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## Two Kinds of Utility: England's "Supremacy" and the Quest for Completion in David Dabydeen's *The Intended*

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In this essay I argue that the central protagonist of David Dabydeen's *The Intended*, the unnamed narrator, resembles the author in that he is torn between cultures (English, East Indian, and West Indian), and torn between two kinds of utility: one base, mechanical, and calculating, and the other, romantic. The latter predicament may be seen as a natural consequence of the convergence of romantic and utilitarian ideology underpinning British colonialism. Moreover, Dabydeen's ambivalence about his allegiances and literary heritage is similar to that of one of his literary models, Joseph Conrad. Indeed, part of my argument here is that Dabydeen's poetic ambivalence is part and parcel of Caribbean writers' inevitable confrontation with literary models such as Conrad.

Considered his first masterpiece by many critics, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* continues to be the groundwork upon which many judgments about Conrad's artistic achievements are made. This has to do with the particular accomplishments of this work itself, and his other works, when scrutinized in terms of the specific artistic aims that he delineates in his Preface:

A work that aspires, however humbly, to the condition of art should carry its justification in every line. And art itself may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying every aspect. It is an attempt to find in its forms, in its colours, in its light, in its shadows, in the aspects of matter and in the facts of life, what of each is fundamental, what is enduring and essential . . . the very truth of their existence. (145)

The appeal here to the truth of the facts of life is somewhat akin to his claim that the experience in *Heart of Darkness* is "experience pushed a little (and only very little) beyond the actual facts of the case" (*Heart of Darkness* 4). Such an appeal suggests a desire on Conrad's part for literary realism, for presenting an accurate imitation of life as it is without embellishing upon the "common" circumstances or characters represented. This premise underlies Eugene Redmond's essay "Racism, or Realism?" in which he sees Conrad as a child of the Victorian age who inherits the assumption that "Realism as an upward swing of the esthetic pendulum from Romanticism" (359), among others.

However, as Ian Watt reminds us, there has perhaps been too much emphasis placed on Conrad's apparent aim "to make you see" ("Conrad Criticism" 257). He argues that there has been too little emphasis placed

on how Conrad specified that the objects in the 'presented vision' should be such as to 'awaken in the hearts of the beholders that feeling of unavoidable solidarity; of the solidarity in mysterious origin, in toil, in joy, in hope, in uncertain fate, which binds men to each other and all mankind to the visible world'. ("Conrad Criticism" 257)

Taken in its entirety, the Preface suggests that Conrad's aim is deeply romantic; or, as Watt puts it: "In the centrality of his ultimate purpose Conrad is akin to Wordsworth" ("Conrad Criticism" 257). Elsewhere, Watt makes a more elaborate case for viewing Conrad's Preface from a romantic perspective:

The basic terms of Conrad's position were set by the Romantic tradition, and they derive from the substantially new ontological problems about literature with which history had confronted poets and critics at the end of the eighteenth century. The thought of Newton and Locke had made it necessary to face the question of what kind of truth was embodied in literature; the social tendencies represented by such movements as the French revolution and Utilitarianism had made it necessary to justify the usefulness of literature to mankind at large . . .

Literature embodied kinds of humanly necessary truths or values which were not attainable elsewhere; it therefore had a higher kind of utility than the material and the quantitative; and it was produced by, and communicated to, constituents of the human personality, usually described as the imagination or the sensibility, which were not available to scientific psychological study but were nevertheless necessary to explain not only man's aesthetic impulse but the grounds of his religious, moral, and social life. Conrad's Preface is centered on these three large Romantic issues . . . although his formulations and emphases naturally reflect later critical and intellectual attitudes, as well as his own particular creative concerns. ("Conrad's Preface" 153-154)

One later attitude that Conrad's formulations reflect is the mid-to late-Victorians' ambivalence toward the contentious romantic legacy they inherited. The connection that Watt makes between the romantic impulse and utilitarian ideology in literature also figures importantly in *The Intended*, the debut novel of Guyanese-born poet and literary scholar, David Dabydeen.

## I

'Just because you ain't got a mother don't mean that England will mother you . . .'

