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APPENDIX 1

LETTERS REQUESTING INTERVIEWS AND INFORMATION
APPENDIX 1.1

EXPLANATORY NOTES

A request for an interview or for information was based on the following criteria: that otherwise unavailable information on texts, authors and historical contexts would be acquired, and that the mythology surrounding the 'absence' of women's writing could be explored through a dialogue with selected 'expert' witnesses from various fields. The requests aimed to explore the possibility of tracing 'lost' authors, but also sought explanations as to how the effects of an 'absence of a tradition' for women's writing in the Caribbean operated in the 1960s and '70s through contact with individual authors. Thirty one requests for interview were made in writing to writers, scholars, activists and publishers with an option to provide written information and this sometimes proved the only possibility for correspondents resident abroad: see Appendix 1.3, the letter to Joyce Gladwell who was traced to an address in Canada. The majority of initial requests took the form of the letter presented in Appendix 1.2. As the introductory chapter explained, some interview requests failed because the institutional form and tone of the initial request letter was misjudged, particularly amongst correspondents who had little interest or investment in academic research. I present an example of the standard letter (1.2) which was used initially to illustrate the dangers in using college-headed note paper and a standardised format which was intended to present the research as academically credible, and which was, in retrospect, misjudged as a general strategy. 1.2 also presents the offending provisional title of the thesis (see Chapter 1, p.15-16) 'Poor Cows: The "Marginalisation" of Working-Class Women Novelists, circa 1960-1979'. Appendix 1.3 provides a contrasting example of how this strategy was deliberately changed in later correspondence.
Dear Madam

I am writing to you in the hope that you may be able to help with my research project which is briefly (and provisionally) outlined below. I am a Ph.D. student recently registered at Bristol University, with a studentship based at Cheltenham and Gloucester College of H.E., and my supervisor is Professor Peter Widdowson.

My thesis is provisionally entitled Poor Cows: The 'Marginalisation' of Women Novelists, circa 1960 to 1979. I am researching the apparent paucity of certain types of writing in mainstream literary and cultural histories of the period. My interest is in tracing the history of women writing outside the established intelligentsia, particularly women immigrant novelists. Whilst the conditions of the period fostered and valued, the early novels of British-based writers like V.S. Naipaul, Wilson Harris, Sam Selvon, George Lamming, and C.L.R. James, female immigrant novelists with equivalent literary reputations are scarce (Emecheta, Hodge, Desai and Gilroy are possible exceptions). In a broader context, I am concerned with issues surrounding the concept of marginality, with publishing histories and the effects of these on women writing in this period. My aim is to recover writers' experiences from the period and to analyse factors which may have inhibited women's development and recognition as novelists. I am also interested in the cultural and historical determinants in Britain which may have resulted in a deliberate rejection of the novel-form by the artists themselves, especially when the situation is compared with that of the equivalent period in America which established Afro-American women novelists world-wide.

As at this early stage of my research, my progress is dependent on recovering from oral sources material which is scarcely documented. Therefore I would very much value the opportunity to gain from insights based on your knowledge and experience of black arts in exile, The Caribbean Artists Movement and your involvement in Caribbean Voices. If at all possible, a short interview would be the preferred option, either face-to-face or by telephone. Failing that, would you be willing to give a written response to certain questions which I could forward to you? I would be obliged if you could let me know if you are able to help in any way. I attach a self-addressed envelope for your convenience, alternatively I am easily contacted by telephone at home on 01283 532504.

In the meantime, I am looking forward to hearing you at The Voice Box, on Saturday, 24 June, 1995, and to the celebration of the life and work of Sam Selvon and Caribbean writers in London.

Yours Faithfully

Sandra Courtman
Dear Mrs Gladwell

I was delighted to receive your response to my letter and please pass on my thanks to your brother for conveying the request. You asked how I came across your brother's address. I have been hoping to trace you for some time and I met Dr Bridget Jones at a Caribbean Conference in London in July. She had worked in Jamaica in the '60s and '70s and still has friends and contacts there. I think a Jamaican friend of hers happened to be visiting London and suggested I might try to contact you through your brother.

First let me tell you a little about my research. I am an English literature Ph.D. student (mature) registered at Bristol University and this is the final year of my project. I hope to complete my thesis by October 1997. I am researching the apparent paucity of published writing from West Indian women in Britain in the period of 1960-1979. I began looking for novels but have since widened my search to other forms of writing as it quickly became apparent that women writers choose many other forms of expression. My thesis has a provisional title of 'Lost Years: West Indian Women Writing and Publishing in Britain, 1960-1979.' I am particularly interested in the forms of expression that women writers choose in this period and in the historical context surrounding their writing and publishing. Because of a lack of historical documentation and materials, my research has depended a great deal on the information provided by writers and activists that I have interviewed. I was loaned your book by a distinguished Jamaican-born scholar, Professor Harry Goulbourne. I was fortunate that Professor Goulbourne recently joined the staff at Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, where I have my bursary. He remembered buying the book when he was a student and being very impressed with it, though he cannot remember where he actually bought it. Since then I have searched Caribbean second-hand book shops and specialist women's book shops but I have failed to find another copy. Though the British Library does hold a copy. Can you suggest anywhere where I might be able to buy a copy?

I was very excited on finding your account of growing up in pre-independent Jamaica, your life as a Commonwealth student in London and your trials as a young wife and mother. I have yet to find your particular experience accounted for elsewhere and in literary terms, it is very finely written. I believe Brown Face, Big Master is a very important book which should be reprinted. I am enthusiastic about anything at all that I might do to lobby publishers to reprint. I recently met Merle Hodge and she told me that she had come across an extract from Brown Face, Big Master included in some
Caribbean teaching material and thought it extraordinary. I have many questions for you and am conscious of the fact that it would probably take several interviews to fully explore your experience as a writer. What follows is a list of questions which I would be most grateful if you are able to answer but please mention anything you feel is important. I sincerely hope that you will not find these questions too tedious or intrusive. I will be writing about Brown Face, Big Master in my thesis and I am very interested in anything which affected its production or reception and on your development as a writer.

1 When did you begin writing? What were/are the major influences on you as a writer?

2 Did you write other pieces or write in other forms? If so did you wish them to be published or have them published anywhere?

3 Did you receive any encouragement as a writer from an individual or an organisation?

4 Did you participate in any writers' groups or artists' organisations and if so what effect did that have on your work?

5 Do you write now?

6 What inspired you to write an autobiography?

7 When did you actually write Brown Face, Big Master? Was there a gap between writing and publication?

8 Did you have problems getting the manuscript accepted for publication or was it commissioned by The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship? Have you attempted to have it published with other publishers in Britain or elsewhere?

9 Were you asked to make changes or was it edited?

10 Was Brown Face, Big Master reviewed in Britain or the USA? If so where and how was it received?

11 Do you have any general suggestions as to specific effects on West Indian women students (or other groups of women) writing in the 1960s and '70s that might account for a paucity of published writing?

I am very grateful for your interest in my research and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Courtman
APPENDIX 2

AUTHOR’S INTERVIEWS AND SIGNIFICANT DISCUSSIONS;
AND NOTES ON ANNE WALMSLEY’S TRANSCRIPTS CITED IN THE
TEXT
APPENDIX 2.1

DETAILS OF AUTHOR'S INTERVIEWS
AND SIGNIFICANT DISCUSSIONS

The selection of subjects was initially derived from critical and historical sources, and from suggestions made by advisors with expertise in the various fields of cultural studies, women's studies, feminist literary criticism, the sociology of migration, working-class writing, and popular culture. 31 requests for interview were made to writers, scholars, activists and publishers, and the first stage of requests produced 27 positive responses which offered to discuss the project in the form of face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, or by providing written information. Subsequently further interviews/requests were made and some subjects were interviewed more than once. Appendix 2.1 briefly explains, where applicable, why the subjects were chosen and gives dates and venues of significant meetings: these appear below in chronological order of first contact. The following occasions were either tape-recorded and fully transcribed, or written notes were made at the time of the discussion or immediately after.

**Margaret Drabble:** a discussion with the author took place at Sheffield Hallam University following conference proceedings at 'Literature: A Woman's Business', 11 March, 1995.

**Dr Anne Walmsley:** founder member of The Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM) and historian/author of *The Caribbean Artists Movement 1966 -1972*. She taught in the Caribbean in the 1960s and was appointed as Longman's first Caribbean editor in 1966. First interview took place with **Professor Louis James**, British member of CAM, original conference organiser, and Caribbean critic and scholar, in London, 31 May, 1995 (see Appendix 3 for full transcript). A subsequent meeting took place with Dr Walmsley in London, 14 August, 1995.


**Tamara Jakubowska:** Lecturer in Postcolonial literature. Discussion took place at Middlesex University, London, 6 July, 1995.

**Rebecca O'Rourke:** early member of FWWCP group Centreprise, published poet and novelist, scholar of women's writing and author of *The Woman Reader*. Interviewed in Middlesbrough, 17 July, 1995.


**Nick Pollard:** psychiatric occupational health worker, published poet, FWWCP member since 1978 and current editor of *FEDeration* magazine. Interviewed in Sheffield, 18 August, 1995 (see Appendix 3 for full transcript).

**Tim Diggles:** Community arts specialist and current national administrator of the FWWCP. Interviewed in Stoke-on-Trent, 22 August, 1995.


Merle Hodge: Trinidadian novelist, activist, Caribbean scholar and lecturer, member of CAM. Discussion in Miami, 27 April, 1996.

Barbara Ferland: Jamaican poet, contributor to the BBC's Caribbean Voices, British resident since 1961. Interview in Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, 12 February, 1997 (see Appendix 3 for full transcript).

Dorothy Blake: Jamaican migrant and retired factory worker, FWWCP member and executive member. Interviewed Loughborough, 5 April, 1997

Roger Mills: novelist, long-time member of FWWCP, currently runs a writers' workshop specifically for novelists. Discussion, Loughborough, 5 April, 97.
APPENDIX 2.2

ANNE WALMSLEY'S TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED AS PART OF HER RESEARCH FOR THE HISTORY OF THE CARIBBEAN ARTISTS MOVEMENT

I am indebted to Dr Walmsley for allowing me access to her unpublished transcripts. These were particularly useful in supplementing my interviews and in supplying information and ideas for Chapter 2 and 3. Brief notes on the Walmsley transcripts are included to indicate which of her many interviews were utilised for this study. They appear in chronological order:

**Leila Hassan was interviewed by Walmsley in London on 11 December, 1985.** Hassan was director and editor of *Race Today*. They discuss how Linton [Kwesi Johnson] straddled both organisations - the tail end of CAM and beginning of Creation for Liberation.

**Maureen Warner Lewis was interviewed by Walmsley at Mona, Kingston, Jamaica on 11 March 1986.** She studied for an English Honours at Mona and then transferred to York to study for an MPhil in linguistics in the 1960s. She describes the informal network of students in Britain (such as Kenneth Ramchand and Gordon Rohleher): 'At the time there were so many West Indians doing post-graduate work in Britain'. She discusses the 'defective' nature of her English degree at Mona and her inability to appreciate Brathwaite's modern poetry. They discuss the Igbo's in Trinidad, Kumina queens and Miss Queenie. She mentions the high levels of education in Trinidad and the pre-independence literary and intellectual ferment of the 1930s - *The Beacon* movement and C.L.R. James. She says: 'Each generation thinks they have discovered the whole thing anew. And we keep marking time, instead of going forward and building.'
Christine Craig, interviewed by Walmsley in Kingston, Jamaica, 12 March, 1986. She went to boarding school in Jamaica. In the interview she said:

Andrew [Salkey] was terribly kind and very interested in the work of other people. We took them [children's books written by her and illustrated by husband Jerry] to Oxford University Press specifically because Andrew opened the door for us. [...] I had done two children's books and then I got pregnant and had a baby, and was at home; and was really unhappy. And I started writing then perhaps as therapy. Andrew said 'You know, you've got something... Start where you are at the kitchen table, if that's what you've got.' And it was really a very very serious turning point for me.

She describes how, when she returned to Jamaica, there was much political upheaval and she felt guilt about writing poetry, doing it in secret. She felt that 'You should be out there building bridges and fixing roads.' The interview also contains a discussion how CAM existed to encourage new writers as opposed to those who were already established.

Yvonne Sobers, interviewed by Walmsley in Irish Town, Jamaica, 16 March, 1986. She was a teacher in Ghana when she met the Brathwaites. In London, she attended meetings at the Student's Centre. CAM influenced her by inspiring her to write creatively 'along time after.' Sobers had a short story published in Focus '83: 'Claire'. She mentions the need for a group to inspire and support writers.

Doris Harper Wills was interviewed by Walmsley in London on 19 March 1986. She came to London in 1967 from Guyana on a Commonwealth bursary to go the Rose Bruford College of Drama and she says she 'went straight off to the CAM conference'. A talented performer/writer she had been welcomed into the Harlem Writers' guild and was in a group with Rosa Guy and Paule Marshall. She was part of Marina Maxwell's 'salon' in London. She mentions meeting Sylvia Wynter in Guyana. She describes her choice not to get published in Britain as being partly because 'You have to go to many tea parties.'
Judith Laird, interviewed by Walmsley in Port of Spain, Trinidad, 24 July, 1986. She was at art college in London, Hammersmith when she met John La Rose. Laird did her thesis on 'Folklore of Trinidad and Tobago' and she mentions the importance of Beryl McBurnie who was in London at the time. She says she was inspired by Salkey and La Rose and, also Wilson Harris and Ivan Van Sertima. Laird went back to Trinidad in 1971 and formed a theatre group at Kairi House: 'It was a community situation, so we did have this cooperative where we did theatre.' She did a lot of work with children and talks of the value of teamwork. She describes going to Cuba and becoming one of Fidel 'Castro's private media people'. She says her painting has become 'even more community minded.'

Merle Hodge was interviewed by Walmsley in St Augustine, Trinidad, 29 July 1986. She describes speaking to a CAM meeting in March 1969 on 'Léon Damas, Poet of Negritude.' She discusses the arguments which recurred at the time about debating the problems of the Caribbean from a distance. She was involved with the Black Panthers with an old family friend - 'one of the very strong people in it '- Althea Jones. She tells how she finished her postgraduate work in 1967, at University College London, after which she travelled. The interview describes her commitment to Grenada and the New Jewel Movement, her lack of time for writing fiction and her wish to write for small children.

Diana Athill was interviewed by Walmsley in London, 9 July, 1987. Athill was the founder member of Andre Deutsch in 1958 and editor during CAM's years. She personally handled Jean Rhys, V.S. Naipaul, Michael Anthony but she does not refer at all to Merle Hodge. She says '... a writer was a writer. And if I liked a writer I published him (sic) and if I didn't, I didn't.' Walmsley comments on Athill's rejection of some of the younger writers: 'I think that they did have a sort of feeling that your criteria of good writing was a sort of mainstream literary high art and that the language - it ought to be in standard English.' Athill replies that there was a danger that a writer who appeared not to be in command of
standard English might have been written off as 'a hick'. They discuss the split between black publishing outlets and the mainstream. AW: 'There was still hope of a genuine dialogue in the sixties - that is over.' Athill describes the importance of Salkey in introducing her to V.S. Naipaul: 'It was through Andrew [Salkey] that Vidia came to us.'

Althea McNish was interviewed by Walmsley in London on 1 February 1987. McNish came to London in 1950 from Trinidad and was a fully professional fabric designer and artist by then and in business. She describes how her father came from America in the 1940s and held 'open house' in London pre-CAM. She did postgraduate study at the Royal College of Art in fabrics.

Pearl Connor was interviewed by Walmsley in London on 25 February 1987. Connor came over here to study law in 1948, pre-Empire Windrush when there were only 'a handful' of artists and intellectuals. She met people like C.L.R. James and met and married Edric Connor. At their house they hosted many gatherings, acting like an embassy when anyone came over from the Caribbean. She worked on the Caribbean service, broadcasting back home. She mentions that Claudia Jones was trying to start a women's movement with Pearl Prescod and Pearl Connor.

Sarah White was interviewed by Walmsley in London on 23 September 1987. She started the New Beacon Press with John La Rose in the summer of 1966 and their first publication was La Rose's Foundations.

Akua Rugg was interviewed by Walmsley in London on 1 October, 1987. Rugg transcribed the tapes of CAM meetings and conferences. She discusses joining the Race Today collective in the early seventies, working with Linton Kwesi Johnson and 'The Creation for Liberation Movement'.
Stuart Hall was interviewed by Walmsley in London on 8 October 1987. Hall spoke at the second CAM conference in 1968. The interview discusses how he came to Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship and met Doris Brathwaite at the Methodist Student Hostel in 1951. Doris went to Nottingham to study Home Economics. Hall was at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1964 but knew Andrew [Salkey] early on 'it was a very small community.' Claudia Jones introduced him to John La Rose. He says: 'There was an émigré black Caribbean political grouping in London of which Claudia was very important - rather at the centre of.' He describes being very strongly in support of the West Indian Federation and how its collapse made him decide not to go back. He remarks on 'black school kids writing poetry' and on the impact on popular culture and popular music.
APPENDIX 3

LETTER OF PERMISSION AND INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS
APPENDIX 3.1

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Appendix 3 presents three examples of fully transcribed interviews as supporting material for the thesis (Appendix 2 contains a list of the interviews and significant discussions which took place during the course of this research). The three interviews presented here have been chosen to illustrate the way in which the interview method was conducted; to demonstrate how information and ideas were generated through these discussions; and to exemplify the different types of interviewee sought and how the questions and discussions were adapted to their specialist knowledge. They appear in the chronological sequence in which the interviews took place.

Appendix 3.2 offers a reply from Dr Walmsley as evidence of her response to my request letter to include the full transcript of our interview. The request letter also included a draft copy of the full transcript, and invited the participants to suggest corrections or omissions. The four people represented in Appendix 3 have all given their written permission for the record of our discussions to be included in the thesis. All transcripts are presented in a form approved by those involved, and corrections suggested by the participants have been incorporated.

Appendix 3.3 is a transcribed interview with Dr Anne Walmsley and Professor Louis James. Dr Walmsley was a founding member of The Caribbean Artists Movement (1966-1972) and is the author of the authoritative history of the movement. She was appointed as Longman's first Caribbean editor in 1966. Dr Walmsley suggested that the interview take place in the company of Professor James, Caribbean critic and scholar, and a member of The Caribbean Artists Movement.

Appendix 3.4 is a transcribed interview with Mr Nick Pollard, a member of various writers groups of the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers since 1978. Mr Pollard is also the current editor of the national journal, FEDeration, and has served on the executive committee for some years.
Appendix 3.5 is a transcribed interview with the Jamaican poet, Barbara Ferland, contributor to the BBC's *Caribbean Voices* in Jamaica in the 1950s. She settled in Britain in 1960. In 1994, *Without Shoes I Must Run* was published as a single anthology of Ferland's poetry and contains work from the *Caribbean Voices* period together with some previously unpublished poems written in Britain.
Dear Sandra

Thanks again for your letter. I was really glad to hear from you, with news that you’ve made such good progress on your thesis. Your intro. chapter gave me an inkling of just how much careful research, and thought, you have given to the question of why so few West Indian women apparently were writing until quite recently. The question is, I believe, a very important one. You may think (as you said to me on the phone) that your findings seem banal and obvious - not to me they don’t! When completed, it will have mapped out unchartered territories of wide interest, and for others to explore further.

Of course I’m happy - indeed, honoured - that you’d like to include the conversation you had with Louis James and me in May 1995. I’m afraid my editor’s pencil has made a bit of a mess of your transcript: ignore them if you don’t agree with my punctuation suggestions; I’m glad of a chance in other ways to make my part in the discussion a bit more coherent.

So sorry not to see you today after all. Hope you enjoyed it; I know Beryl G. would be glad to see you - and no doubt, many others.

All the very best

Sincerely

Anne Walmsley
Written transcript of a taped interview on with Dr Anne Walmsley and Professor Louis James, London, 31 May 1995

Please delete the inappropriate statement by crossing through.

I give permission for the full unedited transcript of my interview to be included as an appendix in the unpublished thesis, Courtman, Sandra, 'Lost Years: West Indian Women Writing and Publishing in Britain, circa 1960 - 1979'.

I give permission for the transcript of my interview to be included with corrections/omissions as marked on the returned manuscript, as an appendix in the unpublished thesis, Courtman, Sandra, 'Lost Years: West Indian Women Writing and Publishing in Britain, circa 1960 - 1979.'

Signed:  [Signature]  Date:  25 June 1998
APPENDIX 3.3

TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH DR ANNE WALMSLEY AND PROFESSOR LOUIS JAMES, BEDFORD SQUARE GARDENS, LONDON, 31 MAY 1995

SC You said in the introduction to your book that the CAM history is 'curiously absent from cultural histories of the period in Britain and in the Caribbean'. Why did you think that was? Why is it absent?

