

to fight lynching and voting injustices. Angela contends that contemporary feminists are failing because they are repeating the same mistakes their sisters made.

Her scholarship is subjective and militant; overkill is a frequent problem in an otherwise well-researched historical analysis of why and how the goals of middle and lower class women will continue to differ. But Angela may be right in asking, "how can whites understand the humiliation of women used as breeders, of slaves unable to prevent their mulatto sons from being sold and never seen again?" Even Eliza's gentle Christian morality in Harriet Beecher Stowe's best seller is not what made mothers defend their children. Instead their passionate abhorrence of slavery made some like Margaret Garner kill. So Angela concludes that blacks, not whites, should tell their own story. *Women, Race and Class* is such a primary source, although she appreciates Gutman's scholarly assertion that the black family was strengthened not weakened by the rigors of servitude.

Her contributions should be acknowledged in contemporary encyclopedias, and her vehement assertions about American political history, feminism, Marxism and racism should be expressed freely.

A visiting scientist-scholar from Leningrad once compared Angela's protests with that of Solzhenitsyn, to which this reviewer responded that the comparison is not valid. "Your dissident critic, forced into involuntary exile from his beloved Mother Russia, is now a non-person, while this Marxist is permitted to teach, criticize and publish her condemnation of America's injustices."

— Edith Blicksilver  
Georgia Institute of Technology

Zee Edgell. *Beka Lamb* (London: The Chaucer Press. Distributed by Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., Exeter, NH; 1982) 171 pp., \$2.95.

Formerly called British Honduras, Belize, an emerging third world country, second smallest in Central America, originally became a part of the British Empire because its coast gave sanctuary to British sailors and pirates. But a thousand years or so before, the land formed a small part of the mighty Mayan civilization. A dozen or more sites—Mayan centers—have been discovered in Belize and have offered up their

pyramids and artifacts as silent testimony to the past. Becoming fully self-governing in 1964, the country continues to experience various power struggles; Guatemala claims Belize since, according to its doctrine, a province which successfully revolts against a colonial power inherits all the rights and boundaries claimed by the colonist power. Hence both Mexico and Guatemala, as successful revolters against the Spanish, could lay claim to Belize. Moreover, the inhabitants of Belize represent many disparate loyalties: the Black Caribs, descendants of West Africans and the Red Caribs; Mayan Indians; Creoles and Africans; Mestizos, Maya Indian and Spanish mixed bloods; East Indians; Syrian and Lebanese; Chinese; North Americans and Europeans.

Cognizant surely of all that Belize is, Zee Edgell, herself a Belizean, has ostensibly given us a simple, local color novel to recount life as it is experienced in present day Belize. Native customs, myths, and dialect provide the frame on which the weaknesses, triumphs and sorrows of a young girl hang exposed. Although a brilliant metaphor occasionally adds dimension, we are not really encouraged to read this novel symbolically even with the juxtapositioning of the demise of the old way, in the death of Great Grandmother Straker, against assimilation, in the death of the student Toycie.

The novel portrays a primarily matriarchal society, except that final decisions, final petitions, final action, insight and wisdom reside in the man, Mr. or "Daddy" Bill Lamb. Thus in essence females are "full of sound and fury signifying nothing."

Still, in part, it remains a woman's story; male authors do not really know menstruation or a woman's libido, which apparently only a female author can or will deal with. Yet the treatment of illicit sex and subsequent pregnancy could as easily have been written by a male, emphasizing, as Edgell does, the moral issue and the ostracism of the female. Although as a woman Edgell may initially appear more empathetic, the unmarried creole Toycie does lapse into insanity and premature death, while the Spanish Emilio undergoes no pain of castigating remorse. Nevertheless Toycie's plight does not suggest that a real stigma exists so far as the other Creoles are concerned. Finally, even though *Beka Lamb* is written by a woman the attitudes and values remain traditional; that is, males are cast in the decision making and problem solving roles while females have the powerless roles. This is not a feminist novel.

We are presented with the initiation theme, a sort of rites-of-passage situation, laid in Belize; we witness the apparent protagonist undergoing change, that of moving from childhood into womanhood, of confronting larger issues. Beka Lamb, non-productive rebel in an educational system geared to English mores, overcomes her penchant

for lying and directs her responses to life, placing death in its proper perspective and assuming responsibility for her own progress. Having won the prize for her writing and having at last fulfilled her wake for Toycie, she will accept her place in a society influenced by the British, but with a people who are uniting “to build a nation” and learning about that country—its flora and fauna—its essence.

During the unraveling of Beka’s story, we have been exposed peripherally to political, mythical, social, racial, and religious issues. However, while the novelist brushes many issues none are fully realized. The conflict between the native culture, Gran and the P.I.P. versus Daddy Bill and moderation, fizzles out. Describing the town, Edgell tells us that, “It was a relatively tolerant town where at least six races with their roots in other districts of the country, in Africa, the West Indies, Central America, Europe, North America, Asia, and other places, lived in a kind of harmony.” Yet the book itself reveals harsh lines of racial demarcation, with the Creoles living below poverty level.

Although the tension between local beliefs and the Catholic church never becomes a clear cut issue, it has generated unrest in the people. For example, when the issue of Toycie’s pregnancy clashes with the Church’s moral stance, Daddy Bill shows that justice demands that Toycie be permitted to graduate. In the minds of the people, right is on Toycie’s side yet the Church prevails; Toycie is expelled, and is later killed in the fierce hurricane that ravages Belize. Through it all, our sympathies are with Toycie, love’s victim, and we wish that somehow the author had been willing to take a more severe stance.

The strength of this novel lies in its realistic treatment of a country little known to the vast majority of English-speaking peoples. While we cannot argue with the author’s vision, we can wish that a more aggressive theme had prevailed and that bits of folklore and Belizean life had been more carefully woven into the story.

— LaVerne González  
San Jose State University