post Chad rev start Emancipation Day 1 Aug 97 at Cowipster

thank Marcia Tull, UJI LABCH for help widates of pub; running off again (finally) despite some LAIKS - but that's how I want it) Cowipster 29 Aug 97
angloCaribbean freed by 1834 legislation. In some Caribbean territories, the 'police/policing' officially observed marking the occasion with 'day' even if the name 'Emancipation Day' fell into 'disuse', replacing it, as did most other angloCaribbean, with an unexplained 'August Bank Holiday' and finally, in the case of Sam aica, the Independence Day on 6 August 1962.

However, again, inexplicably, midway into 1997, Barbados & Jamaica decided to establish a new national holiday named the Independence Day 1 August as Emancipation Day.
will help you to define what you're doing is often absent (t). Because we suffer there from competition for scarce resources. So that I, a writer, am seen - even by fellow writers themselves - in some kind of competition with other equally involve counterparts, and with those whose experience we share. So that I suppose the tendency to disallow - to elbow the other person/'competitor' out of the (e) way, is very very strong. Therefore one's voice isn't (t) always given - allowed - the resonance, shall we say, which sometimes you think it deserves

Now I been writing since a born, kind a thing . on the beach in Barbados, where I'm brought up. My poetry slowly develops (I'm here thinking of the hinterland(s) of Rights of Passag
(s), to be 'specific') the notion of What is Caribbean/the Caribbean? What is this - this archipelago, these beautiful islands - yes - which are contrasted in their beauty with extreme poverty and a sense - a memory - of catastrophe What is the origin of this... this paradoxical and pluraregional situation?

The image that gives me the 'answer', the on-going answer... is... one day... one day on the north coast of Jamaica, we staying in a house on a cliff overlooking the ocean and this is a sandy situation...

The yard where we staying... it's a humble - is not a Jamaica North Coast bikini situation (n) that you would go to tomorrow or at Thanksgiving. This is not the North Coast of the great hotels, James Bond, 'GoldenEye' and tourism.
This is a ole yard, okay? and this old woman is sweeping, sweeping the sand of her yard away from her house. Traditional early morning old woman of Caribbean history. She's going on like this every morning, sweeping this sand - of all things! - away from... sand from sand, seen?... And I say Now what 's she doing? What's this labour involve with? Why's she labouring in this way? all this way? all this time? Because I got the understandin (g) that she somehow believes that if she don't do this, the household - that 'poverty-stricken' household of which she's part - probably head of - would have somehow collapse.

In 1950, Derek Walcott pub the classic Sisyphean statement - 'The testament of poverty' - about this condition.
It is little I can do for those;
Politics and prose
Do equally: my heart
Is soiled by their hurt,
Applause turns anger to sport,
And time judges the technique,
Not the continual knock
In the blood's moon-wrecked tides...
I myself lived among them,
And in the brittle papered room,
I saw the wild candle
Of arson in her eyes, and the angel
Of flame in her head;
Her shame wants to burn
The paper house her sons earn,
But she died like a stone in her bed...
...So for the have-nots
In brown villages with dry nets
There is no hope falls
In martyr drops from a dry wound,
Only the common sound
Of blind love stumbling on walls.
Hate kicking over chairs,
And the curse on flesh from the blind...

SW, from 'The testament of poverty' (2002 11 (29-30), 292

Sisyphus is a term I use for the negative tra-
(d) in Caribb esp anglopho Caribb lit - esp
Patterson, Naipaul & the early Walcott/ as here
in contrast to the dorado (el dorado) trad (Harr-
is & most of the hispanic Carib & LA writers in
what becomes known as Magical Realism) See KE,
MR (forthcoming 1998) and a shorter earlier 'pre-cos-
mo' version in Annals of Scholarship (July 91)
In this poem, DW's Wo considers futility's arson > her poverty's unending future (see KB's T T of the 1990s for one poem of this sort); with Walcott's Wo's children sisyphey in this same tradition.

And her sons return with the dawn
Cursing the catch, no adventure
In the absurd economy.

Her daughter hates her indenture
To sand gardens and hovel, her animal
Spirit broken... [DW, faded]

So she's in fact performing a very important ritual which I couldn't fully understand but which I'm tirelessly trying to.