AW I think the reasons for the two are separate. The reasons for its absence in cultural histories of Britain - and I'm talking about, you know, books about the arts in Britain in the sixties and that sort of thing - is that so little of it had been written about it until I was able to gather everything together and make a chronological history of it. And also because very few people who were not directly interested in the Caribbean were aware that CAM was happening. As you remember from the CAM book - CAM organisers were very keen to bring in leading people in the arts into CAM but very few of them, in fact nobody really, responded to this invitation. As far as the Caribbean is concerned, I'm pretty sure it was because it was taking place here. And in the Caribbean there is very little interest in what is happening to people from the Caribbean who've gone to live in Britain and America.

SC That surprises me. I thought that so many people in the Caribbean would have been looking to further their opportunities abroad and would be interested in what was going on.

AW They don't consider it part of their scene and part of their history. I think the writers are a bit of an exception. They seem to be very proud of writers that

have gone abroad and made a success. And they do still claim to know of them and write obituaries of them when they die. But the artists - certainly they gave very little recognition to - well it varied from country to country. But in Jamaica the CAM book had very little notice. It was as if all they were interested in were those Jamaicans who there was a little bit about.

LJ I think it's easy to assume that when Jamaicans got to London or Toronto or wherever, they became another kind of West Indian. I mean the interaction between them was no longer just Jamaican or Barbadian, it was the mixture. And suddenly there becomes a self-consciousness about being West Indian. I think whereas back in Jamaica it was seen as something rather different.

AW Yes.

SC I was going to ask you - as part of that - whether the women's history of the period was further subsumed. Because you said that the CAM history was absent. Reading through the book, the references to the women were so often as helpers or partners, as people who... not made the tea exactly but...

AW Oh it was rather like that.

SC Was it?

AW Oh yes. That is why someone like Jessica Huntley was really outstanding. She was by no means the tea maker. Of that partnership, she is more active than Eric, her husband. In Guyana he was politically very active. I don't think she was really so active until they came over here. But she will tell you much more I hope. There is only a little bit in CAM but she was extremely active in publishing and this is really quite remarkable. It was she who collected money in order to publish speeches by Walter Rodney. She had this idea that publications must
come out. She also took this great initiative of issuing cards, work by West Indian artists, which really was extremely go-ahead. And the whole history of her publishing firm is like that. But in The Caribbean Artists Movement it was less so. Doris, Kamau Brathwaite's wife, is a prime example, a highly intelligent and well-educated person but who always put her husband first and his interests and ....her career really developed in the ways that she thought would be most helpful to his work.

SC  Right. So they put their men first which is gender politics really.

AW  Yes.

SC  What about Selma James? She published in Bristol?

AW  Did you know her, Louis?

LJ  Yes. Yes. She wrote about Jane Austen didn't she.

SC  She was also active within this women's ......

AW  She has been an extremely active woman. Now! she is very bitter and some people say deservedly so, because C.L.R. gave her very little credence. Very little acknowledgement... And a lot of people say that she was responsible for a lot that he did. In fact ...erm - when I published that collection of writing about Aubrey Williams the Guyanese painter and I was quoting this piece of C.L.R. James's in the *Guyana Graphic* and I had to write to the C.L.R. James estate or something to get permission.* Selma came back to me and said it was she who had written it and not C.L.R. and I thought well...

LJ  Oh, really?

AW  I rather doubted it because it had C.L.R's ring but I'm now quite sure she was indeed responsible for it. People said that when C.L.R. got all his honours that Selma should have been there. But he seems to have been the real old West Indian male chauvinist who kept her out of it.

SC  I was perplexed that she is mentioned in the CAM history but to publish her own work she has to go to Bristol, Falling Wall to publish. Why?

AW  And she's been very active in The Women's Movement. She'd be a very interesting person to talk to.

SC  Well, I want to get hold of her but I don't know how to get in touch with her. I am going to try and do it via Bristol, Falling Wall Press.

AW  I used to have an address. I'll see if I've got one for her. Now the other woman writer who did this of course was Sylvia Wynter. She was married to Jan Carew and people say that she was one that largely wrote Black Midas. You've heard that haven't you, Louis?

LJ  Yes. Yes. Then she wrote it again in the second version that came out. It's very different from the original one.

SC  She wrote The Hills of Hebron didn't she?

AW  Yes - in her own right and she is now a very eminent literary critic. But when she was married to Jan Carew, no question of her emerging and being herself.
SC  This is fascinating isn't it?

AW  Well I think it is part of the West Indian male pride... isn't it?

LJ  I think so. Yes. Mind you until recently you could say that it was easier for men to publish, would you say, in England?

AW  Oh infinitely! Yes, but it was easier for men to do anything. In my generation we didn't think of doing things for ourselves. We went to Fabers and we were the right hands of the directors. We were the secretaries. We weren't the people who did things. And my dream was always to marry some brilliant academic and enable him to achieve things. It was a general way one was brought up somehow.

SC  Right OK. I was going to say to you, following on from that. Why do so few women writers achieve the canonical status attached to the males of this period?

LJ  Well, I suppose they just didn't publish as much. And someone like - not an immigrant writer - but Olive Senior or Lorna Goodison, they have actually got that status... as the major...

AW  Absolutely. A very good comparison.

LJ  But here I think that people just didn't get that kind of body of work published for the reasons we've been discussing, like lack of support from men and lack of recognition from publishers and just the general milieu that it wasn't accepted that women would be the writers. It would be the men.
AW Yes.

LJ And much more in the West Indies than here even, I think.

AW Yes. What we were saying before, it would be nice to put on tape, that as far as we know there was no tradition for women writing fiction in the Caribbean.* Though you were bringing up examples of women poets, Louis, and you were mentioning this friend of Jean Rhys, whom I had never heard of.

SC What was her name again?

LJ Eliot Bliss.

SC Was she white Creole?

LJ She was white. Well, she was really more English but she spent some of her childhood in Jamaica and like Jean Rhys was completely changed by the experience. And *Luminous Isle* is really about coming to terms with what she wants to be. And she does it by meeting this woman farmer, an independent woman in Jamaica in the mountains and suddenly feeling that this is what she wants to be. It's a wonderful novel.

SC It's called *A Luminous Isle* is it? Do you know what year it was published?

LJ I think it was something around 1933.*

SC So that's very early then, isn't it?

* A conversation took place over lunch in a cafe in Museum Street which proved too noisy to tape but these issues were discussed.

Yes. Very early... but I'd like to add something. Because women have always been associated with bringing up children, you associate them, to some extent, not only with poetry but with the oral tradition.

That's a very good, a very important point, Louis. That they were the carriers of the oral culture. But they carried it on an in oral way and very few of them ever thought of writing it down. Ah, Louise Bennett, of course. You know about her don't you?

Yes, but again she wrote poetry, didn't she?

Again she was put down for a very long time. She wasn't considered a real writer, you know. When there was this evening of Caribbean and Canadian poets at the Royal Court as part of the Commonwealth Festival and Louise Bennett was there as a folk singer... or a folk story teller... but not as a writer. This is another division - the folk and the 'real' literature. And I think that is a tremendously important point that Louis has made that the woman was the person who kept the folk traditions going.

I was going to ask you that actually. It is one of my later questions. Would they have been more likely to choose other forms of expression? Women? Because of this oral tradition? For instance the women that you do mention in CAM, such as Marina Maxwell, they tend to go in for things like performance arts.

Well she was into Drama very much...

Would this be a tendency do you think? Rather than writing novels?
AW Well, yes... novels. Fiction in itself is a very European form whereas folklore, particularly with morals like the Anancy story, are an African tradition brought over to the Caribbean. And poetry, of course is likewise - it is an old tradition. Whereas fiction is a very... Louis could put this so much better....middle-class...eighteenth century it began didn't it? Wilson Harris is always protesting against this saying that fiction is an entirely inappropriate form of literature - at least fiction in a European sense is an entirely inappropriate form of literature for the Caribbean experience.

LJ Yes. Yes. And of course you get the culmination of this women's perspective in someone like Erna Brodber.

AW Yes. I was thinking of her. When you are talking about interviewing Jessica Huntley you really ought to try and interview John La Rose and Sarah White.

SC I have written to them but they haven't written back actually.

AW Well they too... They are both recovering from Andrew Salkey's death and the Black Book Fair. But the thing to do.... well, I'll tell you afterwards what to do. But Erna is an amazing example.

SC She wrote *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home*.

AW And *Myal* and she's just published *Louisana* and she's got lots of the oral tradition.

SC I think she was published later.

AW But her writing is so unusual.
LJ  Yes, absolutely.

SC    I was going to say - in your CAM history you mention that for the first time there were significant numbers of women coming over to university in the fifties.

AW    Oh yes. That first batch, that's right.

SC    So, in that case, even given what you've both just said about the novel form being an inappropriate bourgeois European form... I'm still wondering why women coming over here for postgraduate education or education in this country, didn't appropriate the form that their equivalent males were doing.

AW    But they were entirely different. They were coming over here as students. And then they became academics, people like Elsa Goveia and that wonderful woman - Lucille Mair. You see, your equivalent to people like Lamming and Selvon and co. came over without much in the way of secondary education at all because they wanted to be writers. It was a completely different thing... and what they were writing - these people you are talking about - was all of an academic sort. They didn't go into creative writing.

SC    Erna Brodber was a sociologist wasn't she? She wrote.

AW    Yes, but of a much younger generation.

SC    Yes, that's right.

AW    Her fiction draws very heavily on her research as a social anthropologist.
O.K. Fine thank you. I was just wondering and wanted to ask you both is ...the picture that I am getting at the moment is that there are two poles, two distinct classes of Caribbean migrants. And I'm getting this idea that there is one highly educated and one very poor almost semi-illiterate or illiterate group. Is there anything in between. Was there a middle band? A middle-class?

It's hard to equate West Indian groupings to English classes.

It's a very important point.

And I don't know if you could say that Selvon is working class, although in some sense he would be put in that, if he was in the English category.

He was here, but he was more middle-class in Trinidad. You are absolutely right, Louis.

It's a different kind of category.

So class position moved anyway, shifted anyway when they left.

Yes. Yes.

Yes. One of the interesting things that Selvon said was - that when he went to Canada - he became middle-class again.

Right. It's just that Harry Goulbourne picked me up on something. He said that the first generation of male writers who came over here were definitely middle-class and I felt that they... I'd said that even if they were middle-class back home...
AW Well, some of them were. It's this class...

LJ It depends you see...again, it's different categories. Lamming comes from a very poor background and doesn't education suddenly change that?

AW You see C.L.R. James was less so and Selvon was less so. And Naipaul was your Brahmin propertied Indian immigrant.

LJ Yes, he was. And Salkey was middle-class too wasn't he?

AW Well...his mother was a teacher. Seriously, he went to Monro, which is the leading boys boarding school, so he was... His father was an immigrant worker in Panama. Yes he was middle-class really. [laughing] I started to use class and I started to use people's colour in the CAM book, and when Brathwaite read one of my early drafts he pointed out some of the inconsistencies. I decided it was a bit feeble but the only way out was to leave out all references.

SC It is difficult isn't it?

LJ [laughing] I think the main thing is to be very cautious about it.

AW Yes, very cautious. Yes, that's right Louis. But I think it is very important point that you've made that it shifts when they come here.

SC Did either of you have any involvement with the programme Caribbean Voices?

AW No, I didn't - too early, but I have got to know Henry Swanzy quite well.

SC Do you think that Henry Swanzy would be worth me contacting?
AW  Alas it's too late. He is going to be eighty next month. And although he is doing very well he keeps repeating himself and his memory comes and goes. Also he is rather, I'm sorry to say it, Sandra, but frankly, he's had such a lot of research students wanting to interview him. Unfortunately nobody had done a thorough piece of research work on *Caribbean Voices* which would lessen the need for people to talk to Henry Swanzy. Which is a whole... another story.

LJ  Figueroa might be a good person to talk to.

AW  But he's somewhat frail now.

SC  And Una Marson is dead isn't she.

AW  This is one of the problems. But what things did you want to know about *Caribbean Voices*?

SC  The same questions I'm asking you. Whether they came across any early women's writing and whether they knew of anybody. But I could go to the archive.

AW  Yes. But actually there is an interview with Genevieve Eckenstein. She and I go and see the Swanzys once a year, and she worked for the BBC and she interviewed Henry about two years ago. And he does mention some... that's a very good question actually. I think you should talk to Genevieve, because in addition to her having done this interview with Henry - she might well be glad to share the transcript with you - there were a lot of women sending material up to *Caribbean Voices*, some of which was used. It was mostly poems but there were short stories as well and some of them Henry thought very highly of. Number two. You remember in the CAM book the possible contributions for *Caribbean
Voices had to go to someone called Cedric Lindo in Jamaica and those that he thought were suitable were sent in. In actual fact, it was his wife Gladys who controlled what went on and it wasn't Cedric at all. And she had a down on George Lamming and there's a whole lot of rather scummy literary history there which hasn't actually reached circulation. But the third thing is that Genevieve, whilst she wasn't actually involved with Caribbean Voices, she was involved with the Caribbean Service and a programme called Topical Tapes. And she used to organise literary competitions for people in the Caribbean and she would know what number of women sent in entries. But then we are back to writing in the Caribbean rather than from people here. And actually Caribbean Voices was taking material from the Caribbean rather than here. The way in which women were used in Caribbean Voices was as readers. Particularly this woman who Henry Swanzy and John Figuroa talk about who was called Henriques, Pauline Henriques, that's the woman. She was used as a reader, an actor. She wasn't someone who was writing. I don't know that any people, women who had come over as immigrants, were actually contributing creative material to Caribbean Voices in the way that Lamming and Selvon were. Good question...interesting.

LJ Is there a file at Caversham of all the items?

AW Oh yes, the scripts are there.

LJ But is there an index that you could look at?

AW I've no idea. But you could talk to Genevieve about that - I'll give you her details.

SC I want to know if it is worth following up these things.

AW Absolutely. Talk to Genevieve first.
SC Using Emecheta as an example of a woman who came here and did write - she actually mentions that she had read African women novelists and that this was very important to her conception of herself as a potential writer. And I wondered whether you thought that the lack of tradition that exists in the Caribbean has been discouraging?

AW Yes...Role models. I think so. When you were talking about Buchi over lunch I was thinking that. You know so much more about African literature, Louis. I would have thought that there was a tradition. Is there more of a tradition of women writing in Nigeria than in the Caribbean?

LJ I wouldn't have thought so. Before Buchi. There are quite a few now.

AW They probably wouldn't have had the education. They probably weren't literate.

SC I know. This is why I use it as a comparison.

AW Does she quote anyone?

SC Yes. Flora Nwapa. And another one. And this is before she published Second Class Citizen, which is quite early.

AW For the men, there certainly was this feeling of role models.

SC And there were a lack of role models for women?

AW Yes. Certainly. But there are abundant ones now.
SC I wanted to ask you about the comparison with the situation in America. I think you actually say in CAM somewhere that one of your writers felt that they were much more encouraged in the States, and the feeling that I'm getting is, that writers flourished in the States and Canada as opposed to here.

AW Your great black women writers-Alice Walker and Toni Morrison - are fairly recent aren't they?

SC Walker was writing in the sixties and seventies.

LJ What about Paule Marshall?

SC She went to the States didn't she? She wrote about Harlem. I just wondered what you thought of the comparison between the American situation which has promoted these black women writers so thoroughly.

LJ I think it's come quite late actually. It's come since the sixties I think.

AW I think there are a lot of factors. I mean the whole history and situation of blacks in America is so entirely different. They are Americans.

SC OK well if we use migrants then instead of people like Walker, if we use somebody like Paule Marshall, we can compare in some ways.

AW Yes, Paule Marshall is a very interesting comparison. Did she go there as a child?

SC I can't remember.
AW But if she'd come here - would she have written and published as she did there?

LJ And her books were published in the States, not in England. In fact they are quite hard to get hold of here.

AW *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* is about Barbados. That was actually published by Longmans when I was there, I remember.

LJ Was that a first edition or a republication of an American book?

AW No, I think it was a British edition of an American book.

SC It's probably not a very good question, my next question - you've already covered about form and the oral tradition.

LJ It is a sort of halfway thing. One of the things about Caribbean writing, as largely a male form, from people like Lamming and Wilson Harris and Selvon. It has been of an extraordinarily open and experimental nature. It has been creative in the ways it has fragmented the tradition. I think the way the oral tradition has come in increasingly through the poetry and the influence of people like Kamau Brathwaite has been crucial. And I think the women writing have been much more directly concerned with the folk tradition. The kind of thing that Louise Bennett was doing which was basically to take the folk tales and bring them out in a performance form rather than a written form. And still if you get a transcript of Louise Bennett's 'Anancy' stories and then listen to her - they are two different things. She is a terrific performer.

SC It is very much a performance art. When women do write, are they more likely to write about their lives back home - from your work - than their
experiences here as immigrants? Is it to do with what publishers accept or is it what they would prefer do you think?

AW I think it is more what they feel they've got something to write about. And I feel it's often largely autobiographical. I'm thinking of Grace Nichol's *The Whole of A Morning Sky*, do you know that book? And Amryl Johnson's, what is that?

LJ *Secrets of a Ragged Hem* - that's autobiographical, going back to Trinidad.

AW And you talked about Joan Riley and Merle Collins.

SC They are much later.

AW They are too late for your study

SC Yes. Joan Riley does write about coming to Britain but she didn't publish until the eighties. But she seems to be writing about the period that I'm interested in, but publishing later.

LJ What about Zee Edgell - a Belizian writer. It is really very interesting. Where is she now?

AW I think she is back there and has just published another book. But I had forgotten your cut off. I was thinking about Pauline Melville - do you know about her. She is an extremely gifted awarding-winning writer. She is from Guyana and is part Amerindian. Her first published collection of short stories, rather like Sam Selvon's, half of them are set in Guyana and half of them are set here. Of those that are set here they deal with immigrant characters. It's called *Shape Shifter* - do you know that book?
SC  Maybe I came across her but didn't follow it up because she published later. But I will follow her up.

AW  She's absolutely brilliant.

LJ  Yes, a terrific writer.

AW  1960 to 1979 - She's in the eighties - too late.

SC  Joan Riley would be a good writer - Merle Collins again is in the 1980s. I don't know - I will look at them anyway. I may do something on Joan Riley because she seems to be writing about the period even though it's later. I'm not discounting them.

LJ  Did Merle Collins publish some of her stories earlier?

AW  I don't know. I just remember her as a poet. Then bringing out Angel - the one about Grenada, and then short stories.

SC  I wrote to her and she has gone to America so I couldn't get to speak to her unfortunately.

AW  She came here in the early eighties at the time of the US invasion of Grenada. And Pauline Melville worked in Grenada as part of the New Jewel movement. You see, there's something! They both, Merle and Pauline, would have felt themselves that they should put their time and energy into education in Grenada, as part of the New Jewel Movement and they only wrote their fiction when they came over here and that was all over.
SC  That was something that I was going to ask - would women, even women that were politically convicted or active at the time, be more interested in other activities..

AW  Yes, a more practical role. I think so.

SC  Such as Jessica Huntley?

AW  Jessica would see her publishing as political activism.

LJ  So would Una Marson.

AW  Yes, absolutely. That book by Delia Jarrett Macaulay- has it ever come out? It's with Cape isn't it? Did you know there is a book in preparation on Una Marson - a biography? She is from Sierra Leone isn't she? Delia?

LJ  Yes. [?] is bringing out a reader of Una Marson

AW  She's at Kent, isn't she?

LJ  No. I mean she was. She did her doctorate at Kent. I examined it and that's the book that's coming out.

AW  She did her doctorate on Una Marson - oh marvellous! You must know lots about Una Marson.

SC  She does sound like an interesting figure.

AW  Yes, she was. She was.
SC  We've dealt with class. Working-class members Donald Hinds and Michael Anthony were encouraged to develop their skills as writers - you mention that they weren't particularly educated. I just wondered - wouldn't women present themselves for such encouragement? You've probably answered that.

LJ  Michael Anthony - was, first of all, very much shaped in an English education and then when he broke away from it, he began to find himself. So it wasn't so much being given the encouragement. It was almost as if he was encouraged in the wrong direction and he suddenly broke away against it.

AW  Donald Hinds of course has written all this fiction but none of us have ever seen it. [laughing] You ought to talk to Donald ... he'd be very good.

SC  How would I get to talk to him?

AW  He's a head of history at a boys' school in London.

SC  I was going to ask you about working for Longmans. What was your position in Longmans?

AW  I was appointed as Longmans first Caribbean editor in 1966 when they decided they were going to expand their Caribbean publishing.

SC  Right. So would you have looked out for women's writing at that time?

AW  [Laughing]  No. Yes, but my main work was to develop the educational publishing because there was a tremendous expansion in secondary education in the Caribbean at that time, thanks to World Bank grants, and there was this whole movement to Caribbeanise the syllabuses.
SC  So you had a market?

