

**THE BLOSSOMING OF CARIBBEAN LITERATURE: THE LIFE AND WORK
OF FRANK COLLYMORE**

(The Walter Rodney Lecture, University of Warwick, 18 March 2010)

I suspect that Frank Collymore would blush to hear that he is the subject of a Walter Rodney lecture. He was hardly a radical or revolutionary. Indeed, he was conservative by temperament and upbringing; some, a few, might even say reactionary. He showed little interest in politics, was hardly overjoyed when Barbados gained independence from Great Britain. He was of the uninformed view that “We in B’dos have no African customs, folk-lore or anything of the sort,” and he spoke of “the somewhat absurd idea of Mother Africa.”¹ Of course, in these positions he was very much of his time and upbringing. Still, he was open-minded and liberal (even if that is a dirty word in some quarters), one who valued the individual no matter the cause in which the individual was embedded, a man of principle, unconventional, even disturbingly so in his way, a person of great integrity, someone whom men of much more radical persuasion were honoured to be able to call their friend and mentor.

Think of men, writers, like George Lamming, Austin Clarke, Kamau Brathwaite and Timothy Callender. I believe that to some extent they became the challenging figures that they did because their self-confidence was encouraged by Collymore’s influence, even if he was not likely to share their stronger, more ground-breaking socio-political and artistic beliefs. Collymore’s life and work support the idea that important changes for the public good are often made or assisted by persons who do not set out to be programmatic change-makers. Such was Collymore’s contribution to history in his work with the little magazine *Bim* and his help and encouragement of some of the West

Indian writers who cut their teeth on *Bim*. As I had occasion to say in my biography of Collymore, in speaking for him against criticism of his lack of political activism, some people are political activists and some people are not, and the world has benefited and suffered at the hands of both kinds.

It is Collymore's work with *Bim* and for the young West Indian writers who passed through its pages that will be the focus of this talk, but it is good to give a sketch of the man beyond that work, since such a sketch should suggest qualities that, however indirectly, informed his contribution to the blossoming of West Indian literature. Let's begin with a little of the testimony of a few of those writers whose work was the blossoming. Here, for instance, is Lamming, in his last letter to Collymore (16 February 1980), a few months before Colly's death. Lamming was writing from the United States, to which he had returned after receiving the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from the University of the West Indies at the Cave Hill campus in Barbados. Because of failing health, Colly had not been able to attend the graduation ceremony, at which Lamming gave the address to the graduates. I quote one paragraph from Lamming's letter:

We all missed you both [i.e. Colly and his wife] at the graduation ceremony and the evening celebration in the union building; yet it seemed that you were there, the way the meaning of your life and what you gave dominated everything people had to say. Ours was an almost miraculous meeting, some 40 years ago, and its significance has been kept alive even by people we do not know. I am grateful and happy that it has been so.²

Like Lamming, Brathwaite voiced his high regard for Collymore on many an occasion. Here is one. In his monograph *History of the Voice: the Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry* (1984), he quotes from a Collymore poem to show that, although it is written in “the conversational tone [of English poetry] of the early 50s,” avoiding “the tyranny of the pentameter,”³ the poem does not have the Caribbeanness of “nation language.” However, he adds a footnote to say that Colly died while the monograph was being prepared for publication, and continues: “I should like here to pay tribute to his warmth, kindness and humanity, and to his enormous contribution to Caribbean literature.”

And Derek Walcott, in an interview in 1985, said:

Frank Collymore was an absolute saint.... I’ve never met a more benign, gentle, considerate, selfless person. I’ll never forget the experience of going over to Barbados [in 1949] to meet him. To be treated at that age by a much older man with such care and love and so on was wonderful.... He was not by any means a patronizing man. He never treated you as if he were a schoolmaster doing you good.⁴

Colly would have protested vehemently at being called a saint. He was not a saint. He was a greatly good man, humanized by his weaknesses as by his strengths. Incidentally, brought up as a good, church-going Anglican, he became an agnostic, under the influence of C.E.M. Joad, Bertrand Russell and Aldous Huxley, but he never wore his agnosticism on his sleeve.