—David Dabydeen, *The Intended*

In the United States Guyana is mostly remembered for the catastrophic events surrounding the suicide/massacre at Jonestown. Involving a quest that had much to do with prototypical American ideals of identity, religious freedom, and political self-determination, this story is revisited by Wilson Harris, in *Jonestown*. Harris is not the focus here, but he is one of the Guyanese writers on whom Conrad has had some influence. For instance, in "The Frontier on Which *Heart of Darkness* Stands," defending Conrad against Chinua Achebe's charge of racism,

Harris argues for an intuitive and heterogeneous reading of *Heart of Darkness*, as a "frontier novel" that "stands upon a threshold of capacity to which Conrad pointed though he never attained that capacity himself," rather than a historical and homogeneous reading of the novel (*Heart of Darkness* 263). And as various critics have remarked, Harris' *The Palace of the Peacock* resembles *Heart of Darkness* in both content and form. As is the case with many Caribbean novelists, Guyanese authors are drawn to issues of quest for identity and culture, and their concerns include the inheritance and negotiation of British literary and cultural ideals. Among others, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in particular serves as a specific point of reference for negotiating these ideals.

In Jan Carew's *Black Midas* for example, the adventures of the hero, Aron Smart, materialize through his chance encounter with Beauchamp, an Englishman who becomes his benefactor. Their relationship alludes in some ways to the relationship between Magwitch/Provis and Pip in Dickens's *Great Expectations*. But more important is the intriguing way in which Beauchamp's reason for being in an outpost of European empire, in this case British Guiana, is similar to the implicit motivation for Kurtz's journey in *Heart of Darkness*. That motivation has to do with the romantic and utilitarian function of empire in negotiating individual and social or class interests. To put it plainly, the imperial landscape serves as a viable resource for the money needed to make a good marriage: the hero who is successful on his adventurous journey returns with enough lucre to purchase, or be rewarded with, the hand of the woman he desires and/or to advance in social standing. In a letter to Aron, Beauchamp explains:

I left a young wife in England. We were married the very year I sailed. Her family had been against the marriage because I had neither money nor social position, and she, under the influence of a carping, nagging mother, made my life miserable. A friend had told me about the gold and diamond rushes in Guiana, and I came expecting to make enough money in a short time to return to London and live there with my wife in our own home. (Carew 84-85)

This passage is reminiscent of one in *Heart of Darkness* in which Marlow describes Kurtz's predicament within his society regarding the Intended:

I had heard that her engagement with Kurtz had been disapproved by her people. He wasn't rich enough or something. And indeed I don't know whether he had not been a pauper all his life. He had given me some reason to infer that it was his impatience of comparative poverty that drove him out there. (74)

Beauchamp's description of what he encounters in the empire also alludes to Kurtz's experiences in the Congo: "You cannot imagine what it was like for me to be suddenly released from our civilised traditions and modes of behaviour in England, to find myself in a primeval world where debaucheries and excesses were the rule" (Carew 85).

Carew's allusions to Conrad are less pronounced than Edgar Mittelholzer's in *Corentyne Thunder*, where the narrator characterizes Big Man Weldon's eldest son, Geoffry, as follows: "Seeing him, one thought of a coppery sky and a dead smooth sea—the China sea of Conrad—and a falling barometer" (41). Carew's references to Conrad are also less decidedly marked than those in Dabydeen's *The Intended*. That title is itself a direct allusion to the iconographic female symbol in *Heart of Darkness*, a symbol that occasions Wilson Harris's praise for *The Intended* on its back cover: "A startling honest first novel which turns a thematic *heart of darkness* around to illumine a groping pilgrimage—Indian and Rastafarian—issuing from distant colonies into a new video jungle and a labyrinth of coded sex in the city of London." Harris's summary of the novel is insightful, and his pun on the narrator's quest in "a groping pilgrimage" is to the point. It speaks to both the sexual aspects of that quest, conquering the symbolic, virginal, virtuous Englishwoman, and the quest for the completion of the individual and cultural self that has been fractured as a result of migration and colonial hegemony.

In *The Intended*, the narrator's conflict regarding traditional utilitarian and romantic utilitarian principles is represented in two characters, Shaz and Joseph, friends whose influence and ideals he must negotiate and choose from. The utilitarian pressures exerted upon Shaz are established at the beginning of the novel:

Although curiously respected by us for his treasury of natural knowledge, he [Shaz] was despised by his father—an accountant's clerk—who never tired of calling him a dunce. The problem was that they were a Pakistani family, and therefore the arts and culture were not deemed worthy of study at school or university. What mattered were the sciences, medicine, law, and computing . . . Shaz's interest, however, was in the arts and for this he was heartily cursed by the entire family, including his mother, even though she could hardly read and write, add or subtract. The boy fancied poetic words and modern images. (3-4)

Here the utilitarian values that are part of the family's social and moral codes are embodied in the accountant father (albeit a clerk) and, ironically, in the mother who, because she cannot add or subtract, cannot be a good, calculating Utilitarian. The family views these utilitarian values, which they see in terms of the traditional professions that would bring the greatest happiness to their numbers, as opposed to cultural and artistic pursuits, or pursuits of the imagination.