AW  Oh... well no... It was a market and they were crying out for Caribbean history, Caribbean literature, Caribbean geography, everything Caribbean. And readers that had a Caribbean content and all the rest of it. So that was my main work to find people, to find the books that were required and to get people to write them. And the fiction was rather a side-line.

SC  I see. Did you come across Beryl Gilroy's writing for children while you were at Longmans?

AW  Oh, Beryl Gilroy was the first author I ever took out to lunch. When I arrived at Longmans, I was told, well - here is Beryl Gilroy. We've said that we want her to write some readers for Guyana.

SC  Oh excellent! So you were right in there at the beginning with her then?

AW  Yes. And do you know what she said to me when I took her out for lunch - I was absolutely terrified - she said, how very nice it was to have a woman as her editor and I was so amazed because a lot of people didn't like it at all - you know. And she's been my firm friend ever since. No - she's terrific - Beryl.

SC  So I can mention your name then if I do get to see her?

AW  Oh yes.

SC  I was going to ask you about Naseem Khan - you mentioned that she was running something called 'The Hustler' what was that?
AW It was an immigrant newspaper. She was very much into the West Indian immigrant crowd.

SC And she was involved in a journal called ARTRAGE wasn't she?

AW She was responsible for setting up the minority arts advisory committee, MAAS. She wrote a book called *The Arts that Britain Ignores* - she is regarded as very controversial now because a whole lot of black cultural activists have written her off. But I think she made a real contribution. But you need to read the... I don't know whether you really want to go into that. Why are you interested in that?

SC I just wondered whether any Asians were involved in CAM at all. I know you mentioned that Africans performed at poetry readings.

AW Oh I see. That's interesting. Naseem is Indian born but went to Roedean and so she's frightfully English but she is Indian. She somehow she was very in with the West Indian student's centre crowd of West Indians. That's why she did *The Hustler* and came to conferences.

SC But you don't remember particularly any Asian writers?

AW No. No I don't remember any. There was the Indo-Caribbean sort of thing..

SC OK fine. I wanted to ask you about Nottingham CAM. Are any of the people still around? Would it be worth me contacting them?
Well, to my shame I could have pursued that more and I didn't. Um... because I discovered too late that Robert Reinders, who was the man responsible for it, was still around. You knew him didn't you, Louis?

Yes.

He went back to the States quite recently so it's too late to interview him but he told me that somebody at Nottingham - I'll have to look up the correspondence - that someone connected with it is still there. You might be able to get hold of them. And that would be very interesting. Louis was very much involved in that. Louis went up to speak with them.

I went up to speak but I have very little memory of the actual people. It was a lively group of local people and they were doing plays and things which were West Indian background but I don't really have any detailed memory. There were so many different things going on. I just went up there and...

You expressed their case to the CAM committee.

Yes. Yes... Valerie Bloom was up there at the time wasn't she?

Ah now she's an interesting example. Yes. Do know Valerie Bloom *Touch Me Tell Mi*?

Yes that's poetry again isn't it?

And she's more your period.

Was she involved in Nottingham CAM?
AW  No she's much later.

SC  Is there someone called Lavonnie White?

AW  Oh yes, she was the secretary of Nottingham CAM. But it's a man who is..... I'll look up Reinders' letter but he does mention someone as still around.

SC  I just thought with it being so near to me I could easily go over there.

AW  I should have pursued it more but, where do you draw the line?

SC  You couldn't do anymore. You said about the first CAM conference that 'several housewives came' and I wondered if ...

AW  Ah well. They are on the list, you see. Doris Brathwaite drew up a list of people there and she put their occupation or perhaps they gave their own occupation and some of them said they were housewives. Do you want to know who they were?

SC  No. It's just that going to the conference and hearing people speak at the conference, I wondered if they might have been inspired to write any of them?

AW  Ah... now you know..... the questions aren't bad are they, Louis? Because Jerry Craig's wife - Christine. Jerry was the great art man in CAM, Christine was doing acting at the time but it was a direct result of CAM that, and particularly Andrew Salkey who was a tremendous one for nurturing latent talent, she started writing at the time of CAM and she's gone on to publish poetry and I thing she has published short stories with Heinemann - Christine Craig. Now that was what CAM wanted to do. CAM wanted to broaden the whole writing activity and to get people who had never thought of writing before to start to write and that did
include women. CAM didn't make much headway because CAM was male orientated but... but it did work. Certainly with Christine. I'm trying to think there must be other examples as well. Yes. Yvonne Sobers. I met her in Jamaica and she said something about it. I could perhaps... I'm pretty sure in her interview that she said she had the idea of writing through CAM. But I could look up Yvonne's and Christine's interviews if you like. In fact if you like you could have copies of the women that I interviewed for CAM.

SC That would be wonderful. They might remember something. I've already asked you about Beryl Gilroy. Did you come across Emecheta at the time?

LJ I met her a couple of times but not through CAM.

AW I met her through ATCAL. She spoke to an ATCAL meeting. You know about ATCAL? First it took in African-Caribbean and Asian literature. It doesn't exist anymore but WASAFIRI is its offshoot. But it was extremely active in the early eighties. Needless to say we were both involved at conferences.

SC Was there a journal?

AW There were newsletters and there were very valuable booklists - annotated booklists.

SC Would I be able to get hold of those?

AW Now the place to go for those is the Commonwealth Institute Library.

LJ I've got most of them... I might have some spare copies.
SC  I've asked you about Joyce Gladwell haven't I? She published in London in 1969 - an autobiography called *Brown Face Big Master* - which was bought by Harry Goulbourne when he was at university in Lancaster.

AW  No, I've never heard her.

SC  This is the sort of writing I'm hoping I might find.

LJ  Absolutely.

AW  Louis, you were mentioning community publishing as we were walking up, I mean there are Brixton-based outfits which probably published...Black Ink... I think if you can go to New Beacon you would find that they would know about those or might even have some of their publications. Just to nose around the New Beacon Bookshop you'll probably find some stuff there. That's how you go on with New Beacon. You go to the bookshop, where you find Sarah and you talk to her and you look at the books and you become a customer and you become a friend - that's how their circle operates.

SC  I've finished my questions. I was just going to say have you got any general advice about conducting this sort of literary/cultural research based on your vast experience?

LJ  Well you seem to be doing all the right things.

AW  Yes, she does, doesn't she?

LJ  Identifying people who were around, interviewing them...taking out books...trying to find things like files of broadcasts that might have some sources. I think you are doing all the right things. Yes.
AW I do. I think my only.... I'm just wondering whether that tight period is going to give you enough scope.

SC I thought anyway that at the very least I'm going to have to have a final chapter on why the situation has changed so dramatically since 79, in the eighties there is this flourish of women's writing and enormous interest in anything postcolonial. So I've got to take account of that. So it will....

AW Yes, you are looking at a transition period really, aren't you?

SC I am frustrated in some ways by this cut off period but that's the title that has gone into Bristol and I don't know how much I am going to have to stick with that.

LJ I think you can shift around. I often get students starting one thing and shifting to another. This isn't so much on your method, but I would have thought that your difficulty is going to be these very important issues like role models for women and so on, framing it in a substantial academic way. These things are obviously true but you say them and they are obviously true. I think your real gold will be when you find good autobiographical material and so on. Where you can actually say this is evidence because a lot of it is very hard to pin down particularly when you are moving from a very broad social thing and all these different people coming into different niches in English society and different kinds of backgrounds and somehow getting a kind of framing synthesis of why women writers were as they were is going to be quite difficult isn't it. But I think the good thing is that you've got some wonderful writing to focus on.

AW Yes she has and I think she's got some very good questions. An awful lot to explore, that's the trouble. And as you say you want to ... I think you are quite
brave to go and see Jessica so early. She's in her late sixties, her health is not
great and Andrew Salkey was her close friend - he supported her publishing. I
mean she's in mourning as John La Rose is - both of them. Therefore this is a
time...

SC  A difficult time, and yet she invited me to go and see her.

AW  Well, the thing with Jessica is she loves to be involved. And you've read a
lot and she's very interested in people doing research papers. No, I think it will be
fine actually.

SC  Sarah White and John La Rose ignored my letter.

AW  They don't write letters. Ring Sarah White and see if she can find a
convenient time to see you. You may not get to see John, it would be wonderful
if you could, but he does preserve his time and pace himself very much. Not easy
to get to see. But Sarah is a fountain of information. Ring the bookshop.

SC  Anything else?

AW  No. What I was thinking was of individual publishers in the old days. The
way that Charles Monteith fostered these men from the Caribbean and I was
thinking of the way Beryl Gilroy responded to me and you said 'Was I
particularly interested in women writers?' I ought to have been. I ought to have
said - I'm a woman publisher, I ought to encourage these women to get on and
write. But I did for text books - I did a lot of that. Oh dear, talk about falling into
the stereotypes - I encouraged Jean D'Costa to write for children - but I don't
remember very much encouraging women to write fiction - I can't remember
anybody who seemed interested in doing that really. There was an equivalent in
Nelson and Heinemann - Longman, Nelson and Heinemann - we were all very
active in the Caribbean period and they both had women publishers as well. I don't think Nelson published much fiction but Heinemann, of course, started that excellent Caribbean series. That was started by James Currey but Vicky Unwin was extremely active. I would have thought in your period - Vicky Unwin was the publisher. And you must remember Diana Athill of Deutsch. I'll drop you a line, Sandra, with these addresses. But Diana Athill was rather different - Deutsch wasn't into the educational market like Longman, Nelson and Heinemann were. As you know they published Naipaul and they published Lovelace, Michael Anthony and so on... But she had a particular friendship with Merle Hodge actually.

SC She isn't in Britain is she?

AW No but there is another one in Grenada - Merle Hodge, Merle Collins and Pauline Melville were all active in the New Jewel Movement and all writers. They probably wrote educational material for the New Jewel Movement's education programme.

SC I'd like to thank you both very much for that.
APPENDIX 3.4

TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH NICK POLLARD,
SHEFFIELD, 18 AUGUST, 1995

SC How did you get involved with the Federation in the first place? In other words, how do people get to know about it or hear about it?

NP The first conference of the Federation was in '79. I went to a student media conference in Bangor. It might have been a community media conference in Bangor actually, but I was a student here [Sheffield] at the Poly' when I went over to this thing and I met Aisla Cox who was involved in Commonword and is currently involved in Metropolitan Magazine and did a workshop about working-class writing. After that I joined - shortly after the *Writing* anthology had come out actually - they had it for sale there, but I didn't actually buy it then - I went to Heeley Writers in 1980 which is a local writing group here and we applied to join the Federation. While that was actually going on I moved away. I went to Hackney Writers in London, which is a Federation workshop. I knew that it was a Federation workshop - one of the advantages of being in the Fed is, that if you do move, there is a workshop near you. I came back to Heeley and I've been involved in some role on the executive virtually since 1984-85.

SC So you've been in part of the Federation for 15 or 16 years then? You must have a great knowledge of the activities and the type of people, which is what I'm interested in. Do you know Rebecca O'Rourke?

NP Yeah.
SC  I went to see her recently and she was talking to me about how it has changed because she was involved with the Fed very early on. So what type of people get involved in the Federation - what motivates people to join the group? What motivated you to join?

NP  I've written since I was a kid, on and off, I was particularly encouraged at Junior School. We actually had a session where the Headmaster would take our class out and take us into the boiler room and say 'right, what do you make of that' - So you could write about the things that a boiler room might be. That really got me interested, I suppose, in writing. A friend of mine went to Heeley Writers and he was talking about this group and I thought 'that could be good'. So I joined.

SC  So you always wrote anyway. I mean the group didn't stimulate you to write - the writing was there.

NP  The writing was there but this gave it a focus. Initially I was writing science fiction stuff, that sort of thing, but I'd always written poems - many of which I've actually lost now, but that's what I do now, I tend to write poetry now. I think I've still got along way to go, but I've developed quite a lot through the group and the kind of criticism and support that you get from that kind of group - and our group can be quite critical.

SC  I was going to ask you that - you've pre-empted one of my questions - because I went to see a small publisher recently and he actually said that he worried about a lot of the work that comes out of things like the Federation workshops because he said it is often produced in a totally uncritical atmosphere.

NP  That's true.
SC  But that's not true of your group?

NP  No. If we were producing a publication, we would aim to include everybody who brought something to the group, we do function in a broadly democratic way, although when it comes to doing a publication, somebody has to take on the editing role, but everything we do has actually been through the group. It has to have actually been read at the group and there is an expectation that people will, maybe not necessarily re-write everything, but they will consider what's actually been said about their piece before they submit it for publication. That is not saying that we are arbiters of what is literature and what isn't, but the aim of the group is to enable us all to develop our writing and I think that there is a fair amount of discipline in Heeley Writers about that - which some people find intimidating - I mean people will come in to the group and think 'I can't cope with this' and maybe not come again, although in terms of the standard of the writing we've accommodated people who have variations of stuff and ... sort of quasi E.E. Doc Smith type stories, to stuff at quite a high level - You've got people who write for kids; you've got people who try to write TV scripts; you've got people who are writing poems and novels and quite a lot of people writing short stories. So there's a range of stuff and people, when they feel at ease with the group, will try and experiment as well. So the aim is really to encourage people to develop their writing.

SC  Rather than a quality issue, it's more to give people the confidence.

NP  Yeah, I mean the quality issue is there, and that might come out in the discussion after the workshop. But it's not an issue that's... I mean you wouldn't exclude somebody from the group because they weren't writing very well. The way that you aim to work with somebody that's just started writing, that's just playing around, initially is to say, okay, well, you know - just let's look at it in
terms of the level that they are working at. So there will be some people that we are not very critical of.

SC Yes, I understand.

NP But then they don't need that.

SC No, you would stop them from writing if you did that at that stage. When it comes to publication then, would you publish early attempts, rough attempts and things?

NP Yes. If someone, a member of the group puts something in for publication, through the workshop, everybody has to be represented.

SC When you say it has been through the workshop - what does that actually mean?

NP It has been read out.

SC Do they have to read it out in its entirety?

NP Not necessarily. You would expect.. It would have to be something that .. you might have said - it's a short story, but I'm going to read the beginning and the middle and the end - because those are the areas that I think I've got a problem with.

SC So people actually bring writing along to the workshops in terms of struggles that they are having with it and say 'I don't know how to resolve this' and other writers will contribute and make suggestions will they?
NP Oh yes.

SC So it's writing in process when it's at the workshop stage?

NP Very much so. If it was all highly polished and finished, then.. you know, what's the point really? The other thing you might get, although it's not a function of the group to publish as a primary aim - it's really focused around the writing and what you do with it at the end of the day - somebody might say 'well that would be a really good thing to send off to such and such a magazine' - that they have heard of. Or 'why don't you try and do something with that.' Some people are trying to write for specific target audiences. We had a guy last week who was trying to get a short story into Bella magazine and a couple of people have agents and have in the past been getting things into publications. Generally when people become fairly successful they probably leave the group and feel that they don't need that. People do grow out of the group as well. So there will be people who'll be there for years and other people who will just come through.

SC If you can generalise, are the writers in the group actually aspiring to make it into mainstream, either mainstream literary or popular press?

NP Not everybody is. But some people are. Some people have unrealistic expectations and some of them have quite realistic expectations of where they are. I think there is a lot of, generally speaking, not necessarily in our group, and some of the times when people come into the group as new members, there's a certain amount of.. a lack of understanding as to how the whole business actually works. We get sent - and Tim will probably tell you this when you see him - we get a lot of manuscripts that have been sent into the Women's Press; they send them on to him, and they're not publishable.

SC Right.
The majority of them are even unreadable, in the way that they're constructed, because there is no idea of an audience, for one thing. A lot of people, perhaps, who publish stuff through the Federation, if you go to some of the groups who are not critical, and that's evident in the publication, you pick the thing up and think 'My God, who is going to read this?' But funnily enough, surprisingly it will sell quite well. Some of the Merseyside groups - if they weren't Federation publications - I probably wouldn't look twice at, but they will still sell, people will still read them.

Because they want to read what they're writing about?

They want to read what other people are writing about, yes.

Because that isn't available anywhere else?

It isn't available anywhere else, they're interested in that it has been written by a normal person.

So it doesn't really much matter how it is written, it's just that it validates their own experience of life.

Probably, yes. So that's not really a problem.

No I can see that. So you've really got two groups there; you've got people who are quite serious about writing who might be trying to send things off for publication - I was a member of a group when I lived in Cardiff and the teacher had had quite a lot of stories read on - it wasn't a Federation group, it was just a writers workshop class - on the BBC and people would send stuff off because that's a market these little five, ten minute stories for BBC radio. So you've got some people who are quite - I never wanted to do that - but you've got some
people who are quite serious who want to get something in a magazine; they want to see it validated by...

NP   I think everybody wants to see it published in some form or another. At the end of the day they want to be able to read it out in the pub, they want to hear people laugh at it or laugh in the right places or whatever. They want that to happen. They want other people to enjoy what they have written. I think everybody does that. You know people are very often - again talking more broadly - Federation people quite often write for their grandkids, you know. For example - the work that Pat [Smart] does - is very small publication runs of books that are really just intended for other members of the family. Almost like an OB or a book about my disability, And that's great. It's perfectly valid. The fact is, that it's possible to do that kind of thing because of the advances in technology that have happened recently. So you think about - that is another aspect of it - Pat is really interesting, it might be worth talking to her actually because she is self-taught. She taught herself how to use all this computer stuff. She's brilliant because she can also bring it over to other people in a very straightforward friendly way, so you haven't got the problem of technical jargon or whatever. You know it's sort of straight. Using it and feeling able to experiment with it and learning it in a very sort of hands-on way. So that's a regular feature of the AGM festival of writing - would be her workshop on DTP. Yes, so it's possible to make a book.

SC   And you know you're making that book just for a very small circle of people who are important to you, but then there are other people who want to see a wider... How would you define it when somebody has actually made it, as it were, into the mainstream. What sort of things would you say are indicators of that?
NP I suppose there's the point at which you're recognised by... I think there are a lot of Federation people for whom that is not their concern. Probably the vast majority of people in the Federation have probably got a secret actually of 'yes, I'd like to be in a Penguin classic or something but, at the end of the day what they... they're really very suspicious about that whole issue of crossover - despite the fact that some people like Rebecca O'Rourke for example have actually done that. Others maybe like getting recognised on the publisher performance circuit, or getting something into The North Magazine on a regular basis, or whatever it might be. So I suppose it would be in terms of regular acceptance by other publications.

SC More than one acceptance would you say?

NP It depends on the individual.. when people get their thing in, say, The Wise Girls, they're crowing about it for ages, as is normal. I suppose it depends. It depends what the magazine is because the publisher magazines, there's a plethora of publisher magazines - one of the reasons that the Federation itself isn't just a publisher magazine is; I'd just be adding to - or we'd would just be adding to the plethora of publisher magazines which seem to publish just for the people who put the poems in them and nobody else buys them - you see back copies in Dillons book shops going back years and years and years - so what's the point? Unless somebody is going to actually read it, and it's going to be something different, then there's not a lot of point in publication for publications sake and being stuck with 500 copies of something that you can't sell. But a lot of people aren't concerned with that. For Heeley, for example, we usually do something like a whip round and say 'right we're going to do a magazine we need some money up front to actually put the publication together'. So what you do is you buy copies in advance. So if you... you know, you're going to buy five quids worth of copies in advance - it's up to you what you do with them. But I mean.. I
end up giving a lot away, but my aim is to try and sell some so somebody has actually bought the thing.

SC   Yes, because that sort of gives it value as well.

NP   ..and taking it away and hopefully read the work of the group. Other people just buy one copy. They won't even show it to anybody else. So they've written their work, had it shown in the workshop, had it printed out, and they've got one copy for their self use (laughs) - so like who else is going to read it? A lot of people would, I suppose, say the measure is getting acceptance by Harper Collins or Virago or something, and at that stage where you've managed to get an agent and you've gone through the hurdle of actually getting a book published by somebody, and I would say a book rather than a single poem or single article in a magazine - maybe that's the point at which you can say 'now I'm a published author'.

SC   Do you have any people who've done that, who've gone through Federation..

NP   Yeah, Jimmy ...... the guy who wrote *Cracker*

SC   Jimmy McGovern?

NP   Jimmy McGovern, yes. There's one for starters.

SC   He's made it pretty big, with that.

NP   So, if you get the first edition of *Writing* - there is a story that you've got in there...*

SC That's wonderful. It's funny because, did I tell you I used to teach in a prison?

NP Yes.

SC ..before I gave it up in October. One of my students there was writing TV scripts and he was corresponding with Jimmy McGovern and Jimmy McGovern was writing back and he was showing me the letters and he was fantastically encouraging. That all fits in now. I kept thinking - why is he doing this? He hasn't got time to do this, but obviously, if he's gone through that sort of stage. The stages themselves of being quite a disadvantaged writer or whatever - then that fits with why he would be bothered with a prisoner/student trying to do things. He was very very good.

NP Yes and I think generally he was very supportive.