Then, John Wickham. In a tribute titled “My Friend Colly,” written shortly after his friend’s death, Wickham wrote:

If there are two things which make me feel saved from complete nonentity, they are that Colly entrusted the editorship of *Bim* to me and that, in [his] last note, he said that I was to bear him and to write his obituary.⁵

Who was Frank Collymore? Some understanding of the man and his place in Barbadian society is germane to appreciation of his contribution to West Indian literature through his work with *Bim*. When I first met him, in the mid-1960s, I had no previous notion of what he looked like. The man I saw was, to all appearances, white, though of a slightly swarthy complexion. He once described himself, with amused self-deflation, as “one of the whiter of the non-whites,” this by way of explaining certain differences of outlook between two groups in the local theatre. Derek Walcott described him “with his tousled white head, looking like a browner version of Yeats in a high wind.”⁶

In 1960, Wickham, published a profile of Collymore in which he said:

Frank Collymore is a white Barbadian. He does not come from the wealthy landed class but of that larger middle or middling class ... a class noted for its careful husbandry, its narrow vision.... By all reason of his background in time and place, Colly is the last man one would expect to have identified himself with a literary magazine and made it the foremost contributor to the surgent spirit of West Indian writers in the last fifteen years⁷

In a much later piece on Colly, Wickham let on that Colly, although he had been greatly appreciative of the profile, had been “furious” at being identified as a white Barbadian:

“... I was entirely wrong He was not white. And I could hear the crossness of a schoolmaster’s voice warning me never to use those words again.”⁸

One Sunday morning in July 1939, Collymore and two friends went to Silver Sands beach for a picnic. After a while, a large party of white Barbadians appeared on the beach. In a diary entry written that night, Collymore reflected at length on them. He wondered

whether it would be possible in any other West Indian island to see such a large number of white people of the middle classes all together at once. And they all *were* white; there wasn’t the suspicion of a coloured one among them. White and abhorrent of any form of racial contamination, they are a class apart. ... Generally speaking art in any form means nothing whatsoever to them⁹

Collymore’s opinion of the generality did not preclude his enjoying friendship with special individuals. Indeed, he had gone to Silver Sands that morning with an exceptional white Barbadian, his close friend “T.T.” Lewis, a history-making, enlightened political activist and his wife, who were living at the time at Collymore’s home. Another such exception to the norm was Therold Barnes, a wealthy merchant of artistic gift, who assisted with the editing of *Bim* in the early years, and was also largely responsible for Collymore’s becoming an outstanding actor on the local stage, which was at that time more or less a white enclave, although the whites were largely expatriate. In addition, Collymore’s first wife was white Barbadian.

Anyway, there was nothing patrician about the already legendary Frank Collymore whom I met that day in the mid-60s; he had no “airs and graces.” He was

easy-going, barefoot, in shorts. His house, the famous Woodville, was a modest bungalow, just a couple of doors up Chelsea Road off the busy highway, about a mile from the centre of Bridgetown. It “was the prototype of the modest, middle class civil servant’s house that proliferated around Bridgetown towards the end of the [nineteenth] century.”¹⁰ The living room looked lived-in, with books lining the walls, and no sense of anything-you-mustn’t-touch. It was the home of the enlightened schoolmaster, the one whom his student Lamming memorialized in his cameo-portrait of the only one of his high-school teachers for whom the protagonist of *In the Castle of My Skin* had any respect, the schoolmaster also remembered with great gratitude and respect by others of his charges such as Austin Clarke, the journalist Gladstone Holder, the broadcaster and actor Alfred Pragnell, and Harold Crichlow, who became Dean of St Michael’s Cathedral in Bridgetown.

