

A Tribute To Edna Manley

National Library of Jamaica

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By Archie Lindo

We knew it would happen one day, but, somehow, like death all over we did not anticipate the hour, and so, Edna Manley, our beloved Edna Manley, leader in the Arts has quietly and unexpectedly left us.

We shall miss her as long as memory last. And generations to come, reading about her, never having seen her, wonder about this fascinating, dynamic person we called Edna Manley.

Her role of art will long outlive her and memory too, told verbally as well as in books that children and adults can and will read, will tell of her glory and her worth.

Writing this as I am, at a time when I am still quite ill, having just left hospital. Believing at one time that I could have gone before Edna; I last saw her at an art show (she seldom missed these) and as usual, we were teasing each other

about the art scene. We were differing at times, on the fineness and not so fineness of the work before us, but never with rancour or any bitterness, laughing at each other's errors or 'hits' as they occurred.

WANTED NO BITTERNESS

This was one quality about Edna Manley, she could credit your successes with equal happiness as she could with your errors with equal fun at your expense. Life, after life was to her something one could enjoy, why should there be amnesty or bitterness? She could, of course, be 'sharp' as they say if you made an error that struck her as being just a bit more than silly, and that was when she could go just a bit overboard, and you; if you were sensible enough could admit that, after all, perhaps she was correct and laugh it off and there it ended.

I am being rather light this morning. Edna always said she

wanted no bitterness, not much grief at her departure for another life.

All sensible people should know and understand this. It is not how you have done it, how you have lived. What your life, brief as it seems sometimes can be, has been on this earth that matters most.

Edna would say, "Now stop preaching and tell me one of your jokes." I believe that it was mostly for this reason that she would say come and look for me, your visit has too long been overdue.

But it was not always for mirth. Sometimes it was for what one might call "depth of feeling", and Easton Lee would phone and say Edna wants some poetry come along and join us and we will read for her.

The last time was a couple of weeks ago in addition to our delight there was a very well, let's call it sentimental poem which I read. It was her favourite and mine. It was the Yeats poem fairly brief, but oh

so beautiful. It was:

When You Were Old

When you were old and gray and full of sleep
Nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
And one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face.
And bending down beside the growing bars
Murmur, a little sadly, how love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.