SC Now, let me just pick up on that because that's something that Rebecca said - it is a bit of an ambivalent position if you make it through to mainstream - because you are expected then as an ex-member of the Fed to open the doors for other people and she said that is incredibly difficult because you have got to try and maintain your position there - you're still an oddity anyway and yet people from your group or whatever would expect - Oh now you work for, like he would work for what is it?... It's Yorkshire, Yorkshire TV. Now you can get me a job in Yorkshire TV. Would you go along with that.*

NP I think it probably would be the case. I mean there are quite a few other people - Ken Worpole, Roger Mills, quite a few other people in London who've

* Granada TV.
ended up getting into... at least getting anthologised and published - in fact quite a few people from Hackney Writers, the group from when I went there, have actually gone on to reasonably good things. And, yes, I suppose there is an expectation and not only have you got that - you've also got 'so and so is a good poet or so and so is a good writer, why don't you promote him?' There's also things like, part of the actual process, I've just done this because I'm in the middle of doing a self publication.. is that a friend of mine through the group is Bertie Doherty so they've very kindly written, like an endorsement of my stuff, so I can stick that on the back of the book - but it's important to get those things because...

SC  Sorry, who was that?

NP  Bertie Doherty.

SC  So you've somebody who says 'this is the best thing I've read in years I couldn't put it down'

NP  Yeah, because you're not going to get 'Bloody wonderful - the Guardian' or whatever. You're not going to have these things on there so you've got to...

SC  But you need something.

NP  You need something.

SC  To say somebody else has read this and thinks it's...

NP  Okay

SC  ... worth publishing
NP So it's a good buy. Because there are millions and millions of people publishing. You go into Rare and Racy in Sheffield, there's a whole section of poetry anthologies and there's thousands which are all, you know, sixty pages, A5, all looking the same, you know, and really I don't know what they do with them, whether they actually pulp them after a certain period, but I mean [laughs] they seem to turn over.

SC It's amazing that, I mean do you think that there is.... this is an interesting point, I mean I started off looking at novels and I've broadened it now because it's just a waste of time confining it to novels, I've got to look at all sorts of different types of writing. But I hadn't thought much about poetry and my assumption was that there was no market for poetry in this country, I mean generally speaking, and yet you're telling me that there's all this stuff, I mean I never even look on the poetry shelves as a rule, when I go in a book shop. You're telling me that there's all these anthologies of poetry, I mean is there a market for them or are they just there for the people who write them?

NP I think there is a market for poetry but I think there's a problem of how poetry is marketed and how poetry is marketed through the education system for schools. I mean, because I had a teacher when I was eight years old who was enthusiastic about poetry, I had two teachers actually who were enthusiastic about poetry, it probably encouraged me to write poetry, and I would think that I wouldn't be the only one from that class of eight-year olds who does that. In fact, I shouldn't be because one in four people probably have got writing stashed in a biscuit tin under the bed somewhere. But by the time you got to GCE level, I'd sorted out.... literature is for kids that are brainy - so that's before you get to that sort of thing, and when you do get to it, 'what did it do in its holidays' sort of like - you know? You've got to look for the theme, or whatever. You're not actually engaged in the process of marrying what you're doing to a poem you're taking to
bits - to the process of actually writing it. So since I've .... I hadn't really taken
writing poetry seriously until comparatively recently, but now I actually treat it as
a much more serious business and I've now got ambition for it and I think that
maybe I might get some somewhere - sort of reasonable feedback - so I must get
paid at some point. I get a lot more out of reading it because I'm sort of taking it
apart in the same way... it's like if you were a musician you would think well
that's a good bit, mmm I quite like that.

SC So it's part of your apprenticeship, as it were, to read lots of other poetry
as a writer.

NP Yeah, and to see what other people are doing, because you can pinch
ideas, You think - I'll have a go at that, I'll try that rhyme scheme, I'll try that
kind of metre.

SC Is poetry a working-class form though?

NP Yes, of course it is. Patrick McGill, you know a navvy poet. There's Joe
Mathers, a celebrated Sheffield Chartist, who used to write his poems to the same
tunes that Robbie Burns poems were sung to. Yeah, if you go to Glasgow and
have a look round there, for example, there's a whole working-class writing scene
up in Glasgow. It hasn't actually entered on the Federation at all, probably
because of the geographical reasons as much as anything else.

SC Somebody said to me, that - again it was this publisher I went to see, that -
I'm interested in form, that's one of the things I'm interested in - like what forms
working-class or black women might choose. And he said that everybody thinks
they can write poetry, everybody thinks they can sit down and write a poem and
he says he gets a lot of 'cat' poetry - you know 'I love my cat bla bla bla' - and he
said but there is a big difference from that and somebody conceiving of
themselves as a writer of say a novel, of a sustained piece. Would you agree with that, that everybody thinks they can write poetry, whereas everybody doesn't think they can write for, instance, a novel or even a short story maybe?

NP Well, I suppose our view would be, the Fed's view - we used to have in our publications 'readers should be writers' - the whole idea of the Fed is that they will read something and think 'mmm I could do that', you know - or I've got important things to tell, I've got experiences that I should be relating to other people, that are individual to me. Maybe when you read tons and tons of publications that have come out from Fed members, you realise that there are a lot of things that come up recurrently, but there are things that stand out. If you read a whole load of middle-class novels there will be things that turn up recurrently, but there will be ones that particularly stand out. That's not a problem. I suppose that in terms of studying writing, what you're working with is people who are working and writing and maintaining families and doing all those other things that they've got to do - keep the mortgage up; pay the bills; do all that kind of stuff - they can't actually make a career of writing because they've got their career of working on the buses or housework or whatever. And you've got to fit it in, you've got to be quite selfish and say 'right this is my three hours to go and sit in the room with a typewriter or word processor and bash out my autobiography'. What a narcissistic, self-orientated thing it is - in the view of other people - 'me I'm important' - you know and do all this stuff.

SC Whereas to pen a poem?

NP Well even the poem, because I mean, yes, you can knock a poem off in five minutes, or you can do a sustained piece of intricate work that's really well thought out and has taken a bit of time to construct and has really got those things woven in there, so that you're really.... by the time you get to the last line - you're
really going to hit the nail on the head. A reader is going to go oooh, you know, or whatever, that takes a bit of time and effort to do it.

SC    Yes, I'm sure, I'm not saying it doesn't.

NP    You've got to come to it time and time again.

SC    But somebody had actually said to me, oh you know - particularly with respect to women, whose lives are very crowded, that you know, just what you've said really, that the time and conditions that are needed for a sustained piece of writing like a novel is just not on, but whereas they could sit down, literally at the kitchen table and grab a little slot of time and put together a poem, maybe - I don't know.

NP    I think - it's what you carry in your head at the time that you're doing other things, because - my writing has gone off recently - the last few months - because I've actually had so much to do at work - my head is full with all this crap from work, so what I can't do is - I can't sort of be kicking round at the back of me mind - I've got this line that doesn't work - how's it going to go?' - and you could be doing the same with your story - if you've got your novel plot or the development of a character - you think - 'Oh God I can't do this' - and that's going on while you're doing anything else. Why quite a lot of people manage to produce novels at the same time as...

SC    I was going to ask you that. Out of the Fed, do people write full length novels?

NP    Yes. There's....

SC    Do women write novels?
Women write novels, yeah, Liz - I'll go and have a look and read one off, if I can find it. There's a women from Basement Writers whose name escapes me for the minute.... she's called - Liz Thompson. There's the Joyce Storey books.

SC Yes you mentioned them. I've not heard of that.

There was a non Federation writer, but one in Sheffield - Kit Sollit who wrote a full length novel about drugs - a full length novel about Sheffield steel working in the period between the wars, so there are a few examples. Generally people tend to write short stories or poems.

Rebecca O'Rourke said she has got an unpublished novel. Did she ever get a novel published?

Jumping the Cracks by Virago.

That's it, I was trying to remember it. I've actually read it as well, I couldn't remember what it was.

And there's Cath Staincliffe in Commonword, she has just produced a thriller with a female protagonist - a single mother.

Yes I read about that - it was in the magazine wasn't it. There was a review of that in the magazine.

Yes. So there's....

So it's not fair then to say that people only write poetry or whatever, they do write across the range.
NP They do write across the range - but you've got a problem if you're a novelist, and I dare say if you talk to some of the novelists within the Fed, they will tell you this - You can't get your novel through the workshop very easily because probably everybody wants to read, you've got about ten minutes. If somebody reads for half an hour then you've lost the thread of what's being read to you anyway, because usually it's going to be - the acoustics in the room might be pretty terrible - you're in some sort of institutional room where the heating is up - nodding off etc.

SC You've been at work all day or whatever. Do you always meet in the evenings?

NP We do. Other groups, some groups meet in the afternoon. Some groups are basically unemployed centres or they're based around Age Concern centres or things like that. So it's not just about the time to write, it's also about the time to process the work through a workshop and the facilities and publication. If you are going to publish a community publication, how are you going to invest all your resources? In publishing a novel - which might die flat on its feet, or are you going to do a community publication which reflects everybody? The resources of a group like ours which is unfunded - the funds that we've got have largely come from us unless we can get grants for specific things - like running workshops for other people. We don't have the kind of money that would enable us to publish a novel.

SC Yes, I can understand that. Do you ever get writers....

NP ..or getting it distributed for that matter. If you produce the thing it's then got to look like a commercial product.
SC  Some of the West Indian novels, the Caribbean novels were self published and distributed before they had any outlet but that must have been very difficult to do. There are references to some poor woman, usually, typing full-length manuscripts and you know, running them off - this is before the technology was there - and it must have been a mammoth job - I've thought that. I was going to ask you. Do you ever get working-class writers who actually reject the novel form because it's a bourgeois form, you know, make a conscious rejection of it - to say well, the actual form of the novel, or the European form of the novel, doesn't speak to the people that I want to...

NP  I don't think so, because I think there is a tradition of working-class novel writing. In this area - in Yorkshire - there were quite a few mining novels during the forties and fifties for example. So in the period between the first working-class writing of novel length, and fifties, sixties and Alan Sillitoe and Stan Barstow - they weren't the only ones who were working in that kind of thing. But as... I wouldn't say there was a rejection because it was a bourgeois form, I would say that there would be a rejection of what was thought to be bourgeois issues in writing - or there was in the eighties, whether that's a problem for people in the Federation now or not, I'm not so sure - and then you've haven't got the ideological - the same ideological consciousness that was around at the end of the seventies. You haven't got the communist party.

SC  No, that's right.

NP  You haven't got SWP, you haven't got Big Flame and those groups. CP particularly I think, and some of the groups in the Labour Party. There were quite a few people that were involved in those in the Fed when I first came in. And there's probably been quite a tradition of CP members who've written novel-length things and you know had them published in the past. So there was a tradition through there and some of the other left-wing groups like the SWP*or
the IS* wouldn't have necessarily recognised that as an issue or you know. We had Floyd, I think he was in the RCP but like a lot of his co-party members wouldn't really be concerned with writing, they'd see it as a diversionary activity or not really the - it's not the essential business of selling newspapers or magazines.

SC And it's taking energies away from political activity. That's certainly true of black women as well. I mean some of them would reject writing purely because they'd see that they'd got to work in other sorts of ways, there were more important issues. But one of the things that's been said to me about why black women didn't write in this period or why there are so few, even Caribbean women writers, is that it's an oral tradition and it isn't part of their tradition to write down stories. What do you think about that?

NP Well, I don't know whether.... I can see that being the case in the Caribbean context but why does that mean it's the case for women and not for men, I wonder? Because I would imagine that storytelling wouldn't just be an exclusively female province.

SC Well, it isn't exclusively female but it seems as if it is particularly passed on by the women in the family. Whether these are myths or not - but there is a sense of the men being absent. There's huge extended families with cousins and aunts and grandmas and the stories being passed down in that context. But I just wonder because - if you accept that, then, if those women then came over to Britain, they'd be severed from those sort of networks wouldn't they, those traditional networks of storytelling and then would they then have the impulse, do you think, to write?

* Socialist Workers Party.
* International Socialists
NP I think if you were separated from that context you would be looking to establish something like the old life in your new social environment, wouldn't you? Looking for other people that you could share that with and I think to some extent you can see that going on. In terms of an English or British experience you would. Where it was an oral thing... Yes it may have been an oral thing and like for Joe Mather, it would have been because he couldn't read or write. In the end of the eighteenth century, early nineteenth century sort of ballad forms and that sort of thing. People learned ballads - and why there are so many different versions of them is because it's what was in somebody's head. Such traditional tales as were told similarly would be carried in that way. What you have got I suppose is, there would be.... What there would be is there would be a reservoir of.... If you were talking about working-class autobiography - what you've got is you've got all the sort of stories that are handed down, you know, I'll tell you a story about your granddad, yeah? Those kind of things would be carried on in the oral experience - like there are stories that my grandma told me about when she went to Canada which I know were never written down and probably in the telling and retelling get shorter and shorter and shorter. So, yeah, I suppose there's that sense of tales that are told within family life. Nobody ever thinks to write them down because the people of substance are those people who are the great achievers. So unless you're Brunell or unless you're George V ....

SC Why would this be important. But I do have an author, one of my authors is Beryl Gilroy, who published Black Teacher in 1976, but she wrote a collection of stories, sometimes a page and a half, that are all reminiscences from Guyana and she wrote them for her children who were born in this country who would never know that world - in fact that world's gone now - she's captured what was a village life that's .... and all sorts of customs and practices that have actually disappeared - And I can't believe that she would be the only one who would have that impulse to do that.... the only woman who would say, well you know, stories that were passed down and aspects of life that were important have gone and my
children are going to be cut off from that forever. I don't know - what do you think?

NP Well, I think oral history groups which have taken up a lot of those kinds of issues, and there is a lot of the groups within the Fed or those that have been in the Fed at various times have been concerned with oral history - because of the literacy problem as well as the oral history movement itself, which has been going on for some time, you know, probably also in connection with that. I dare say there's probably some parallels with some of the aspects of folk music - sort of Topic Records kind of approach to folk music that was going on late sixties, early seventies. As regards other black women that were doing it - Shirley Cooper actually produced a book, it might be about four or five years ago which was a similar kind of thing, her life in St. Kitts. There's Pauline Wiltshire who was at Centreprise who wrote Jude the Disabled - a girl who came from Jamaica. Living and Winning is one of her autobiographies - she did write some other things as well which were run off on a Roneo machine, I think they're still around. She'd be somebody else to look at. Some of the literacy books that Centreprise produces as well were like that. I can't remember her name but there was another woman who was describing her experiences in the Caribbean with photographs as well*. I mean one of the things that was also going on and this is also the end of the seventies were those John Berger books - and as a style of presentation that appears to have been quite influential in the way that adult literacy readers are put together. And also in some of the early books like the Working Lives series that Centreprise produced, so, they were like photo-documentary books and the Working Lives ones were actually sold - they sold a load to the Swedish Work Education Association so that people could learn English from them. It was like, literally, a group of people who worked on the street in Stoke Newington. So.... I think that was how the early stuff came out. Also the Paulo Friere approach to literacy, so that people were using their

* This is probably Louise Shore's autobiography Pure Running.
own lives as the stuff - which is what Gatehouse does - people use their own lives as the stuff of adult readers which then probably encourages people not only to read and write but also to then write their own readers. And in terms of what they've done, some of the staff that I work with, have actually used that approach with people with literacy problems in a mental health environment.

SC I've certainly used them myself

NP You've just got to run them off on a photocopier.

SC Yes, it's easy now.

NP So you can produce your own literacy materials very cheaply that way.

SC But that's one aspect, but what about this impulse to record or express experience, I mean if you consider how traumatic it must have been for some of the women arriving from the Caribbean. Would you think they would have to write down or express what was happening - some of them, not all of them?

NP Yeah, obviously they do. There are lots and lots of those stories of 'How I came to Britain', or 'The difference between my expectations and my experience' But one of the local anthologies is one about the Kelvin Afro-Caribbean community centre which was based around the Kelvin flats in Sheffield, which have just been knocked down. But it was good because Afro-Caribbean people from the Kelvin flats who were describing the difference between their home life - coming here, their first experiences of Britain, what their working life had been like - and now they are retired - and so reflecting back on the past and how things had been for them

SC And were they men and women?
NP Men and women. But I would say there were quite a lot women who had done that.

SC Because what has been said to me - I've spoken to quite a lot of academics about this and they have said that the women weren't writing in this period, that Caribbean women just weren't writing in this period.

NP Most of the publications I've talked about would have been produced in the late 1980s but some of the Centreprise ones were published in the early 1980s and I would say if you are writing a book and you come to a community publisher, it's going to take about a year or two to get that book together and maybe there would be quite a few people who were doing some writing before then, before they thought - well I know I've got something I want to take and see if I can get it published. So the places to look at would be places like Bristol, places like Commonword.

SC Bristol?

NP Bristol Broadsides

SC Right. Oh because I've written to Falling Wall but I didn't get any response. Have you heard of them - Falling Wall Press - they were a women's group?

NP No - Lorna - you will have to talk to her down in Bristol. Tim will know her, Tim will have her address.

SC I'll make a note of that then
NP She was involved in Bristol Broadsides

SC And as you said in your letter and I feel this is absolutely right, that you can't take publication dates now as actually denoting when something is written, because I know that Beryl Gilroy's collection of reminiscences from Guyana - she's had for thirty years and couldn't get published and it came out last year.

NP Well, that would be another thing wouldn't it.

SC Yeah.

NP You know like you've got your George Lammings and your Samuel Selvons yeah? So who's going to read the jottings of a black woman from the Caribbean who maybe speaks with a heavy Jamaican accent, Yeah? And how is she going to effectively deal with all - just the straightforward cultural perceptions as well? See you have got things - I can't remember the writer now but there's a book called Jamaica Labrish - I can't remember what her name is at all - but that dates back to the forties or fifties or something - some of the material that's in that.*

SC So that seems to get rid of this idea that women weren't writing in that period. I mean I am unhappy about saying that in a period in history women weren't writing

NP I wouldn't say women weren't writing, no. I wouldn't take a risk on that. You know you can go back as far as Mary Prince.

SC Except that somebody wrote that for her.

* Louise Bennett, Jamaica Labrish (Kingston: Sangsters, 1966).
NP  Alright, somebody wrote that for her but maybe that would be the same way as somebody saying - okay well we're going to do a tape of what you tell me and ....you've got a tape recorder out - you do it.

SC  I mean one of things of why these women are not supposed to be writing is because of the problems they've got with their daily lives, of setting up a new home, of dealing with racism and hostility and all sorts of terrible things that must have come as an awful shock, I am sure they weren't expecting. But does that mean that because those people were absorbed in all those difficulties that they're not going to write, they're not going to want to write?

NP  They are going to write because of those difficulties, because the main reason that people write is - one of the main reasons that people write is they write for therapy.

SC  And I agree with that. That is backed up in my experience of working in a prison, that I've seen a lot of people deal with their traumas and their experiences and the passage of time, through creative writing. But then they haven't got the daily grind as it were, they haven't got to labour and all the rest of it.

NP  Just give me a minute and I'll fish out a book.*

NP  About a third of these people say they write for therapy, this is a survey of general writers made in the fifties or sixties or something like that.

SC  I'll just write this down.

*  Motives ed. by Richard Salis
NP And there are quite a few anthologies on writing as to why writers write. If you check through that you'll probably dig out quite a few more as well.

SC Well certainly Beryl Gilroy has written a paper 'Why I write' and she's certainly said it's to do with cultural identity. It's definitely a strand in her work and that's why I can't believe that people under tremendous difficulties don't write because, my experience and your experience would back up, that actually would want to sit down and write and try and make sense of it. Would you agree?

NP Yes. There's a whole load of stuff on creativity if you look at Anthony Stow and Winnicott about the origins of creativity and that kind of thing - the dynamics of creation in that Stow book. But he makes a lot of references to elsewhere. If you look at also, Alice Miller 'Thou shalt not'.

SC Oh yes, the children's psychologist

NP 'Thou shalt not', in particular, is about how people's childhoods and the pressures that they were under and so forth actually influenced the way that they write and the themes that they write. Edmund or Edward Hare - I can't remember what his first name actually is - has done a series of studies on creativity and madness and there's quite a lot of literature in a central chapter in Roy Porter's Mind forg'd Manacles which is a history of psychiatry. So there's big chunks of Freud in there on the sorts of the dilemmas of people trying to deal with their creativity. So it would stand to reason that anybody faced with adversity, at least would be trying to record it or write about it or express it in some way whether orally or actually whether in writing. So to discount it is a convenience of a literary establishment. When I was training as a radio journalist, I was repeatedly being told by one of the people that I worked with was 'what I don't want' .... What he used to do in particular is 'Black Lesbian, mother of six, attacked in alley way' When I could have done some other kind of story, but it was seen as a
minority issue, not of mainstream interest. And if you're in the process of pushing forward a mainstream view of literature which reflects the status quo or which reflects the developments in the current way that the status quo maintains itself, then it's very inconvenient to have a whole bunch of people who have turned up with suitcases and thwarted expectations saying 'what a bloody horrible country this, I've ended up in'.

