londoners*, aspects of liminality can be read in the novel’s characterisation, and in its polyphonous narrative strategy and in its stylistic appropriation of European modernism, Caribbean oral tradition and Trinidadian calypso.

While these novels remain significant for delineating the rituals of the migratory process in ‘real time,’ there is scope, for liminal re-readings of the works of novelists such as Edgar Mittelholzer, V.S. Naipaul, Andrew Salkey and Wilson Harris, whose work, like that of Selvon and Lamming, draws on equally liminal experiences, literary forms or narratologies. Space has not permitted me to examine these texts. Beryl Gilroy’s *Of Love and Children* (1996) is significant, since it offers, albeit, with the benefit of hindsight, a female perspective on hitherto predominantly male memorialisations of the *Windrush* era narrative. There is scope too for liminal re-readings of contemporary fiction by ‘second generation’ Caribbean authors such as Caryl Phillips, Zadie Smith, Courttia Newland and Andrea Levy which, in their considerations of cross cultural Britain, also draw on the implicit paradigms and tropes of liminality. Works are integral to considerations of the problematic integrations which follow the liminal phase.

There is very little auto/biographical work available on calypso artists. As I have shown, only four such biographies are available in publication. My work here has shown that this scarcity is the result of several complex factors. Notwithstanding the recent international success of soca, the corresponding

academic and popular interest in the traditional forms of calypso, and the ability of calypso to directly influence contemporary music styles, calypso and its derivations, still occupy a decidedly niche commercial market.

As this thesis shows, the polyphonic, multi-voiced fictional biography, which is itself an interstitial form, offers a valid alternative to more linear, single voiced accounts. It is particularly suited to depictions of biographical subjects, like Lord Kitchener, whose lives were characterised by the ritual processes of exile and migration.

Kitch covers what I determined were the most significant and revelatory periods of Kitchener's life; hence, it was not my intention to strive for completeness or historical accuracy. There is scope here then, for a subsequent biography of Kitchener which takes a more thorough, historical approach to the entirety of Kitchener's life. Moreover, other equally important artists such as The Mighty Sparrow, Growling Tiger, The Roaring Lion or Calypso Rose are yet to receive the biographical attention they deserve. Considering the importance of the calypso as a cultural and political tool, the lack of auto/biographical material on these and other singers, musicians and performers represents a disparity which needs to be addressed. These absences need to be approached as a project of national interest in Trinidad, and elsewhere in the Caribbean where the calypso has contributed significantly to the political and cultural fabric of the region and its people. Such a project is also of significant importance to the Caribbean diaspora. Since several of the celebrated exponents of 'traditional' calypso are elderly, there is the danger that their stories, which are integral to considerations of the social and cultural history of the Caribbean, and to what constitutes 'Caribbean-ness,' will ultimately be lost.

The collection of these life stories must take into consideration the significant role of female calypso artists whose voices have been marginalised in historicisations of calypso. My research revealed a marked scarcity of auto/biographical work on calypsonians, corresponding work on female calypsonians was virtually non-existent. While several articles and academic papers consider and analyse the work of women calypsonians, only Rudolf Ottley's two volume,

Women in Calypso (1992, 2005), offers biographical material, in the form of interviews, on female calypsonians.⁴⁰⁶

Kitchener's death in February 2000, meant that I was not able to interview him for this project.⁴⁰⁷ I have benefited from the availability of several radio, film and newspaper interviews he granted throughout his career, and the equally numerous articles in print and audio visual media, but these sources often offered incongruent information. Newspaper articles often presented contradictory information, as did in-person interviews with colleagues and family members. I was aware, in interviews, of attempts by Kitchener's former wife and family members to maintain and protect his legacy. A rumoured 1953 arrest and conviction of Kitchener for 'living off immoral earnings,' for instance, was denied; research subsequently found it to be accurate.⁴⁰⁸

Researching Kitchener's early life in Trinidad presented particular problems. Kitchener did not become a public figure until the early 1940s when he moved to Port of Spain. Some account of his life prior to this can be found in interviews and accounts given by Kitchener himself, and relatives and colleagues, but it remains a particularly problematic period to research. Related to this, several important contemporaries of Kitchener, such as his ex-wife, Marjorie, and fellow musicians Leonard Joseph and Russell Henderson were elderly when interviewed and a degree of flexibility was required in interpreting their recollections.

It was not possible to interview certain individuals, either due to illness or their refusal to participate in the project. Yet, these and other limitations did not present major setbacks to the project however, since, as I have noted, my focus in *Kitch*, as a creative writer, was not on historical exactitude. As Stanley has argued,

⁴⁰⁶ For a related and valuable argument for the validity and revolutionary power of oral and textual vernaculars in Jamaican popular culture see Carolyn Cooper's analyses of female reggae and dancehall artists in *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender, and the "Vulgar" Body of Jamaican Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) and 'Loosely talking theory: Oral/Sexual Discourse in Jamaican Popular Culture', *The CRNLE Reviews Journal*, 1, 1994, pp. 62-73.

⁴⁰⁷ While I saw Kitchener perform on numerous occasions at Carnival in Trinidad, I met him only once, in Port of Spain in 1987, an event which I recount, as a metafictional moment, in the last chapter of *Kitch*.

⁴⁰⁸ *News of the World*, 'Calypso Kitch Fined £25', 1953, p. 9

such attempts at accurate 'reconstruction' are theoretically unfeasible.⁴⁰⁹

As this thesis has shown, rite of passage and liminality theory offer valuable means by which to consider the processes of separation, migration and assimilation characterising the *Windrush* era, and which are accordingly, implicit in Caribbean fiction of the period. Such theories also offer valid means by which to re-consider the postcolonial Caribbean itself, as an alternative to those theorisations which consider the region in terms of hybridity, discontinuity and fragmentation.

This thesis has offered, as its central element, the first biography of one of calypso greatest exponents. As part of the postwar migratory process, analysed here in my re-reading of the work of Samuel Selvon and George Lamming, Kitchener was part of a *communitas* of thousands who occupied liminal thresholds between 'home' and exile. As liminal personae they embodied perpetual processes of becoming both colonial subject and immigrant, both British and Caribbean, simultaneously inside and outside of the society they lived within, unable to return fully, to the floating islands of their memory. Moreover, in examining the postwar milieu, liminality has proven to be an effective tool for considering the inclusive interstices of the postwar Caribbean migration to the UK.

Similarly, the polyphonic, multi-voiced fictional biography, which is itself a liminal form, in collating the myriad voices and views which contributes to a life, writes into the interstice, allowing for the interplay of both imaginary and historical worlds, and reflecting the perpetual process of becoming which characterises Caribbean subjectivity.

⁴⁰⁹ Stanley, *The Autobiographical I*, p.7

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