

my trinidad

Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow.

March 2024. Issue #03, Volume #15



THE TRINIDAD & TOBAGO
RED CROSS SOCIETY

"Respecting humanity,
giving service to all."



Inside:
Creatures of the Night

Exploring some Trini Folk Tales

The Ghosts of Macaulay, II

Wickedness, Prejudice and Injustice

www.mytrinidad.net



My Trinidad Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow is a monthly digital magazine capturing the essence of Trinidad, the most southerly of the Caribbean islands. It offers a nostalgic look at the island that was, and casts a skillful eye on the island that is, in an attempt to enlighten readers to the island's potential.

Its editorial vision is based on the old English philosophy that you can't really know where you are going unless you know where you've been.

In an effort to fulfil that vision our cast is made up of Trinidadian nationals at home and in the Diaspora who represent some of the most thoughtful minds of the day. In terms of infamy as opposed to celebrity, they are as follows:

- Dr. Johnny Coomansingh (President)
- Raynier Maharaj (Editor)
- Margaret Ann Syne (Publisher)
- Kin Man Young Tai (Assistant Publisher)

- Peter de la Bastide
- Reetoo Deonarinesingh
- Kathryn Stoltmeyer Wight (emeritus)
- Gerard Stoltmeyer Wight
- Gerard Pemberton
- Dawad Phillip
- Dr. Kenneth Ramchand
- Motilal Boodoosingh
- Yvonne Bobb-Smith
- Glenda Jack
- Judith Ramsey

Anthony Deyal (Founder)

My Trinidad is a not-for-profit publication graciously supported by the advertisers you see on your pages (we urge you to support them too). As a result, we are not beholden to any corporate sole, shareholders, political parties or big businesses, but instead strive to represent the 99%, as we all deserve a country to live in or claim heritage to, of which we can be justifiably proud.

Any income generated from this magazine will go directly towards a children's charity to be established.

If you wish to receive My Trinidad on your smart device, please subscribe to subscribe@mytrinidad.net. There is no cost to your subscription.

The views of readers will be welcomed, and when possible, published. We reserve the right, of course, to edit same. All opinions offered in this magazine are not necessarily those of the publisher and editor.

Cover Art: Kite Season by David Subran

Easter & Literature

What's inside! It is here for you to read about some of our main men of MyT participating in the 26th Annual Literature



Margaret Syne

Publisher's Note

Week 2024, on 11th – 15th March at the UWI. Included is a synopsis of Trini culture

in more ways than one. There are musings in a teacup and the display of grit and determination of a local model/ beauty queen. You will enjoy an interesting six-minute history lesson along with the critique of a timeless 'top of the chart' hit. Move along to our Trini folklore of nocturnal creatures and the tragic love story of The Ghost of Macaulay Pt2. We have a child's story, wonderful photos of SW Trinidad, avifauna and the scenic Columbus Bay. We continue with Pt 2 of a village soap opera, which features a helpful but lusting teacher, together with a

simple recipe for hot cross buns to enjoy over the Easter holidays.

MyT can now be found on Caribbean News Global. This is a platform for Caribbean affairs, news, strategic communication and related services with a global dimension.

In this month of March, we celebrate: International Women's Day Friday 8th. This year's theme: 'Count Her In: Accelerating Gender Equality Through Economic Empowerment' All the Best to women the world over!

- Maha Shivratri Friday 8th
- Holi 25th
- Good Friday 29th
- Spiritual/Shouter Baptist Liberation Day Saturday 30th
- Easter Sunday 31st

It is also our local Kite season in Trinidad and Easter sports in most communities.

Be mindful of Rip Tides and rough seas at our lovely beaches. Keep your eyes on the kids!

Have a Happy and Safe Easter Vacation !



The Easter weekend is a time for kite flying in many Caribbean countries, including Trinidad. This year, Easter falls early at the end of March

The Ghosts of Macaulay (Part II)

Wickedness, Prejudice and Injustice

While Abrafo was being whipped, between the tears, Hunu was simultaneously scolding Efuia for talking too much. Efuia was also sobbing relentlessly, not because she was sorry for her actions, but for the man she loved who was tied to the whipping pole. She realized that the situation was now hopeless. She lost! Efuia's attitude and forwardness resulted in utter confusion in the Macaulay household. She interfered in matters that did not concern her. Jealousy got the better of her.



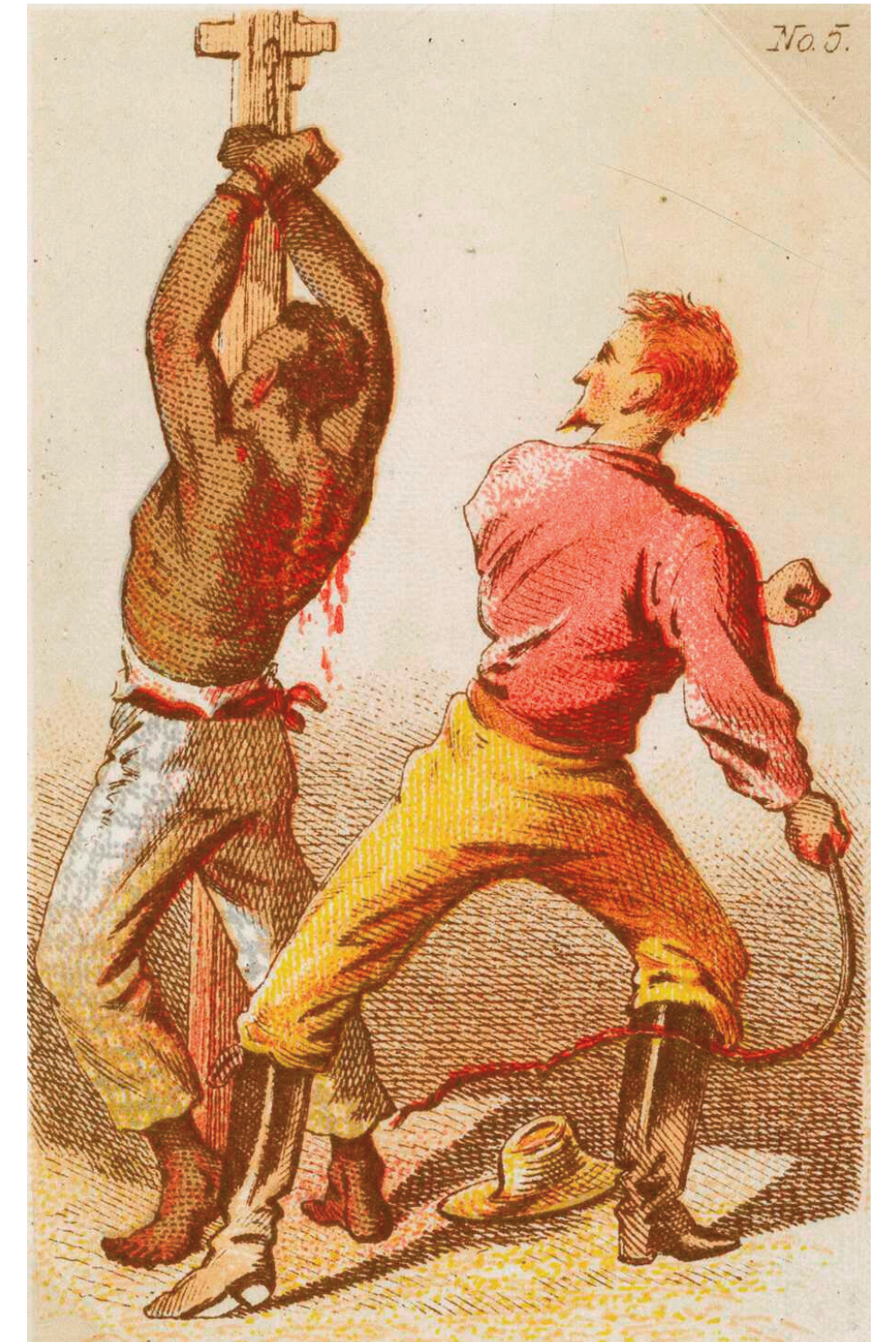
Johnny Coomansingh

The residents of the entire village were present on the hillside looking down at every stroke of the whip that fell on Abrafo's back. This was a sad day for all of them. They saw the glaring eyes and the evil grin of the whip master. Blood trickled down Abrafo's back staining the top of his trousers. As they stood there, thoughts about retaliation ran through the minds of the group. Abrafo's body was now limp and it seemed that he was going to die. After the whipping, the young men consulted each other and planned that they would get the better of the Macaulay's for their wickedness, prejudice and injustice. They decided to set fire to the cane fields, the stables and the manor house. It was late in the evening when Hunu and a few of the young men came for Abrafo. He was still alive. They took him home and nursed him there with herbs and hot soups. In the confusion, no one thought about Roane.

Night came. All was quiet until mayhem broke out. Quietly they set fire to everything. The Macaulays and all the drunken slave drivers were asleep. The fire spread so quickly and fiercely that Mr. Macaulay and all the slave drivers were burnt to death. Although a little scorched here and there, somehow Maisie survived. Before the fire was set, the cows, horses, mules and donkeys were set free. The cane fields blazed like an inferno. Roane was trapped; she couldn't escape. The fire blazed ferociously. The angry tongues of flame reached out but couldn't touch her. She was inside a big circle. She could not run anywhere. Sadly, she slowly perished as she succumbed to the smoke and heat. When the fire died, they found her lying flat on her stomach in the middle of the circle. Covered with ash, it was as though she was protecting her unborn baby. There was nothing left of the manor house, nothing left of the stables. Even the whipping pole was burnt to the ground. Maisie found refuge with the slaves in an empty shack next to Hunu's house. For several hours each day, Maisie would sit staring into the sky. To her, this was just a bad dream. She looked as though she had lost her mind.