... And then one morning I see her body silhouetting against the sparkling light that hits the Caribbean at that early dawn.
and it seems as if her feet, which all along I thought were walking on the sand... were really... walking on the water... and she was travelling across that middlepass age, constantly coming from where she had come from — in her case Africa — to this spot in North Coast Jamaica where she now lives... 

That was the 'answer' to my quest/ion. The 'meaning' of the Caribbean was in that humble repetitive ritual actio (n) which this peasant woman was performing. And she was always on this journey, walking on the steps of sunlit water, coming out of a continent which we didn't fully
know how to understand, to a set of islands which we only now barely coming to respect, cherish and understand

And so my poem startle to ask the question, What is the origin of the Caribbean? How do we come from? Where do we come from? And why are we as we are? Why are we so leaderless, so fragmented, so perpetually caught up with the notion of hope and still at the same time Sisyphean? Why is our psychology not dialectical—successfully dialectical—in the way that Western philosophy has assumed people’s lives should be, but tidalistic, like our grandmother’s—our nanna’s—action, like the movement of the ocean she’s walking on, coming from one continent/continuum, touching another, and then receding (‘reading’) from the island(s) into the perhaps creative chaos of their future...
These are the things that I begin to think about and at the same time I'm involve with another model of metaphor which had liberated me from the School and school-book-imposed pentameter - worse the quadrameter - 'the boy/stood on/the bur/ning deck' (we talkin'bout COLONIALISM & COLONIAL DEADICATION) - pentameter - 'the cur/few tolls/the knell/of part /ing day' - which didn't - couldn't - gift me my nanna's mo- ment and movement and grace and terror walking on the wa- ter

'They' - these imposed meters - couldn't allow me to write the sunlight under her feet - she walk on water and in light, the sand between her toes, the ritual discourse of her morning broom. But by this time I'm listening to Miles [Davis, jazz trumpeter] - that muse/ical who was himself creating a spine of coral sound along our archipelago. Miles is singing the shadows of the clouds that move acr
oss our landscape (bear, for example, Miles' remarkable lyrical period 1957-62, w/Phil N
vans; Miles Ahead, Porgy & Bess, Sketches of Spain, Quiet Nights; w/Porgy & Bess the most 'Bajan'.

esp where the Bajan landscape & even something like Bajan (language) or rather the spirit Bajans com
es alive in 'Bess, you is my woman now' & parts of 'Buzzard Song' and 'Gone'); his music
saying it so that i begin to see it - 'Bess' becoming -

if he cd fly
he wd be
an eagle

he wd see
how the land
lies softly
in contours
how the fields
lie striped

how the houses fit into the valleys

he wd see cloud
lying on water

moving like the hulls of great ships over the land

[KK "Miles', Jah Music (Savages 1986; rev 1997)]
So it is that I begin to write a poetry of a new, more native way, corresponding also to my adult return to the Caribbean after a ten-year growing-up absence in Cambridge and Ghana; seeing our things and trying to express that way of seeing - the movement, the glitter, the kinesis of it... because what I describe to you - despite the pioneers of Caribbean poetry - had not yet been dealt with in the Caribbean in this way... We in the Caribbean have basically conceived of our cosmos as coming out of a plantation; a migration out of a plantation and moving from countryside into the city and soon/later metropole [the]...
asic expression of this is in the progression of Samuel Selvon's work (Selvon (1923–1994 b. Trinidad, live UK, Canada) from *A Brighter Sun* (1951) with 'The cane is bitter' and to *The Lonely Londoners* (1947) for a study of the theme, see K6; *Sir Godfrey & the Islands* [Boots] (1966, 1995). Even in some most 'recent' novels (e.g. Edward Anstic (1984, 1998) the theme continues—since the 'reality' continues):

petual tide of migration
- of migration in many cases, from 'native' to Other, and (therefore) not giving ourselves a history that is original and new and ancient— that understands the meadow of ancestor and ancestor (y)
In my formulation, our history starts far far beyond [before] Columbus. Far even beyond the West African sources we suppose to come from. Because I'm concerned with Africans themselves migrating out of the heart of our continent, out of the deserts of the Sahara, Sahel and far far farward into Nile and Nubia, and being transferred into the similar - no - famil
iar - forests and desert
(s) and valleys - of Sri
Lanka, South-East Asia,
Fiji, Papua New Guinea,
the Australasias, the Am-
ericas and the Caribbean
- our nanma brooming the
sand with her dawn and
walking on the water