SC Particularly when - one of the reasons I am interested in the sixties is - when the myth of that period is so ebullient and then anything that runs counter to that is, as you say, not really very convenient is it, because it's seen as a period of all sorts of liberation and political innovation. Alright, there was a lot of conflict and unrest but it's seen as a time of great promise and potential and yet there are other things going on which show that actually there are other experiences at the time.

NP Well, there's the whole colonial experience, not necessarily just black women, it's colonial writers per se. It's like half the English syllabus is made up of Irish writers or Scottish writers or Welsh writers, but they are English writers, you know all subsumed into the canon of English literature without recognising what is plainly there and why they're there which is about the difference of experience, the linguistic influence, which again is a problem you have as a black writer, writing in Patois or trying to develop work around Patois. In terms of the poetry that is being produced - there is an awful lot of work coming out from black writers probably because you've got the availability of different cadences from the kind of different grammars that operate, so when you stick English on top of another grammar - in the same way that Irish poetry works - you've got something that's really quite new and vibrant.

SC It is very rich.
NP Yeah and you can play around with it in a whole new way. So actually it's sort of pushing the frontiers that works in poetry.

SC Which Louise Bennett did pretty early on.

NP Yeah.

SC But she wasn't recognised as a poet for a long time at all.

NP No

SC Because of this language/linguistic thing.

NP No and I wouldn't have come across her unless I'd gone to a workshop on black writing. So, I mean, she still ghettoised within that.

SC And yet if you look back now it's innovative and fresh and vibrant and the work has actually been incredibly influential. But the establishment, and even the male Caribbean establishment, did not recognise her as a poet or a writer. It came later that. So those early experiments... it was okay for Selvon to write with a lot of what was termed nation language or dialect but it didn't always work in favour of the writer.

NP No, there's a book called Bad Friday by Norman Smith which is wholly in Patois - published by New Beacon Press. And I think you'll still see that kicking about on some left wing bookshop shelves in the far corners, unbought - because it's quite a difficult read - its got its own spellings - it's like all this dialect spelling thing that... you've got to sort of accept... you have to read it aloud to yourself to make it work.
SC But have you read any like early Scotts literature or anything?

NP Yes.

SC You've got to work very hard at that, you know I mean Galt which 17th century or something, I can't remember, *The Entail*. I used to have to set myself - when I was doing my degree and I did a course on Scottish literature - I used to set myself a page of it because it was incredibly difficult - But presumably the people who he wrote it for - I wouldn't have thought it would have been....

NP No, No. Other people would have written and spoken in that form. But what you've got now... Yeah it might be okay to publish an early medieval text or an early Scottish text as an 'Everyman Classic' but when we're in with a commercial proposition, or a proposition of putting forward a new literature that's going to sell now.... or people are going to say this is good stuff and it engages the reader and we're going to get our students to do it on further education courses or whatever... but mainly it's a commercial proposition: one of the things that is continually being stressed is the issue of accessibility. The Fed's view is one about the accessibility of the right to be published, so erm... one of the groups who've just joined the Fed is a Mauritian group who have a similar sort of issue with lots of additional problems, they publish in pidgin French - the dominant language in Mauritius is English but 90% of people speak pigeon French. So they're sort of running against the establishment, which is the establishment of the old colonial administration.

SC Yet it's interesting that this years Booker prize was James Kelman, *How Late it Was, How Late*, which is written in Glaswegian.

NP With a furore around it all about it being written in Glaswegian and how this guy's inarticulate and murdering the English language and all this of stuff.
Precisely the point about teaching standard English in Schools. And fair enough, people need to have access to a standard code that everybody is using so that they can communicate, but at the same time it is ridiculous to devalue the influences and the range of influences that are available from everybody else's tradition too, and erm... you know for writing to move forward to try out new things they've got to go to those influences.

SC I suppose if you think about a woman coming over from say Jamaica or Guyana - I've been looking at women who are quite highly educated like Beryl Gilroy - but forget that, think of a sort of ordinary immigrant women coming over from Jamaica who would have left school at thirteen or fourteen, they would not have seen anything, probably, written down in any sort of language other than standard English because the sort of education they would have received would have been highly colonial - based on Dickens and the classics and all the rest of it - if they did that sort of thing at all - so I suppose, would it be possible for then to conceive of themselves at all as a writer if they could only write in Creole or ... I mean... what do you think of that? If the only thing you've ever seen written down is standard English text, can you possibly then - and being working-class as well - and not valuing your own experience, could you then conceive of yourself as being able to write something down and record it in your own way?

NP Yeah, There is Dorothy* who is on the executive now, and there was Florence Agbar before her, both come from Pecket Well, and they're both people who come from the Caribbean - came out here in the late 50's, early sixties - and both had reading and writing problems and they're in the Federation of worker writers. And function on the executive [laughs].

* Dorothy Blake. I interviewed her at the following year's festival of writing, Loughborough, 5 April, 1997.
SC So they weren't going to let that....

NP So it's not a problem, you know....

SC So that flies in the face of all that. Do you think I ought to talk to them?

NP Yes, I think you should, Yeah. It would be worth getting hold of... going to Pecket Well.

SC Where is it?

NP Gibbett Lane, Halifax.

SC Because if they would be an example of just the sort of thing... you see these are the things that people keep saying to me 'women didn't write because...' and I am very very interested if I find examples where women... because I believe they did, I believe they might have done.

NP Pauline Witshire would be a similar example, because she was probably writing nearer the time.

SC So where would I contact Pauline Wiltshire then? Is she attached to a group?

NP God knows. She was published through Centreprise. Now I don't know whether...

SC Are those publications still available from Centreprise?
NP They'd be out of print but I tell you where you might get hold of them actually, there is a basement full of Federation books down in Eastside bookshop in Whitechapel, used to be the Thap bookshop.

SC Yes I've seen an advert for that in the newsletter

NP And Tim would know. There are great stocks of old Federation books that were never sold and could still be kicking around. Gatehouse might have some stuff as well.

SC And they definitely wrote....

NP Whether they were writing then, I don't know. They are people who are involved now. And Gatehouse itself has done a number of adult readers, because they were focused at people from ethnic backgrounds who were having literacy problems, including quite a lot of work with Pecket Well. So there would be people who are using those sort of oral techniques - tape recording and writing things down - or working as a group of people producing a book in the early eighties.

SC So would their motivation for their writing be? Was their motivation to improve their literacy or were they writing?

NP One of the books is called 'Telling It How It Is' or 'Like it is.'

SC Is their purchase on their experience. Well that's what I'm hoping for.

NP Again, certainly the EOHP* will probably have that kind of stuff.

* Ethnic Oral History Project.
SC  But is that mostly South Asian....

NP  No. No.

SC  Because I'm focusing on the Caribbean you see, purely because of the language, I don't feel as if I can deal with the South Asian writing issue very easily without having a language and, you know, I think it's very complex - the cultural differences are very complex.

NP  The Hammersmith and Fulham group which has some sort of ties. I'm not sure about the things earlier on, but they actually produced some publications which were from, I'm not sure, Antigua, I think, was one of the islands that somebody had done something about.

SC  Okay, Well this is all grist to the mill. I mean the fact that the Federation exists and hardly anybody knows about it in the mainstream - if I have mentioned it to academics they've never heard of it - that there's this whole international body of people who despite market ideology and all sorts of other things do write and do come together and write - the fact that the Federation exists, is in itself an indication that - against all odds and all sorts of things people do want to write - don't they?

NP  Yeah, Yeah.

SC  Women are doubly affected and trebly affected if they happen to be...

NP  Yes, the other thing is the difficulty of getting to... like you've got... the frame of issue I suppose, about when you set your workshop up and that's why some groups run several workshops at different times. You know it's getting out in the evenings, as opposed to getting out in the day time; it's about
encouragement, which a lot of the women that we've had Heeley writers for example, have actually not had from their partners.*

SC I've taught women's groups where sometimes it's been an *Educating Rita* job - they haven't actually burnt the work - but, put it up in the loft and all sorts of things; there is that. I did have an interview with a woman from Jamaica who came over in '57 (I think). She is an example of somebody who didn't write, but she said that she had got small children; she was working in a factory all day; she came home; she'd got all the work to do - it just wasn't on. She does things now, now her children have grown up and she's expressing herself now as an older woman. And the other thing that's interesting is to look at that issue, the fact that women's expression sometimes has to be delayed because of the demands of life.

NP There is the point you were making about the syllabus in Caribbean schools. It was an English 'O' level syllabus.

SC Oh definitely, in fact I was quite shocked that it still is - because the publisher I went to see showed be some of the books that Longmans are still selling in the Caribbean and the syllabus, I was shocked, is hardly changed. - It's hardly got any Caribbean stuff on it at all - they're still doing *Jane Eyre*, still doing all the English Classics. So that situation hasn't even changed very much and when I talked to Caribbean women and asked them what they read - it's Sir Walter Scott and Dickens and all the rest of it. So then to never see yourself in any of that writing is a bit difficult isn't it. I mean it's a difficulty for working-class people because... it's not quite as bad is it.

* During a subsequent interview with Ken Worpole, he mentioned that husbands were suspicious, not to say openly threatened by their wives wanting to write. He said that husbands would often park outside Centreprise waiting for their wives to come out and would say 'Well, what exactly have you been telling them about us?'
NP Yes, That anthology that Kwame Dawes produced recently, *Progeny of Air*, that's actually about that issue of who owns the education process.... going to a high class education, but what it's about; it's about a high class education for a colonial administration which .... you know, exists, but maybe ought not to by now really.

SC But then we did have - I mean you mentioned - Chris Searle's mentioned in one of those Fed mags. Is that the Chris Searle that set up the Fed with Ken Worpole?

NP Yeah, That's the one. The Chris Searle of *Classes of Resistance* and *Stepney Words*.

SC So he's still going and... he is headmaster is he?

NP He is headmaster at Earl Marshall School in Sheffield; but he has recently had a bit of bother *- I think largely about his .... His concerns have been about .... Well latterly he has been involved in complication.... projects with his kids.... lots and lots of stuff.... and.... the context of that stuff. I mean it's an international school. So he's been very keen to maintain his cultural links with the Caribbean background... in fact he would be useful getting hold of if you can get hold of him.

SC Yes I was going to ask if you thought it might be.

NP It would be because he's got a lot of Caribbean contacts, going way back. He was also in the education ministry in Grenada at some point - apart from

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* Since this interview Chris Searle has been dismissed as headmaster of Earl Marshall school. At the 1996 Festival a letter of protest was drafted to be sent to the Education Authority.
actually urging quite a lot of anthologies of working-class writing and Caribbean writing.

SC  Where do you think I would be best to write to him?

NP  At Earl Marshall School

SC  Yes I thought that when I saw his name. That was one of the questions I was going to ask you, whether you thought it might be worth getting in touch with him, I have actually written to Ken Worpole as well and I'm hoping to see him at some stage - because obviously if they were there right at the beginning....

NP  And in fact your earliest anthologies - they would be working people who were writing in the early seventies. Again that was yet another....that was the point that we were saying early on about coming over here and then finding that the country isn't what you've been led to believe - it isn't Mother England actually - it's a pretty grim experience if you're black - and that was what the Stepney Words trouble was all about - the headmaster of the school didn't want this relatively junior English teacher who'd been helping his kids to produce an anthology which ....

SC  ...which was critical of the culture they were received into?

NP  And there was all that sex, drugs, rock and roll and adolescent problems.

SC  Valerie Walkerdine - is she part of the Fed? She is mentioned as running a workshop or something.

NP  To be honest I don't know. I know the name.
SC She wrote a book called *Gender, Class and Childhood*. I happened to see her name in the magazine.

NP No

SC Not to worry, I'll ask Tim if he knows.

SC I've finished my questions, was there anything else, could you think of anything else relevant. It is very interesting to get this perspective on it, particularly in contrast to the academics and publishers that I've been seeing.

NP The other thing that would be around would be - if you come into a strange kind of country. How do you get into the education system in the first place? How do you get into where the writers workshops are in the first place? And are you....

SC That was one of my first questions to you. How do you find out about the Fed'

NP Is there a suspicion....

SC I mean you found out from a friend didn't you?

NP Yeah, so you've got to be aware. You've got to be involved in labour party politics or something to actually be aware of some of this stuff being around and that's again part of the problem with why the Federation is invisible... is that there are people within the labour party who are responsible for being the shadow minister of culture, or whatever, or the shadow minister for heritage. Well they won't have heard of us except there may be an occasion when they might get a copy of the mag sent to them. And if you aren't coming from within the country
- if you do that kind of thing - it would be a very isolated activity, it would take
time for that kind of writing to filter through.

SC  So they might have done it but they might not have been able to ....

NP  There would be lots of things working against you actually making the connection...

SC  ...finding some sort of support. I mean one of the areas of my work that I am
following through is this support networks thing, you know, how writers support
each other and how they find a sense of audience. How they support each other in
what they're doing in learning to write as it were, and you know, you've got
institutional ways of doing that and then you've got things like the Federation and
writers' workshops. But for a group of say, black women who are working-class
women, then for them to have access to any sort of support network would be very
difficult. I mean for a lot of them the Church would be their meeting place of other
women and that would not necessarily lead to encouraging their writing, on the contrary, it might be against that.

NP  Yes. You could try Saddaca in Sheffield, which is like an Afro-Caribbean
cultural centre. They have their writing groups based there. They're on The
Wicker.

SC  So is that a writers group?

NP  They have writers groups there, they have a Workers Education Association - a series of classes there as well. It might be worth talking to those people there - they have had women's groups there. And at Yorkshire Arts there is a black writers network - which produces a newsletter on a quarterly basis - which would be worth chasing up as well. I think one of the key things is, not
only how do you get into the education system, the awareness or the need for outreach work, would be only something that surfaced in community politics in perhaps the eighties. It's a relatively new idea, it's certainly a difficult issue when you try to take it in to libraries, because we've actually tried to do that in Heeley. There was an attempt to have a cross-South Yorkshire association of writers workshops - there were about forty workshops listed, so what we thought we'd try and do was actually promote there being more workshops in Sheffield, so that we actually could get the same kind of.... we thought if we could build up the numbers of workshops that were in Sheffield. We could then do what was happening in Liverpool, which was have access to the print media - because we could create the demand for print courses and so there would be that sort of rolling thing which was what happened in Liverpool. They'd actually had a load of people going to do a print course at the local college so everybody produces a book as a consequence of that course being there. And to get the support, to even do that, through local libraries was very difficult. The libraries themselves were - they'd have to work overtime to stay open and they were under threat - already the apparatus of facilitating education, within the local population, was being rolled back. I think it would have been difficult in any case, it wasn't until the demand for library use fell off that the reclamation of the library as a meeting room ever became an issue. So those are - it's the whole sort of context of changes in community politics, changes in the awareness of adult literacy as a problem which again wasn't really a big issue until the seventies. Which would influence how people actually have access to the means to produce their writing in any published form.

SC  But it's one of the interesting things about the period - that it was just precisely at the end of the seventies, or mid-seventies, that these sort of issues were bubbling under and that's one of the things I'm interested in.

SC  I don't think there's anything else now. I want to thank you very much.
APPENDIX 3.5

TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA FERLAND,
GERRARDS CROSS, 12 FEBRUARY, 1997

SC I understand you were born in 1919. Where were you born?

BF I was born in Spanish Town. My father was a doctor. A graduate of Edinburgh and he specialised in tropical diseases. We were three children, I think, who must have been born under mosquito nets in those far away days.

SC When had he gone over to Jamaica? Had he always been there and gone to Edinburgh and come back?

BF My father was born in Marlborough, Spurtree, Jamaica. And my mother in Old Harbour. When my father graduated from Edinburgh, he decided to return to Jamaica and specialise in tropical diseases.

SC And you had two siblings as well?

BF I had a brother - an elder brother and a younger sister - both deceased. What a dreadful world.

SC So tell me a bit about your education. You went to Brampton and Wolvers Girls School?

BF Brampton was in Mandeville, the country part of Jamaica, and also Wolmers Girls School, which was in Kingston.

SC They were private? Were they quite posh schools?
BF   It's a word I don't like - posh. It [Brampton] was a little old fashioned. And then I had to leave Brampton for reasons that I don't like to reveal, family problems. Then I was transferred to Wolmers when I was just about twelve.

SC   Did you go to university? Did you come over to England to go to university?

BF   No there was no university in Jamaica then and I didn't come over here. I worked with The British Council for thirteen years as secretary/assistant to the Music Officer. Which was wonderful. It was tough going. Jamaica was just coming up. The university was just being built. And there was a collection of Jamaican folk songs which I loved and knew. My mother was - that's my mother over there [pointing to a photograph] - she was a very gifted person and she had a heart the size of this world.

SC   Did she teach you music?

BF   No. I learned listening from her. I had very little so-called musical education but it just came naturally.

SC   So you didn't have formal training in music then. It was a thing you picked up intuitively by ear?

BF   Much more so. And I had a certain amount at Brampton and a certain amount after but I was never... how shall I say, academically minded. It just happened in that way. It is so difficult.

SC   How did you get your job at The British Council?
BF My first job was £1 a week, walking, which I had to do then. There had been family problems. I don't want this disclosed.

SC That's OK. Don't worry.

BF Family problems - and my home was broken up, so to speak. Soon as I left school at Wolmers I had to go out, quite rightly. My mother was quite right. And it was in a garage in the slums of Kingston and it was £1 a week. And it wasn't right for me but it was an experience.

SC Was that a clerical job?

BF I was trying to type, trying to learn to type properly. But also I had to bandage some of the men's hands. I used to have lunch with an albino, Mr Gray and he smelled like cold cream and I used to have to go upstairs. And my lunch in those days was one shilling a day. It was a pattie, a Jamaican pattie and we had it with Tamarind fizz and it was bliss. And then catching a tram car - that was when I got a little more than a pound a week - I took a tram car to get home. But I was so blessed because it was such a beautiful country. I had always been sort of funnyly different and I must have been a horrible child. I am sure of it, quite sure of that. But what I used to do in between, if I had a break, I would go to the library at The Institute of Jamaica and take a tram car that went up to the Botanical Gardens and sit under a tree and I remember a book by Walt Whitman and a book of Rupert Brook here. And sit under the trees until it was time for me to get another tram car back. Then I'd walk home again. But always from a child - the bedroom I had to share with one or two people - was not far from the drawing room and my mother was playing and my brother was singing or having singing lessons. So, as a child I was brought up with music, not written and dictated to at all, and I had the tremendous urge for stage for acting and singing, that kind of thing. And then suddenly, something which cannot be disclosed,
happened in my life. And then poetry that had been there I think always, just started to bubble up, bubble up, bubble up. And I used to get in trouble in class because very often, instead of giving the right answers, and I still don't give the right answers, I would scribble and I used to get all the marks for this nonsense. As much as I revere Milton, I love great great poets. For me as a poet, I have not been blessed with a gift to use long words and long lines. And that is why later on when I discovered Emily Dickinson, erm. 'My life closed twice before its close/ It yet remains to see/ If immortality unveil a third event to me/ So huge so hopeless to concede as those who twice befell/ Parting is all we know of heaven and all we need of hell.' Now in two verses she has got it there.

SC  So she was a big influence on you?

BF  Oh Rupert Brooke too and Edna St Vincent Millay. And all people who can condense in a few lines. I have never been given the gift to write pages and pages. It has to happen zum! I remember with 'Grey Swamp', that just came. At the end of the veranda there was a ping pong table, I was sweating, I had come in from school and my blouse was dripping. And this thing just happened - buff bang bim! Like that. And you can't exactly explain it. It just happens. Now as I am getting older, what I am finding is, I still want to be able to write but the moment happens so quickly with me meeting someone, like you, or I don't say that in affectation but as soon as I saw you I thought... I wondered what you would be like, wondering and wondering. But I find now that every moment is increasingly precious.

SC  You do still write now? You still write?

BF  No. No. I don't write now or not as I want to. I live this at the present time. How shall I say... I long to be able to put it down as I used to but I find now the time is precious and I must live...
Rather than write?

[B] What I said - my three favourite words - love, light and laughter. Those are the things that one must cherish more and more as one gets older. And some sayings - that North American Indian saying - 'Do not criticise your neighbour's feet until you have walked a mile in his moccasins.' I think that's wonderful. It is becoming difficult - the pressure - it's becoming increasingly difficult. Because it is becoming nearer the end and my inner vision is expanding. I have a brick wall outside this old fashioned flat and weeds! Every weed is a flower, they die down when the sun beats on them but they have got the guts to come up in the rain. After tears its that when you begin to live. You have got to suffer enough really to be able to.

I am sure you are absolutely right and that is something that a lot of writers and critics say, that writing or creativity comes out of sense of loss, being separated or lost, or to have suffered in some way. And some people believe that writing is therapy and I don't believe that it is therapy in that way, but it does come out of those experiences of pain.

Oh yes. Without a doubt. I don't think it is matter of writing only Sandra. If you are painting.