For Abrafo, this was the end of his world. Everything he hoped and lived for was wretchedly snatched from him. Roane and his unborn child were gone forever. This was too much for him to bear. Without any fanfare, Roane was buried under the samaan tree in a simple grave. Abrafo fell face down on the grave and wailed incessantly for his love. "Roane, Roane, why did you have to leave me like this! I love you Roane! I will never stop loving you! How can I live without you?" Sadness enveloped the village as Roane was laid to rest.

After Roane's burial, the village of slaves remained in their little hov-



els. They had nowhere else to go. The news about emancipation reached their ears and they waited patiently while they tended their yams, corn and a few chickens. Sometimes hunger got the better of them. Their subsistence farming did not always provide for all their needs. Nevertheless, they made do with whatever they had. Maisie was still with them. From the way she behaved, she appeared to be going crazy. Her words were few. In one fell swoop, everything she possessed was taken away from her. She barely ate the food Hunu gave to her.

Every day around four o'clock in the afternoon, Maisie would walk up the knoll to Roane's statue. She would sit there clutching to the base of the statue weeping her soul off. Her long stringy hair, tear-stained face and tattered dress, the only dress she had, did not make of her a pretty picture.

Continued on Page 14

The Day Trinidad Became A Republic

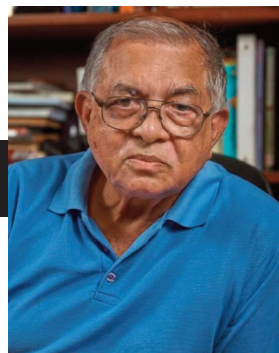
(Trinidad and Tobago became a Republic on August 01, 1976. The event is celebrated as a public holiday on September 24th because this is the date when the first Parliament met under the new Republican Constitution).

On September 24, Trinidad and Tobago celebrated Republic Day. I remember when the idea was first raised many people, familiar with the examples of the neighboring South American republics, were very much against it. They thought it would initiate an era of lawlessness, crime and coups. These are not the only things that characterize my country. One other characteristic is the distinctive dialect. I remember when, as a student in Canada, I was talking spiritedly to another Trinidadian. A Canadian roommate afterwards asked me, voice lowered, "Tony, why were you singing to Charles?" It was the first time that anyone had ever accused me of the ability to sing, or thought that I would waste so precious a gift on a man.

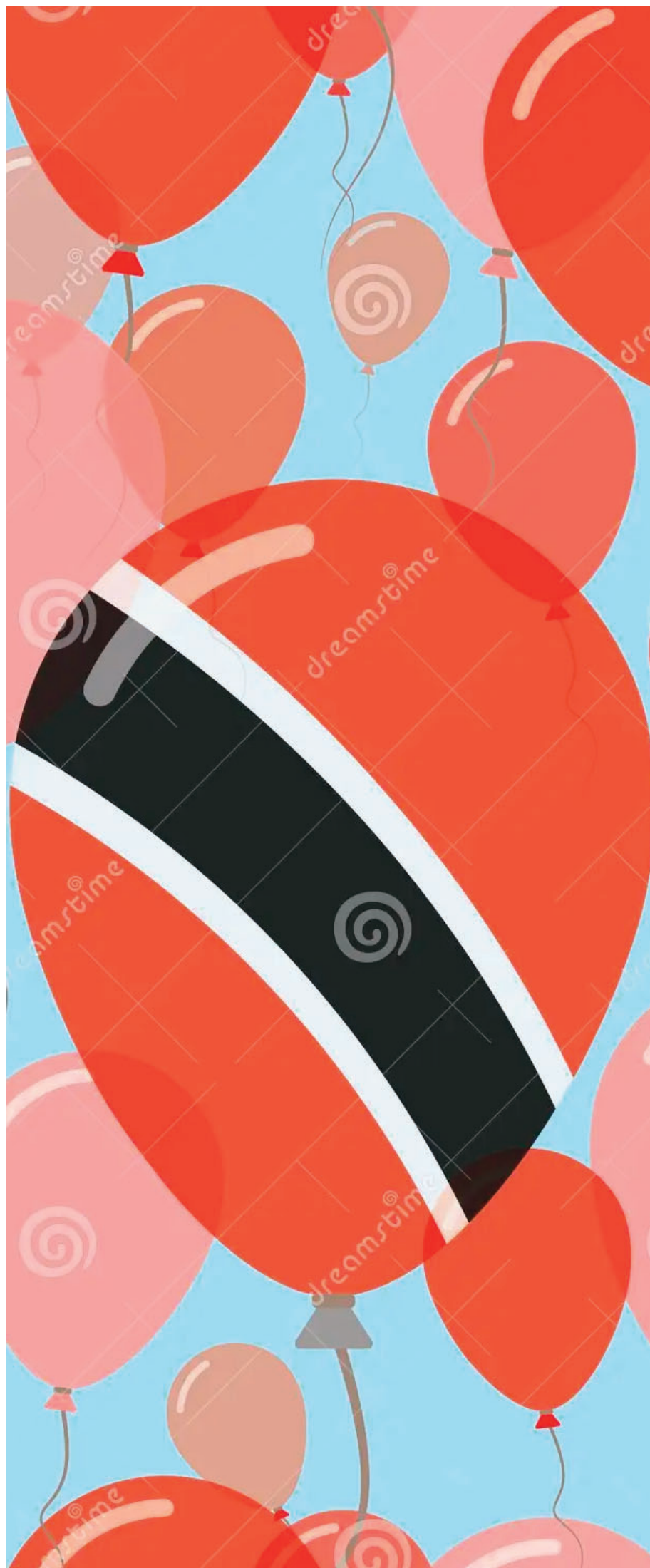
Our dialect (argot, idiom) is the language of calypso and soca, compounded of the many variations- African, Indian, Spanish, French, Syrian, even Chinese--on the common theme of English. It is our truly native tongue. I remember once hearing one of my countrymen at an international conference give a brilliant speech in perfect English, BBC accent and all. As he sat to tremendous applause he leaned over to me and asked, "How ah talk? Good?"

Another key characteristic is the mixture of many people, what Archbishop Tutu, on his first visit to Trinidad, called "the rainbow country." I remember one Canadian lady, ironically the daughter of that country's External Affairs Minister at the time, asking my friend Charles, "How come you look African and Tony looks so much different, Indian almost, and yet you both are from Trinidad?" While there is still volatility to the mixture, a certain flammability resulting from the "divide and rule" policy of the British and the politicians they spawned and who succeeded them, it will settle in time. Already, it is evident that the music was fusing even as the races were feuding.

Out of that m \acute{e} lange, not yet a melting pot, still somewhat a tossed salad, has come a culture, which has already impacted significantly, on the culture of the world. Trinidad's Carnival has inspired many other Carnivals and the country remains, in spite of different claims about the parentage of the steelpan, the steelband capital and mecca of the world. Its distinct "Chutney" music, based on the language and rhythms of India, is being copied by artistes from the Indian sub-continent. It has exported Vidia Naipaul and helped to shape the work of Derek Walcott. If it has a problem is its parochialism, even paranoia, about people "stealing" its culture, not recognising that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Someday, it will be mature enough to understand this and to understand that culture is not something you put on a stage for tourists to applaud, but it is everything you are and all that you value, cherish and hold most dear.



Tony Deyal



The Triumph of Yolandra John

A Journey of Resilience and Friendship

I remember the day in 2006 when Yolandra John graced the rehearsal space at UWI's Black Box on Agostine Street, St Augustine. A sense of inevitability hung palpably in the air. Yes, look de winner reach!



Joseph Lopez

I silently acknowledged, while whispers of admiration echoed sentiments of her unrivaled stature: I then said to myself again, 'hmm, dey cya beat she, not even with a ten-foot pole.' Yolandra, standing tall at six feet plus, exuded an effortless charm in her ensemble—a distressed short jeans grazing her thighs and a yet stylishly tied Digicel jersey. Little did I know then that she belonged to the esteemed Digicel Promotion Girls team and was about to share our journey as a fellow contender in the Mr. Manhunt and Ms. Tourism TT competition.

Before delving further into the narrative, permit me to set the scene of DCF Black Box—a wooden edifice, painted obsidian, nestled amidst the verdant expanse of UWI St. Augustine.

Here, amidst its hallowed confines, the cadence of rehearsals and classes in Theater and Performing Arts echoed ceaselessly. From grand university productions to intimate student plays, this sanctum bore witness to the passage of time, nurturing the fervor of theater enthusiasts such as myself.

Ah, but there is much more to unravel! I, too, grappled with the rigors of the program I initially enrolled in, daunted by the demanding nature of Theatre Arts classes, especially as a working student. Lost in the throes of my burgeoning career in TV and media, the corridors of academia seemed like a distant echo. Yet, destiny led me to avenues beyond UWI, offering more flexible pathways to academic pursuits. But ah jump de story! Returning to our protagonist, Yolandra's entrance into the scene marked a watershed moment—a silent proclamation of her intent to claim the crown. She, a contender in Miss Tourism TT, and I, in Mr. Manhunt TT, embarked on parallel journeys of self-discovery.

