

1995

A Note on Sam Selvon

Henry Swanzy

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi>

Recommended Citation

Swanzy, Henry, A Note on Sam Selvon, *Kunapipi*, 17(1), 1995.
Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol17/iss1/11>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library:
research-pubs@uow.edu.au

A Note on Sam Selvon

Abstract

I can't remember when Sam started to contribute to Caribbean Voices, but it was just after the end of the War, when he was working on the Trinidad Guardian. I can just remember that it was a charming and unpretentious poem. 'Remember Harry's little car, And the vale with daisies.' Later it was about 'When the Yankees came to Trinidad, they had the girls all going mad.' He was one of the first West Indian writers to make contact with the BBC, when he came to England with George Lamming in 1950. Long afterwards, he came down to see me in Bishops Stortford when he spoke about the literary renaissance in the Caribbean to a local literary society. His contributions were mainly in prose, clear and unpretentious and marked by great accuracy of expression; over the years, I can still remember the sketches he wrote in verse and prose, such as his vision of the shore in Barbados, with the sea making the sky 'tremendously large'. Then there was the birthday broadcast that he and George Lamming made to celebrate the birthday of Frank Collymore, the editor of Bim. He was, however, not only a good writer but a great man. When he came to England, bringing his family, all of them fell ill with lung trouble, and had to go to a sanatorium at Pinewood in Berkshire, where I visited them -to find him quite undaunted. He overcame the temptation to abandon the struggle of making his name in London, among 'the lonely Londoners', but emerged to write for one of the leading English daily papers, The Telegraph, living only for a time on his savings. He also published a novel, A Brighter Sun, where the two main characters, the young Indian couple, Tiger and Urmilla, may well have been based on his own life. He was an admirable man, not least for his talent of silence. He never preached, but he fulfilled to the letter the words of Garcia Lorca on 'the coming of the black boy to announce to the gold-minded whites the beginning of the reign of the year of corn.'

HENRY SWANZY

A Note on Sam Selvon

I can't remember when Sam started to contribute to *Caribbean Voices*, but it was just after the end of the War, when he was working on the *Trinidad Guardian*. I can just remember that it was a charming and unpretentious poem. 'Remember Harry's little car, And the vale with daisies.' Later it was about 'When the Yankees came to Trinidad, they had the girls all going mad.' He was one of the first West Indian writers to make contact with the BBC, when he came to England with George Lamming in 1950. Long afterwards, he came down to see me in Bishops Stortford when he spoke about the literary renaissance in the Caribbean to a local literary society. His contributions were mainly in prose, clear and unpretentious and marked by great accuracy of expression; over the years, I can still remember the sketches he wrote in verse and prose, such as his vision of the shore in Barbados, with the sea making the sky 'tremendously large'. Then there was the birthday broadcast that he and George Lamming made to celebrate the birthday of Frank Collymore, the editor of *Bim*. He was, however, not only a good writer but a great man. When he came to England, bringing his family, all of them fell ill with lung trouble, and had to go to a sanatorium at Pinewood in Berkshire, where I visited them - to find him quite undaunted. He overcame the temptation to abandon the struggle of making his name in London, among 'the lonely Londoners', but emerged to write for one of the leading English daily papers, *The Telegraph*, living only for a time on his savings. He also published a novel, *A Brighter Sun*, where the two main characters, the young Indian couple, Tiger and Urmilla, may well have been based on his own life. He was an admirable man, not least for his talent of silence. He never preached, but he fulfilled to the letter the words of Garcia Lorca on 'the coming of the black boy to announce to the gold-minded whites the beginning of the reign of the year of corn.'