

unifying factor in the Caribbean. Sam Selvon expresses a similar sentiment when he remarks that he is often assumed to be black and that he feels good about it "because that is what I mean when I say I'm trying to supersede racial or insular barriers, and to conceive of the whole Caribbean area as one unit" (142).

The essays on literature form a small but significant portion of the book. They deal with a wide range of authors, including Sonny Ladoo, H.G. DeLisser, Ian McDonald, Michael Anthony, Earl Lovelace, and Wilson Harris. Among the essays written by writers, those by Arnold Itwaru and Cyril Dabydeen are of particular interest, with both focussing on the politics of exile. Having asserted that emigration to Canada has intensified the sense "of silent and unrelenting homelessness," Itwaru concludes: "If we do not deal with this dilemma, . . . we remain no more than antic men . . . who embrace, dress themselves in, configure themselves and are configured by, the means of their own destruction—and are, sadly, proud of it" (206).

To attempt a synopsis of all the articles would make this review inordinately long. Suffice it to mention that the book, in its depth and scope, in the significant information it provides, and in its awareness of the complexity of the *crossing of the Kala Pani*, is probably the first of its kind and that Frank Birbalsingh has done an excellent job of editing and introducing a timely and seminal collection of essays on the Indo-Caribbean experience.

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Ian McDonald and Stewart Brown, eds. *The Heinemann Book of Caribbean Poetry*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1992. pp. xix, 236. US \$10.95. pb.

Anthologies of Caribbean writings often take suggestive titles such as *News for Babylon* or *A Shapely Fire* or *Creation Fire*. In that context, the title of this recent collection, *The Heinemann Book of Caribbean Poetry*, carries no overt or covert significance although the collection itself is quite impressive. Most of the collections with catchy or suggestive titles have one thing in common: their desire for one kind of exclusivity. Thus, Ramabai Espinet's *Creation Fire* (1990), though pan-Caribbean, contains only women's writing; John Berry's *News for Babylon* (1984) puts together works of West Indian poets living in Britain in the same way Cyril Dabydeen's *A Shapely Fire* (1988) projects the works of the West Indian diaspora in Canada. Ian McDonald and Stewart Brown, the editors of *The Heinemann Book of Caribbean Poetry*, are more than usually aware of "the anthologist's power . . . to exclude" (xvii) and they have exercised that power pretty much sparingly. This one, too, is intended as a pan-Caribbean volume and contains works by poets living in the Caribbean as well as abroad. The poetry here, however, is prominently contemporary. Usually, the most recent works of established poets have been selected, and even more typically, it has included many emerging and young poets. In the editors' words, "it is the range and variety [of

Caribbean poetry] that we have set out to represent" (xvi)—except that in the Caribbean that "range and variety" can be daunting, given the multiple permutations and combinations of languages, ancestries, and locations. Like most earlier anthologies, but excluding for example Barbara Howes's *From the Green Antilles* (1980), this is a collection of English and Creole-inflected English poetry; translations from Spanish, French, Dutch, or Portuguese have not been used. Even at that, the volume comprises of as many as sixty-one poets from eight different countries, which makes it more inclusive than exclusive.

In spite of having accommodated such a range, McDonald and Brown, at several points in their "Introduction," reveal an odd sense of inadequacy, generated perhaps by the extraordinary variety of Caribbean poetry. Or perhaps, they are aware of and anxious about the kind of precedence set in Paula Burnett's *Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse* (1986), which includes poets of the oral as well as the literary traditions and covers a wider chronological ground. However, their regret over the omission of "hundreds of West Indian poets writing now . . . because of inevitable limitations of space" (xvii) is an understandable regret and one shared by many anthologists. But, then, a reader of Caribbean poetry will also be assured to find that the reasons given for such omissions and exclusions are validated by the editors' focus on the Caribbean itself. Thus, for instance, McDonald and Brown have given "priority to poets based in and/or who seemed to be writing *into* the Caribbean" (xviii), which is an interesting response to diaspora volumes like *A Shapely Fire* or *News for Babylon*. This decision demonstrates a critical sense of the Caribbean history of migrations and cross-migrations which can problematize the way its writers are received and acknowledged both within the motherland and in the metropolis. While names of poets like Louise Bennett, Derek Walcott, Martin Carter, or Victor Questel recur and circulate frequently, there is a need to recognize other voices as well.

The present volume serves that need very well particularly because the editors rather than passively ignoring or accommodating the canon, have braced themselves against it by naming Edward Brathwaite and Derek Walcott the two extremes of divergent but equally powerful representation of the Caribbean voice, as the "big two." These editors view Walcott's poetry as adding "a distinctively West Indian voice to the Great Tradition" (xv). Brathwaite is recognized for his attention to the creolising process itself as a source for poetry. But the agenda in this selection was specifically "to emphasise the achievements of particular poets whose work is sometimes overshadowed by the 'big two'" (xvii). The poems, however, are not grouped under schools or traditions and the reader is therefore not pre-conditioned to categorize them; for example, oral and literary traditions are not demarcated separately. In an interesting disregard for traditional format, poets are arranged

alphabetically by name and not chronologically, a presentation the reader will appreciate for its convenience if nothing else.