However, I digress, for the tale unfolds further. Despite my modest height and struggles with self-doubt to pursue a modeling career, fate intervened. A chance encounter with a passing stranger one day, a whisper of possibility, "Joseph, have yuh ever try modeling? Yuh have de face!". In that moment, incredulity mingled with newfound resolve, propelling me towards uncharted horizons. I was aware that my face might have the potential to secure me a spot in a show, but my height, or rather lack thereof, instilled a fear of limited opportunities.

Kudos must be accorded to the renowned designer and masman, the late Dexter Jennings, whose benevolent guidance provided me with a lifeline amidst turbulent waters. Buoyed by his mentorship, I had a chance to navigate the labyrinthine corridors of the fashion world, earning opportunities to walk runways locally and regionally that seemed beyond reach.

Ah!! But ah jump de story again!! Returning to the crucible of competition, that Yolandra and I entered back in 06, somehow, I managed to beat both male and female contestants in the photogenic challenges. To be completely honest, that was the only award I won in the entire show. Apart from that, I didn't place in the top finals of the show, and I knew

that I had loss like a bat (Laugh Out Loud). As I foresaw from day one, Yolandra emerged victorious as the winner of Ms. Tourism TT. Fast forward 16 years later, and Yolandra, who has dedicated her life to philanthropic work in her community of Point Fortin, collaborating with young girls and the elderly, creating a platform to amplify her voice for change, and inspiring women locally, regionally, and internationally, has not only put Trinidad on the map as one of the most celebrated top models in this country with a successful career in modeling but has also represented the beautiful borough of Point Fortin and TT at Mrs. Globe Competition.

Yolandra traversed a myriad of obstacles on her journey, particularly in securing sponsorship to cover the expenses associated with the pageant, essential for her voyage to China. Despite the formidable challenges, she exhibited unwavering determination and resilience. On March 9th, 2024, at 10 AM Trinidad time, Yolandra ascended to the esteemed position of first runner-up in the prestigious Mrs. Globe competition. This competition unfolded almost concurrently with the Miss World pageant, capturing the nation's rapt attention as Ache Abraham vied for the crown in India, while Yolandra fervently contested for the Mrs. Globe title.

From the outset, Yolandra commanded a formidable presence, garnering immense support from social media advocates who championed her cause. Voted as the people's choice for the crown by her fellow delegates and bestowed with the honor of the best speech award, Yolandra's ascendancy was a testament to her unwavering grace and eloquence. The synchronicity of these pageants with the global celebration of International Women's Day adds an extra layer of significance to Yolandra's remarkable achievement.

As someone with the privilege of knowing Yolandra for over two decades, I am deeply moved by her indomitable spirit and unwavering resolve in the face of adversity. She has not only defied the odds but has exemplified the transformative power of perseverance and resilience. With the steadfast support of her family and close friends, Yolandra has demonstrated that no obstacle is insurmountable, and every dream is within reach. Although national recognition for Yolandra's triumph at Mrs. Globe may have fallen short of expectations, what truly resonates with me is the unwavering solidarity displayed by the community of Point Fortin and environs. Their unwavering support, rallying behind Yolandra at every turn, underscores the profound impact of her journey and serves as a testament to her status as a force to be reckoned with.

Fast forward to the present, where Yolandra's narrative continues to unfold with chapters of triumph and perseverance. Despite encountering obstacles on her path to Mrs. Globe, she refused to succumb to despair. With unwavering determination and the support of her loved ones, she transcended adversities, culminating in a triumphant showing as the first runner-up.

As the curtains draw to a close on this saga, I hope we can glean inspiration from Yolandra's journey—a testament to the power of resilience, the potency of dreams, and the unwavering support of the community. May her story serve as a clarion call to pursue our aspirations relentlessly, for with grit and determination, no summit is beyond reach.

Hot Cross Buns

Prep Time: 10 Mins Rising Time: 2 hours Cook Time: 20-30 Mins

1. Place in a large bowl: 1 cup lukewarm water; 2 pkg yeast (22g); 2 tsp sugar. Allow this to bloom.

2. After the yeast is ready, add in the same bowl: 1 cup whole milk; ¼ cup cooled melted butter; 2 beaten eggs; ½ cup sugar; 1 tsp salt; 2 tsp vanilla extract; 1 tsp lime juice. Mix this well.

3. Now add again in the same bowl: 4 cups Flour [from 6 cups (saving 2 cups for later)]; 2 tsp cinnamon; 1 tsp nutmeg; ½ tsp ginger. Mix into a sticky dough.

4. Toss around 1 cup of seedless raisins in the remaining 2 cups of flour. Add this combination raisin mixture to the batter. Incorporate well. Place in an oiled bowl. Tap a bit of oil on top of dough. Cover with plastic wrap first, then with a damp kitchen towel. Let rise for 1 hour, or until double in size.

5. When dough is ready, section into balls. This should yield about 2-3 dozen balls, (depends on the size)



Form into round balls and place onto 2 greased cookie trays, gash (in a cross X or whatever pattern you prefer) the tops with a pair of kitchen scissors and leave to rise for an hour or until double in size. Bake in a preheated oven: 350 F for 20 – 30 minutes or until golden brown.

6. During bake time, make the Glaze: In a bowl, sift 1 ½ cups Icing Sugar, slowly add tiny amounts of citrus juice (or milk), and mix well until thick and smooth.

7. Remove cooked buns from oven. While still hot, pour the glaze over the top of the buns. When set, remove from the tray and serve.

[Alternatively, divide into 2 equal parts, roll out into 2 sweet bread rolls if you prefer.]

Enjoy! Bon appétit! Try it! All for you!



Habitat for Humanity[®]
Trinidad & Tobago

Air on the G String

No matter what the decade, the most remembered and treasured time in anyone's life is one's teen years. It was a time of 'first socializing' with friends, and a time to attend many a 'get-together', parties and fussing over music. Here in Trinidad, we had many choices: local, regional and international. My friends and I were into popular music. We



Margaret Syne

loved certain songs so much that we could not wait for the radio's top 100 on weekends. If one were lucky enough to have older siblings, chances are they had tapes and record discs at home. What luck! When I was a pre-adolescent, 'live bands', called combos in those days, were the in thing. I was still in primary school, when a neighbor of ours used to have a combo/ music band practice on the weekends. I used to sit on our porch and listen to them. I fell in love with the combo's organ music. Quite different from the church organ, I dare say.

One weekend, they were practicing 'A Whiter Shade of Pale'. What does that mean? I was captivated. It was mysterious and yet poetic. I had no facts but was totally taken in. I just loved that piece of music. As I listened to the words, I got even more confused. For the life of me, I could not comprehend the lyrics. It was all strange and confusing language. As the years went by, I memorized the song as the melody haunted my soul. Fast forward to today, when I found the time. No! I made the time to research the song that remained a classic, here at home in Trinidad and globally. I researched magazines like 'Uncut 2008' and a few recorded interviews with Keith Reid and Gary Brooker. The mystery fog cleared up the elusive melody and tantalizing lyrics in some ways.

To simplify matters, this song was composed in London, in 1967 by a band called Procol Harum [a mis-spelt Latin phrase 'Procul Harum', which means 'far beyond these things']. It was a period in history that introduced the hippie lifestyle: free love, free sex, drugs, long hair, miniskirts, flower power teens and young adults, free expressions and any excuse for a party! In contrast with the times, the lyrics were not drug-induced but books influenced it: tales, mythology and poems. Incredible but for real! The first verse was derived from a poem by John Milton. Fandango is a Spanish/Portuguese dance.

The lyrics are about a man at a dance party. He was in a club with friends and other people. There is a bar and too many drinks were being served. They were dizzy, ecstatic, and were swept away by the dance and music. He lost himself among the drinks. He is with his girlfriend, with whom he is in love and she is a virgin. The girlfriend lost her virginity in a drunken seduction that night, and to his disbelief, broke up with him! 'Her face at first just ghostly, turned a whiter shade of pale'. She left him! Therefore, it's a girl leaves boy story.

Keith Reid composed the enigmatic lyrics. He said it was to



conjure a mood: evocative and mysterious, which was done deliberately. He wanted his words to metaphorically paint a picture of surrealism like that of Salvador Dali. A visual art abstract conveyed into an auditory version in music. At that time of 'Summer Love', there was nothing like it! Reid was experimenting with the Bach classic intermarrying with 60s pop. The colour white in this song is symbolic of purity as he mentioned the Vestal Virgins from ancient Rome. The mythology also included Neptune and the mermaids. I assume the plethora of characters was intended to have people struggle in the abstraction, to solve the puzzle of words over half a century later. Like my attempt right now!

'As the Miller told his Tale', in the repeated chorus was about Geoffrey Chaucer's Miller from the Canterbury Tales. What was the tale about? It was all about sex! Chaucer wrote raunchy stories called 'tales' in his books, one of which was 'The Miller's Tale'.