Collymore taught for over fifty years at his alma mater, Combermere School, and in a way that experience enhanced his special contribution to Barbadian life. By an Education Act of 1878, Combermere was designated a second-grade school, to distinguish it and a few others from the three officially designated first-grade schools on the island: Harrison College, the Lodge School and the Queen’s School for girls. This categorization was based on considerations of class and colour. Whereas, within a few years of 1878, Combermere was admitting black middle-class boys, “the student population of the ... first-grade schools remained largely White until the 1940s and very few Blacks were appointed to their teaching staff before the 1950s.”¹¹

Collymore taught mainly English and French and encouraged in his students the appreciation of literature. A few, like Lamming, have been deeply grateful for the

welcome with which he allowed them access to his remarkable library at Woodville. For many years he chose and directed the plays performed by the boys at the school's annual Speech Day ceremony. Some of his protégés, like Clarke, recall how he encouraged and made it possible for them to see plays, including ones in which he acted.

His lasting, beneficent effect on the boys whom he taught was the result of his style and approach to teaching and education, which in turn were a function of both temperament and careful thought. His enlightened idea about discipline was puzzling to his colleagues and seemed at best odd to them. He was unwaveringly against flogging, regarding it as counter-productive. In a diary entry for 15 April 1940, after setting out at some length his tenets on education, he observed:

I think I've written enough to show that since the object of teaching is to bring about improvement or progress in some form or other, and this through the free working of the intellect, the main purpose is to implant a desire for improvement in the mind of the boy; hence recourse to "fear and trembling" in the guise of flogging and threats and all the mumbo-jumbo of severity and power would have no part in my programme.¹²

His concern was not just with imparting knowledge and expertise in the subjects he taught, but also with developing the whole mind and personality of his students. F.A. Hoyos, who was for a time his colleague at Combermere, put it well:

Above all he succeeded because, it seemed to me, his philosophy as a teacher was based on that of St Francis of Assisi. He sought not so much to be understood as to understand, not so much to be loved as to love, not

so much to be respected as to respect the thousands of boys who passed through his hands.¹³

The kind of person he was, as schoolmaster, as actor, as friend, was all of a piece with his contribution to West Indian literature as poet, short-story writer and, most of all, editor and publisher of *Bim*. His creative writing blossomed during the early years of his work with *Bim*, and the two endeavours were mutually energizing. For instance, one of *Bim*'s achievements was that, by providing a publishing outlet, it facilitated the development of the short story form as a significant medium for the West Indian literary imagination. In this connection, Collymore, one of the most prolific contributors of short stories to *Bim* must be regarded as one of the pioneers. In his eighteen stories published in the magazine between 1842 and 1971 and posthumously collected under the title of one of them, *The Man Who Loved Attending Funerals* (London et al: Heinemann, 1993), the writing is assured, precise and well controlled, and shows a pleasing variation of style and tone in keeping with changes of subject-matter.

However, there is not much that is distinguishingly Caribbean in the subject matter, little or nothing, for instance, of the social criticism or the focus on the proletariat and the peasantry that were to be strong-points of West Indian prose fiction. There *is* social satire and evidence of Collymore's gift for comedy of manners in one story, "RSVP to Mrs Bush-Hall," and one or two of the stories do give glimpses of Barbadian social history in the early twentieth-century. With respect to the proletariat, a story titled "The Best Man," published as early as 1928 and not included in the collection, is the exception. Otherwise, his strengths are in the exploration of the dark underside of the human mind, with echoes of Edgar Allan Poe, and in the child's evolving consciousness

in a world controlled by adults. There is evidence that the three stories which deal with the latter theme might have developed into a novel, which, if it had come to pass, would have been a pioneering example of another West Indian specialty, the novel of childhood.