Values of the imagination, that carrier of humanly necessary truths, are embodied in Joseph, the illiterate, guitar-playing Rastafarian who reminds the narrator of a guitar player and supposed madman he used to know in Guyana:

Day and night, it seemed, he [Joseph] sat at the window strumming a guitar and singing to himself. I wondered whether he was related to the guitar man in New Amsterdam who lived opposite us . . . As soon as he woke up he reached for his guitar and began to play. He was a madman, but harmless to children; when we

paused on the road on our way to school to listen to him he was oblivious to us, his head bent to the strings and his fingers moving up and down. Now and again he would lift his head and stare at us without really seeing, his hand still working the strings. We were a little afraid of him on account of his madness but a few bold ones, including myself, ventured into the yard to get a closer look at his method of playing. We were enchanted by the music, for it was unimaginable that we could ever possess a guitar. (81-82)

In a sense, the guitar (both the instrument and the playing of it) is a symbol of indulging in pursuits of the imagination or sensibilities, which, of course, comes with the risk of overindulgence leading to madness. Rastafarian ideology underlies Joseph's approach to life in general, including his aesthetic outlook; the essential values of his worldview, which he identifies as "'feelings and oneness'" (87), coincide with Conrad's romantic ideal that art should give rise to feelings of "unavoidable solidarity" in the hearts of its observers.

Pursuits of the imagination are precisely what the narrator aspires to, though these romantic pursuits do not preclude a degree of calculation that could be construed as utilitarian:

Like Joseph I wanted to be somebody and the only way to achieve this was to acquire a collection of good examination results and go to university. Everything was planned: I would try for top grades in my three 'A' levels, then I'd do a B.A. Degree at Oxford or Cambridge and then a Ph.D. I would write books, and one day become a celebrity, or writer, or something. I was seventeen now, and nobody, but in ten years time I'd be somebody. (113)

The narrator's description of what motivates his personal goals marks a distinction between his ideals of higher utility and the base or lower utility, represented by money, that has overcome Shaz: "'It will take twenty years of hard work and studying; why don't you just do a few exams and get a job with lots of money?' Shaz wanted to know" (113). The narrator's reply, "Because that is the way I am," . . . "money's not everything" (113), suggests his rejection of the lower for the higher kind of utility. But, as we shall see, this is not necessarily the case.

The narrator's quest involves a struggle with the literary imagination, a struggle to find a voice and language that meaningfully represent the humanly necessary truths of his experience. Because of colonialism, that experience is both hybrid and hegemonic, and therein lies a central conflict. "In the London Underground," he declares, "we were forced into an inarticulacy that delved beneath the stone ground and barrier of language, whether Urdu, Hindi or Creole, and made for a new mode of communication" (16). He must effectively negotiate the influence of the colonizers' literary productions. This problematic aspect of the quest for Caribbean intellectual, poetic tradition is figured specifically when the narrator is asked to compose an inscription for the tombstone of his landlord's dead sister. Speaking of this request, he says:

I fancied that my own immortality was secured by the verse on her tombstone, for when Mr Ali was faced with the problem of an appropriate inscription, it was me he approached to compose a set of words. ‘Something that will last,’ he said, ‘tell her story, that people will forever see what my sister was, and my family.’ (141)

Here, the narrator’s desire for immortality through literary production is complementary to Mister Ali’s desire for words that would tell his and his family’s story, be truthful and therefore be lasting.

These complementary motives suggest a desire for the use of the imagination in the service of a higher kind of utility, and the task of producing the desired inscription bears some resemblance to what is arguably Marlow’s central challenge in *Heart of Darkness* when he comes face to face with the Intended’s desired commemoration of Kurtz. Conrad values his heroes’ ability to act impulsively, to be prepared for the heroic moment, and to seize the opportunity almost without thought when it arises, which is precisely the scenario established for Marlow. The first narrator’s statement, that Marlow shows “the weakness of many tellers of tales who seem so often unaware of what their audience would best like to hear” (*Heart of Darkness* 11), is the perfect setup of the part Marlow will play with the Intended. To borrow Northrop Frye’s term from *Anatomy of Criticism*, it is the announcement in the beginning of the story of what will be Marlow’s “climacteric adventure” (187). In a sense, Marlow appears to be heroic because, contrary to the first narrator’s claim, he is up to the task.