You came to England in 1950 is that right?

52. For the first time.

And that is when you came to work at The British Council?
BF No. I worked at the British Council since 1948 in Jamaica. When they first came out to Jamaica. That was the time was the time the first university was being built.

SC Ah I understand now. It was in Jamaica not London.

BF Yes that's right.

SC So you came to London in 52?

BF On holiday and then returned to The British Council until 1960. Had a bit of a traumatic experience which mustn't be disclosed but my step father who had remarried and my step mother who was a very unhappily unpleasant person. And we had to leave overnight. I brought Mark. You see I was married to Ferland before and he, Mark's father, had to leave. He was working with this Saudi Arabian oil company. He was American and he had to leave a couple of weeks before Mark was born, so he never saw Mark. So naturally as soon as I was able, I went back to work. That's how it started.

SC So when you came to England you had Mark then.

BF Yes. I left him with mother while I came over. I always wanted to come to England. Always.

SC You had been on holiday?

BF In 1948 I worked for The British Council and in 1952 I came over on holiday.
SC When did you actually come and settle here?

BF 1960. Had to... leave because of the step-mother and problems.

SC So what did you do when you first came over here?

BF In 1960, I tried to get a school for Mark for months. We went from place to place and so on. Then I met Shep at this little hotel at Earls Court Square where we were staying at the time and we were married then. And Mark, at last, had found a school. He came over and remember he had a strong Jamaican accent and the schooling was not up to the English standard and we did, due the kindness of a friend who I made at this little hotel, find Chard in Somerset, a public school, a small public school but old. He even went to tutors in Brompton Rd. The manager of this hotel said he had been to Chard and it's very good - 'It is a small school but I know the headmaster. He is ex-Baliol and was a captain in the marines. Very good chap.' So again we trekked and as soon as we went there I thought 'I like this.' There was a boy in the grounds of the school with a falcon on his arm. And the headmaster appeared with a breeze in his gown and hair flowing in all directions. No-nonsense person and I liked the look of him. The first term was sheer hell. It was the winter term. They threw him into the swimming pool. They beat him up in the dormitory. But you know he went on to become head of his house, captain of this. And he got three Edinburgh awards, bronze, silver and gold. He did well.

SC So he is a chip off the block then?

BF No. Mark is a much stronger person than I am and a finer person, too. So we went through this. It was wonderful. It wasn't easy at the time and various bits and pieces. And I was blessed with Shep. That was my name for him. Richard
Sheppard. Because he was by nature a gentle man. And we laughed at the same things.

SC Very important. Tell me about *Caribbean Voices* and how you came to contribute to that. Was this when you were still in Jamaica?

BF Yes.

SC So you sent pieces over did you?

BF Yes, because the chap who was the representative of the BBC in Jamaica had been in the office one morning and I had been scribbling something and he said 'What is that?' And I said it is a bit of scribble that I am doing. And he looked at it and said 'It is more than a scribble, I am going to send this up.' Because it was called *Caribbean Voices* in those days, the broadcast, you see. And that was very nice.

SC So you had your first poem accepted did you?

BF Over here. In the Caribbean.. *Calling the Caribbean*.

SC And it had to come over here and was broadcast back. How strange.

BF Yes [laughs].

SC Can you remember when that was? You were at The British Council so that would have been 1948? 49?

BF 49 or 50.
SC So when you had had one poem accepted you sent more off?

BF Yes. His name was Lindo. He used to come around. Then I was asked to do the music for the first all-Jamaican pantomime. And remember I had had no musical... with regard to writing music at all. The music was taken down by a lady who could write music and so on. And one of the songs was called 'Evening Time' and it became fairly popular out there. But I never received any royalties for it because unfortunately the chap... I was so foolish... went to his place in London with Shep and I heard afterwards that it was being used as signature tune for Radio Jamaica. Never had any pennies, any pennies from it at all. This happens.

SC So you composed the music and somebody wrote it down. So it must exist somewhere as a score. Is it anywhere if anyone wanted to find it? It must be somewhere written down, is it?

BF Yes, In the summer, I had a phone call from Canada and they have got hold of it. They want me to give them the rights and to share it with Louise Bennett who did some of the words.

SC For the pantomime? Is this Busha Bluebeard?

BF Well I got to know Louise Bennett because my chief, who was Music Officer, wanted to make a collection of Jamaican folk songs. And she was very good at Jamaican folk songs. And she came to the office. And I would take down... well I had been brought up with the folk songs, so it wasn't difficult you see - the taking down of the words. And then Noel Vaz, he was an ex-British Council scholar and he wanted to produce the first all Jamaican pantomime, Busha Bluebeard, and he wanted me to do the music. And there was another man who was English, Oxford St. John, who was very clever. His lyrics were very
clever. And I was thinking only the other day, I think one of the best tunes... I can't play now because my paws are not very clever...is the 'Gardens of Weeds Song'. And of course always, since I first heard his music - I took the diaries of Noel Coward because I think he was an extremely clever person - not only clever but his melodies and his words were so belonging. And it was such a comfort when I learnt that he couldn't write music. He had to dictate it also.

SC When you came over to London did you continue to write poetry?

BF For the holiday or after?

SC When you came and settled.

BF No.

SC Did you stop writing then?

BF I wrote a bit but I was being a woman and a wife.

SC But sometimes you'd still scribble a bit did you?

BF Oh yes.

SC But you didn't send it anywhere to be published?

BF No.

SC So mainly when you had things published it was when you were living in Jamaica. So when you got things in the journals like *Bim* and *Focus*.
BF  And one or two things, when Edna Manley, the famous Jamaican
sculptress, when she died they had a special commemoration service for her and
Professor John Figueroa read 'Le Petit Paysan' at her funeral and on one or two
other occasions some of my jingles have been used. I prefer the word jingle.

SC  So your career as a published poet was really in the Caribbean not over
here? So you didn't attempt to get anything published here? Did you send
anything off? Did you try and get anything published after 1960?

BF  In 60. No. Some of the other things in the little booklet are things I have
written over here. But none of them were sent up to be published.

SC  So that's the first time they have been published in that collection. I see.

BF  But many of them were written over here.

SC  I was interested to know... you've mentioned various names I know.. Was
there anyone particular who encouraged you either your writing or your music?
Was there a particular person who was very special in that they encouraged you
to write or do your music?

BF  Well from the time I was in my early teens. The very best friend who
believed in my stupid nonsenses. She has died. Her name was Noel Clark and she
was a tremendous influence when I was in my early teens. I was a very mixed up
and confused child because of the problems of my parents breaking up and a
completely new way of life but she always encouraged me. I became addicted to
having 'nervous breakdowns' and was diagnosed as being 'hyper-sensititive' and
the cure prescribed was - 'she needs roughening up'.

SC  Was she a school friend?
BF  No we met because our home was made into a guest house and she happened to stay there. But from then on she was a devoted and most loyal friend.

SC  So her name was Noel Clark. And she read your work and said 'I like this. It is good.'

BF  Yes. And Noel Vaz has been a good friend. He got a British Council scholarship over here to the Old Vic. And he was a producer of plays in Jamaica. And we had known each other since we were in our teens. We grew up not only as friends but as brother and sister or cousins. Because when I was a child, we used to put on plays together and they were shown on the back verandas of our homes, the audience sitting on the lawns.

SC  Did you ever join a writers' group or an artists' organisation?

BF  No, The Little Theatre Movement, those were the people who, Greta Burke and Henry Fowler. They were The Little Theatre Movement Group, they made the production of *Busha Bluebeard* possible.*

SC  When you came to London you didn't hear of anything or have anything to do with The Caribbean Artists Movement?

BF  No.

SC  Did you meet any writers or artists here?

* see Bruce King, p. 39 and p. 236.
BF No. I met, when I was working with the British Council in Jamaica, I met many people - Vidia Naipaul, John Hearne, oh many.

SC But you met them in Jamaica. When you came here you didn't hear anything of The Caribbean Artists Movement?

BF No.

SC I was quite interested that one of your poems in this book is dedicated to Dylan Thomas. Did you hear him read in London?

BF I am afraid not in life, only recorded.

SC I was interested because Gloria told me that she and another writer had heard him read in a pub in London and I wondered if you had been there on that occasion.

BF No dear. Under Milk Wood came out to us at The British Council. And there was one day when Derek, Derek Walcott who used to come in and have a chat with me and look about and I said 'Derek, this is an astonishingly wonderful thing called Under Milk Wood by Dylan Thomas.' And I said if you don't want to stop now in the office I can take them home and we can hear it together. And he did come down the road, I remember it so well. He and my mother were introduced and I said 'Mother we are just going to listen to some records.' 'Alright dears, well goodnight' and she disappeared. And I put on Under Milk Wood right through. Derek was sitting in the corner and after about an hour mother came out and said standing in the doorway 'Are you two alright? Because I haven't heard a word.' So Derek just chuckled. Oh we used to have such fun in those days.
SC  What did you like about that. What attracted you to Dylan Thomas? I know it was very different and there was nothing like it before or since probably, but what was it that you liked about it?

BF  His way with words and his voice. It was a marvellous voice. The depth of it and his arrangement of words. It wasn't corseted. And the colour of his words.... When we were married and we used to travel a bit. I said there is one place I would like to go. It's Wales and to see the boathouse and we did. You see, I've been so blessed with all these lovely happenings.

SC  You went to Laugharne is it? I have been there too.

BF  Yes and the boathouse. And the pub and they knew him, many of the people knew him. Of course we had to go to a pub and that afterwards I said I want to see where he has been placed. We went up and there was just a bit of rock brought up from the beach, that's all, with name that's all. Nothing more need be said.

SC  Do you think he influenced Caribbean writers?

BF  I would like to think so but I think now the tendency is for Caribbean writers to go back to the African pattern. The folk songs are beautiful. My chief made a collection, Tom Murray made a collection of them. That is how I got to know Louise Bennett so well. She would come and I think we laughed so much.... Anyway she is a buxom lass - Jamaica as it was when I knew it as a child - I owe to Nana, and those lovely warm-hearted people. Bare footed with music that sprang from their toes.

SC  Is that who you learned the folk songs from?
BF And mother, my mother could play so well. She hadn't got a great deal of musical education but she was wonderful. I remember once they went on a tour when I was only about five and one of the stories that they brought back was - my father was delighted to tell it - they were in Venice and the gondola stopped outside the hotel and as mother saw the piano, it was like a magnet to her. And she went and she started to play and the gondola stopped 'Bravo! Bravo!' and the rest of it. She was a natural and she encouraged me in the little plays we put on the veranda.

SC So she was an enormous influence on you wasn't she.

BF Oh tremendous.

SC When I asked who encouraged you. She encouraged you to do the plays?

BF Oh yes! She was all for that. She loved the theatre. And I remember that I was only about nine and the Ward theatre which in those days was a darling little theatre... It was the first time I ever heard *A Room with a View*. And it was very amateur but the music was delightful. Lindsay Downer - that is somebody who should be remembered. He was a Jamaican, a white Jamaican and he used to come over to England. You see that was when the Ward theatre really was like a little theatre, and he'd bring back the sheet music of things he had heard in reviews. They were amateurs but they were jolly good indeed. I remember as a little girl of nine, I think I was, when I first heard and when I first went to the theatre. I adore theatre. But now not the sort of plays where one person sits here and another person sits there and there is no scenery at all. It doesn't move me. Music does. But very modern music does not but then I am old hat. I love things that give you a twinkle in your toes.
SC Did you write in other forms? I know you write poetry and music and lyrics, did you ever write short stories or did you ever write a diary or in any other form?

BF No. I have a diary that I wrote on my first visit to England. But it is not much capture. It is just momentary, just thoughts, what I was experiencing. But I always wanted to come to England. It is not that I don't and did not love Jamaica but I could see the changes, the violence that was going on. And being brought up in the country where Dada had another surgery and being able to walk completely unafraid and up my beautiful Blue Mountains without fear.

SC So you did the right thing to settle in England?

BF I think so but as I knew it, one was able to walk and I remember walking from The British Council, that was 1940s, and going from King Street to East Street. You wouldn't have thought it but passing by the language that was hurled at one when one went walking, even then. But now when I hear of people and they say that the tragedy is that there is this extreme poverty on one side and great wealth on the other. A great friend of mine, very much a Jamaican used to come and stay here. We have had so many people staying in this funny old twig of different sizes, shapes, colours. I love colours.

SC Yes. Well you grew up in that didn't you.

BF Yes, very mixed colours. All beautiful.

SC So did you go back to Jamaica after 1960?

BF No and I wouldn't want to because I had heard of so many friends who have been killed and shot. And this young woman who is very much a Jamaican.
She phones up and she writes, she says Auntie B I don't think you could take it now. She has got an excellent job with the government having been educated over here. She went to St Thomas's as a nurse and after that she went to Durham University with high honours. After that she went back to Jamaica and got an excellent job. The Blue Mountains which I cherish the memories of so much. I cherish my memories of our beloved island, but might weep if I went back.

SC At least you have your memories. If you had stayed all that would have been tarnished. Tell me about....

BF Derek Walcott was an exceptional young man. He has, and still must do, a prominent forehead, deep sunk eyes and I think that one of the loveliest things that anyone ever said, we had been down to The Ferry Inn, Spanish Town Road, with friends for a drink and we'd come back and we drove back to the university. And as he was leaving the car park, he touched my knee gently and said 'Barbara you have grace.' And I thought that is something to cherish, coming from him. He was not a person to be tremendously talkative, very withdrawn in many ways - but that forehead and these deep sunk eyes, you know.

SC Did he read your work?

BF No.

SC You didn't think to show it him?

BF No [gasps] couldn't. And Vidia Naipaul, he was another one I knew very well.

SC But they didn't know you were writing?
BF I think they were so involved in their own creative ... Oh no. Completely different, Vidia and Derek were completely different.

SC How did you meet Gloria?

BF British Council - because she used to come and see the Arts Officer there and bring her paintings to be looked at. But G is a character in herself. She would go down to the slums or wherever. And she still is in her own way. Can't say hermitess, but she has her own day which, even now, is very full with her own work. It might not appeal. It was very individual Gloria's work, as she is. She is a dear and when she used to come and stay here occasionally for a couple of nights with her adopted son, Fabian Escoffery. She had a sense of humour and I understood it. She is very much an individual, an intellectual as well as an artist.

SC Did you meet any of the other Caribbean Voices contributors? Any other of the women? Daisy Myrie?

BF Not Daisy Myrie, no. I used to collect poems that I discovered. People who didn't even know they were poets. When I was in Christiana, there was a young girl, Anita Kneale and I copied down from her one or two of her poems. Then there was Constance Hollar 'I will sing a song of yellow on this lovely yellow day'. 'Talking about Amarandas but best of all are Amarandas dripping in the rain'. She was older than I and she was a scholar really not just a poet.

SC So really you would never come together as a group you just sent off your pieces. You were never a group of poets or writers then?

BF No.
I just wondered if you happened to know of any other writers that I have come across and who are Jamaican: Rosalind Ashe, Lucille Fremonger?

Oh yes, she was at Wolmers when I was there.

I have been reading her autobiography which is extraordinary. She sounds like an extraordinary person and no one has ever heard of her. You are first person who has known of her.

Oh yes. When I say at school, I was in a lower form. She had a Jamaican scholarship, very clever girl.

Have you read her autobiography? It is called Yes, My Darling Daughter. It is wonderful. It is not in print now, of course it isn't. It tells of her childhood and you would love it. You ought to try and get hold it. I had to get it from the British Library.

Lucille Parkes she was when I knew her.

She writes about her childhood in Jamaica very vividly. But you knew her?

At school. But she was in a higher form at school than I was and she got a Jamaican scholarship but I didn't follow her up after that.

If you read the autobiography then you would understand that her father was so strict...

Parkes, oh yes!
SC ... that really he expected her to do very well and only the best was good enough. She had to perform.

BF Yes.

SC Did you come across Joyce Gladwell nee Nation. She went to school at St Hildas?

BF No.

SC But you came across a lot of people whilst you were at the British Council?

BF Oh yes! It was a joy!

SC It was a meeting place for writers and artists.

BF Oh absolutely, absolutely.

SC And did that inspire you, meeting these people?

BF Oh yes and we were so lucky. I was offered this job at The British Council through a friend of mine who was leaving and she mentioned this to her uncle who was a very very great friend of mine, Horace Vaz. And he said, 'You know B - that is the right place for you.' And I said I would never be able to do it. And when I went in on my first day and my chief had, I can't tell you how many miniature scores, he was the Music Officer. He was a Scot and a very strict disciplinarian but when you got to know him he was very nice indeed. And he said to me - 'Do you think you will be able to arrange all this?' And it was like a different world. And those years I was fully stretched emotionally as well as
mentally. It was through The British Council that I met Hector Whistler the artist who was out there. And the house that he happened to come across had been my grandmother’s house. It was in a very dilapidated state. He painted that for me. I called him Blithe Spirit. We took to each other. I was at home with people who were creating, people who were doing something. Those were my richest years in many ways. I would say that my life with Shep, and you know Sandra, I think I have being so blessed with knowing so many lovely people and having so many dear friends. And what ever else this old twig has lacked, it has never lacked love, light and laughter. Young people, old people, all colours, all kinds. Lloyd Hall who comes over to see me still when he is in England. And you see it doesn't matter two hoots - why this emphasis - but I suppose everything is changing. But it saddens me to think of how Jamaica - well I suppose the whole world has changed - oh the deliciousness of truly Jamaican food cooked in Jamaican fashion now.

SC I wanted to ask about that because I came across a little recipe book that was written by a group of Caribbean women in the 70s who came over to London and were obviously desperately lonely and missing home. And they produced this little Caribbean recipe book and on the one hand they had a recipe and on the other side they had a poem. It was beautiful. It was called Captain Bluebeard’s Beef Creole. I wanted to ask you about the bluebeard in the title.

BF The number of wives you see. That’s from the fairy tale I think of Bluebeard who had so many wives.

SC I know of Bluebeard as a pirate. He is not a pirate?

BF No. Morgan was the very well known buccaneer. Oh that is another Jamaican that I knew extremely well, Adolph Roberts, he wrote a number of books. He was a very knowledgeable man indeed.
SC  So Bluebeard is this kind of folk figure.

BF  That's right. A busha. A busha meaning a man of property who has many wives.

SC  Do you think of yourself as a writer?

BF  No! I don't think I could write a worthy book. When I read something like Rachel Manley's *Drumblair*, that is a beautiful book! It has poetry as well as prose. It has beauty right through. To sustain a book like that takes more than talent. It take genius. Well, Edna came with her carvings and so on. But funnily enough I never felt at ease with Edna. I never tek to her as we say in Jamaica 'Me tek to you Mrs.' I never tek to her. No. Formidable she could be. But her husband was a different matter. Norman. He wasn't just handsome, he was beautiful. He really was. And he was not for himself but for the island, for Jamaica, which he dearly loved. And this child, Rachel she has more than talent, she has genius. I knew her mother very very well. She was married first of all to Bob Verity whom I knew extremely well from the days at the Junior Centre. He did splendid work.

SC  You say you don't think of yourself as a writer, is that because you don't think of yourself as writer because you have to write more sustained pieces, longer than poetry?

BF  Yes, that's it.

SC  Even though people would say that your poetry is extraordinary and has a wonderful quality and it is technically very beautiful but you don't regard yourself as a writer?
BF  I wish I could have been a poet.

SC  But you are.

BF  That is your kindness but there is a difference between - what I would say sustaining at length - a long thing through. Because if I were to write about my childhood, I don't think I would find the words that would fit in the right places. I don't know if I am capable of sustaining a long thing. You know. But I do know at least I have written in music a few songs that are pretty alright. That was done when I was thirteen, fourteen, fifteen... that was the time that I began to be able to pick up the pebbles without my asking for them to be there. They just came the right colours and they fitted in. But I have never been one to sit down and write a long piece. I have had one or two little things written in magazines over here, Memories of a Jamaican childhood, prose.

SC  Here? In what?

BF  *Woman's Journal* that sort of thing.

SC  So you did have work published here?

BF  Yes, that sort of thing. Not bad, but to sustain a book like *Drumblair*, I would not have been able to do that. And I think too that in my own way of living... I have not been able to sustain one full day of complete ecstasy and fulfilment. It comes to me quickly, suddenly and even with people, I find that happening to me. It doesn't take me six months or what ever it is to feel that I am at home with that person. Something goes 'zing' in me if I meet someone, like you. This is true. I was wondering what you were going to be like. I thought very learned. You are real you see. I think that suffering is a tremendous gift. Pain with a capital P. Or you wouldn't understand that other word beginning with L.
SC  Yes, it is the other side of the coin. I have nearly finished my questions. I
  don't want to tire you. I think I have finished unless - you have anything you
  want to tell me about to do with your writing or your development as a writer?