Collymore became involved with *Bim* by happy accident, and not as a result of any purposeful action on his part. In 1942 the Young Men's Progressive Club of Barbados decided to upgrade the level of their club magazine, *The YMPC Magazine*, an in-house pot-pourri of light fare. They decided to launch a more serious literary magazine. One of the new magazine's founders, Therold Barnes, who had become a friend of Collymore's and a collaborator with him in the theatre, knew of Collymore's talent for writing and drawing. Collymore was coopted to assist with the editing of the first number of the new magazine, *Bim*. Writing twenty-six years later, E.L. "Jimmy" Cozier, the well-known journalist and chief editor of that first number, said that the coopting of Collymore "was the best thing we ever did for West Indian literature."¹⁴

Then, as it happened, Cozier went off to Trinidad to take up a position with the *Trinidad Guardian*. According to Collymore, Cozier "left Therold Barnes and myself to look after the infant."¹⁵ Cozier put the situation somewhat differently:

"Colly" nursed the infant to vital manhood, and the rest of us gazed admiringly from afar True, Therold Barnes helped provide the pressure and the continuing persuasion, but he would be the first to give credit where it is undoubtedly due.¹⁶

Collymore quickly became *the* driving force behind the journal – editor, publisher, advertising salesman, marketer – and remained so until, because of failing health, he handed over to John Wickham in 1973. True to Collymore's modesty, the magazine

always listed other persons among a team of editors, and they did assist on occasion, but he was *the* editor.

Bim started out, understandably, as a Barbadian magazine. That it soon enough began to look outwards, to the wider Caribbean, was a sign of Collymore's receptivity to the spirit of the time. On his return from a British-Council-sponsored visit to the United Kingdom in 1947, he noted

a change in outlook. The West Indies had come into the news. The conference at Montego Bay seemed to point to a federation of the British West Indies. I found myself enthusiastic for contributions from the islands, and I was not disappointed. During the years that followed, we were publishing material from Trinidad, Jamaica, British Guiana, St Vincent, St Lucia.¹⁷

Bim's blossoming West Indian spirit was also fuelled by the appearance, shortly after *Bim*, of three other important literary magazines: *Kyk-over-al* in Guyana, edited by A.J. Seymour; the Jamaican, irregularly-appearing annual *Focus*, edited by Edna Manley; and the BBC's weekly "Caribbean Voices" programme, produced by Henry Swanzy. Collymore sustained a lively, mutually supportive correspondence with Seymour and particularly with Swanzy. Some items that first appeared on "Caribbean Voices" were also published in *Bim*, and vice versa. True to his colonial orientation, Collymore looked to Swanzy and "Caribbean Voices" for helpful critical comment on the emergent writing.

Our debt to persons like Collymore, Seymour and Swanzy is deepened all the more by awareness of the obstacles they had to contend with. There were influential persons in Barbadian society who disparaged the idea of West Indian literature. One

such was the editor of *The Barbados Advocate*, George Hunte. Collymore was especially cas down by a review of *Bim*, No. 15, which appeared in the *Advocate* of 20 December 1921. In it, the reviewer, Neville Connell, Curator of the Barbados Museum, wrote:

West Indian poetry, literature and art, only exist in the purely geographic sense. There is no endemic culture in the Caribbean. Such culture as exists in this area owes its origin and growth to the influence and stimuli of Western Europe. The standards by which critics should judge West Indian culture, therefore, must be foreign.

Collymore told Swanzy that, as a consequence of this review, he “almost began to wonder if it was worthwhile continuing,” and that the review was “an indication ... that the ‘intelligentsia’ in Barbados are still far too conservative in their literary outlook to think that anything of remotest consequence can originate in the Caribbean.”¹⁸

Collymore’s reaction is all the more appreciable when we consider his own conservatism. For instance, he himself was to write, in an article on “Writing in the West Indies,” that “the fundamental culture [of the West Indies] is Western European.”¹⁹

Anyway, to return to the story of *Bim*’s increasing West Indianness: No.9 (Dec. 1948) marked a decisive development with regard to the widening West Indian focus of the magazine. That number included poems by three Trinidadians – Cecil Herbert, Harold Telemaque and Ruby Waithe -- an essay by a fourth, Ernest Carr, and a short story by the British Guianese Edgar Mittelholzer. The appearance of the Trinidadians had to do with the fact that young George Lamming, who had gone to teach in Trinidad, had become very active in promoting *Bim* there, and in enlisting contributors. In No. 10 the West Indian dimension was decisively widened. On the front cover, contributors

were grouped according to country of location. The list included, in addition to most of the non-Barbadians who had appeared in No.9, Barnabas Ramon-Fortune and Samuel Selvon of Trinidad, Gloria Escoffery and A.L. Hendriks of Jamaica, A.J. Seymour of British Guiana, and Derek Walcott of St Lucia.