A problem of execution arises, however, for Dabydeen’s narrator: a problem of literary aesthetics and ideals. That is, how to represent the mundane facts of Mister Ali’s sister’s life and how to reconcile those facts with the elevated goals of a romantic imagination. He describes:

I gladly took on the project of writing his sister’s epitaph, my first venture into poetry, the beginning, I thought excitedly, of a literary career. Although time was short, I set about the task like a professional, asking Mr Ali a series of questions about his sister so as to build up a human profile, a sense of character, setting, plot, mood. There was, however, not much he could tell me about her which I could not guess already: no strange tales or memorable incidents. (143)

His interest in strange tales or memorable incidents suggests his romantic inclination, a sense which is reinforced as he continues:

Her life was as plain as the ground in which the village stood, an expanse of neatly tilled earth, even furrows made by oxen for centuries, the same lines cut open, then sealed, cut open again in a regular succession, the rains coming each November, the crops pushing up in March for harvest in June, then ploughing in September for November’s rainfall. The same ragged men trailed behind the same oxen, until they all dropped dead and were replaced by another generation of

ragged men and beasts that looked the same, performed the same tasks at the same appointed hours. (143)

In other words, her life offered no adventure, no occasion for romantic possibilities. The narrator's apparent preference for the latter is implied when moments later he insists of Mister Ali, "There must be something else" (144).

His strategy when faced with this problem of reconciling mundane realities with romantic goals is fabrication and exoticism, an artificial (re-)representation of her life in romantic terms:

Later that night, rain beating against the windowpane, I took up my pen and tried to fabricate verse with an exotic flavour. I imagined a forest swept by monsoon and a child knee-deep in a swamp of leaves searching desperately for dry wood. Buffeted by strong wind the child clutched a small bundle of her livelihood under her arms and struggled homewards, frightened but yet consoled by her haul. Horrid shapes appeared in the semi-darkness, and she tripped over creepers and matted roots as the wind howled savagely and branches reached down from the pitiless gloom to pluck her to devilish regions of air. (144)

But in this artificial process the colonizers' models dominate and burden his imagination:

After a flurry of ideas, ending with the magnificent leap of a man-eating tiger, its stripes burning bright in the forest of the night, I paused in self-doubt, wondering whether I could ever rival Conrad and the other white writers when it came to jungle scenes. (144)

In one stroke the narrator delineates the double burden that weighs upon Caribbean writers in pursuit of their own literary aesthetics. The first is the idealization of European literary aestheticism found in Romanticism, for example. This is indicated both by the allusion to Blake's "The Tyger," a poem pervasive in literary canons of the Romantic Movement, and by the allusion to a signal romantic ideal in terms of a mode of expression: namely, in a flurry, akin to Wordsworth's spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. The second is the valorization of European literary figures, romantic poet-prophets, "immortals" whose works set the standards by which all else is judged.

For an aspiring Caribbean writer-poet, the preponderance of the colonizers' aesthetic, literary traditions (Romanticism in particular) upon his imagination is such that his creativity is smothered. Part of the problem is that the colonizers' universalized literary themes and values are the only ones he knows. For the descendants of Asians, Africans, and Native Americans in the "new world," maintaining their ancestors' aesthetic values and traditions orally is difficult enough. Translating or adapting the oral into an imposed literacy is all the more difficult. Speaking of adapting and transferring traditional African philosophy to the Caribbean, Paget

Henry in *Caliban's Reasons* borrows from Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy* and puts the case effectively:

Writing 'technologizes the word' and so opens up discursive possibilities that are restricted in exclusively oral languages. These expanded possibilities permit the complex patterns of argumentation and levels of systematization associated with the 'classical period' in the history of a philosophical tradition. African philosophy for the most part never experienced a classical phase in which its ideas were given a written elaboration. Consequently, Africans did not bring written formulations of their philosophy to the Caribbean. This oral confinement certainly made identity maintenance and thematic development in the Caribbean extremely difficult. (61)

This sense of the limitations of oral language is especially relevant to Joseph who is, after all, illiterate. The narrator appears at first to challenge the automatic privilege accorded to reading and writing over speech, a privilege that was part of the binary underwriting of the African's enslavement and exploitation, and the daunting exclusion (or the sordid white-washing inclusion) of all of England's Others. It is thus that he seems to find some self-recuperative value in Joseph's "curious illiteracy" (195):