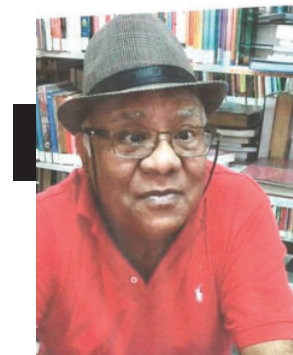
The front man Gary Brooker, and Matthew Fisher provided the music/melody. The melody begins with a powerful, haunting, esoteric feel. Matthew Fisher distinctively played it from a Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) composition. Bach's classic 'Air on the G String' influenced the song's melody. They then took it and zoomed into everlasting stardom!

This is not a 'Fool's errand', but if you have the time, listen to the lyrics again. Trinis have an instinctive notion in their DNA to sing incorrect lyrics. A grin and a giggle! We all know that! Seriously now, this song is one of the most beautifully composed songs in recent history. Two extra verses are not usually played. Locate the full version; it shall be well worth your while.



Teacher Kern, Part 2

The Chandrika's were strictly vegetarian. Kern was accustomed to eating meat, fish and even beef and pork after his family had converted from Hinduism. He was missing his regular fare. After school, he would go to the various restaurants and bars in Penal, especially Harry's in Clarke Road for a roti and beef or some fried or roast pork. He became



Mootil Boodoosingh

friendly with another patron, Siew, who was Kamala's cousin and who came from a family of Pundits, where meat was prohibited at their home. They became firm friends and Siew who was a heavy drinker encouraged him to have a few drinks. Kern who never drank before found that he liked how it felt and when Kamala mentioned that their sexual relations were better after he had a few, Kern began drinking more regularly.

Chandrika Baba was very rich. Apart from his lucrative practice as a Pundit, he owned a large cocoa and coffee estate in Lachoos Road and had several houses that he rented out. In addition to Kamala, he had two sons. As was traditional in Hindu families at this time, he had decided that his sons would share his properties. Because Kern had received no dowry, the marriage being expeditiously performed, Chandrika Baba gave the couple a lot of land where he built a concrete flat, and gave them some money to start their life together. Many of the young men in the village envied Kern for most of the houses around consisted of thatched roofs and mud floors.

Meanwhile, Kern was called in by his head teacher. He would no longer be allowed to teach at Debe Pres. His father in law organized a

position at Ramai Trace Hindu, where Kern continued his teaching career. With no rent to pay, no house to build, or land to buy and with husband and wife working, life was good. Kern bought a brand new blue Zephyr Six and was one of the few men in the village, who owned a car.

When baby Sandra came, there was a big Barahee with singing, dancing and much celebration with Baba's wife directing. It was rumored that there were a few bottles of Vat 19 and since he moved into his own house, Kern had resumed cooking meat. Therefore, there were chicken and goat and duck deliciously curried. Kamala would still not permit beef or pork.

Kamala's mother stayed a while and when she returned, Kern hired a helper cum baby sitter. Gauri lived three houses away. She was sixteen, had left school, and completed one year at Rajo's sewing school. Her parents wanted to get her married but she was not too happy with this. She jumped at the opportunity to babysit Sandra for not only would she get an opportunity to earn some money but also have access to Kamala's books, magazines, newspapers. She also listened to the radio shows "Second Spring" and "Dr. Paul" for she had no radio at home.

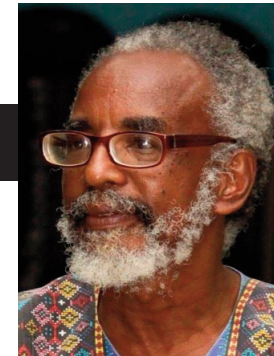
After maternity leave, Kamala returned to work leaving the baby in Gauri's care. She would see about the baby, sweep the house and prepare a meal for when the teachers came from work. She called them Sir and Miss as befitting their status as teachers. Kern would drop his wife at Clarke Road Hindu and then go to Ramai Trace Hindu passing his house on the way back. Frequently Kern would stop on his way from Clarke Road as if he had forgotten something.

Continued on Page 12

A Six-Minute History Lesson

Where Calypso went? - Bro Valentine

In 1912 in New York City, they recorded the first calypso By Lovey's Orchestra, a band from Trinidad the record could show This orchestra was led by George Bailey, the musician not the masman The tune was entitled 'Mango Vert' so Calypso recordings began



Zeno Obi Constance

In 1914, two years later, Julien Whiterose and one Jules Simms Gave to Calypso its first vocal recordings In 1921 Railway Douglas open the first Calypso tent

And from then to now I keep asking where the hell the calypso went?

For since in the early 20's Sa Gomes sponsor Lion and Tiger Our calypso music was attracted by a recording company they call Decca It was recorded before all that jazz and so much other music But somewhere along the way Calypso has lost its magic Just when we feel the Calypso would skyrocket all over the Continent It took a nose dive in the Savannah and then back to the frigging tent

FOOTNOTES

1. George Bailey, the Mas' man, was one of the great bandleaders of TnT. His 'Back to Africa' remains a signature piece in the history of mas'. George Bailey - Lovey's orchestra - check the CD 'Calypso Pioneers', recordings of early calypso music 1912 - 1920.

2. Mango Vert - the popular folk song of yesteryear. "Ah want a penny to buy mango vert, mango vert ./ Gimme a penny to buy mango vert, mango vert"

3. Julien Whiterose along with Jules Simms, bandleaders / Chantwells of the early 20th century. See the record/CD 'Calypso Pioneers'

4. Calypsonian Walter Chieftain 'Railway' Douglas, so named because he worked at the railway. He would introduce tarpaulin as a covering for the yard thus renaming it a tent which name still holds today.

5. Eduardo Sa Gomes, a businessman who organized /sponsored the first calypsonians to go to the USA to make recordings.

Actually Lion and Atilla (not Tiger) were first to go.

6. The Roaring Lion, Rafael de Leon, one of the all time great calypsonians - Mary Ann, Netty Netty, Papa Choonks among his many hits.

7. The Growling Tiger, Neville Marcano, crowned first ever Calypso Monarch in 1939. Sang 'Money is King' and 'The Gold in Africa', among his many great kaisos.

8. Decca recording company of the USA.

9. The Queen's Park Savannah in Port of Spain, for many years the home of Carnival, Calypso and Pan.

In the early 30's Calypso reach Harlem's black community Pioneered by Sir Lancelot, the Duke of Iron and Houdini Sam Manning, Bill Rodgers, the Duke of Malborough Not forgetting Gerald Clark and Lionel Belasco Look how long the Calypso was on the international scene Until a man named Morey Amsterdam brought it where the pasture was green

'Rum and Coca Cola the Andrew Sisters said it all



The tune sold 7 million copies and Lord Invader he had a ball 150 US thousand dollars he got for this calypso And for composing the melody, Belasco he got something

FOOTNOTES

1. Harlem in USA, the main centre for Black cultural activities in the 1940's to 1970's

2. Sir Lancelot (Lancelot Victor Pinard) (1903-2001). In 1939, he left for New York. He featured in over a dozen films writing and singing calypsos including the movie I Walked With a Zombie the first movie to include a calypso.

3. Cecil Anderson, the Duke of Iron, moved from Trinidad to New York in 1923, died in 1968 at the age of 62. Also preformed in a couple movies.

4. Often called the "Calypso King of New York," Wilmoth Hendricks Houdini (1895-1973) was the first calypsonian to have a successful career in the United States.

5. Sam Manning was one of the first Trinidadians to make a substantial impact in the international music world. In the early 1920s, he moved to New York. Died in 1960 while traveling in Africa.

6. Bill Rogers, Guyanese born vaudeville performer, famous for his hit song "West Indian Weed Woman"

7. Gerald Clark, bandleader of the period.

8. Duke of Malborough, (James Adilla) early calypsonian, first sang in French patois during the 1890's

9. Lionel Belasco was born in Barbados in 1881 and raised in Trinidad. By 1900, he was leading his own band and, in the mid-1910s, he moved to New York. In 1943 he published a songbook that included a piece called "L'Année Passée." The melody of the song (from a Martiniquean folksong) was the tune used by Lord Invader for his calypso "Rum and Coca Cola". Belasco died in 1967 in New York

Continued on Page 16

Lamentations, Skeletons and a Mysterious Man

The Department of Literary, Cultural and Communication Studies, University of The West Indies (UWI) recently presented the 26th Annual Campus Literature Week. At this event, several contributing members of the magazine, My Trinidad Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, participated in the lunchtime readings. Among the presenters were Tony Deyal, author, writer, consultant, and founder of My Trinidad, Kenneth

Ramchand, professor emeritus of West Indian Literature of the University of The West Indies and Colgate, and Johnny Coomansingh, professor of geography and president of My Trinidad. Another contributor, Motilal Boodoosingh also presented an online reading from one of his works.

Crafting Liberated Words was unquestionably a great title for the program that epitomized exceptional and excellent forays of quality presentations. Indeed the "words" proffered in the readings were well crafted; if you doubted, wordsmiths do exist. In many instances, political satire, innuendo and double-entendre flourished. The sometimes surreptitious nature of the in-person advances were adventurous, but most of all, laced with an abundance of kuchoor, kankah, and generous sprinklings of humor.