As the years went by, succeeding generations of West Indian writers had early exposure in the pages of *Bim*. The most substantial of these contributors, in terms of number of contributions, included Brathwaite, Eric Roach, John Figueroa, Ian McDonald, Karl Sealy, Cecil Gray, John Wickham, Slade Hopkinson, Michael Anthony, Mervyn Morris and Timothy Callender. Anyone who wants to study the development of, say, Lamming or McDonald or Morris or Roach, needs to go through the pages of *Bim*. Similarly, anyone wanting to know about an excellent poet, Judy Miles, or an excellent short-story writer, Karl Sealy, who fell silent far too soon, before they had made the mark they seemed destined to make, will need to read their contributions to *Bim*.

Roger Mais made one appearance, with a short story (No.12), and V.S. Naipaul two: an anecdote titled "Tea with an Author" (No. 34) and a short essay on "Critics and Criticism" (No.38). Notable absentees were Martin Carter and Wilson Harris, but they had *Kyk-over-al*. *Bim*'s West Indian interest also came to show itself in critical essays, notably those by Brathwaite and the distinguished critic Gordon Rohlehr.

Few such magazines have begun as innocent of "policy" or "programme" as did *Bim*. In their editors' "Notebook" to No.15 (Dec. 1951), Barnes and Collymore wrote:

It is not always an easy matter to define a policy; we have so far refrained from attempting to do so, and indeed we do have no intention of restricting ourselves to any set programme. ... We have no desire to boast of a West

Indian literature And a literature ... is not brought into being by blue-prints. (p.149)

For No. 22 (June 1955), Lamming wrote “An Introduction,” in which he said::

It has been my intention to point, so to speak, the social implications of a magazine whose emphasis was never on social analysis or political prediction, and I have tried to emphasise the point of that unconscious change and development because of the tendency of groups among us to plan and organize what they call their culture. (pp. 66-67)

That statement is all the more significant, coming as it did from Lamming, himself so concerned with social analysis and the political implications of literature.

In his “one and only policy,” that of “encourag[ing] creative talent,”²⁰ a policy of “experiment and encouragement,”²¹ Collymore may well have been too cautious in the experimenting, while being at times too lenient with regard to the quality of the material accepted. According to Wickham, Colly was “so kind that he was often reluctant to take the decision that the piece of verse awaiting his [judgement] was nonsense.”²² The one instance that I know of in which he rejected a contribution raises interesting questions. Cecil Gray has told me that he once sent Colly a poem which began, “Say ‘sir’ to the white man, boy,” and Colly promptly rejected it. It was a dialect poem about race relations, but it was also probably not any good.²³ Maybe so; but it may also be that Gray thought that Collymore was being protective of the status quo with regard to class and colour.

There was also the instance in which Colly asked Ian McDonald to change the “f-word” in his poem “On An Evening Turned to Rain.” The line in question was “Women

fucked and fondled, wine drunk down.” McDonald did not like the suggestion, but agreed to make the change so as to have the poem published in the forthcoming issue of the magazine, where the line appeared as “Women feted, fondled, wine drunk down” (*Bim* No.54 [Jan.-June 1972], p.64). He said that he understood Collymore’s “problem” with the word, but thereafter he reverted to what he considered the “definitive version” of the line.²⁴ One does not know exactly what was Collymore’s “problem” with the “f-word.” I suspect it was not a matter of his personal squeamishness. Although he himself was not known to utter profanities, two of his best friends, “TT” Lewis and Ralph Perkins, his colleague at Combermere, were famous for their foul mouths. More than likely, the problem was that Collymore thought it unwise to risk offending the sensibility or prudishness of his readers and advertisers.

