

Although this is a largely satisfying biography, Algoo-Baksh, one feels, treats Clarke's notorious return to Barbados and his sojourn there as Acting General Manager of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation too leniently. Clarke's goal was to use television and radio as tools in the Barbadianization of the masses. Algoo-Baksh insists that Clarke wanted Barbadians to "profit from the insights he had acquired in his quest to comprehend his own identity"; and he also wanted "to foster in the Barbadian people both a profound self-respect and an appreciation of their own culture and society" (125). However commendable a goal, Clarke's attempt to become Barbados's cultural messiah might have been regarded as decidedly pretentious, to say nothing of impertinent. The Barbadian masses were not interested in cultural salvation, and indeed Algoo-Baksh euphemistically describes the entire exercise as "an ambitious venture" (126). Algoo-Baksh, furthermore, claims that in *The Prime Minister* (1977) "Clarke's resentments are focused to serve his art, rather than his art the resentments" (142). Some readers will not be persuaded by this claim, for the novel is arguably an exorcism of his turbulent and abortive tenure as manager and sometimes reads like a revenge book.

Algoo-Baksh has mined and brought to the surface revealing facts about Clarke's life and attitudes that are valuable for a thorough study of his work. There is no question of Clarke's valuable contribution to Canadian literature. Algoo-Baksh has explained his attempt to "shake [Canadian] society out of its complacency, to disabuse it of its belief in its innocence" (185). She has also succeeded in demonstrating the crucial connection between his life and his work, and has traced in some detail Clarke's struggles to find a respectable place as a black man of letters in North America. She has also traced *en route* the development of Clarke's multifaceted and sometimes harassed consciousness, and she has given the reader a clear picture of Clarke's remarkable progress from his humble beginning as an illegitimate youngster in Barbados with limited prospects, to literary and social success and above all, to a sense of his own integrity as a unique individual.

HAROLD BARRATT



Ian Macdonald and Vanda Radzik. *Kyk-Over-Al 46/47: 50th Anniversary Issue*. Georgetown: Red Thread Women's Press, 1995. Pp. 314. US \$12.00.

The Caribbean has not been as fortunate as other regions where opportunities for publication in local literary journals and magazines are concerned. The region has not produced a journal as widely known as *Transition* (Africa), *Meanjin* (Australia), *Landfall* (New Zealand), *Canadian Literature* (Canada), or *The Literary Half-Yearly* (India). This is

not to say that there have been no anglophone Caribbean literary magazines; since the 1930s, *Beacon*, *Focus*, *Bim*, and *Kyk-Over-Al* have appeared respectively in Trinidad, Jamaica, Barbados, and Guyana. But like other Caribbean ventures, most strikingly, the West Indian Federation, which survived only from 1958 to 1962, none of these magazines either endured or endured consistently. In this unpromising sociocultural context, *Kyk-Over-Al* has proved to be the most distinguished survivor, as its 50th Anniversary issue—*Kyk-Over-Al* 46/47—so handsomely attests. To endure for fifty years in such a context, where newsprint had often been unavailable, and the supply of electricity erratic at best, is worth easily one hundred years in older and larger societies that are regarded as more developed. But survival is not all; this anniversary issue also reveals a literary sophistication in *Kyk-Over-Al* that makes it the equal of any other literary journal in the world of postcolonial literature.

Of the Caribbean journals already mentioned, *Bim* and *Kyk-Over-Al* are most alike in the sense that they are the most purely literary. This is probably because they were fathered by men who were primarily writers, *Bim* by Frank Collymore in 1942, and *Kyk-Over-Al* by A. J. Seymour in 1945; and just as Collymore became a father figure of Barbadian literature, so is Seymour revered as Guyana's foremost man of letters. No wonder that Ian McDonald, current editor of *Kyk-Over-Al* and co-editor of the anniversary volume affectionately refers to Seymour by the initials "AJS," in the same way that C. L. R. James is now known fondly as "CLR." No wonder too that splendid tributes are paid to AJS by several contributors to *Kyk-Over-Al* 46/47.