On Wednesday March 13, Coomansingh presented a true story: an episode from his childhood. The memory recaptured his quest to cage a "Semp" (Euphonia violacea), a member of the finch family. With lagley, a sticky substance created from the boiled and chewed resin of breadfruit and/or breadnut (chataigne) trees, and a half-rotted, oxidized banana, he was optimistic for capturing a passerine warbler. His neat little bird cage constructed from "Bois Canot" (Cecropia peltata) leaf stems and coconut leaf midribs (cocoyea) was empty and he longed to admire and cherish a bird in its "prison" as the other 12-year old boys showcased in the little cocoa-producing village. His reading titled, Mysterious Mr. Frankie, focused on his futile undertaking. The villagers in the community thought that Mr. Frankie was a shape-shifter... "He does tun beast" they feared. Here is part of what occurred:

"My thoughts, my reminisces, about the cocoa-cracking activity slowly dissipated, drifting to a more pleasant aspiration; my precious bird. We were approaching the last bed of cocoa trees before the boundary, the Sangre Chiquito River. At that point, he told me to stop in the clearing between two cocoa trees separated by a box drain. I was told to keep very quiet. What happened next was amazing but quite troubling. Let me remind all who are reading this narrative that this was no dream; this was no movie. It was real! Mister Frankie stood to my left and rested his right hand on my left shoulder. With a stolid look, that old man then emitted a sound, a kind of deep visceral haunting sound, a sound I never heard before in my life; indescribable! Then it hap-



From left to right: Kenneth Ramchand, Johnny Coomansingh and Tony Deyal

pened.

The scene turned suddenly! Mysteriously, a swarm of birds flew in with a frenzied kind of behavior that I never witnessed before. It seemed as though they had no choice but to beckon to Mr. Frankie's "call." There were small birds, medium sized birds and large birds with a variety of colors. Quite noticeably was this large black bird with a long pointed silver beak perched on a cocoa tree that kept its eyes fixed on me: quite scary. This bird was not flying around like the others. It just sat there staring at me as though it wanted to hypnotize me.

All kinds of weird thoughts entered my mind. Was it true that Mr. Frankie was a shape-shifter as the villagers thought? Was he a wizard? Was he an obeah man? Was that the reason why he did not ask me for my birdcage? Mister Frankie looked mysteriously tense and staid as though in a trance. It seemed like he was communicating with something. I stood there frightened. Then he turned to me, and in a low somber tone asked, "Which one do you want?" I could not utter a word. I just shook my head from side to side motioning that I did not want any bird at all.

His hand was still on my left shoulder. Still in the trancelike state, Mister Frankie uttered a similar sound from way down in his stomach. The birds quickly disappeared. The scene became calm, but I said not a word. I was too scared to speak. My heart was racing inside of me. My imaginations about Mr. Frankie began to torment me.

Continued on Page 17



Johnny Coomansingh



The Meteor

I had just finished building my royal castle out of Lego when I heard a deafening BOOM! I went outside, into my garden and I saw the most amazing thing that made a dent in the garden. What was it? I had no idea! I called my daddy and he said,

"It looks like a hot rock, but where did it come from? Well, we can't have it there forever, so you need to find a way to get rid of it".

"Why me, suppose it is an alien from outer space?" I asked.

"Because everyone else is busy", replied daddy, so with that said, I set off to do the assigned task.

As soon as I left daddy's presence, I was brainstorming ideas to remove the rock and in ten hours' time. I was tired and hot. It was 20:09 and daddy had said to me when it was 10:10, "you have to remove that thing". I knew that I was too weak, but I tried to lift the humongous, smooth rock. Miraculously it was no problem at all, I was super strong! Unfortunately, along with the comet, I hurled myself into the air. Look! I am flying!

The altitude was rising, and I could see windows on an airplane, but I was focused on the fact that I could not breathe. So bravely, I let go. While falling through the air at 100 miles per hour, I screamed as loud as I could, hoping someone could hear me. I was falling straight into

the middle of the garden...in the sleeping position and that is when mummy came over, picked me up and put me in the bed.

The next morning, there were news reports of a girl 'flying' with a Meteor and daddy announced, "Next time, we'll call the police". The next day, I was sitting on the comfortable, black couch reading an interesting book all about the stars and planets when suddenly I heard a deafening sound, BOOM!

Daddy came into the warm living room just in time to see a big, brown meteor on the road and a beautiful, meteor shower right above us. It was the most amazing, mind – blowing view I have ever seen because I have never even seen a meteor before.

BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM! It was too loud for me and when daddy was phoning the police, I suddenly felt very hot. Was this linked to the mysterious, unexpected rock or not? I felt confused, first a rock in our garden, now a meteor shower! How very strange.

Suddenly, I heard a loud, annoying sound. The police and astronomers came! This was getting weirder and weirder by the minute; the police think that it is just a coincidence, but the astronomers say that there could not possibly be a coincidence and they would find out in the next few weeks. I counted the few boring weeks after; indeed, no more comets or meteor flying above my head, nothing strange happening.

Finally the authorities exclaimed "Prepare yourselves; we are under attack by other life forms, Aliens".



Jayna Boodoosingh

Teacher Kern

Motilal Boodoosingh, from Page 8

Dooshan, the boy next door began noticing that when Kern returned on mornings, Gauri would come to the porch when Kern went inside the house. Kern would come to the porch and Gauri would return inside. This action would recur several times until both of them would remain inside for a while until Kern would come out and resume his journey to work.

Now, Dooshan always had a thing for Gauri, and he soon told Gauri what he saw. He threatened to tell her father if she did not share some with him. Soon, about three times a week, Kern would have his in the morning and Dooshan, lunchtime. Although he promised not to tell anyone, he boasted to his best friend Rawle that he didn't mind having "battered bread" as he didn't have to pay for it. Rawle wanted to eat also but he didn't have the courage to approach Gauri!

Time passed. Kern finished teachers college and became prominent in the village. He became the president and captain of both the cricket and football club. He would fill out the tax returns of those lucky enough to find work as laborers in the county council, give recommendations to those seeking employment, help fill out applications for public assistance and old age pensions. He now had as his drinking partners many persons of importance as he was no cheapskate. He was friendly with the Police Sergeant and had kept in touch with his old school mates from Naparima who had become doctors, lawyers, politicians and generally men of influence. Whenever one had a problem with bureaucracy, Kern was the man to help. Funeral arrangements, attention at the hospital or small matters with the Police were made easier if Kern chose to help. In addition, he never refused to do so. Even though he joined the ruling party, when all around him were opposition, he was very well respected in the village.

Gauri would babysit from Mondays to Fridays with weekends off when Kamala was home. By now, she had a boyfriend who liked to take her to the cinema on weekends but was showing no interest in getting married. He lived with his parents and was unemployed, helping in the lagoon

whether with rice or watermelon and bodi. Krishna persuaded his father to buy him a car with which he could work "ph". His father got him a second hand Vauxhall Victor with which he was soon taking Gauri for rides on evenings. They would be often seen parked next to Clarke Road dam on evenings where Krishna feeling up, hugging and kissing her and desperately tried to get into her pants.

One Saturday afternoon Gauri consented to go to Quinam beach with him although she told her parents they were going to the Metro cinema.

While they were parked and involved in some heavy petting and more, they were accosted by three men with knives and were robbed and assaulted. The evening would find them at the Penal Police Station. Here, Krishna encouraged her to "tell the police what they did to you". Gauri responded "Why you doh tell the police what they did to you!"

As was bound to happen, the village soon found out. Gauri's father was enraged and vowed he would kill Gauri and Krishna. Teacher Kern spoke to Mr. Babloo and said he would fix things. Meanwhile Krishna stopped seeing Gauri as he was ashamed that his friends and relatives would view her as "spoilt goods". He never spoke about the incident at Quinam and his friends were afraid to ask as he had a quick temper. Still, they snickered behind his back as they made up their own stories.

Although Gauri sent several messages, Krishna did not visit her. Many women sniggered that "it good for she, going with man to the beach". She asked Teacher Kern for advice.

"Don't worry. I will fix things" he responded.

He consulted with his sergeant partner of the Penal Police Station and they visited Krishna. He was threatened with arrest for rape as the sergeant said that Gauri had reported that he had sex with her against her wishes. The solution, marry her or face a long stint in prison. Terrified, Krishna chose to marry Gauri.

As the wedding drew near, Kamala was alarmed that she would lose her baby sitter and helper. She was delighted however, when Kern informed her that Gauri's younger sister who had just turned sixteen would be starting work the next week.



South West Trinidad: Coastal - Avifauna



By Sham Sahadeo

1. Early morning moments, Columbus Bay, SW Peninsula, Trinidad. This particularly scenic beach shows years of erosion. The three stacks out in the water were once part of the headland you see on the right t of the photo. The area is made up of sandstone rocks, which gives rise to caves and arches on the other side of the headland. It is sandy and wide enough for a game of friendly football or cricket.

2. Black Bellied Whistling Ducks at the Wild Fowl Trust in Pointe-



Pierre. They are usually found in central and south America. These awesome ducks organized themselves, all in a row. They feed on grasses, seeds and aquatic invertebrates.

3. A stunning, large and lanky, Cooi Heron perches quietly on tree waiting for an opportune moment to resume its feeding. It hunts fish and crustaceans in the shallows like the Gulf of Paria mud flats. This is a species of long legged wading bird in the heron family Ardeidae found across South America and our south west coast wetlands.