BF  Life has been my teacher. Loving has been my greatest happiness and
  reward. Laughter, that's the thing. You can cry with some one. I don't do it very
  easily. It can happen with some people they can burst in to tears just like that and
  then it is off. But laughter is something which remains. I find myself in there
  sometimes laughing, remembering something that we have shared together. I
  think it is a kind of bubble. It is a kind of spring. But if you can laugh with
  someone the tears will come. They come as one grows older more readily
  sometimes.

SC  How did you come to have your collection published?

BF  Through Professor John Figueroa who liked my jingles and read some of
  them over the BBC and said 'You know B you should have some of these
  published.' He was the one who read 'Le Petit Paysan' at Edna Manley's funeral.

SC  Yes and he edited the anthologies, the Caribbean Voices anthologies. So
  was this recently? Because this came out in 1994.

BF  Oh, some years. I can't tell you the exact date. And there was Peter Orr.
  He has made so many recordings while he was head of The British Council
  Recording department. And he read one or two or them and was kind enough to
  say that he would like to write the introductory note.

SC  And how did you come to use Peepal Tree?
BF  John Figueroa said try them.

SC  So this must have been in the last five years or so?

BF  Yes that's right. Five or six.

SC  Well, I am glad you did it. You have been very kind. I have asked you lots of questions. Is there anything else? I don't think so. I am troubled that you didn't carry on writing when you came to England. But I understand that this happens to a lot of women as well, that they find their life takes over in such a way that they can't carry on writing. They can't fit it in.

BF  No, you see you become lost. You become lost if you start writing and the phone rings or somebody calls and one has to perhaps realise that is important but there is somebody there who wants you or needs you. And which is more important?

SC  Do you think that, as one writer said to me, that men have the ability to cut themselves off. That they can sit and write with all sorts of things going on, children and things wanting doing. They can somehow say 'No I am just going to write' and they write these sustained pieces.

BF  That's it.

SC  But she said that, as a woman, you can't do that.

BF  No, because if you feel that you are needed. Somebody is lonely. Somebody is old. Well it is a matter of stopping that and attending to them.

SC  But do you think that men can do that - cut themselves off more easily?
BF Oh yes much more so. Much more so. And the wife makes a delightful barricade which sustains them. You are alright. You are safe. You get on with it. Anna Wickham... I have a poem somewhere. But she said 'If you should ask why there is no great she poet/ let them come live with me and they will know it.'

SC And so many of the women in The Caribbean Artists Movement were typing up manuscripts.

BF Ah, I have been through that.

SC And they were not writing themselves but they were doing the labour which was essential in getting this work on to paper.

BF I have it. I understand. Stenographer.*

SC Doris Braithwaite, who manually typed out so many manuscripts.

BF Moi aussi.

SC And this stops women from writing.

BF Oh definitely! It is one thing I can say that I did work and I mean work. There were the music catalogues which were part of my job to do. Typing, and you become automatic almost with doing this, doing this, doing this. And physically you are very very tired. But there is so much left in one. I don't know if you believe in another life. I am not sure if I do. And I don't believe if you are a Wesleyan or a Baptist or Methodist. That is not to me. I say The Great Spirit not God. And people who have never read Darwin's theory of evolution and we

* Title of a poem in Without Shoes I must Run.
take so much for granted that this happened. Certainly I do believe that a man named Jesus was born but I am pagan enough not to be quite sure that he was God the creator of this vast vast universe. I am yet to... I must work towards it. No I must not work towards it I must let it come naturally. If you work towards something too much it loses its colour, its flavour. If you are making a cake and you stick to a recipe, it can become a very very boring cake indeed. No - I do believe that there is a Great Spirit.

SC I am going to finish there because I think you have been more than generous.

BF My love, thank you for being so patient.
APPENDIX 4

RAMCHAND'S YEAR-BY-YEAR BIBLIOGRAPHY OF NOVELS, REPRODUCED FROM HIS FIRST AND SECOND EDITIONS OF THE WEST INDIAN NOVEL AND ITS BACKGROUND
EXPLANATORY NOTES TO APPENDIX 4: RAMCHAND'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

The present thesis has made several references to the ground-breaking scholarship of Kenneth Ramchand in *The West Indian Novel and its Background* (1970). As a point of reference, and as a means of comparison with my own Appendix 5, which includes women's writing in a variety of prose forms, I reproduce Ramchand's appendices, a 'Year by Year Bibliography' of novels (Ramchand, pp. 282-286). This appendix was revised for the second (1985) edition of *The West Indian Novel and its Background*, and this is also presented (Ramchand, pp. 292-302). Ramchand's original list included 169 novels published between 1903-1967 in the UK, the Caribbean, Australia and the US. Out of these novels, only 5 were by women authors: Cicely Waite-Smith, Phyllis Shand Allfrey, Ada Quayle and Sylvia Wynter. There was also one entry for Jean Rhys. The second edition expanded the list to include 352 novels published in the UK, the Caribbean, Australia, Canada and the US between 1902-1982. Out of these 27 were by women authors.
### Year by Year Bibliography

Places of Publication are given in brackets  
U.K. = United Kingdom; U.S. = America  
G = Guyana; J = Jamaica; T = Trinidad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<td>1936</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Minty Alley</td>
<td>(U.K.)</td>
</tr>
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<td>1937</td>
<td>De Lisser</td>
<td>Under the Sun</td>
<td>(U.K.)</td>
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- The Heltons or the Deeds of Rio (1928)  
- Maroon Medicine (1937)  
- Marguerite: A Story of the Earthquake (1936)  
- Jaws: A Story of Jamaica (1936)  
- Jane's Career (1943)  
- Susan Proudleigh (1934)  
- Triumphant Squallions (1936)  
- From Superman to Man (1931)  
- Those that be in Bondage (1931)  
- Revenge (1937)  
- The Caciqu's Treasure and Other Tales (1936)  
- The Haunting Hand (1932)  
- Tropic Death (1938)  
- Home to Harlem (1934)  
- The White Witch of Rosehall (1939)  
- Benja (1937)  
- The Mind Reader (1936)  
- The Moralist (1936)  
- Ginger town (1935)  
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Laming: The Emigrants (U.K.)
Maia: Brother Man (U.K.)
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Taylor: Pages from Our Past (J)
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Selvon: An Island is a World (U.K.)
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De Lisser: The Cup and the Lip (U.K.)
Heame: Stranger at the Gate (U.K.)
Mittelholzer: Of Trees and the Sea (U.K.)
Selvon: The Lonely Londoners (U.K.)
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Naipaul: The Mystic Masseur (U.K.)
Quayle: The Mistress (U.K.)
Selvon: Ways of Sunlight (U.K.)
1958
Carron: Black Mids (U.K.)
De Lisser: The Arawak Girl (U.K.)
Lanning: Of Age and Innocence (U.K.)
Mittelholzer: Kayanu Blood (U.K.)
Mittelholzer: The Weather Family (U.K.)
Naipaul: The Savages of Elba (U.K.)
Reid: The Leopard (U.K.)
Selvon: Turn Again Tiger (U.K.)
1959
Drayton: Christopher (U.K.)
Heame: The Autumn Equinox (U.K.)
Holder: Black Gods, Green Islands (U.S.)
Mittelholzer: A Tinkling in the Twilight (U.K.)
Mittelholzer: The Mad MacMullocks (U.K.)
Naipaul: Miguel Street (U.K.)
Nicole: Of White (U.K.)
Salkey: A Quality of Violence (U.K.)
1960
Dawes: The Last Enchantment (U.K.)
Du Quecanno: A Princess for Port Royal (U.K.)
Ferguson: Village of Love (U.K.)
Harris: Palace of the Peacock (U.K.)
Kempadoo: Guinea Boy (U.K.)
Laming: Season of Adventure (U.K.)
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Palmer: A Broken Vessel (J)
Reid: Sixty-Five (U.K.)
Salkey: Escape to an Autumn Pavement (U.K.)
1961
Carew: The Last Barbarian (U.K.)
Drayton: Zebra (U.K.)
Harris: The Far Journey of Oudin (U.K.)
Heame: The Land of the Living (U.K.)
Hercules: Where the Frowning Bird Flies (U.S.)
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Mittelholzer: Thunder Returning (U.K.)
Mittelholzer: The Piling of Clouds (U.K.)
Naipaul: A House for Mr. Biswas (U.K.)
Nicol: Shadows in the Jungle (U.K.)
Roy: Black Albino (U.K.)
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Prazer: Wounds in the Flesh (U.K.)
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Nicol: Ration (U.K.)
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Selvon: I Hear Thunder (U.K.)
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Places of publication are given in brackets
U.K. = United Kingdom; U.S. = America; G = Guyana; J = Jamaica; T = Trinidad;
Austr. = Australia; Can. = Canada;
B'dos = Barbados

1931 Rhys:  After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie (U.K. and U.S.)
Roberts:  The Moralist (U.S.)
[Endicott]:  Mayor Harding of New York (U.S.)

1932 McKay:  Gingertown (U.K. and U.S.)
Roberts:  [Endicott]:  The Strange Career of Bishop Sterling (U.S.)

1933 McKay:  Banana Bottom (U.K. and U.S.)
Mendes:  Pitch Lake (U.K.)
Rhys:  Voyage in the Dark (U.K. and U.S.)

1935 Mendes:  Black Fauns (U.K.)
Roberts:  The Top Floor Killer (U.K.)

1936 James:  Minty Alley (U.K.)

1937 De Lisser:  Under the Sun (U.K.)

1939 Durie:  One Jamaica Gal (J)
Rhys:  Good Morning Midnight (U.K.)

1941 Kirkpatrick:  Country Cousin (J)
Mittelholzer:  Corentyne Thunder (U.K.)
Roberts:  The Pomegranate (U.S.)

1943 McLellan:  Old Time Story (G)
Naipaul:  Gourdeau and Other Indian Tales (T)
Waite-Smith:  Rain for the Plains and Other Stories (J)

1944 Aarons:  The Cow that Lauged (J)
Donaldson:  Heart's Triumph (T)
Lindo:  Bronze (J)
Roberts:  Royal Street (U.S.)

1945 Lindo:  My Heart Was Singing (J)
Mais:  And Most of All Man (J)

1946 Mais:  Face and Other Stories (J)
Roberts:  Brave Mardi Gras (U.S.)

1947 Rogers:  Laleaja (T)

1948 Roberts:  Creole Duck (U.S.)

1949 Reid:  New Day (U.S.)
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Year by Year Bibliography

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Richmond: A Kind of Living (Cuba)
Williams: Jamaica Mento: A Collection of Short Stories (T)

1979
Bascombe: The Preacher and the Strumpet and Other Short Stories (U.S.)
Callender: How Music Came to the Ainchan People (B'dos)
Cambridge: Feet of Clay (T)
Campbell: The Ragdoll and Other Stories (J)
Clarke: Caribbean Coup (T)
Doyley: Between Sea and Sky (Can.)
Heath: From the Heat of the Day (U.K.)
Humfrey: Portrait of a Sea Urchin (U.K.)
La Fortune: The Schoolmaster Remembers (U.K.)
Lovelace: The Dragon Can't Dance (U.K.)
Naipaul: A Bend in the River (U.K.)
Osborne: The Mango Season (U.K.)
Sadeek: The Malali Makers (G)
Wilson: Mulatto (U.K.)

1980
Brodber: Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home (U.K.)
Clarke: Growing up Stupid Under the Union Jack (Cuba)
Guy: The Disappearance (U.K.)
Hosein: The Killing of Nelson John and Other Stories (U.K.)
Jackson: East Wind in Paradise (U.K.)
Salkey: Danny Jones (U.K.)
Salkey: The River that Disappeared (U.K.)
Thelwell: The Harder they Come (U.K.)

1981
Anthony: All That Glitters (U.K.)

1982
Edgell: Beka Lamb (U.K.)
Lovelace: The Wine of Astonishment (U.K.)
APPENDIX 5

BIBLIOGRAPHIES OF PROSE WORKS AND PLAYS
PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH BY WEST INDIAN WOMEN
APPENDIX 5.1

EXPLANATORY NOTE TO APPENDIX 5.2: A YEAR-BY-YEAR
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PROSE WORKS AND PLAYS IN THE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE PUBLISHED BETWEEN 1948-1979 IN BRITAIN BY WEST
INDIAN WOMEN

This year-by-year list of publications presents an alternative view of West
Indian women's writing to that suggested by a similar list in Kenneth Ramchand's
*The West Indian Novel and its Background* (reproduced for comparison in
Appendix 4). Given the focus of his study, Ramchand's appendix was necessarily
concerned with the publication of novels only. My own list is an original record
of West Indian women's publishing activity, in a variety of prose forms, in
Britain between the years 1948 and 1979. This has been generated from a number
of sources, both written and verbal; and whilst there are excellent bibliographies
of Caribbean women's writing, as far as I am aware none of them include all the
material in this Appendix and none of them organise the work by year. By listing
women's work by year in this way, it may be possible to make interesting
connections between a particular year and writing in a particular form. Unlike
Ramchand's list my Appendix only offers material whose first edition was
published in the UK which reflects the focus of the present study on West Indian
women writers *in Britain* (although, as it transpired, publication in Britain was
not a guarantee that the writers were *resident* in Britain). The bibliography is
intended to provide a basis for further scholarship, for whilst the majority of the
material was tracked down, it was not possible to actually obtain all the works
listed here for closer analysis. Some of the examples were not held by the British
Library, but were available - for reference only - in The Commonwealth Institute
Literature Library in Kensington, London. A number of comprehensive
bibliographies (see Berrian and Broek, Busby, Paravisini-Gebert and
Torres-Seda) document the extent of publishing activity through small presses

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and literary journals in the Caribbean in the same period. But Appendix 5, British-focused as it is, supplements their evidence that 'over one thousand women writers from the Caribbean, Guyana, Guyane, and Suriname have published since the nineteenth century.'

APPENDIX 5.2

A YEAR-BY-YEAR BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PROSE WORKS AND PLAYS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
PUBLISHED BETWEEN 1948-1979 IN BRITAIN BY WEST INDIAN WOMEN

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APPENDIX 5.3

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WEST INDIAN WOMEN'S PROSE Works AND PLAYS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
FIRST PUBLISHED BETWEEN 1948-1979, ORGANISED ALPHABETICALLY BY AUTHOR

The authors whose first editions appear in Appendix 5.2 are listed here alphabetically to include all works first published between 1948-1979. Reprints are detailed and, to the best of my knowledge, whether the work is currently in print in Britain or the US. All publishers are British-based unless followed by US in parentheses. Every effort has been made to trace reprints but those published outside Britain may have been missed. The current print status of the work has been determined by internet searches including 'Global Books In Print' and 'Bookfind'.

Key to abbreviations

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Nelson's New West Indian Readers  
Backfire (with Neville Guiseppi)  
Leary Constantine | 1969 B  
1971 Ch  
1973 Ch  
1974 B | OOP  
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1981 F | OOP  
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| Wynter, Sylvia b. Jamaica   | The Hills of Hebron                             | 1962 F    | OOP    | Jonathon Cape                   |
| (1932 - )                   | "                                               | 1984 F    | "      | Longman Drumbeat                |
|                             | Black Midas (adapted for schools with Jan Carew)| 1969 Ch   | OOP    | Longman Caribbean               |
APPENDIX 5.4

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BRITISH COMMUNITY PUBLISHED MATERIAL AUTHORED BY OR EDITED BY WOMEN WRITERS OF CARIBBEAN ORIGIN OR CONTAINING CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CARIBBEAN WOMEN WRITERS AND WHICH HAVE BEEN CONSULTED FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS RESEARCH

Key to abbreviations

A    Autobiography
AN   Anthology
b.   born
d.o.b. date of birth
drn.  edition
H    History
R    Recipes
SS   Short Fiction
TRA  Transcripts
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<td>1995</td>
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<td>Just Lately I Realise: Stories from West Indian Lives Who Knows It Feels It</td>
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In 'Reconstruction Work: Images of Post-war Black Settlement', Stuart Hall argues that 'The Past cannot speak, except through its "archive". When such histories [of black settlement in Britain] do come to be written, the photographic evidence is likely to play an extremely important role in their construction'.

What follows is a discussion of the kinds of problems presented by such newly-emerging sources for a new field, focusing on a particular archive of post-war studio photographs - the Dyche collection in Birmingham Central Library - as a supplement to literary and historical resources in evidencing Caribbean arrival and settlement in Britain.

Studio portraits from the 1950s onwards are now publicly available as pictorial/historical evidence, but their very availability presents the researcher with problems which, in a sense, encapsulate the challenges presented by such reconstruction work in general: in particular, the irretrievability of factual data necessary to decode 'raw' source material. Such photographs, for instance, are of anonymous people who are outside the official histories of the period, and who re-appear in the late twentieth century without names, dates, or a wider social context. Furthermore, as Hall also argues: 'They signify a certain democratisation of representation. They are poor-person's "portraits". The camera did for the poor, what painting could not do'. As evidence, they must be read with caution if their subtext is to be usefully understood, since the studio context allows for self-conscious constructions which suggest the need to tell a particular story iconographically: they are, in a sense, fictions from people who do not generally write fiction. As non-literary forms of cultural self-expression, they require as much attention to be paid to their 'absences' as to the features of their composition, in the process of filling out both the presences and the
Plate 1: Woman with dolly bag
absences in fictive and autobiographical accounts by Caribbean migrants. But the terms of the present thesis's excavation of Caribbean women's forms of expression, as 'the poor person's' story of arrival, they represent a valuable alternative to written ones, albeit riddled with problems imported by the interpretative strategies necessary to understand a past which speaks to us from photographic modes of cultural expression.

******

People looking for names. Names looking for people.... Daddy and Mummy are names looking for people. Daddy will soon have a person, I'm told, for he is coming to join me, but Mummy is a word without a person.3

This is how Rachel Manley begins her memoirs of a Jamaican childhood, and in so doing, evokes a state of desire and uncertainty familiar to generations of Caribbean children. For Manley grew up within historically embedded patterns of migration which made such familial separations and reattachments commonplace, and her arresting phrase, 'People looking for names', might well serve as a caption for the unidentified people in the Dyche's Studio's photographs. They are of the generation that, half a century ago, travelled on the SS Empire Windrush which arrived at Tilbury docks with 492 Caribbeans on board. The Windrush docked on 22nd June, 1948 - the year that the British Nationality Act confirmed right of entry to Britain for colonial and Commonwealth citizens, a post-war strategy designed to ease acute labour shortages by recruitment from overseas. Migrants suffered widespread discrimination, demonstrated in the public show of violence in Nottingham and Notting Hill in 1958, and by 1962, the right of unrestricted entry was revoked by the Commonwealth Immigration Act. But in the earlier part of the period, there was many a hopeful landing of people transported from the Caribbean on a five year plan for self-improvement - a journey which, for the majority, turned out to be their final passage. The Dyche Studio photographs of
Plate 2: Woman with pleated dress
Caribbeans in Birmingham may now represent part of the evidence of that arrival.

A recent series of exhibitions of the Dyche collection, entitled 'Being Here', and presenting selected photographs to evidence the arrival of African, Asian and Caribbean migrants to Birmingham, was only made possible because Birmingham Central Library's Head of Photography, Peter James, personally rescued the contents of the Dyche studio and removed them to the library as a potential archive. This is now largely made up of nameless and undated photographic artefacts from the 1950s, '60s and '70s. The circumstances surrounding their acquisition, and the public display of such essentially private documents, are undoubtedly two of the most fascinating aspects of the exhibitions, and the reason why reproductions of the photographs have accompanied local and national newspaper articles seeking to identify the subjects: to find the 'missing persons'. The photographs were the work of two white commercial studio photographers who operated from premises at 354 Mosely Road, Balsall Heath since 1919: Ernest Dyche (1887-1973), and from the late 1940s onwards, his son Malcolm, who died in 1995. The total collection of prints is evidence of the Dyches's need to change markets and clientele, since Dyche specialised in portraits of theatrical performers until the declining market for these portraits forced the studio to find a different source of income. Thousands of negatives and prints, now housed in the library, bear witness to the number of migrants to the Balsall Heath, Sparkhill and Highgate neighbourhoods of Birmingham who chose to visit the Dyche studio during the 1940s, '50s and '60s, although the connection between Dyche and the subjects of the photographs seems to have been a purely a commercial one. It further indicates both the shifting demography patterns of migration, and the laws which later restricted immigration from the West Indies (indeed the 1970s portraits are almost exclusively of Asian subjects).

As personal portraits, rather than the documentary photographs of the arrival halls at Southampton and London in Hulton's Picture Post, they are bound up in
Plate 3: Casual threesome
a history of intensely private separations which may never be recovered, and they present the historian with the central problem of viewing and interpreting such images. From the outset, they were both loaded with the desire of the subjects to construct an acceptable photographic image to send home, and were self-consciously constructed to stimulate desire in the people looking at them. The photographs were attached to letters, to be circulated by those left behind in Kingston, in villages, or on small islands, in order to establish that the subject had indeed arrived and was prospering. They are intended to show that life was good and the decision the right one; in this way these photographs fuelled the desire for increasing numbers of Caribbeans to join their families and friends in Britain.

