

ELDORADO LAND OF GOLD

A COLLECTION OF POEMS



BY TRADITIONALBODYWORK.COM

Contents

Preface	3
Introduction	5
THE LEGEND OF ELDORADO	5
Poems about Suriname.....	7
ELDORADO	7
I CAN REMEMBER	9
BEAT THE DRUMS	10
YOUR STREAMS.....	11
POISONED.....	12
HOLY DOVES.....	13
I HAD THIS DREAM.....	14
FROM BOY TO MAN.....	15
SOMETHING'S WRONG	16
COMING HOME	17
YOU'VE CHANGED.....	18
OF '82	19
A STRANGER NOW.....	20
PLAYING BALL	21
TO BE A MAN	22
DISPOSABLE.....	23
I CAME TO SEE	24
SILVER FLYING	25
MONEY	26
WANNABE	27
BIGGER BETTER	28
WHO AM I	29
THE MANGO TREE	30
MY COUNTRYMEN.....	32
STILL IN CHAINS.....	33
I WON'T TELL	34
YOU TALK	36
GOLDEN DUST.....	37
HOLLAND	38
WRONGS ARE JUST	39
A VISION	40
LAW AND ORDER	42
MY VIETNAM	43
NO BORDERS	44
THE MIRROR	45
THIS LAND OF MINE	46
Appendix.....	47

Preface

The *Republic of Suriname* (also known as *Surinam*) is one of the three *Guianas* located in the northeastern part of South America.

In 1975, Suriname became independent from the Netherlands, the country that — with some interruptions — ruled it as a colony for about three hundred years.

The other two Guianas are *British Guiana* (today called *Guyana*) bordering Suriname to the west, and *French Guiana* (which is still a French colony and called *La Guyane*) bordering Suriname's east.

The poems in this book reflect my feelings, thoughts, expectations, and impressions with regard to several of my revisits to Suriname, the country in which I grew up from 1972 to 1982 (from four to fourteen years old).

After my sudden departure to the Netherlands together with my father, hurriedly leaving Suriname after the infamous *December Murders* in 1982, I returned four times to the country: in 1996, 1997, 2011, and in 2012.

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Introduction

The Legend of Eldorado

El Dorado (also known as *Eldorado*) — a Spanish phrase meaning the “Golden One” — is a mythical city of gold, which was supposedly headed by an incredibly rich King who covered himself with gold dust every day to wash it off in a lake near the city every evening. It was said that during ceremonies and festivals, the inhabitants of the city threw jewels and golden objects into the lake as offerings.

At first, the name “El Dorado” was only the name given to the rich King, but later it became the designation of the entire city. At any rate, rumors thus went that the city of El Dorado was located at the banks of a large lake, the latter called *Parime*, somewhere in South America.

The legend was first recorded in the 16th century by Spanish colonists in the Americas. It’s thought that the tale came into existence because of the conquerors’ encounters with various indigenous tribes in the Americas who created objects, ornaments, and jewelry of gold, without being able to find the mines where the indigenous would supposedly dig for gold. The idea grew that there needed to be a hidden, secret place with enormous quantities of gold.

Gradually, the legend of El Dorado began to spread among the European colonists. In the decades that followed, the city was looked for in various places across the continent, a search that went on and off until the beginning of the 19th century. As the area became better charted over time, the existence of the city and lake was thrown into doubt, to be finally dismissed.

Although the idea of the location of Eldorado changed frequently during the centuries, its existence in the Guiana highlands became one of the most persistent theories, leading to several expeditions into the region to find the golden city, even up to the point that lake *Parime* and the city were creatively included in many maps of South America throughout the 17th century.

For me, *Eldorado* and *Parime* (the latter in Suriname called *Parima*) have been a natural part of my youth. I learned about them in school, I had my swimming lessons in the municipal swimming pool with the name *Parima*, and my grandmother worked many years in a printing house called *Eldorado*.

I have chosen “Eldorado” as the title of this poetry bundle, because of the promise it holds. The promise of riches, gold, wealth, prosperity. This promise of capitalizing on South America’s potential, this so-called “potential” that until today hasn’t truly been realized, not in Suriname, and — not in any other country of South America.

Today, the label “Eldorado” has come to mean any place where wealth can be quickly and easily gained. The name was also given to many towns in Latin America and in the United States.

Poems about Suriname

Eldorado

Eldorado
land of gold
your treasures
mighty old

your greens
so lush abundant
your stars
so crisp and clear

the pleasures
of your land
your jungle
and your creeks

Eldorado
land of gold
your treasures
pure and bold

the blossoms
of your land
your flowers
and your fruit

your rivers
clay and sand
with force they
roll and thunder

Eldorado
place so old

your treasures
all but sold.