which I attempt in this first poem, Rights of Passage
- the first poem of The Arrivants trilogy - far too simple to
say it like this - but here is the originating vision and
intention - the skid of the genesis stone on the waters
of the Caribbean - [singing kaisa] 'The stone had skidded arc'd and
bloomed into islands • Cuba and San Domingo • Jamaica and Puerto
Then I start work on the second trilogy — still unmaned
[now [Mayune97] ancestors] which started, as Nate tells you,
with *Mother Poem*, 'about' my mother's Barbados; *Sun Po-
em*, 'about' my father's Barbados, and *X/Self* — which

\[ X \]

is the 'break' — my junction/disjuncture —

the unexpected 'left angle', as it were — and we really
talkin as much if not more subtext as 'text' here — that yu ask
in me bout...
blink
Now Mother Poem and Sun Poem had to be written (to put it this way) because having created a skeleton of archipelago in The Arrivants; a string of song celebrating the movement of our people into these ilianas, I had to inhabit them with ancestors, with ghosts, with spirits, with lwa; trying for a total cosmos. I mean I know this, I have to do it. at least try for it. And at the same time it has to be also a poetry of familiar projects periods and familial people. I have to celebrate my mother and my father and the caliban people old and new i grow up with, I know and get to know. For the first time in our poetry - the novelists had of course been doing this all along - we admit - i can't describe to you the terrible limbo/lembé effect of this word - and i can find no other in or for this context - which means metaphorically - for some of you it might seem 'anachronistically' - the word/discoveries that we continually make - as if forced - and i don't mean 'coerced' - out to the surface of like a fruit or wound or sometimes the dome or
doom of the volcano - as a result of the downpressure of the colonial experience - that continues to amaze me (the surprise and power of the word/experience) - thru which we - me - as i say, 'admit' = discover = family

Now I don't know what this sounds like to you - it's such an obvious and yet devious thing. But in the Caribbean, to celebrate one's parents, sisters, godparents, aunts, uncles, santería - one's own muses, loves and lovers - was almost - for poetry - in/conceivable - and therefore im/possible - or at least practically impossible - because - again - we had no native precient - pre-ancient - prescient - model

To look into the mirror of your thoughts, to look into the mirror of your metaphor, to look
into the mirror of your self, was not to see your/self in the Caribbean but - well - else-
where - on a false-literary and imagined - migrant - mig-
rained - landscape on which you have been 'nurtured' -
on which you have been force-fee'd - on which - reall-
(y), you have been smurther ed...

To look into our mirror then & there was to see the face - or what we think was the face - of Charles Dickens or John Keats, Thack
Colette or Salvadore de Madariaga And to look into the mirror or minor of your sister is not to see your sibling but to see, at the extreme, Anna Karenina or Emma or Brooke Shields or Twiggy without the boney 'style' or some Hollywood actress star without the hope of any such what we call 'looks' or locks or wealth or fame or femme or 'glam' - we being the opposite, the out-print negatives of the very foreign ikons we hold dear and not yet 'even' Mary Wa-
ges Mary Wiggins Mary Princ-
(e) Mary Seacole Mary Braff-
it from the Round House Bay
Street whe we born an eat sa
lt bread/sweet bread on Sun-
dee afternoons

So that our mothers and fath-
ers, the people who really m-
atter, are not - could not be! - the
subject-matter - the smatters, even -
of our poetry, because they
had not been written about
everwhere, where, as Sam Se
von's calypsonian put it, real
mothers and fathers and poets come from (see Sam Selvon, 'The Calypsonian'.) S\m 17 (1992): 8. In seas s col\s inc Modern Caribb short stories, ed Satoru Tsuchiya (Tokyo 1977)