Protect Yourself from COVID-19 (NOVEL CORONAVIRUS)

- WASH YOUR HANDS AND USE HAND SANITIZER
- AVOID CLOSE CONTACT WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE SICK
- THOROUGHLY COOK MEAT AND EGGS

www.health.gov.tt | Ministry of Health-Trinidad and Tobago | TrinidadHealth | MoH_TT | minhealthtt

The Ghosts of Macaulay, Part 2

Coomansingh from Page 3

Anyone could have seen that a great depression overwhelmed her. Maisie carried out this “ritual” for over three months after the great conflagration. Then one day she found an old axe near the woodpile and took it with her up the hill. On this day, she did not occupy her accustomed spot at the base of Roane’s statue. She stood adjacent to the statue weeping and mumbling to herself. Then with one powerful swing of the axe, she decapitated the statue. The heavy stone head rolled down the hill and stopped in a little ravine that traversed the track. Laughing loudly and crazily, Maisie ran down the hill after the incident. Her foot got caught in a root and fell head first, banging her head on the statue’s head. She stopped breathing. The night was closing in and Hunu realized that Maisie was absent from her seat on the rickety bench that leaned against the side of the house. Hunu and a few others went in search of Maisie. They found her stiff and cold body at the bottom of the hill and quickly buried her right there on the spot.

While all this was happening with Maisie, Abrafo was still mourning the loss of his lover. No matter how Hunu counseled and wept with him, Abrafo could not let go of his love for Roane. He would sit for hours under the samaan tree where his lover was “sleeping.” Many times he would prostrate himself on her grave and cry for her. Efua used to peep at him and sadness would envelop her soul. She longed for the chance to have Abrafo for herself because she still loved him. She still wanted him. Abrafo never gave to her a second look for the mischief she caused. The hate he had for Efua could not be measured. There was no forgiveness in his soul for her. Abrafo never stopped going to the samaan tree until this day when he did not show up at home. It was a fateful day when Hunu and Efua saw him hanging from one of the boughs of the tree. Abrafo would join Roane in a grave next to hers. The village continued to grieve and mourn. Roane and Abrafo could not have been together in life, but somehow in death, they would never be separated.

Emancipation of the slaves came concomitant with several changes on the landscape. The sugar cane plantations on the island have disappeared leaving plots and parcels available for subsistence farming. Lands were divided up everywhere. New roads were developed and a new village sprung up in the area known as Macaulay Village. Today, vehicular traffic constantly flows east to west on the highway that passes through the village. No one took the time to assess the spiritual forces that dominate the area. No priest, pastor or reverend was invited to make oblations before the commencement of the highway. Roane’s headless statue on hill could be seen at times from the highway. There are many theories about how the statue came to be erected there and how it became headless. Seen from the highway, the samaan tree is still green and flourishing. Under this tree are the graves of Roane and Abrafo, a place seldom visited by anyone.

Legend has it that Maisie’s spirit haunts the village. For example, doors and windows open and close for themselves and eerie laughter is heard up the hill every day. When such events are happening, dogs put their tails between their legs and break out in a whimper. There are stories from villagers who have seen weird things happening on the hill just after sunset. Many villagers fear to go too close to the headless statue, especially after sunset. However, it’s almost a fact that at certain hours after midnight many vehicles crash into each other or fall over the over-



passes on the Macaulay strip of highway. There are many deaths occurring there. Reports from vehicle drivers who survive such horrible crashes have indicated that an apparition of two lingering ghostlike forms appear in front of them as though wanting to embrace each other. It is quite possible they say, these are the ghosts of Roane and Abrafo. Many people who know the story often argue that at that spot where the ghosts appear on the highway is the same spot where Roane conceived and where she died in the cane fire. It is anybody’s guess that drivers and passengers will continue to die on the Macaulay strip of highway unless something is done to forever lay to rest the precious souls of Roane and Abrafo.

(Adapted from the soon to be published book, titled: Leh Mih Tell Yuh by Johnny Coomansingh)

Creatures of the Night

Exploring some Trini Folk Tales

As twilight falls over the Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago, a mystical realm of folklore awakens, shrouded in darkness. Embedded within the intricate tapestry of Trinidadian culture, lies a captivating assortment of nocturnal creatures, each bearing its own unique tale and significance.



Ishwar Sooklal

From the mischievous Soucouyants to the haunting Lagahoos, these beings have seamlessly integrated into the fabric of Trini folklore, ensnaring the imaginations of successive generations.

Growing up in the rural part of Trinidad, known as Plum Mitán, my family roots intertwined with the enchanting narratives of Trinidadian folklore. Gathered around flickering lights such as candles, flambeau and sometimes torchlight, my grandfather, uncles, and aunts wove intricate tales of the beings that roamed the night. These were not mere bedtime stories; they were potent vessels of fear that gripped my young heart. As daylight diminished, vivid depictions of soucouyants casting off their skins and Lagahoos (Loup Garou) prowling the countryside left me trembling with unease.

Recollections of hurried nighttime baths and cautious journeys to my cousins’ house under the veil of darkness still send shivers down my spine. The mere thought of encountering one of these supernatural entities concealed in the shadows filled me with an overwhelming sense of terror. Yet, amidst the fear, these stories engraved themselves into the very fabric of my being, becoming permanent imprints upon my childhood memories.

Encounters with folklore creatures in Trinidad and Tobago have been woven into the fabric of our cultural heritage, passed down through generations with a blend of myth, legend, and personal stories. As someone deeply immersed in the stories and having encountered a few of these creatures first-hand, I can offer a window into the diverse tapestry of Trinidadian and Tobagonian folklore.

Among the most renowned creatures is the Soucouyant, a blood-sucking hag known to shed her skin at night, taking to the skies in search of victims. My grandmother’s warnings to keep garlic and salt by my bed to repel these malevolent beings remain vivid memories. Though I’ve never glimpsed a Soucouyant myself, the chilling tales from elders in-



La Diabliesse (top) and the Lagahoo, below

stilled in me a sense of caution during the quiet hours of the night.

Then there are the douens, spectral children with backward-facing feet, believed to dwell in the forests and beckon unsuspecting wanderers. As a child, the mere mention of douens sent shivers down my spine, their spooky presence seemingly lurking just beyond the forest’s edge.

No exploration of Trinidadian folklore would be complete without mentioning La Diabliesse, the mythical seductress who leads men astray into the depths of the forest. I’ve heard first-hand accounts from those who claim to have encountered her, their stories filled with a mixture of fear and fascination for the otherworldly beauty of this enchantress.

There are also the elusive lagahoos, mischievous creatures said to roam the countryside, causing havoc and playing pranks on unsuspecting villagers. While some dismiss them as superstition, others swear they’ve heard their spooky laughter echoing through the darkness of the night.

Another intriguing figure is Papa Bois, the guardian of the forests, who appears as a half-man, half-deer entity.

Continued on Page 19

A Six-Minute History Lesson

Obi Constance from Page 9

10. Morey Amsterdam, who played Buddy Sorrell on The Dick Van Dyke Show, pirated 'Rum and Coca Cola' and gave it to the Andrew Sisters.

11. Famous calypso by Lord Invader- 'Drinking Rum and Coco Cola / going down Point Cumana / Both mother and daughter / working for the Yankee dollar'

12. Patty, Maxime and Laverne Andrews, recording and film stars in the 1940's, stole / remixed 'Rum and Coca Cola' taking it to #1 on the American charts.

13. Lord Invader (1914-1961) is best remembered as the composer of "Rum and Coca Cola," He won the court case against Amsterdam and the Andrew Sisters.

*Calypso reach in Greenwich Village, Calypso reach all over Broadway
Calypso sold its first million albums through Harry Belafonte
Nat King Cole recorded 'Calypso Blues' in 1948*

*Chuck Berry recorded 'Havana Moon', that calypso was great
Robert Mitchum, Rosemarie Clooney, the Kingston Trio, Louis Far-
rakan*

*All these people sung the calypso, Lionel Ritchie and Bob Dylan
Calypso it was acknowledged had an influence on the Motown sound
Jamaicans could say thanks to Calypso, Reggae music is still around
A calypsonian told me a story about Bob, Peter and Bunny
Recording his calypso 'Where Sammy Gone' they sang background vocals
for he*

*Our first independence Calypso King, Lord Brynner who they send loco
Told me that Bob Marley and the Wailers pick up some vibes from we
calypso*

*After all these people and places where the hell did calypso go?
End up in some cheating competition on some blasted Dimanche Gras
show*

FOOTNOTES

1.Greenwich Village and neighboring Broadway, centre for cultural and theatre activities in New York.

2. Harry Belafonte (Harold George Belafonte) is a Harlem-born calypso singer and actor. Best known for singing the "Banana Boat Song" with its signature lyric "Day-O, daylight come and me wan go home". His breakthrough album Calypso (1956) was the first album to sell over 1 million copies.

3. Nat King Cole to Bob Dylan, North Americans who recorded versions of calypsos.

4.Bob Marley, Peter (McIn)Tosh, Bunny Wailer (Livingston) – the famous Jamaican reggae group, the Wailers, once did background vocals for calypsonian Lord Brynner. Only Bunny Wailer is still alive today.

5.Kade Simon, the Mighty Brynner, from Erin in South Trinidad, first Independence calypso king in 1962. Died in the 1980's.