Over and above the fact that *Bim* gave to the emerging writers the space to have their work exposed, and to benefit from the stimulus of being in one another’s company in its pages, Collymore also did a great service through befriending and helping otherwise to promote some of his young contributors. Some of these friendships developed largely through correspondence, and here we must also notice the stimulus of his friendship-by-correspondence with A.J. Seymour, Henry Swanzy and Harold Simmons, St Lucian mentor of Derek Walcott. To read this correspondence is to feel that we are indeed partaking, behind the scenes so to speak, in an epoch-making moment at the blossoming of a literature, a moment we are better able to appreciate from the advantage of hindsight.

The most notable cases of Collymore’s friendship and mentorship of younger writers are those involving Mittelholzer, Lamming, Brathwaite, Walcott, Callender and Clarke. The most celebrated case may be that of Walcott, but I shall use Clarke for

illustration now. Collymore first made an impression on Clarke as his teacher at Combermere. Clarke gives us a cameo glimpse of Colly the schoolmaster as “character,”

brown shoes polished with a Nugget tan which must have had razor blades in the tin – for his shoes looked cracked, through age and polishing.... His shoes had rubber heels. They fell secure and in rhythm of jaunting confidence along the interminable second floor corridor²⁵

For his part, many years later, Collymore recalled affectionately, in a letter to Clarke: “And you know I kin still see you, sittin’ at the leff-han of the back row in 5A smiling at me!”²⁶

It was after Clarke emigrated to Canada in 1955, and began to write in earnest, that his correspondence and friendship with Collymore began. From No.35 (July-Dec.1962) to No.40 (Jan.-June 1965), each number of *Bim* carried a Clarke short story. Clarke has recalled gratefully Collymore’s reassuring words concerning his worry that his novel *Amongst Thistles and Thorns* (1965) – the first written but second published – would sound too much like an echo of Lamming’s *In the Castle of My Skin*.²⁷ In the same letter, Collymore also told Clarke that he had got word from Brathwaite (then in Jamaica) that he had heard that Clarke was now “the ‘angry young man’ of Toronto.” Collymore continues: “All good luck. This racial problem is always a difficult one. Here in Bdos, as you know, although there has been – and still is to a certain extent – a social cleavage, yet there has never existed any *hatred*.” Collymore enlarges on this statement, painting a benign picture of comparative racial harmony in Barbados. One can’t help wondering how he would have taken a novel like Clarke’s *The Polished Hoe* (2002).

Clarke, pacesetter and master craftsman of Bajan vernacular, has made a point of a valuable lesson he learnt from Collymore regarding writing the vernacular in his creative pieces. Collymore suggested that the writing “should [not] be too West Indianized; especially as to spelling,”²⁸ otherwise “the non-W.I. reader [would] find it too much of a foreign language,” and that the West Indianness might better be conveyed through “speech-rhythms.” “Of course [Colly continued] you must bring in a misspelt word here and there,” giving as acceptable examples “bout” (for “about”), “pon” (for “upon”) and “excape” (for “escape”), used in a story that was about to appear in *Bim*. However, as he told Clarke, he had substituted “with” for “wid.” “And of course [he concluded] the ignored auxiliary and the floating participle – these all make for the richness of the speech.” Interestingly enough, the basis of Collymore’s advice, i.e. that one should not make the Caribbean vernacular seem on the page too strange to the non-Caribbean person, meaning too different from English, stands in sharp contrast to a subsequent ideological line of a later generation, viz. that one *should* make the vernacular seem, in orthography, as far removed as possible from English, thereby enhancing the idea that the Caribbean creole is not a version of English but a *different* language.