As a double issue, *Kyk-Over-Al* 46/47 is formidable in size—310 pages. It consists of a wide variety of items: excerpts from previous issues, new poems and stories, critical commentary of one sort or another, and illustrations. As one may expect, the main contributors are Guyanese, but other writers come from Belize, St. Vincent, Barbados, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and Britain. Many contributors are well known Caribbean writers and critics, implying that Guyanese literature possesses not only a national identity that is profoundly Guyanese, but also a regional identity that is just as profoundly Caribbean. Not that this dual identity is advanced to be provocative or controversial; it is presented simply as a feature of the cultural richness and diversity of the Caribbean. This is one example of the seriousness and literary sophistication of *Kyk-Over-Al* which, in the words of AJS, set out to serve as "an instrument to help forge a Guyanese people, make them conscious of their intellectual and spiritual possibilities—build some achievement of common pride in the literary world—make an act of possession of our environment" (18). In pursuit of these aims, *Kyk-Over-Al* has also given service in helping to discover new writers and to provide informed discussion of their work.

Another service of *Kyk-Over-Al* is to reflect the multicultural and artistic richness of both Guyana and the Caribbean. This is illustrated by

biographical sketches by Jan Lo Shinebourne, Clem Seecharan, and Cy Grant, among others. Most of all it is illustrated by repeated reference to aboriginal Caribbean people, for example, the Arawaks and Caribs. Anne Walmsley interviews the Arawak-Guyanese artist George Simon; Arawak characters appear in Pauline Melville's story "The Grasp of the Ant-eater"; and the title of David Jackman's poem is "A Carib remembers."

In the end, *Kyk 46/47* is packed with too much diversity for it all to be illustrated in a short review. Suffice to say that in addition to tributes, poems, stories, and biographical reflections, there are critical essays on the work of Austin Clarke and John Figueroa, reviews of seven volumes of fiction and poetry, and an entire section of 25 pages—"Guyana Prize 1994"—which discusses works submitted for literary prizes in Guyana in 1994. This section reproduces the chairman's "Opening Remarks," the Judges' Report, and the acceptance speech of one of the prize-winners. It also serves to illustrate both the all-encompassing variety of *Kyk 46/47* and its methodology; names which appear in the section (Edward Baugh and Mark McWatt) also appear in sections such as "Special Contributions" and "Poetry." Similarly, Michael Gilkes appears in two sections as does John Figueroa, Ian McDonald, Eusi Kwayana, and others.

Such recurrence of authors and consequent inter-relationship of themes is a marvellously successful strategy that captures the singularity and multiplicity of Guyanese art, literature, and culture, which is, at one and the same time, emphatically both Guyanese and Caribbean. This strategy was not mentioned either by the current editors of *Kyk 46/47*, or by AJS himself in the early years of *Kyk-Over-Al*; but it is a sophisticated byproduct of their efforts. Rupert Roopnarine uses different words to acknowledge the sophistication of the general achievement reflected in *Kyk 46/47*: "Born in the same year as the United Nations fifty years ago, in the aftermath of the decimation of great cities and the slaughter in the ovens, on the steppes, and in the trenches, *Kyk-Over-Al* was a small part of the universal assertion of civilisation over barbarism, of humanism over inhumanity, of the garden over the ashes. And this in a British colony, far from what is called the centre" (93).

FRANK BIRBALSINGH



G. R. Taneja, ed. *W. B. Yeats: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*. Delhi: Pen-craft International. 1995. Pp. 235. Rs250.

This is a strange compilation. Of the fourteen essays in the volume, only three date from the past ten years and, in the current frenetic turnover of ideas and terminologies, this hardly substantiates the "recent" in the title. The essays vary in length between 5 and 29 pages;