*The first woman to enter a tent to sing calypso
Lady Trinidad was her sobriquet, the first to cut a record also
Thelma Layne was her name,
I want them female calypsonians know about a feminist in the art
A trailblazer and fighter of long ago*

*And then enter Harold Philips, a man who would create history
A calypsonian and a pannist, a concert promoter form Laventille
In his Colony Club in England where he promote his calypso show
These white boys would walk with their guitar*

And together they jam the tempo

And then Woody told me a true story

Them white boys used to gig with he

About a historic concert they pull off in Hamburg, Germany

John, Paul, George and Ringo,

Is Lord Woodbine made me to know

*The famous Beatles from in Liverpool picked up some vibes from we
calypso*

*After all these explorations how much further the Calypso went?
End up in all kind of competitions and then back to the fringing tent*

FOOTNOTES

1. Lady Trinidad. She was born Thelma Lane on September 18, 1914 to Barbadian parents. King Radio (Norman Span) heard her and invited her to try singing calypso. He trained her and in 1935, when she was 19 years old, she became the first woman to sing calypso in a tent. Thelma made her debut in the Crystal Palace Tent on Nelson Street, which had been founded by the great Railway Douglas. Those days it was difficult enough for a man to become a calypsonian, far less a woman. The three calypsoes she sang at her debut were "Nora, Nora" (not Kitchener's), "Old Man's Darling" and "Advice to Young Women". She was honoured in 1992 by NJAC for her contribution to calypso. She died at age 85 in 1999.

2.Harold Phillips, entertainer, pannist and promoter . Also known as Lord Woodbine, he was a musical mentor to the famous Beatles. Died in the year 2000.

3.The Beatles, from Liverpool in England, arguably the most famous group in the history of pop music. John (Lennon) and George Harrison have both died.



Lamentations, Skeletons

Coomansingh from Page 10

I wanted to get out of there. It seemed that he had total control over these creatures. A few seconds later, he was back to normal but appeared a bit disgusted. I thought that he was annoyed with me for not accepting his effort in providing me with the bird I wanted so badly... Not long after, Mr. Frankie died. He died with all his secrets...more secrets I'm sure, than just how to catch a bird."

The crème-de-la crème for the in-person readings arrived on Thursday 14. Two of them were Professor Emeritus Kenneth Ramchand, a former professor at UWI, the expert on Caribbean literature in the world. The last man standing was Tony Deyal, as everyone knows, the "Master of the Pun." In his submission, Ramchand catered for what I would describe as a nuance of Trinidadian political satire titled: The Wife's Lament. In this piece, he suggested that in a letter to a person known as "Maybelline," the wife reminisced about the men with which she was involved. This reading is of utmost importance for people, young or old, who are entangled or tied up like market crabs with the politics or "politricks" in Trinidad and Tobago. There is no "Mysterious Mr. Frankie" in this one. The clues are as plain as day. They would find it easy to follow her laments about the men she entertained as husbands. She explained:

"My first husband: A powerful man. I have to get him out of my heart because it is he who lift me up and throw me down. He exists for me in episodes. One year the doctor say we have to pay as we earn. He explain to the masses that money is not the problem. He hard on them because he love them, and then he say, as if it is a poetry he compose "If loving you is wrong, I don't want to be right." Is those words self I had said to him when he tell me I shouldn't love someone like him so much. He acted then as if he didn't hear or care. But he thief my words, and when it suit him, he used them like he use everything and everybody that walk into his trap. My first husband blow me away, Mabes. I was young then, ardent to give and to belong. The man had returned with fame and a name, and an anger that had greatness in it. If he were leading a march, I would walk in the rain to Chaguaramas. If he say "Buy local," I throwing away apples and grapes and Betty Crocker cake mix. My second husband was duncie-head and he was neither here nor there. It suited me that he preferred blondes but he was useless as a night watchman. Always at some International Conference. Taking my money to go and do his business overseas. But I hate the third one. Napoleon. It was he with his moral and spiritual values that sweep in and nearly finish the job my first husband start."

Ramchand didn't end there. He went on to add:

"I thought it would be noble and fulfilling to serve the most intelligent man in the island, forget Dom Basil Matthews! Although my bottom was not fat in those days, I join up with the women who formed a brigade to urge him on to greater greatness. I joined in the ecstasy at Woodford Square. My heart throbbed to his staccato joined in the ecstasy at Woodford Square. My heart throbbed to his staccato rhythm in the Parliament Chamber, where I hugging my shawl against the cold in



there, pretending it was him I hugging. I stood still among the awe-struck pan men in Laventille. I went by bus to Harris Promenade, and as I fall under the spell, I decide I have to get on board with this man as if he is the last train to San Fernando...

I couldn't see that the shades were there to hide his eyes. I didn't know then that he could look you in the face and switch off your voice with that hearing aid thing. I used to fill his pouting silences by making up words that I dreamed to spread like kisses on his lips... I never thought it would be unpleasant to kiss that mouth that never do without cigarette or pipe even at the dining table. At home, his insults were devastating. He didn't think I could think; and I cringe because I couldn't fool myself that he was crazy for my body. Most of the time he squire up in his side of the bed with his back to me and never make the mistake of turning in his sleep and touching me. The one or two times a year, he try to be private with me, a part of him always holding back. What it is that he want from me?

When he stick the note on the fridge door that he was leaving me I did not run straight to my parent's house as them Indian women does do, and then run back home to take my licks. I flush the bowl and I lock myself in the one private space I have in this house. I start doing mental arithmetic. In the beginning, I was a ten. But he was The One. If the One take off, I go be a zero."

And I laughed at the lines that follow because many, many moons ago I became aware of this fact from the stories a Caroni Swamp boatman related to me about the murder of the Scarlet Ibises.

"People have pity on me and they begged him to come back. No sorry dou dou, no apology, not a little pinch of arm or nipple. And still. Like a dog, I take him back. And just so I want to cook something special for the prodigal. I call Kamal and ask if he have any scarlet ibis in the freezer. All I could think to do is cook for him.

Continued on Page 18

Lamentations, Skeletons

Coomansingh from Page 17

What's wrong with me... He died like an old woman in a leaking house with a bunch of corbeaux round his bed."

Tony Deyal, on the other hand, wallowed in his puns, providing copious libations of humor in his work: *Bad to the Bones*. He opened his volley with the following:

"First there were "ghost" gangs in the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP). They took their money and disappeared into the fourth dimension, never to return. Then there were "ghost" workers drawing salaries for painting the National Housing Authority (NHA) buildings. They moved from varnish to vanish as quickly as you could say "Casper." Now, the nightmare before Christmas continues. As if the health system in Trinidad was not scary enough, the *Trinidad Guardian* has reported the advent of a phenomenon that makes the Port-of-Spain General Hospital more like the setting of a Stephen King novel or a western set in Tombstone Territory.

In its edition of Saturday, November 30, 2002, reporting on the reopening of the Accident and Emergency Department of the Port of Spain General Hospital, the *Trinidad Guardian's* headline read, "Casualty back in operation with a skeleton staff." At first, I thought it was a hoax or practical joke, or even an attempt to delude the public, what Trinidadians call "trying a skull." However, in reading further I realized that the paper was serious and I was almost moved to write a letter of commendation to whoever had conceived of such a brilliant idea. Skeletons are ideal for such an operation. First of all, security would be boned up rather than beefed up.

Normal human beings, as well as the people who frequent hospital casualty departments, would not be able to breach the hospital's de-

fenses or gain entry unlawfully since only the people in charge would have skeleton keys. Those of us who complain about the North West Regional Health Authority, its board and management, and all the allegations of corruption, misspending, stealing of supplies and the covering-up of malpractice and negligence would no longer have to worry. One sure outcome of employing a skeleton staff is transparency. Make no bones about it, a skeleton staff guarantees transparency.

Skeletons might be numbskulls or boneheads but they are too smart to steal food from the cafeteria or towels from the laundry. Granted that you cannot pin anything on them, they still do not steal body parts for sale to private institutions since they know they will be easily discovered."

Tony had more than a skeleton of humorous infusions. Here is a last one:

"One of them went to the cafeteria and ordered a cup of coffee and a mop. Another refused to work at the hospital because its heart wasn't in it. One refused to attend the welcome party put on by the Ministry of Health because it had no body to dance with. And when one reached very late for work and tried to lie, explaining that it was chased by a dog, its supervisor said, "Don't try that. I can see right through you."

In essence, the three of us brought a certain character to the literary week, one filled with political satire, the other with a skeletal take on management in the Ministry of Health and elsewhere, and the third, with a mysterious story that he will never be able to unravel, decipher or comprehend. There are people in this world of ours who carry secrets around. Some carry political subterfuge as badges of honor, while there are those so transparent, that we could see right through them.



Creatures of the Night

Sooklal from Page 15

Tales abound of hunters who claim to have glimpsed him deep within the wilderness, his piercing gaze serving as a reminder of the delicate balance between humanity and nature.

Legend has it that cotton trees are inhabited by spirits, guardians of the forests who watch over the land and its inhabitants. Many believe that these ancient trees serve as portals to another realm, where spirits and supernatural beings dwell. I recall a tale told by an elderly villager about a group of travellers who sought shelter beneath the sprawling branches of a towering cotton tree one stormy night. As they huddled together, seeking refuge from the howling winds and driving rain, they heard whispers carried on the breeze, voices speaking in a language long forgotten.