Collymore, apparently following Clarke’s lead (though it may have been the other way round), began to write to Clarke in Bajan, his delightful command of it in turn stimulating Clarke’s own proficiency. Clarke observes that “what is strongest in his [Collymore’s] ‘dialect’ writing is the rhythm, the beat, the musicality in speech, and the words spoken in an untraditional order. And too, his playfulness with names.”²⁹ Clarke then lists the many names, most funny, by which Collymore addressed him in the letters.

Incidentally, “untraditional” in relation to word order must be taken as “untraditional in English” because the word order was following traditional African syntax.

For Clarke, Collymore was a vital link, through correspondence, to the Barbados that fed his imagination, an informed literary mind whose delight at his young friend’s success justified the labour of love. The two also kept each other informed of mutual literary friends and acquaintances. In their correspondences we can glimpse a West Indian literary network taking shape.

Austin Clarke is a great letter writer. The most unforgettable of his letters to Collymore is one written from Duke University in North Carolina on Easter morning 1972. Collymore was then 79 years old, Clarke 38. This letter is a brilliant performance of over 2,000 words and it deserves to be published as a creative piece in its own right, beside, say, the performance of Clarke’s *Boysie* in *The Bigger Light* (1957) and *Mary-Mathilda* in *The Polished Hoe*. It even has its own title page, in Clarke’s signature calligraphic script, in, as always, Indian ink: “EASTER MORNING LETTER TO / FRANK COLLYMORE, EDITOR OF / BIM LITERARY MAGAZINE, / BARBADOS 8 APRIL 1972”. The letter captures the feelings of the West Indian far from home, reliving in memory and imagination his nurturing experience of home.

It begins on a resonantly intertextual note, harking back to the classic “Early, Early, Early One Morning,” a short story by Clarke, which had appeared in *Bim*, No.38 (Jan.-June 1964). The story tells of his misadventure one Easter morning in his boyhood when he had to sing in the Cathedral choir in Bridgetown. The letter begins:

Dear Mr Collymore,

This is one Easter morning that I ain' wearing no tight shoes going down to the Cathedral Church, saying I singing in no choir! And although the feet ain' hurting through the pressure o' small shoes, the spirit sort o' low, becausin I just turn on the tellyvision, and a man come on, in technicolour, talking 'bout Easter³⁰

The televised singing is nothing like the singing Clarke remembered from back home:

These people here in America can't sing no sing, like we. Man, is now that my mind stretch back to some real pretty singing especially when them fellas have-in a coupla pints o' bad dark rum and some souce leff-over from Sarduh night. That is singing.

Here we get a Clarke staple, the celebration of food as a factor of identity.

Later he writes about the imminent publication of his novel *The Meeting Point*, the first part of his "Toronto trilogy:"

Well, my day-bew in this country, in regards o' writing, is April 3rd. THE MEETING POINT making it Amer'can day-bew; and I ain' know whether it mean nothing in terms o' symbols and superstition, but I feel that the publisher publishing it too close to April the 1st, whiching as you know is a funny-arse day, back home.

The letter ends:

I senning you all the best for now and for to come; to you and the missis and the lil' ones, everybody you could see in the reaches o' your eye, and hear in the reaches o' your earhole. So tek it light! And iffen the spirit move you ... fire one in mem'ry o' e. A Moun' Gay would do!

After Colly's death, Clarke wrote a letter of condolence (9 August 1980) to his widow, Ellice, in which he remembered his friend and mentor as "a man who meant more to me, as a boy, as a young man, as a writer, than I am able to say."³¹ Then, on reading about the retrospective exhibition mounted at Woodville in 1993 on the centenary of Colly's birth, Clarke wrote again to Ellice: "I was overjoyed to read in *The Nation* of 8th January, the "Tribute to Colly," & the part you are taking in this long overdue recognition of a man who single-handed laid the artistic and literary foundations of all our successes."³²

Some time in the late 1980s I happened to remark to George Lamming that I had read of the opening of the Frank Collymore Auditorium in the Barbados Central Bank building in Bridgetown. George chuckled mischievously and said something to the effect that that was a joke, because that was a place where you'd have to wear jacket-and-tie, and Colly wouldn't be caught dead going into such a place. Well, Colly was not caught dead in jacket and tie. He was buried in shorts, sandals and short-sleeved shirt, just as you would have chatted with him in his drawing room at Woodville.

