

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: Penguin 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;

there is no consistency in footnoting (one essay has 85 notes, one has none); the proofreading is poor and there is no index. A weak introduction by the editor does not spell out the criteria according to which essays were chosen and what emerges is a randomness in kind and quality. There are no essays specifically on the plays or the prose and it would be very difficult for a reader to gauge from this collection any directions in the current study of Yeats.

Six of the essays are on individual poems and although none offers a very novel approach to the particular poem, there are some stimulating questions and suggestions. Evan Radcliffe has a sound line on "Among School Children" in relation to Yeats's notion of "unity of being" and his view that the poem presents a certain failure but also a worthwhile aspiration is a good one. The final lines of the poem are curiously passed over without a binding interpretation. There is a similar omission in Linda Fox's essay on "The Wild Swans at Coole," where the enigmatic concluding stanza is insufficiently commented on. She offers some intriguing probes into why Yeats chose "nine-and-fifty" swans although her theory that 59 is one minute short of the hour and a point of revelation does not quite square with October and the twilight in the poem.

The most satisfactory essays are those by Debra Journet, Joseph Chadwick, and R. B. Kershner. Each of them offers something with which one can argue; there is a discursive line and a deployment of evidence which forces the reader to engage in the particular issue and assess the strength of the outlined case. Too often in some of the other essays there is a dull rehearsal of established positions or, as in the case of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a crabwise logic couched in unreadable jargon. R. W. Desai's "There Struts Hamlet: Yeats and the Hamlet Mask" is rather bitty but there are interesting possibilities in the material which might have been better realized in a fuller treatment.

Journet's "Yeats's Quarrel with Modernism" focuses on his use of "symbol," "emblem," and "image." This is slippery territory but Journet's footing is nimble. The discussion ranges across Yeats and persuades the reader to think again about these terms which are so often used as if interchangeable. On the actual question of Modernism the argument is not so deft although always stimulating. A confusion emerges between "subjective perception" that is granted a priority in Modernism and Eliot's notion of objectivity that is also deemed to be central to the movement. Furthermore, she wishes to detach Yeats as an Irishman from Modernism which she claims was, despite its French roots, basically an Anglo-American fashion, but six pages earlier she lists as the most representative Modernist writers "Eliot, Joyce, Lawrence, Pound, Woolf and Yeats": two Irish out of six seems a disproportionate tally. There are some good comments on Yeats in relation to Pound. She quotes Yeats in his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*: "Ezra Pound has made flux his theme, [sic] plot, charac-

terization, logical discourse, seem to him distractions." My text has a semicolon after "theme" and what she gives as "distractions" reads "abstractions unsuitable to a man of his generation."

"Violence in Yeats's Later Politics and Poetry," by Joseph Chadwick, is a cogently presented investigation into one of the most vexed areas in Yeatsian studies. His starting point is a statement by Walter Benjamin: "[Mankind's] self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic." Chadwick applies this claim to Yeats's later poetry. The line he follows is challenging, certainly, but it underestimates, it seems to me, two things. One is the measure of horror Yeats himself felt at the prospect of imminent times, a horror he had felt many years before when watching Jarry's *Ubu Roi* in 1896 and saw "After us the Savage God." Second, Yeats was a dramatic writer, not a statesman or a prophet and, irrespective of his own hopes or fears, he describes what he envisages with a dramatic intensity which may look like relish or approval but may mean no such thing. Nonetheless, this is a very worthwhile contribution to a central debate.

R. B. Kershner's "Yeats/Bakhtin/Orality/Dyslexia" is not entirely convincing but it brings together some fascinating material and ideas, some helpful and some not. The connection he suggests between Bakhtin and Yeats is reasonable enough but is it needed? Throughout the essay there are modish ambitions which detract from what could be a more satisfying discussion, given the obvious intelligence and eye for good examples. Kershner is extremely interesting on Yeats's manner of writing and reading and on the delivery of his verse but he pushes the evidence too far at times. For example, he describes Yeats's style of delivery as "artificial, slow and cadenced" and attributes this style to his dyslexic condition. Perhaps, but Yeats was not alone in reading in this way. Again, towards the end of the essay Kershner has some excellent comments on Yeats's syntax but he cannot leave the matter there; details on syntax are shanghaied to fit a bigger (and weaker) theory.

Notwithstanding these three good essays and various assorted items of interest in other essays, I cannot see this as a strong or representative collection of recent essays on Yeats.

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Carole Boyce Davies. *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Pp. 240. \$55.00, \$16.95 pb.

This book offers an invaluable introduction to anyone interested in an overview of the writers, critics, and issues involved in reading black women's writing. I begin with a strong assertion of approval for this book not simply out of sisterly solidarity but rather as a way of making