I couldn't see, not for years, not until the solitary hours in Oxford University library trying to master the alien language of medieval alliterative poetry, the sentences wrenched and wrecked by strange consonants, refusing to be smooth and civilized, when Joseph returns to haunt me, and I begin to glimpse some meaning to his outburst. He stalks me even here, within the guarded walls of the library where entry is strictly forbidden to all but a select few, where centuries of tradition, breeding and inter-breeding conspire to keep people of his sort outside the doors. I am no longer an immigrant here, for I can decipher the texts, I have been exempted from the normal rules of lineage and privilege; yet he, an inveterate criminal, keeps breaking in to the most burglar-proof of institutions, reminding me of my dark shadow, drawing me back to my dark self. (195-196)

It is that very "dark self" the narrator has been taught to fear most, to be most ashamed of on what he calls his "quest for completion" (196).

Given the inhibiting realities of this colonial heritage for Caribbean poetics, when the narrator takes that heritage to task he does so humorously, though guardedly, with a sense of Socratic irony, a sort of pretense of lacking sufficient knowledge or skill and of an openness to learning from another in order to interrogate the other's assumptions and conceptions:

True, the story [of Mister Ali's sister] was potentially rich with symbols to do with human vulnerability, delusion, expectations cheated by death, and so on, but I couldn't think beyond the first stanza ('The winds of death that scatter human

hope/Dry sticks and barren twigs tied up with rope/Were all the substance of your earthly life/Something something something something knife or wife or strife'). It was more difficult than I thought to find exact rhymes, never mind the phrases to precede them, and it would probably take ten more lines before I had space to fit the tiger in, by which time the gravestone would have grown two extra feet to accommodate all the words. (144-145)

He recognizes on some level the arbitrariness and artificiality of certain formal and thematic features in the Romantic tradition. But given the pervasiveness of that tradition in his imagination, he cannot escape its influence, and he cannot reject it entirely.

Checked by the standards against which his literary output will be judged, the would-be poet from the Caribbean finds himself in a quandary regarding his abilities: "I emerged from all this literary fantasy and nonsense with a real feeling of incompetence" (145). What he refers to as literary fantasy and nonsense is precisely the romantic heritage he is beholden to. However, it is this same heritage that guides his second effort: "I put pen to paper again, driven this time by a sense of the pity of my life, the uselessness of it, and the words came in a torrent more real than any Indian monsoon" (145). And, he adds: "The first light of morning trickled in and I went to sleep exhausted by the melancholy of the writing yet excited by the process of it. I would finish the poem when I awoke" (146). His torrential writing, his exhaustion, and his melancholy all allude to the Romantic Tradition. They call to mind the poet-prophet working in an inspired, spontaneous, and frenzied state to the point of depletion and collapse. But given his esteem for the poets and works under whose collective shadow he labors, he inevitably thinks of his efforts as inferior: "As soon as I read it aloud to Joseph and Shaz I knew it was all wrong, even silly. Before waiting for their response I pulled out a selection of Milton's verse, flicked through, alighted on 'Lycidas' and declaimed it, as if to drown the banality of what I had written" (146).

In his quest for individual and cultural completion through literary articulation, the Caribbean poet is thwarted by his subordination to the colonizers' literary heroes and traditions. The narrator's turn to Milton as a resort in this instance is indicative of this problem. It is as if to say, when it comes to the pastoral elegy, everything that could be said has been said, and it has been said not only better, but perhaps best. George Lamming makes a related argument in *The Pleasures of Exile* concerning the burden of the colonizers' literary and linguistic heritage upon the Caribbean writer's imagination:

When the exile is a man of colonial orientation, and his chosen residence is the country which colonised his own history, then there are certain complications. For each exile has not only got to prove his worth to the other, he has to win the approval of Headquarters, meaning in the case of the West Indian writer, England. (24)

Moreover, concerning this problem that he appropriately identifies as a debilitating *idea* or *myth* of England, he adds: “It begins with the fact of England’s supremacy in taste and judgement: a fact which can only have meaning and weight by a calculated cutting down to size of all non-England. The first to be cut down is the colonial himself” (27). In Dabydeen’s novel, having no long-standing literary tradition of his own, this Caribbean poet cannot, like the English poet Wordsworth, project an ego large enough to imagine his enterprise as comparing favorably to his “great Predecessor” (Abrams 22), the father or model of English Romanticism, Milton.

