

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

# Local poet still packs a wallop

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T.C.

Mississauga poet Peter Jallall is doing his best to keep Canada's oral tradition alive.

Jallall, whose second book of collected poems has just been published, is a constant visitor to school classrooms, professional development workshops and poetry readings.

"Bringing to life the oral tradition is so important," said Jallall. "It's not just important in the Caribbean culture but in the native and Inuit cultures and the Scot and Gaelic cultures in Canada. They all have a strong oral tradition."

Jallall's second collection (the first, *This Healing Place* from 1993, is nearly sold out), is a more eclectic demonstration of his direct and powerful poetic style.

Titled *Yet Another Home*, the new book features a wider variety of subject matter delivered in what Jallall terms a "more Canadianized" voice.

The longer the Guyana native lives in Canada, the more he is immersed in the culture and the more it is reflected in his work, he said.

One of the nicest things about Canada is that, "we want to build a very humane, caring culture," said Jallall, a teacher at Munden Park Public School. His empathy for society's outcasts is evident in a number of the new poems.

The collection also features several verses about his feelings of visiting his native land, family life and the theme, familiar from his first book, of the alienation of the black immigrant in Canada.

It also includes a special section for children, his favorite audience because they don't hide their reactions — good or bad — to his work.

Jallall finds inspiration everywhere, whether writing about his dog, Ricey, or about a Mississauga field mouse he encounters while cutting the lawn, or the "best Canadian tool," the ice scraper.

Jallall said he's gratified there's been a call for more of his work from the small but dedicated poetry community. And, he admits he would be writing poems in any event because it allows him to express his

pent-up emotions and to, "satisfy my soul."

"It was a very different kind of voice," said Christopher Taylor, a long-time friend. "As Peter's work has grown, I've seen a great deal more subtlety in it."

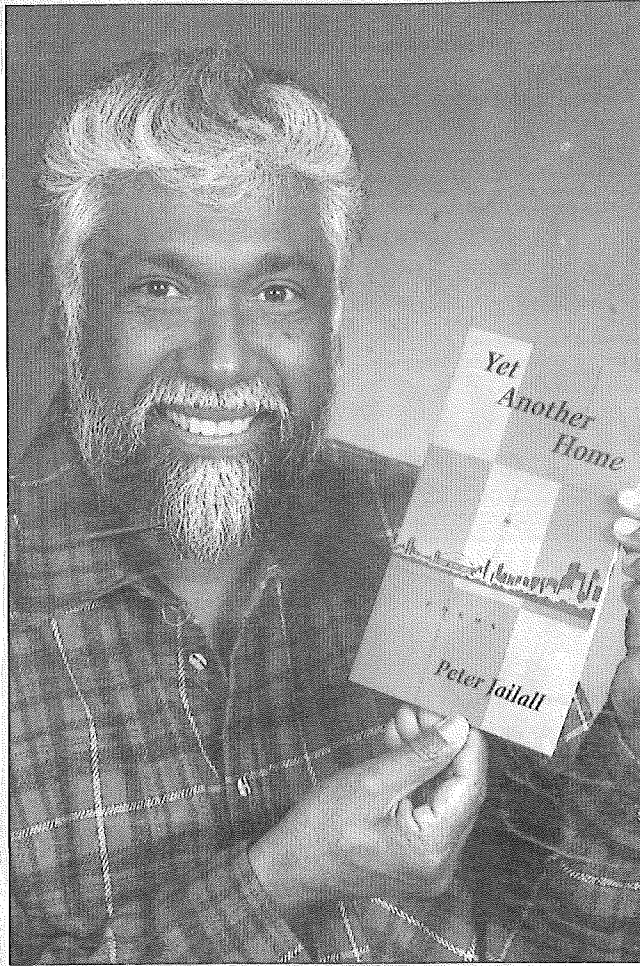
In his best poems, such as *When Nazmoon Died* from the new collection, Jallall still packs a vicious wallop. The poem tells the story of a pregnant woman, unable to run from a terrorist, pleading for the life of her unborn child.

The poem concludes: "But the man fired one deadly shot/ straight to her womb/ Felling mother and child on the spot/ That purple morning when Nazmoon died/ The baby inside never cried."

The denial of the child's humanity, creates an overpowering emotion, said Taylor.

In a signature verse, titled *Poets*, Jallall likens his craft to the sowing of seeds in the farm fields, the preaching of sermons from the pulpit, and the hammering of iron in the forge. "We cast words, helping others live their lives," he said of his hobby.

Jallall's book costs \$9.95 and can be obtained by writing the publisher, National Heritage Books, P.O. Box 95, Station O, Toronto, Ontario, M4A 2M8.



Staff photo by Chris Horobin

Mississauga teacher and poet Peter Jallall has published his second collection of verse. Several of his pieces reflect how women, minorities and the poor are treated by society. Jallall said that politicians aren't speaking to the plight of ordinary people, "so we, the poets, must do it."

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