The same healthy disregard for the conventional is evident in the choice of poems, and very few standard anthology pieces appear in this volume. In a quick comparison with the Penguin book, I found only half a dozen poems by as many writers common to both collections. (In that sense, the Heinemann volume can be a companion piece to the earlier one, complementing it with more recent poems and poets.) On occasion though, it is comforting to see familiar or favourite poems reappear, such as Edward Baugh's "The Carpenter's Complaint" (10) and John Agard's "Pan Recipe" (5), or to note that one of Fred D'Aguiar's always witty "Mama Dot" poems is here alongside his more recent "The Cow Perseverance" (66). Incidentally, this last poem strikes an interesting change of tone in D'Aguiar's poetry: it is now definitely more caustic, impatient, and even angry as he voices a suffering people "with nowhere to turn," who wait, like the perseverant cow, "for the miracle [they] need" (68). The persona in this poem writes a letter to a friend abroad, describing his own senseless world of hunger and want as he turns it "upside down to widen the gap between sense and nonsense" (66). Despair and impatience become entangled in the letter-writer's trenchant comment: "we wash cow's dung for its grain" (67).

Despair over human suffering, hunger, and pain recurs often in the works of younger poets, as in Jean Goulbourne's "One Acre," a poem about a "child with ancient face . . . upon a puny body" whose father futilely digs for yams only to find "one acre of worms" (90). In Lorna Goodison's "Gleanings," the outcasts of life "glean outside the temples of fullness / for charity dropped careless / from full sheaves above" (88). In the same context of suffering and survival, older and younger poets alike celebrate the valorous women, the mothers and grandmothers: Louise Bennett ("Jamaica Oman" 12), Edward Brathwaite ("Miss Own" 21), Anson Gonzalez ("First Friday Bell" 83), Pamela Mordecai ("Easy Life" 160), Marina Maxwell ("To My Grandmother, Lady-Woman" 136), and David Dabydeen ("Coolie Mother" 62). The stoical and resilient West Indian woman who is both a dogged "stone-breaker" and a protective matriarch has, of course, been a strong presence in Caribbean poetry. So, Brathwaite's woman, in defiance of her deprivation finds ways of "keeping her body and soul-seam together" (21). A related image of arduous physical work appears in "Lala: The Dressmaker," by Honor Ford-Smith: "The firm fat of her hands / dissolved by time into a skein of thin brown lines" (78). Also prominent are poems dealing with language, with poetry-making, and self-expression. Very often this concern has to do with the Caribbean writer's unconventional treatment of English, with the creolization of language, and sometimes with the subject of poetry itself. Victor Questel's persona, in "Judge Dreadword," is ironically found guilty of not having read Dr. Johnson, Eliot, or Whitman, of using "folkflit to get from one idea to

the next," and finally of corrupting "our language" (180-81). On the other hand, John Robert Lee's "town boy" persona in "Lusca" would like to find the "syllables of [his] roots, its language of / firm green shoots that climb from it with confidence and with trust" (125).

Similar feelings of disconnectedness or separation also dominate the many poems of exile, nostalgia, and alienation in exile. But there is a certain degree of predictability in these utterances that sometimes rings false even to my own immigrant ears. By contrast, John Agard's "English Girl Eats Her First Mango," the opening poem of the book, broaches the usual ideas of alienation, difference, race, and colour, and yet manages to be effectively ambiguous. As I have mentioned before, the editor's decision to include poets living abroad but writing *into* the Caribbean is a valuable one; but it does not justify some of the "emigrant's lament" variety of poems that pass for "writing into" the motherland. Also, incidentally, as a Canadian woman reader, I strongly feel an urge to ask why not include even one Canada-based woman poet from among, say, Claire Harris, Marlene Nourbese Philips, and Dionne Brand? Are they all held to be guilty of not "writing out and back to the Caribbean" (xviii)?

However, such editorial omissions are somewhat offset by the provision of extensive biographical sketches of the poets. These are further supplemented by fairly detailed bibliographical update on each poet. It seems to me that, aside from the considerable pleasures it provides, *The Heinemann Book* will make an excellent classroom anthology, a useful addition to the other existing collections of Caribbean poetry, particularly in its emphasis on the "cross-sections of current practice" (xvii).

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Anne Walmsley. *The Caribbean Artists Movement 1966-1972: A Literary & Cultural History*. London: New Beacon Books, 1992. pp xx, 356. £15.95 pb.

Behind the wonderment and accolade that greeted the boom of Caribbean literature and art in Britain in the early fifties, there were a few discerning people who seriously concerned themselves with the birth of this cultural movement and about its eventual shape and direction. Three of them, distinguished men of letters in their own right, Edward Kamau Brathwaite (Barbados), John La Rose (Trinidad), and Andrew Salkey (Jamaica) were responsible for organizing and encouraging the development and continuance of these creative elements. They were the nucleus of the Caribbean Artists Movement, and this most comprehensive and detailed account of how it all came about forms the nucleus of Anne Walmsley's book.

One of the many teething problems was how, and if, to encompass the writers who had already established themselves. Andrew was wholehearted in his support of the project but felt that "the writer's job was to