The latter predicament notwithstanding, the narrator’s reference to Milton is a reminder of the struggle between utilitarianism and romanticism that Caribbean writers inherit from the Victorians, an ideological struggle they must negotiate in their quest for a literary tradition and a sense of cultural identity. Indeed, that literary tradition is of intrinsic value, a necessary component for the completion of their cultural identity. The ideological struggle is evident in Shaz’s and Joseph’s different responses to the narrator’s invocation of Milton. Shaz reacts on practical and political grounds: “You can’t apply that rubbish to Mr Ali’s sister’ . . . ‘it’s old-fashioned white-people expression” (146). In contrast, Joseph responds to how Milton’s words seem to speak to higher, universal human values and sensibilities:

“Is music, man,” Joseph disagreed, “pure sound. It ain’t got no factory machine noise, no bang, bang, bang, ping, crash, crash or car bark and backfire, nothing in it make of iron and steel and ball-bearings, it ain’t got no oil, no grease, no coal, is pure soul.” (146-147)

Joseph’s recognition of and preference for Milton’s romantic sensibilities, and his sense that romantic possibilities are threatened by the rise of modernity and industry, a consequence of utilitarian progress, is reinforced as he continues:

“The thing ain’t got no oil stain or diesel fume or char. It ain’t concern with industry smoke or making money or progress, that’s why the man set it in long time back, all them fairy-tale gods and nymphs. Lycidas dead and gone to a world where nowadays things don’t matter nothing, like white people against black people, like thieving and hustling and pimping and rioting, like slavery and all that kind of history. The man turn pure spirit, pure like flowing water, that’s why it’s all water talk, the theme thing is water. His body bathe and the spirit come out clean-clean and clear—not white or black but clear. All of we is music, all of we is clear underneath, inside,” he concluded in a note of philosophical triumph. (147-148)

In Joseph’s view, since Milton’s imagination represents higher, universal human values such as “pure spirit,” though he is European, his words are acceptable for representing Mister Ali’s sister. But in Shaz’s view, Milton’s romantic discourse is inappropriate for representing the

realities of someone like her. He concludes: "'Black people have to have their own words'" (147).

## II

Our voices carry so well  
it takes forever to find ourselves.

—Fred D'Aguiar, "A Great House by the Sea"

The narrator's quest for his own words, his quest for a Caribbean literary imagination, involves his struggle not only with Milton's shadow. Of the European writers who occasion his self-doubt, Joseph Conrad's influence upon him is perhaps greatest. Indeed, this influence is alluded to in the name of the romantic character, Joseph. Again, Joseph reminds the narrator of the "mad" guitarist he used to know as a schoolboy back home. In one passage, he describes the experience of having touched his guitar:

It was the first time that I had ever touched a musical instrument. When he came back I withdrew my hand hurriedly and retreated a few paces, preparing to scoot off, but he was not in the least bothered, merely taking up his guitar and resuming his play. This lack of intimidation took me by surprise and made me feel a sudden friendship for him, so that every afternoon when I returned from school I would go into the yard, sitting down on the table to listen to him with the growing attentiveness and respect of a disciple. Of course he never noticed me but I felt there was a kindness between us nevertheless, a knowledge that he was tolerant of my presence and that I was captivated by the sounds he made. I never imposed upon this unspoken friendship and never again attempted to touch his guitar when he laid it down and went away. (82-83)

That friendship, about which the narrator seems quite proud and happy, is another allusion to one of the central tenets of Conradian romanticism: the solidarity or brotherhood of man. As an apparent disciple of Conrad, however, Dabydeen does impose upon the product created by that artist's instrument: he does touch numerous times upon his composition, *Heart of Darkness*.

In *The Intended* there is a sustained focus on the politics of Conrad's meaning in *Heart of Darkness* that reinforces the thematic struggle over two kinds of utility in the former novel. Here too, that thematic opposition is marked in the two contrasting positions held by Shaz and Joseph, and it is underscored by the working symbolism of guitar playing. While the narrator attempts to tutor Shaz in preparation for his 'A' level examinations, Joseph attempts to help him learn how to play the guitar. The result is an interweaving debate over aesthetics and functionality that

reiterates the underlying conflict between utilitarian and romantic ideals. First, speaking of Joseph's guitar lessons to Shaz, the narrator says:

He [Shaz] gripped the guitar clumsily and his fingers kept slipping from the neck, which Joseph kept correcting. When he eventually got it right and strummed with his hand, an ugly noise escaped and he became agitated and disappointed. Even Joseph was surprised by the unexpected sound; he took the guitar from him and tried it out, producing a gentle melody. He gave it back to Shaz, stood over him, helping him to position his fingers on the strings, and when everything was in place instructed him to begin again. Shaz strummed, but the noise was terrible. Joseph, patient as ever, rearranged Shaz's fingers but in spite of all his coaching, Shaz could not entice a single melodious chord from the guitar. (89)

Joseph's guitar lesson to Shaz symbolizes the narrator's attempt to find his own voice, stroking not strings, but paper with pen. His goal is to conjure language that is musical, that represents a higher sensibility, and that therefore serves a higher kind of utility.