Amongst the first generation of post-war migrants, it was largely young male pioneers who were the initial reporters to anxious relatives. On writing home, the men were placed in an ambivalent position: reluctant to admit any disillusionment with Britain, but equally reluctant to send glowing reports which were likely to attract more friends and relatives to a disappointing reality. Oral histories testify to this contradiction. Letters were written - sometimes composed by a person deemed to have good letter-writing skills - that gave the impression that all was going well. The Jamaican Byron Thompson remembers what it was like to be left behind, separated from his friends and to receive news from them: 'They sent me photographs and told me of the great life they were living.'

Carlton Duncan also recalls how it felt to be despatched to relatives in Clarendon, Jamaica whilst his parents and family followed the 'craze' and emigrated to England:

The letter came from England, from my parents, father, mother and step-father saying, 'Look, you come to England, the place is riddled with teacher training colleges, riddled with universities, you gonna have it so much easier getting into one of these places.' And of course the lure, the attraction of the foreign land and travel and the fact that my ambition would be enhanced and more easily obtained and so forth. A young person, just
Plate 4: Threesome, man with pen
nineteen plus at the time. I jumped at it. But what a disappointment. It really was a major disappointment.7

The situation was compounded by an unfounded assumption that the correspondent was 'rich' by home standards, since the letters and the photographs did not always convey that the high wages promised were misleading, nor did they indicate stoppages. Ewart Walker had worked for British Airways in Kingston, and was earning less in Britain than in Jamaica: 'I could not believe jobs paid only £3 and £5 a week. I earned £14 a week in Jamaica and everywhere I went I had free meals and free transportation.'8 According to Gail Johnson, the oral historian, who worked on *A Long Five Years: Caribbean Elders in Gloucester*, it is unlikely that the pioneers would have found it easy to admit to such disappointments in their letters home, nor indeed to hint at them in the photographs. In this way the photographs were to collude with fictionalised accounts of England which resulted in Donald Hinds's 1966 book: *Journey to an Illusion: The West Indian in Britain.*9

Ernest Dyche was able to construct the necessary image within the generic practices of Edwardian studio conventions (with their properties and costumes) which had functioned equally in the Caribbean as well as in Britain, and his considerable experience of creating theatrical portraits of subjects who were to be projected as objects of desire (for audiences and potential theatrical employers) was also an important factor. Ephemera in The 'Being Here III' exhibition testify to the fact that Ernest Dyche had 'studied the techniques and styles of theatrical and cinema photographer and gradually became skilled in the creation of fictional settings and the art of retouching and the colouring of prints.'10 Dyche's premises in Mosely Road had operated as a photographer's studio since 1893, and this contributes to a certain timelessness and artifice in the portraits which is only countered by the clothing and hair-styles of his new subjects.11 Indeed, Malcom Dyche's late-1970s portraits are composed against a setting used by his father in the 1920s, and he was employing the same 'old backcloths and props which had
Plate 5: Woman in suit
been in service since the studio opened'. Such settings enabled the photographs to become loaded with highly contrived signifiers, with the migrant subjects not unlike actors posed against the fading simulacra of a theatrical backdrops. What are missing from the pictures are any of the social reference-points: the subjects' homes and work places, street scenes, freezing weather, other less well turned out people, or any clues to as to the material reality they inhabited.

Stuart Hall writes of the need to read these absences politically: and although the studio may appear to provide an ahistorical/asocial vacuum, it cannot fully succeed. Dyche's paying customers are so intent on a wish to tell a particular story, that they stimulate our desire to learn how they lived in the 'real world' In studio portraits, the face (as we may see in Plate 1) might betray possible contradictions (uncertainty? unease?) and the carefully chosen clothing defines a desired identity in a 'liminal' state. Thorstein Veblen points out the importance of reading clothing as material culture in his study of its semiotic power, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. The messages given off by clothing are loaded with historical, social, class and patriarchal markers; so that Veblen can write: 'Dress is the insignia of leisure.' For example, a pair of pristine gloves is the sign of a leisured, rather than a labouring class, and is a potent image; the luxurious amount of material and the pleating in the dress in Plate 2 (probably hand-made) signifies the fact that many West Indians brought professional tailoring skills with them. The protagonist, Melda in Beryl Gilroy's novel of the 1950s and '60s *In Praise of Love and Children*, explains how clothing cannot be trivialised in the context of a former slave society:

I admired the skill with which she folded and caressed her clothes. They meant something special to her. I remembered what Mrs Penn had said. We valued clothes because in slavery clothes were given as a reward and thereby became part of our identity. To naked Africans they meant power and civilisation. As we walked to the shop, I watched her swaying walk that said, 'Beware! Here I come'.
Plate 6: Nurse
Mary Chamberlain's work on gender and Barbadian narratives of migration, corroborates the significance of the migration trousseau for her women subjects - '...they signal defiance and deception. "I ent show poor"', as one of her informants told her. Poverty was almost totally concealed in the photographs too - although the casual threesome in Plate 3 provides a rare example of a less than immaculate image. More usually, the 'scrimped for' costume takes on significance as the material record of the woman's journey: as the 'documents' which charted their anticipated hopes and arrival, the Gloucestershire Elders had carefully preserved items of clothing, suitcases and passport photographs from the time of their departure from 'home' in the West Indies.

Given that the photographs were a form of 'writing back', clothing and associated objects were carefully selected signs of advanced status: improved learning, for example, may be implied simply via the pen casually displayed in a suit pocket of the man in Plate 4. People were photographed on imaginary telephones, engaged in conversations with exciting new friends and colleagues, they smoked cigarettes and rested casually on pieces of Victoriana like characters on the drawing-room set of a post-war play (see Plate 5). Such highly contrived images witness the strength of the desire to communicate that their subjects were thriving. Equally, many photographs were taken in work clothes (albeit sanitised versions which have had removed any of the stains of real labour), so that posed in bus conductor's or nurse's uniform, their subject conveys the confidence of some one in a respectable trade or profession. Such photographs coexist, however, within a material racism which meant that many migrants failed to gain equivalent working conditions to indigenous workers. In Plate 6, the status of the unidentified nurse is unclear (State Registered or State Enrolled or a Nursing Auxiliary?), since the professional insignia of hospital badges, stripes, armbands, caps, sleeves and cuffs are mostly absent, though she carries text books to suggest some training somewhere. To read this image culturally would be to acknowledge contradictory evidence about a profession which was to become a prime example of bitterness and disillusionment. Having fought hard in the
Caribbean to become properly trained and qualified, women were recruited to nursing, tested in advance of joining, and assured of a proper career structure. On arrival in England, however, many nurses found themselves relegated to much lower status jobs as auxiliaries or cleaners. A Trinidadian nurse here explains what happened when she presented herself for her British uniform:

The next day I had to be fitted for a uniform. Of course, the lady in the sewing room started measuring me up for an SEN uniform. She handed me this old, patched up uniform, and I thought, 'Have I come from Trinidad for this?' I told her no, I would be getting the starched, green uniform and she said, 'But all the coloured girls are pupils'. I went to the Matron and demanded to change. They were taken back, but there was nothing they could do because I had passed the test. I didn't realise then that they thought that if you were Black, you were stupid. You learn quickly though.¹⁸

The nursing uniform, then took on the symbolic force of what had been attained in spite of racist discrimination.

We should understand, however, that the letters and photographs which embellished experience and played down disappointments may have been part of an important coping strategy to avert a downward slide into the type of depression that is captured by Sam Selvon in the closing paragraph of The Lonely Londoners:

As if, on the surface, things don't look so bad, but when you go down a little, you bounce up a kind of misery and pathos and a frightening - what? He don't know the right word, but he have the right feeling in heart. As if the boys laughing, but they only laughing because they afraid to cry, they only laughing because to think so much about everything would be a big calamity - like how he here now, the thoughts so heavy like he unable to move his body.¹⁹

This 'kiff-kaff' laughter of 'the boys' is a parody of itself, an 'extraordinary' sense of humour which operates to censor madness, control depression, conceal
despair and, at bottom, expresses the will to survive, and which George Lamming has spoken of 'as a form of protection.' It seems likely, on this analogy, that early migrants writing home would use their smiling photographs and the process of composing positive letters as an attempt to sustain or stabilise an identity in flux. Floating between their old world, as 'subjects-in-process', they (and the photographs) illustrate the search for a new metropolitan identity, and inevitably transmit the paradoxes of desire for a new identity not easily understood by those who have not experienced them.

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How can we now interpret and use the orphaned images of the photographs received, since as Stuart Hall states: 'It is difficult if not by now impossible, to recapture the earlier meanings of these photographs.' Nevertheless, he argues for their importance:

This is one aspect of the history of black migration that is going to be all too tempting to forget or disavow since it does not fit easily with current expectations. It does not fit with either 'Jamaica', the Black Nation, or 'Jamaica', the sign of the Tropical-Exotic. That is why I am pleased that this informal evidence exists.

It is certainly true that Dyche's immaculately dressed individuals refute both negative stereotypes in the popular homogenising iconography of black 'immigrants' as a 'problem' in Britain, and alternatively, the white fetishisation of the black body. But the photographs are also private documents whose subjects may hopefully still be living, and as such, any use of them will carry personal and ethical considerations. For instance, and inevitably, what is also 'missing from the picture' is what the subjects, or those who knew the subjects, could tell us about their implications. There are many wedding and social groups in the collection which depict alliances determined by the effects of migration.
Typically, the first wave of post-war migration to Britain, in the late 1940s was young and male, responding to the call for labour. Women did travel to Britain alone, also to better themselves, but often they planned to join a partner with their children at a later stage. Hinds, in *Journey to an Illusion*, explains how the immediate post-war shortage of partners affected young Caribbeans: 'In the early years there was an acute shortage of West Indian women among the newcomers. Some slick fellows would turn up at the station hoping there would be a woman who was unclaimed'. So that by the mid-1950s, new liaisons may have formed in Britain, while lower wages than those anticipated meant that it was not uncommon for the women left at home to give up all hope of receiving much-needed financial support from absent fathers. Margaret Prescod describes it thus:

And the women and children back home they just forget about. So you don't look for those letters from London or those letters from America with the 5, 10, 20 dollars or whatever, if your man is away. But if it's a woman it's a whole other story.

In such desperate circumstances, Caribbean women, with children, were tempted to seek out and join their absent partners by travelling to England, only to face abandonment. Hinds writes of:

One woman who had arrived with her nine-year-old son waited in the bitter cold of a March night until Waterloo Station was cleared, but her husband did not turn up. The police eventually called a taxi and she went to her husband's last known address, only to find that he had left about the time she was embarking at Bridgetown. The police found her a hostel which was willing to take her but not her son. No one had any suggestion as to what was to become of the little boy so the woman went back to the cold waiting-room of Waterloo Station. [...] Wives and sweethearts were more often than not the ones left stranded in waiting-rooms of stations because sometimes unfaithful husbands and boyfriends could not get rid of their mistresses in time, or just did not want to.
Any one of the men in the group photograph in Plate 7, with their white partners, may now be identified as the absent fathers of the above, although it is equally possible that some of these new partnerships turned sour, or were brief enough to become family scandals. Indeed, the enigmatic narratives suggested by the hastily covered faces of travellers who clearly did not want their arrival or meetings to be made public, in some Picture Post photographs of boat-train arrivals at a London station, hint at such fraught personal relationships.

In reading the photographs, it is difficult to resist endowing them with such 'fictional' meanings, supplying an imaginative solution to the historical void: and these acquired meanings may be far removed from what Walter Benjamin identified as that illusive 'true picture of the past' which 'threatens to disappear irretrievably'. Separated from their subjects, and their personal histories, the retrieved photographs offer themselves up to being read in ways which may support fundamentally different narratives. The Dyche studio portraits, indeed, have already proved appealing to a form of (post) modern nostalgia. Two articles in Sunday newspaper supplements offer examples of the contradictory meanings the photographs may offer and of the caution required in interpreting them. Some of the subjects were successfully traced, and these formed the basis of an article in the Sunday Express. Here, Dyche photographs are woven into a text which supports a retrospective version of the migration experience, in which Britain is still the benevolent centre of the Empire. Emboldened in the Express article is this contribution from Abdul Rasheed speaking of a Britain today:

This is still a land of opportunity. You can learn a trade here, or whatever skill you want. The state system is wonderful. The social system here does not exist anywhere else in the world. This is still GREAT Britain. People say it isn't any more, but to me British government is the very best.

But conflicting messages appear in the small print: 'All possess a dignity and grace which real life often conspired to deny them', and the copy surrounding Rasheed's photograph is loaded with contradictions: in spite of Britain being
'GREAT', he states that he feels a failure: 'I've got nothing to show for my 38 years here. I had a shoe shop but had to close it because the bank interest rates were too high.' Such statements might be easily passed over, obscured by the appealing photographs and cheerful headlines. The Express article, for example, headlined by the legend, 'Dream Tickets', sets a picture of a Barbadian, 'A happy Vera Mortlock today', against a Dyche portrait of her with her husband in the 1950s; and in the text, Vera states: 'My life has been just how I wanted.' Any mention of racism is absent from the narrative, and has become diluted into what the author, Charmaine Spencer, describes as a 'lukewarm reception'. Captions and headlines portrays a Britain as 'The Land of Hope and Glory', and insists that 'It was Britain that made my dreams come true'. And there is nothing in the photographs of the smiling subjects to suggest any alternative. Hence, what might appear as a case of a politicised editorial manipulation, could also be the result of a reluctance - identified by Gail Johnson in her work with the Gloucester elders - amongst black pioneers to publicise deeply painful aspects of their migration experience to a white readership. In this way, the fictionalisation present in the studio portraits may be further compounded.

An Independent on Sunday article chose to include different photographs, many of them unidentified. But where the Express article had confined its content to known subjects, smiling, confident and with accompanying narratives as exemplified above, in the Independent, many of the photographs have subjects that are wistful. The photographs had been previously been printed in a Birmingham newspaper and appeals for identification had had limited success, so that requests for identification and information on them haunt the Independent article: these are 'missing persons', not illustrations for the confident success stories in the Express. Even the title, 'Faces of the First Generation' carries a subtext that, for contemporary readers, implies that these are also the faces of a 'lost generation'. However, Leela Taheer recognised herself in a family photograph that she did not realise existed, and in her reaction, hints at a late-twentieth-century form of historical amnesia which severs people from
knowledge of their social roots. Of recovering that part of her history which was in danger of being buried with the photographs, Leela comments: 'It's very exciting. It's part of my history that I had almost forgotten'. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Independent's text is more complex in its discussion of the immigration experience - 'Memories of the fifties are striking for the mixture of raw racism and genuine integration': it is not homogenised into unequivocal tales of success, and considerable attention is given to effects of 'The Colour Bar'. In recognising that a defining feature of racism is the notion that miscegenation is sexual pollution, the article includes subjects who faced extensive prejudice by forming mixed relationships, and there is some discussion of how the photographs document the extent of sexual relationships between African-Caribbeans, Asians and whites. In doing so it refuses facile extremes which have it that black migrants were either totally excluded or universally well-received.

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Opening up of the narratives of history by way of new readings of the kinds of photographic evidence described above is also advocated by Salman Rushdie in Imaginary Homelands: 'They tell us not only what we have previously seen but what it is possible to begin seeing. They open our eyes.' The Dyche photographs defamiliarise the popular image of 'the immigrant', commonly portrayed as a troublesome presence on the streets, and force us to look again at their visual metaphors. Recently exhibited in a collection entitled 'From Negative Stereotype into Positive Image', we can now also consider them intertextually in relation to the photo-commentary of the Jamaican photographer, Vanley Burke, whose 'histograph[s]' capture 'the personal, social, and economic life of black people as they arrived, settled and became established in British society'. Burke's contemporary photographs of a Caribbean community in Birmingham since the 1970s, tell a very different story to that of the Dyche collection and the
stark images (presented as visual anthropology sources of 'Caribbean types') collected by Birmingham's nineteenth-century traveller, Sir Benjamin Stone. Although the Dyche photographs, when seen amongst other work, may be in danger of appropriation within its discourse, it is unlikely that they will lose their visual power. Elizabeth Edwards in the exhibition pamphlet, explains the attraction to the Dyche images:

Despite their unassuming surface, they are for me, the pivotal images in this exhibition, for they represent the resonances of the diaspora experience, documents of another spatial movement, newly migrated people en route to new identities, yet imbued with loss and nostalgia.

As documentary material for research we might regard the Dyche photographs anonymity and 'desire' to project an image as a potential problem. But if we read them as representing migrant identities in flux, engaged in an attempt to 'fix' in a photograph the outcome of their long journey, the pictures become evidence of history in the making, themselves agents in a process of transformation. Indeed as evidence of 'arrival', which may simply not exist elsewhere, they now represent a highly significant archive in the archaeology of black history. Certainly, as a resource for the present recuperative study, they provide a visual reference-point for a 'lost' generation of Caribbean women, offering important evidence in reconstructing their desire for a strong identity and self-expression during the initial period of settlement in Britain.

Hall, p.156.

Rachel Manley, *Drumblair, Memories of a Jamaican Childhood* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1996), p. viiii. Rachel Manley is, of course, describing a different aspect of the flow of Caribbeans to and from the metropolis. Her famous father, Michael Manley, had travelled to a university in England. In 1949, at the age of two, Rachel was sent back to Jamaica to grandparents, Norman and Edna, whom she had never met.

The first of a series of exhibitions, 'Being Here' documents 'the arrival of African, Asian and Caribbean communities in Birmingham during the 1950s'. The first exhibition was housed in Birmingham Art Gallery in May, 1996. This was followed by 'Being Here II', focusing on Dyche's photographs from the 1960s and held at The Custard Factory, Digbeth, Birmingham in April, 1997. The third exhibition, 'Being Here III' on Dyche photographs from the 1970s, took place in May/June 1998, at The Drum, Birmingham.

Ernest Dyche originally operated from the Palace Studio (1913-1937). The studio operated from 32 Coventry Road, Birmingham, and was a minute a way from the theatre where many of his original clients performed.


*A Long Five Years*, p. 46.


Peter James wrote and produced a display to accompany the 'Being Here' exhibitions, which gave an account of the history of the Dyche studios which included photographs of the premises, and of Ernest and Malcolm Dyche. James's display also included ephemera such as bills for services and advertisements for the studio. The display is held by Peter James, Head of Photography, Floor 6, Birmingham Central Library, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham.

French photographer, Jonathon Gregoire had operated from the studio since 1893.

I am indebted to Peter James for the use and reproduction of the Dyche photographs and for drawing my attention to the work of Elizabeth Edwards.
See Elizabeth Edwards, 'From Negative Stereotype to Positive Image', article to accompany Watershed Touring Exhibition, Watershed Media Centre, Bristol. Edwards has explored the way in which 19th century Caribbean studio portraits were appropriated by nineteenth century discourses of anthropological 'types' such as 'the negress'. For pictorial evidence, see also, 'Portraits', in John Gilmore, Glimpses of Our Past: A Social History of the Caribbean in Postcards (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1995), pp. 143-145.


14 A version of this Appendix was given as a paper, with slides of the Dyche portraits mentioned, to The Annual Conference of The Society For Caribbean Studies, Warwick University, July, 1998. I am indebted to the many insightful suggestions and comments that were offered on the portraits. In my original paper I had suggested the pleated dress in Plate 2 was likely to have been shop-bought but in discussion after the paper, historian Professor Winston James made reference to the high degree of tailoring skills routinely acquired in the West Indies. It was generally agreed by the conference participants that the dress in question was probably made at home.


17 At the aforementioned conference, one of the participants claimed that the nurse was indeed a State Registered Nurse.


20 George Lamming's address to 'A Brighter Sun: a celebration of the life and work of Sam Selvon', The Royal Festival Hall, 24 June 1995.

21 'Subject-in-process' is a term used by Julia Kristeva to explain an identity under pressure, I am applying this label to subjects of migration. See Julia Kristeva, 'A Question of Subjectivity - an interview', in Philip Rice, Patricia Waugh, eds. Modern Literary Theory (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 128-134 (p. 133). The interview with Susan Sellers first appeared as 'A Question of Subjectivity - an interview', Women's Review, 12, 19-21.

22 Hall, p. 157.
Margaret Prescod's speech to the conference on 'Women, Race and Immigration' took place in London, 13 November, 1982. The conference proceedings are recorded in Selma James, *Strangers and Sisters* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1985), p. 82.

Hinds. p. 54.

'The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognised and is never seen again. [...] For every image of the past that is not recognised by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.' Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (London, Fontana, 1973), p. 257. Translated by Harry Zohn. First published in English by Jonathon Cape in 1970.


Elizabeth Edwards discusses the way in which an exhibition of current images by Vanley Burke and Claudette Holmes, can be interpreted as a type of historical reaction against which the Dyche collection and the anthropological photographs of Sir Benjamin Stone can be read.

Edwards, 'From Negative Stereotype to Positive Image'.
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