Edward Baugh

¹ Frank Collymore, letter to Henry Swanzy, 14 June 1972, in the possession of Professor David Dabydeen, University of Warwick.

² Collymore Papers, Dept of Archives, Barbados.

³ Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *History of the Voice* (London & Port of Spain: New Beacon Books, 1984), p.32.

⁴ In William Baer, ed. *Conversations with Derek Walcott* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), p.103.

⁵ John Wickham, "My Friend Colly," *Bim*, Nos. 66 & 67 (June 1983), p.4.

⁶ Derek Walcott. "'Bim' Will Cease Publication – Like Sudden Death of a Friend" (letter to the editor),

The Trinidad Guardian, 7 January 1959, p.6.

⁷ John Wickham, "Colly – A Profile," *Opus*, February 1960, pp.3-4.

⁸ John Wickham, "Epigraph to a *Bim* Notebook," *Bim*, No. 74 (December 1992), n.p.

⁹ Diary entry for 23 July 1939, Collymore Papers.

¹⁰ Dr Henry Fraser and Warren Alleyne, *Houses of Leaders* (Bridgetown: Carib Publicity & Company Ltd and The New Bajan, 1991), p.21.

¹¹ Sandiford, Keith A.P. and Earle H. Newton, *Combermere School and the Barbadian Society* (Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago: The Press University of the West Indies, 1995), p.14.

¹² Collymore Papers.

¹³ F.A. Hoyos, *The Quiet Revolutionary* (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan & Carib Publicity Co., 1984), p.45.

¹⁴ Jimmy Cozier, "The Beginnings of *Bim*," *Bim*, No. 48 (Jan.-June 1969), p.247.

¹⁵ Frank Collymore, "The Story of *Bim*," *Bim*, No. 38 (Jan.-June 1964), p.69.

¹⁶ Jimmy Cozier, "The Beginnings of *Bim*," p.248.

¹⁷ Frank Collymore, "The Story of *Bim*," p.80.

¹⁸ Frank Collymore, letter to Henry Swanzy, 27 Feb. 1952. Swanzy Papers, Birmingham University Library.

¹⁹ Frank Collymore, "Writing in the West Indies," *The Tamarack Review*, No. 14 (Winter 1960), p.117.

²⁰ Frank Collymore, letter to Edward Baugh, quoted in Edward Baugh, "Frank Collymore and the Miracle of *Bim*," *New World*, vol.III, Nos. 1 & 2, Barbados Independence Issue (Dead Season 1966 & Croptime 1967), p.132.

²¹ "Notebook," *Bim*, No.15, p.149.

²² John Wickham, "My Friend Colly," p.3.

²³ Cecil Gray, letter to Edward Baugh, 24 Feb. 2010.

²⁴ Ian McDonald, letter to Frank Collymore, 16 Nov. 1971. Collymore Papers.

²⁵ Austin Clarke, "Colly," *Bim: Arts for the 21st Century*, Vol.2, No.1 (Nov. 2008-April 2009), p.121.

²⁶ Frank Collymore, letter to Austin Clarke, 8 Nov. 1971. Clarke Papers, Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University.

²⁷ Austin Clarke, "Colly," p.129. Collymore's letter is among the Clarke Papers, Mills Memorial Library.

²⁸ Frank Collymore, letter to Austin Clarke, 25 May 1962. Clarke Papers. Quoted in Clarke, "Colly," p.125.

²⁹ Austin Clarke, "Colly," p.125.

³⁰ Clarke Papers.

³¹ Collymore Papers.

³² Austin Clarke, letter to Ellice Collymore, 14 Jan. 1993. Collymore Papers.