The following exchange between Shaz and Joseph indicates the various values they approach the guitar. Joseph's approach is in keeping with Conrad's romantic ideal of art appealing to the imagination and the soul. For example, he says to Shaz: "Perhaps you got no soul for the instrument, you gotta let your feelings press into the strings," and he uses an anecdote of children on a swing in an attempt to illustrate his point (90). In contrast, Shaz's attitude is utilitarian, making no allowances for the sensibilities. His reply to Joseph's anecdote shows his desire to obtain the desired result through the smallest amount of effort: "I don't want to break my neck in a playground, all I want is to play a few chords on this bloody guitar, what stupidity you on about?" (90). Joseph's response, "That is because you got no vision" (90), is an explicit rebuke of Shaz's failure to use his imagination. Clearly on the defensive, Shaz again takes the utilitarian view: "'What has that [vision] got to do with it?' Shaz continued, 'it's a simple matter of getting your fingers in the right places'" (90). But Joseph's position remains entrenched in romantic idealism: "That's 'cause you can't see . . . and if you can't see you can't play, for your whole body block up with darkness so there is no light in your soul to guide your fingers" (90).

Both the narrator and Joseph seem wary of the imperialistic vestiges of Conrad's discourse. In a telling passage the narrator describes studying *Heart of Darkness* when Joseph interrupts him because he sees a picture of Winston Churchill in a history book but does not know who he is. The narrator says that Churchill won the war, and Joseph asks which one: "'The last one,' I told him, 'and the one before that, and the one before that. He won all the wars that England fought, they're all the same. It's only that the last one was the biggest, all the rest were leading up to that one'" (84). He continues: "He was fascinated and I was struck by my own wisdom. The overview I had given him suddenly appeared to make sense of all the scattered epochs we were studying for the history 'A' level. I saw in a flash of intuition how even the

Conrad was integrated into the total picture" (85). The total picture that the narrator sees in an intuitive flash here pertains to the totalizing effect of British historiography, a historiography that is one of the mechanisms for representing Britain's imperial outlook. That outlook is also evident in the disavowing dialectics of literary texts such as *Heart of Darkness*, dialectics such as the apparent opposition between utilitarian and romantic goals in the imperial landscape.

The narrator's position (apparently Dabydeen's) seems to be that the utilitarian-romantic dialectic in *Heart of Darkness* threatens the integrity of that work. Indeed, that dialectic is a threat to the romantic values of its author in that it threatens the service of truth, the service of a higher kind of utility. This outlook is figured in *The Intended* through Joseph's re-paintings of the African scenes in the World Cruise at the amusement park where Shaz and the narrator work. In Joseph's view, these scenes, like those in Conrad's work, do not tell the complete story:

He [Joseph] painted over some figures, added others; he re-arranged the wildlife. A white man sucking on a bone and firing a gun pointlessly in the air took his place among the native savages. I think he must have been Mr Kurtz. There was also a dead elephant lying on his back, four massive feet stuck in the air like the chimney stacks of Battersea power station which lay just outside the Fun Fair and which provided the model for Joseph's artistry. Two white men, small like pygmies against the massive body of the dead animal, had climbed upon its head and were tugging at its ivory tusks, as if to pull them out. (112)

By using the chimney stacks of Battersea power station as his model for the dead elephant, Joseph re-presents the adventurous escapism of the imperial landscape, making a direct link between imperial exploitation and England's industrial progress. In other words, he deconstructs a central façade of imperialism's totalizing discourse, represented in colonialistic texts such as *Heart of Darkness*: the supposed opposition between utilitarian progress and romantic possibilities. The narrator's perspective of that façade seems similar to Joseph's. For instance, he comments approvingly on Joseph's changes: "Mr King [the manager of the amusement park] would not have liked all these unofficial changes to the Congo even though Joseph's work was meticulous and a definite improvement upon the original artist's work" (112). Given the references to Kurtz and ivory, it is likely that by "original artist's work" the narrator means more than the work of the person who originally painted African pictures on the walls of the World Cruise. He means to also suggest Conrad's work: his representations in *Heart of Darkness*.