Since these days of the COLONIAL IKON, we've come like a long way, baby - tho not in my view, yet long enough. Our watershed is marked by the art of the Ja reggae film, The harder they come (1972) w/ Jimmy Cliff & a host of real-life Ja ikons. This + the pres of Bob Marley, the Wailers, the i-Trees, Michael Manley, Walter Rodney, Carlisle Guyana, Black Power & the resurgence of Rastafari - to nam (e);/identify a few stelai - all in the 70s - leads to an alternative iconography w/partial but significantly positive - or rather positively 11 DALECTICAL nativist results: the nativisation of most of our public billboards, the widening acceptance of nation-language (see k8, History of the Voice (1984); despite continuing Estab resistance; on public rad io, the pub (1995) of Richard Allsopp's (Oxford) Dict of Caribb Eng Usage, the declaration > 'bastardy' by the govt of Guyana in the 70s, the declaration - at last - by Ja & Bdos in 1997 that the 1st of August will once again be observed as (Slave) Emancipation Day, follow in (g) (in Bdos) the re-acceptance, since the 80s, of the CropOver Fes\val - the one in a sense leading to the other, tho the day after the Bdos Prime Minister declares Emancipation Day, he announces the 'Snipster' agreement w/the US under which US security ('anti-drug') forces are given permission (in the off formulation the US assumed its RIGHT) to intervene & interdict in Caribbean waters & on Caribbean territory in the 'war on drugs - another contradictory neo-colonial 'mask' - whatever it finds necessary to intervene &/or interdict against

**a note on colonialism/see-colonialism**

It was Fanon, I think, echoed by Tsetsi Dangarembga (1988) [A female writer] who speaks of colonialism as a 'nervous condition'

This *Conversations* is really my first (& unexpected, unintentioned) effort to deal w/my personal relationship to this
the first stage of colonialism - in our case coming out of Plantation Slavery - which means that we begin our colonial period already colonized - but there is or shd be

1 native resistance

2 acquiescence/accommodation (‘strategic’ sometimes often practical/empirical). During this period there is effort by colonizer (CLONE or COLON/ier) to impose controlling versions of his/her culture on the colonized; with esp the elite of the colonized taking this up in xchange for share in the new dispensation

3 return of nativisation (NAM): protest, often rebellion, sometimes prolonged (as Basque, IRA Irish etc)

4 if rebellion is successful, there is eventual political independence from colonialism (eg the Am Rev); the cultural independence, nativisation etc remains (more) problematic, w/the postcolonial elite usually hanging on to their priv colonial position

5 cultural Rev usually xpressed as grassroots or ethnic (eg Black Power [c.1967-c.1980] in the Caribb) rebellion; with the postcolonial elite taking increasing paradigmatic energy from this movement in order to retain their position

6 at this stage [now Aug 97] (this is the reality of late 20th cent dev) there occurs varying degrees of RECOLONIZATION as result of SuperPower military, political & certainl econ (neomercantilist) needs/pressures/priorities/greeds. This introduces new contradiction/conflicts in(to) the situation, often accompanied by ABASSA/SISE/SEKOU/ Pinochet-like seizures of Power (in alliance w/one or other of the superPower/mercantilists) at the xpen of nativism (‘freedom’, emancipation’, ‘independence’ etc etc etc) Cf Eric Williams’ political manifesto
March day done (Port of Spain, Trinidad 1961) w/The Mighty Gabby’s Crop-over prize-winning (‘monarch’) calypso of the same name (Brown, Bdos Aug 1997)

For much of this see, for details, KB, The Love Axe/1 - forthcoming since the mid-70s but ‘delayed’ by Estab pub strategies and now forthcoming hopefully 1998/99 - but again under pressure - the ‘lit lost six times - the author increasingly weakened w/age & other commitments etc etc etc.

With regard to my sisters, they now have Imani & Naomi Campbell to see themselves at + an increasing number of poets, singers, authors leaders & Iwa (Oya, Oshun, Yemanja etc) - tho she still Mayun (e) o? don’t yet have a film star icon of her own, despite the real-life ‘Mary’ icons I invoke above. These Marys appear in detail in my NYU Comp Lit classes in Carib cosmology/iconography

And so Mother Poem is at last a poem about my mother and increasingly the social world that she created - slowly slowly ever so slowly - like the polyp - and at the same time ?therefore, a poem about the island, the coral limestone colour from which she comes