

ELDORADO LAND OF GOLD

POEMS ABOUT SURINAME



BY TRADITIONALBODYWORK.COM

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Preface



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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.

I Can Remember

I can remember
all too well
the night the
flag went down

that flag with
colors spread
of blue and white
and bloody red

I can remember
crystal clear
the day our
flag went up

our flag of
green and white
and red
a yellow star

I can remember
all too well
this day that
went astray

this day that
turned in ashes
burned my hopes
my dreams away.

Beat the Drums

I know I should
just fight the past
and wear her out

and beat the future
beat the drums
of blazing victory

of course I should
and live the present
blind for history

and beat the troubles
beat the drums
and fight for liberty

I know I should
and if I could
of course I would.

Your Streams

As a child
I knew your magic
your forest
and your streams

I grew up
with all your gifts
your people
and your dreams

I blossomed
opened up
while learning
my own ways

for you
to slap my face
this awful
day of days

I grew up
with all your shifts
your people,
so it seems

for as a child
I knew your magic
the forest
and your streams.