Suddenly, the air grew still, and a figure emerged from the shadows, its form ghostly and shimmering in the dim light. It was said to be the spirit of the cotton tree, ancient and wise, its eyes gleaming with an otherworldly wisdom. Then, as suddenly as it had appeared, the spirit vanished into the night, leaving the travellers spellbound beneath the whispering leaves of the cotton tree.

In addition, let's not forget the mythical creatures said to inhabit the waters surrounding Tobago, from the enchanting mermaids who lure sailors to their doom to the mysterious water horses said to gallop through the waves.

In the vibrant mosaic of Trinidadian and Tobago culture, folklore transcends mere amusement; it embodies a reflection of our collective heritage and resilience. Through the oral tradition of storytelling, we safeguard our history, impart invaluable lessons, and fortify the bonds of our community.


Despite the intense fear these entities evoke, they stand as poignant reminders of our profound cultural legacy and unwavering resilience. Enshrined within the annals of oral tradition, these folklore narratives serve as conduits bridging generations, preserving ancestral wisdom, and nurturing a profound sense of community.

In contemporary Trinidad, the legacy of these nocturnal inhabitants endures, interwoven into the fabric of daily life through vibrant festivals, rhythmic melodies, and captivating artwork. From the exuberant revelry of the Trinidad Carnival to the haunting cadence of calypso tunes, the spirit of Trinidadian folklore permeates the collective consciousness, captivating both locals and visitors alike.

Local perspectives on these creatures vary widely, ranging from keen belief to cautious disbelief. While some view them as tangible manifestations of supernatural forces, others regard them as metaphorical symbols embedded within the cultural psyche. Nonetheless, these creatures



continue to exert a profound influence on Trinidadian society, inspiring awe, fascination, and, at times, apprehension. Their presence serves as a testament to the enduring power of myth and the intricate interplay between belief and imagination within the Trinidadian landscape.



Philatelic Society of Trinidad & Tobago
(Founded May 1942)

PO Box 596, Port of Spain, Trinidad, WI
Meetings; 2nd Wednesday, every month
at St Mary's College, Frederick St., Port of Spain

Musings in a Tea Shop

By Krishna A. Samaroo

When Gershia Mahabir started Poetry and Prose Open Mic, it was held in Chaguanas in a quaint little teashop named, Ann's Simply Beautiful. The title not only harks back to the origin of the group but also records appreciation to the space afforded it when it was in search of one.

So, what treat awaits the reader as he/she enters the teashop?

The 21 contributors to this anthology represent a blend of voices. 12 of them have published works, which arranged on a bookshelf, the spines counted would collectively number around 60-odd books. These are your established writers. Five of them speak as writers belonging to the Caribbean diaspora living in North America and in Europe.

The collection comprises altogether 40 poems and 17 pieces of prose befitting the name of the group, the evolution of which is traced in the opening piece: Gershia's 'A Brief History of Poetry and Prose Open Mic.'

The book is neatly structured into three parts. The first is devoted to those who submitted only poems; the second who offered strictly prose; and the third to those with offerings of poetry and prose.

These weavers of words, to borrow from Althea Romeo-Marks's poem, 'On Becoming a Word-Weaver', created a tapestry recognizably Caribbean and timely in orientation.

From the use of folklore and superstition, as we get in the tales like 'The Black Dog', 'Saraswati's Fear', 'The Laughing Lagahoo' and 'Witches and Widows', to the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) which we get in 'Shadow' and 'Awakening' (with its depiction of virtual life reduced to 'ones and zeroes', as Daren Despot wryly notes in 'Shadow' and 'The Song of the Greys'), there is a discernible concern for the human condition expressed in a spectrum of forms allowing such.

Shahira Ali's 'Boxed in like a Prisoner' is a mournful plea for liberation of the human spirit – the kind felt in 'The Girl on St. Vincent Street' where she was 'blinging' with unadulterated childhood innocence. 'The Pink flower'.

Eros and Thanatos. What would an anthology of poetry and prose be without two themes that beset the human mind from time immemorial? Daren Despot's 'Hot Fission' matches imagery-wise Dayana Ramsaran's 'Anticipation.' Kasi Senghor's 'A Blessed One' contrasts markedly with Heather Laltoo Ferguson's 'Death on the Caroni' but merge thematically in the dream of transcendence: the 'Coming and going, giving and taking, at one with essence of tree' [Kasi's piece]; 'a soul transitions quietly... mingles with the arrow heads, then floats away/Far above El Cerro Del Aripo' [Heather's poem]. Ariti Jankie, Gershia Mahabir, Johnny Coomansingh, Kamta Persad and Motilal Boodoosingh all as well scribble sentiments, each in his or her unique way, on these two eternal themes of love and death, with Motilal offering sound, fatherly, sage-like advice to the young at heart.

As expected from voices in the diaspora, the experience of exile, while not necessarily foremost on the agenda, remains a burning issue for the Caribbean writer. Confirmed members of the diaspora, Heather, Althea, Johnny, Mervyn and newly joined, Ariti, give their gut feelings on this experience of exile, holding the Caribbean always as home away from home, or as the shores from where the heart somehow could never leave, matters not the time and distance away.

Consider Ariti's 'Gathering.' Returning to her homeland for a ten-day period, (heckled in typical Trinidadian humour or fatigue for coming for 'a ten-day wuk'), Ariti, as persona, clutches firmly the thought that she lived in a village (to wit, Princes Town) where everyone knew her name, and that the house she built to become a home was the shrine circumstances forced her to leave behind, now that she was living on the 'other side of sunrise.' Johnny Coomansingh asserts that African men and women 'must never forget' their 'horrible unimaginable pain.' Just like how difficult it is for Heather to ignore her 'alien presence' when like a battimamselle she 'Flew in on a tropical breeze/To hover around an artificial light.' Her 'own hurts magnified against the wall/Of a place that is not home.'

But humour lightens up each dark and heavy moment in our lives. And as noted above, what could be more entertaining than a good dose of Caribbean, if not Trini humour! It is there in the work of V. Ramsamooj Gosine whose narrator tears literally himself up with anxiety over his neighbour's louvre-less window with its 'nasty...ugly...tear up...untidy' curtains. Both Geeta Outar Sirjoo in 'Cock, the Midget' and Harricharan Narine in 'The Mighty Avenger' depict humorous renditions of the theme of childhood and innocence. Randy Ablack makes use of the traditional Carnival masquerader, The Midnight Robber, to weave a highly entertaining comical item, 'Robber Talk', and complete with two 'extemporaneous' verses, it is a stand out example of dramatic monologue in the anthology. [It is as powerful as Daren Despot's 'The Image of God.' Carnival, by the way, appears as the focus of Leslie-Ann Beckles, in the poem 'Kaleidoscope', her lone offering.] The vein of humour can be seen too in Heather's 'Babu and the Moon over Mayaro' and in a slightly sinister way, almost like dark comedy, in Althea's 'Nightcap.'

Nothing engages the imagination like a good ole 'nancy story or folk tale told in Caribbean vintage style. Alisa Jankie, mentioned above, offers two brief suspenseful narratives in 'The Black Dog' and 'Saraswati's Fear' while Vilma Seusankar paints a picture of the lagahoo in her story, 'The Laughing Lagahoo.' The collection closes with 'Witches and Widows' – a very provocative and haunting recital by Vashti Bowlah. Through the theme of superstition, Vashti explores the exploitation of Hindu women by village folk as gleaned from the very title of her story, those women branded as dakans, and her short fiction fittingly ends with the line: 'It was time to take a stand.'

Surely, each reader, with his or her special craving, would find, among the 57 items on the menu served up at the teashop, offerings he or she deems delectable. Like it could be Kasi Senghor's 'Village Awareness', a veritable tour de force making use of that complex French poetic form, the sestina, or Krishna Samaroo's 'Parable of the Brook', a traditional sonnet written specifically for the anthology, or Gershia's 'Gopaul Luck Eh Seepaul Luck', a poem written in free verse with two voices trading words in a ping-pong like rhythm, or if you wish, with the cut and thrust of the sport of fencing.

The hope is that, in addition to its suitability to the general reader, it could become a work worthy of literary study.

Purchase Musings in a Teashop: An Anthology by Poetry and Prose Open Mic on Amazon. It is available in three versions: kindle, paperback and hard cover.

PHOENIX
Paws & Claws
Rescue and Sanctuary TT

TO ALL OUR AMAZING FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

Funds are very low at the moment, and we have MANY animals in our care, so, if you were thinking of donating to our Rescue and Sanctuary we would be extremely grateful, and could really use the following:

- Purina Blue bag puppy chow
- Purina Green bag adult chow
- Alpo Red bag chow
- Purina Yellow bag kitten chow
- Canned puppy food
- Cat litter
- Collars (if cat, quick release)
- Kale
- Lettuce
- Pak choi
- Callaloo bush
- Master mix rabbit concentrate
- Soap powder
- Bleach
- Disinfectant
- Dishwashing Liquid/Laundry Detergent
- Newspapers
- Shredded paper

Cash donations can be made to

Deposits can be made to:
First Citizens Bank- West Court
The Foundation for Heritage Preservation and Legacy Creation
Chequing Account #2838003

Or Whatsapp message
Aleyah Amanda All
1-868-758-1823

Phoenix Paws & Claws Rescue & Sanctuary TT is a project unit of The Foundation for Heritage Preservation & Legacy Creation