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These journals, as they gradually reach a wider public, will contribute most effectively to the universal world literature we hope for; we repeat however that there can be no question of the nations thinking alike, the aim is simply that they shall grow aware of one another, understand each other, and even where they may not be able to love, may at least tolerate one another.

GOETHE

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ries, I am moving home"—and the reader is not a little relieved.

That said, one must record one's appreciation of this "Asian-American Memoir of Homelands" as a compellingly readable tale of a disinherited female soul, who careens precariously between memories of a rough Malayan childhood steeped in poverty and violence and the realities of a new American existence that in its very notions of plenty denies and negates her prior life. Clearly, Lim's childhood experiences were overpowering: beaten by her father during his blinding fits of rage, abandoned by her mother who left her family and the country for a better life in Singapore, weakened by constant pangs of hunger and misery. To her particular credit, Lim's courageous stories of her early life, desolated by various kinds of losses, are told with the right amount of detachment that never allows her to wallow in self-pity. Instead there is warmth, and humor, and a great skill in realistically recreating a world long lost.

It is only in the later sections of the book, when Lim has obviously extricated herself heroically from the debilitating circumstances of her childhood, that her continued sense of dislocation and dispossession in the New World of America begins to sound like an indulgent angst. It is not as if one doubts the efficacy of her sense of nonbelonging, but one does wonder why, with the kind of intelligence that she clearly possesses, she would be so continually dismayed by the long process of naturalization (and I don't mean the technicalities of it) that every immigrant must necessarily live through, and perhaps never quite leave behind. One would expect that Lim, whose professional identity is inextricably, and fruitfully, linked to her migrant status, would celebrate the fluidities of relocation without, literally, whining for acceptance by Anglo-Saxon America: "There are many ways in which America tells you you don't belong. . . . The United States, a nation of immigrants, makes strangers only of those who are visibly different." However, at the end of this extremely well-written memoir, we are indeed happy to learn that the cathartic regurgitation of her Malaysian stories has laid to rest the ghosts of Lim's past, and that the reconstruction of her fifty-year life of singular achievements appears finally to have convinced the writer that she may yet find her place in the sun that shines upon her adopted homeland.

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Mauritius

Carl de Souza. *La maison qui marchait vers le large*. Paris. Le Serpent à Plumes. 1996. 331 pages. 110 F. ISBN 2-908957-85-X.

The Mauritian writer Carl de Souza (b. 1947) is, paradoxically, an author both new and established. His 1989 prizewinning first novel, *Le sang de l'Anglais*, was not published until 1993. Other paradoxes: De Souza, a newcomer to the Mauritian literary landscape, is already considered integral to it. He has published in France but lives and works in Mauritius—unlike other francophone Mauritian writers such as the novelist Ananda Devi or the poet Khal Toorabaly, for instance, who live in France. He

is a member of one "community," a euphemism and misnomer for a number of Mauritian ethno-religious affiliations, yet writes perceptively and knowledgeably about the others. Throughout *La maison qui marchait vers le large* he writes neither in *Académie* French nor in Mauritian Creole, preferring a fluid prose that interweaves French, Mauritian French, and Creole: "*Côte ou pé aller coume ça, Haffenjee? Voyez pas que j'ai pas fini de causer avec vous?*"

Just as Michel St. Bart, a Mauritian of French ancestry, and Howard Hawkins, a Mauritian of English descent, come to terms with their contradictory feelings in *Le sang de l'Anglais*, so too must Daronville and Haffenjee, the two main characters of *La maison*. They are constantly, if differently, seeking ways of expressing and accepting their alternating feelings of goodwill and disdain, grudging admiration and disapproval, warmth and cynicism. Daronville is an obdurate, wheelchair-bound Creole (mixed white and nonwhite ancestry) who, for financial reasons, is forced to move to the second floor of his splendid, aging colonial house and rent the first floor to the Muslim Haffenjee family. Mr. Haffenjee is a clerk in the district office who moves from the country to Port Louis so that his son can attend a prestigious state school, an opportunity afforded him by his outstanding performance on national exams. The contempt in which Daronville holds all his neighbors, especially his tenants, is palpable. The feelings are mutual but not racist ("communal," in Mauritian terms) so that Haffenjee "détestait aussi M. Daronville. Non parce qu'il était mulâtre et chrétien, mais tout simplement détestable."

The premise of *La maison* is established early. Torrential rains cause a landslide, and the houses of a fictitious but recognizable mountainside neighborhood of Port Louis begin to slip toward the sea. Everyone but Daronville is aware of this: Haffenjee's ailing, withdrawn wife; the hardworking Chinese neighbor whose additional floors deprive Daronville of his one joy, an unimpeded view of ships in harbor; Germaine, the unindustrious and superstitious Creole maid; and numerous others who for de Souza evidently constitute a microcosm of Mauritius. Every "community" is presented and represented and their particularities and misconceptions about one another depicted and described. In spite of the delicate subject, de Souza is not judgmental or condescending; indeed, his keen observations are conveyed in a prose that is celebratory of difference.

Daronville and Haffenjee's almost symbiotic relationship is underscored late in the novel when the two find themselves alone in the *maison*, Daronville grappling with his slipping dream of dying in the home his father built, Haffenjee grappling with his of owning Daronville's house and thereby somehow making up for the *vies ratées* of a wife dying of filial neglect and a son disillusioned by a path that leads only "vers le rêve du père." Just as the house slides inexorably toward the sea, so Daronville and Haffenjee's lives slide toward a reality that forces them both to transgress and atone in a most extraordinary way.

De Souza had already established himself as a significant writer with his first novel. *La maison* confirms his defining role in the constitution of a distinctly Mauritian literature.

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