As an aspiring writer in pursuit of a literary imagination that embodies humanly necessary truths, the narrator must bridge the opposite positions held by Shaz and Joseph. He must strive for the type of "unavoidable solidarity" that forms part of Conrad's romantic, artistic aims. In a later passage, he indicates his ambivalence about the polarity that his two friends represent:

For all his reckless talk of guitar playing and art images, I began to suspect that deep down Shaz was a trader craving to possess things, to buy and sell them, and that Joseph's position was more adventurous, more courageous. Or perhaps it was the reverse: Joseph didn't have the opportunity or ability to own things, so out of desperation and cowardice he settled for nothing, whilst Shaz, really wanting to be artistic, was driven by family and cultural expectations to become a businessman. (135)

His task is to reconcile that ambivalence and polarity, and he attempts to do so when describing a moment referred to earlier, having to do with Shaz's preparation for his 'A' level examinations:

Shaz came round each Sunday to gain guidance for his 'A' level literature exam. He called in first to the Home for a guitar lesson with Joseph before arriving at my room. Joseph would tag along now and again to listen to us analysing Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The two of them sat on the bed and I, the professor, took the chair. I would select key passages from the text, read them aloud and dissect them in terms of theme and imagery, as I had been taught to do by our English teacher. I had great skill not only in spotting an important image, but in connecting it up with other images in the text. Shaz was full of admiration, though it was really a simple task once you discovered the trick of it. (94)

He adds: "Joseph, however, was not as impressed as Shaz by my critical skills, and would not hesitate to interrupt with his own interpretation of things" (95). The opposite responses of the two friends to the narrator's tutelage, one admiring and the other not impressed, mark the difference in their positions and perspectives that the narrator must resolve.

The symbolic reconciliation is figured in the passage that follows immediately:

Once, when I was explaining to Shaz the difference between pentameter and trochee in poetry, drumming various rhythms with my fingers on the table, Joseph broke in by stating that it was all foolishness. "Poetry is like a bird," he said, "and it gliding or lifting and plunging, wings outspread or beating and curving, and the whole music is in the birdwing." (95)

Joseph's vision of poetry here is romantic, and he feels that its value is undermined by pedantic and mechanical considerations having to do with form. In a sense, he is reacting against reading poetry in a formulaic manner, based on calculated metrical conventions that, in his view, suppress the romantic potential of the poetic experience. He insists:

What you doing with your pentating and strokee and all dem rules is putting iron-bar one by one in a spacious room so the bird flying round and round and breaking beak and wing against the wall trying to reach the sunlight. You turning all the room in the universe and in the human mind into bird cage. (95)

In this case, the sunlight is a symbol of the humanly necessary truths or values that poetry may contain. From Joseph's romantic perspective (which here seems to have much in common with Conrad's), the focus on meter gets in the way of such truths.

Shaz's response, in defense of form, suggests his utilitarian outlook: "'Birdshit!' Shaz retorted on my behalf, convinced of my superior book knowledge of Form" (95). He also challenges Joseph's position by pointing out that he is illiterate, unable to write his own name. The narrator recounts Joseph's response:

'I Don't need to write it,' Joseph said fiercely, 'I know the sound of it,' and as if to prove the point, he strummed his guitar. I continued to drum pentameter and trochee on the table whilst Joseph retaliated by composing a tune around the rhythms, so that after five minutes or so of experimentation the two of us arrived at a harmony like tabla and sitar players. (96)

The harmony that the narrator and Joseph arrive at symbolizes a compromise of sorts between the romantic approach to poetry, represented in its sound, and the utilitarian approach to poetry, represented in its form. It is a moment suggesting a harmony of sorts between the two types of utility figured throughout the work: one lower, material and quantitative; the other higher, unavailable through material, quantitative exercises. This vision of harmony suggests that the narrator does not really reject a lower kind of utility in favor of a higher kind. Instead, there is an attempt here from the perspective of a burgeoning Caribbean literary imagination to bridge the supposed divide between romantic and utilitarian ideals that is projected by Victorians such as Conrad. It is an attempt at a Caribbean poetics that is transformative. The projected synthesis of the concept-ideal and the structure-form of poetry functions symbolically. It is a moment in which the narrator appears to reconcile the fractures of his imagination: literary, historical, ideological, and otherwise.

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