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Introduction to "New Work in Caribbean Literary and Cultural Studies"

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Reviewing is a vital scholarly activity. Academic fields are conversations in which participants speak to one another and to their predecessors. Scholarly writing builds on its predecessors and engages in dialogue with its peers, but the publication process for academic work can be so slow that new ideas often take years to elicit responses and debate. Reviews of scholarly work are therefore particularly important as one of the first responses to a new contribution. We are especially happy to offer this issue of *Anthurium* and to dedicate it to reviews of recently published scholarship in Caribbean literary and cultural studies in order to help facilitate the conversations necessary for a vibrant field.

This special issue of *Anthurium* is devoted to the important tasks of first, making our readers aware of new work in Caribbean literary and cultural studies; and then second, situating the contribution of this work in the field as a whole. Reviews of academic work provide readers with an invaluable means of keeping up with new and emerging scholarship while also giving audiences a sense of new directions the field is taking. We have sought to include reviews of new works that speak directly to what are emerging as important questions for today's field: how citizenship and sovereignty intersect with gender and sexuality; the place of race in the study of populations in the Americas that are not always thought of as part of the African diaspora; how our vision of the present can be disrupted by delving into the archive to revisit forgotten pasts; the erasure and uncanny return of the Caribbean from mainstream versions of history; the practice of performance as a way of articulating community and communal culture.

To emphasize the idea of scholarship as conversation, we are happy to begin a new feature in *Anthurium*'s reviews, the "Dialogues" section. This section will invite a pair of authors of recent scholarly monographs on related topics to each write a review of the other's work. The goal of staging this kind of dialogue will be to attract active scholars with significant expertise in the area to help explore the relationship of their work to other emerging work in the field. The benefit to each author will be to receive a serious and considered review of her or his own work; readers of the journal, meanwhile, will gain from hearing the perspectives of especially knowledgeable and current participants in the field. In this issue, Donette Francis and April Shemak have graciously joined us to discuss one another's new books. Francis' *Fictions of Feminine Citizenship* and Shemak's *Asylum Speakers* explore how transnational realities of migration and diaspora shape Caribbean articulations of identity and belonging. Both authors develop methodologies that emphasize interdisciplinarity, engagement with the materiality of

discourse, and the necessity of expanding our usual ideas of the literary archive. Setting up this dialogue allows *Anthurium* to acknowledge the rhetorical contexts that these works share, and call attention to how these kinds of closely related projects point to emerging trends and subfields within Caribbean literary and cultural studies. We are very pleased with the conversation that has emerged between these works and their authors, and hope that our readers find it equally productive seeing how Francis and Shemak navigate the intriguing overlaps and disjunctions that pairing their work has produced.

We have followed the “Dialogues” section with a selection of reviews of particularly timely and significant scholarly works that represent some of the major turns and interventions in Caribbean literary and cultural studies of the past few years. This section begins with reviews of two new edited collections. The first of these is a review by Sobeira Latorre of *The Afro-Latin@ Reader*, a landmark anthology that brings together more than sixty essays by major scholars of Latin American and US Latino/a studies. The publication of *The Afro-Latin@ Reader* consolidates the gains made in raising awareness of African presence and cultural influence throughout the Americas; this volume thus becomes a new opportunity for comparative work and intellectual exchange between the fields of Latin American, Latino/a, and Caribbean studies. Latorre’s review is followed by Rhonda Frederick’s review of another important recent edited collection, *Sex and the Citizen*. This volume collects a number of essays in the vibrant field of sexuality studies, addressing issues ranging from feminism to masculinity to queer identity. As Frederick discusses, *Sex and the Citizen* is widely comparative, covering locations ranging from the US to Suriname to the Francophone, Anglophone, and Hispanophone islands in between.

After reviews of these two edited collections, the rest of the section looks at four innovative and influential recent scholarly monographs. Following the review of *Sex and the Citizen* is Curdella Forbes’ review of another work that interrogates the interface between gender and nation, Patricia Saunders’ *Alien-Nation and Repatriation*. Forbes’ review teases out Saunders’ “against the grain” readings of the Caribbean canon to show how women have functioned in a variety of colonial, anticolonial and postcolonial discourses. My own review of *Caribbean Middlebrow* explores how Belinda Edmondson addresses gender and the archive in similar but distinct ways from Saunders, supplementing Saunders’ approach by foregrounding issues of popularity and the market and pushing into the nineteenth century. The reviews of *Alien-Nation and Repatriation* and *Caribbean Middlebrow* contextualize the archival turn in

Caribbean literary studies during the past decade, by placing Saunders and Edmondson in dialogue with the research of Rhonda Cobham, Alison Donnell, Leah Rosenberg, Faith Smith and others.

We then feature a review by Garry Bertholf of Susan Buck-Morss' *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*. Buck-Morss' work on Hegel and Haiti has been only the most high-profile of an explosion of scholarship during the past ten years on Haiti's world historical importance: work by Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Sibylle Fischer, Nick Nesbitt, and Chris Bongie, among others, has all aimed to reaffirm the centrality of the Haitian Revolution to the world view of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and this event's contribution to the constitution of what we now think of as modernity. Bertholf's review reads *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* as undertaking that archaeological endeavor via a distinctly apposite authorial style that combines overt political commitment and advocacy with meticulous research and argumentation.

Our reviews of new scholarship end with Jeannine Murray-Román's review of Sonjah Stanley Niaah's *Dancehall*, which Murray-Román reads as exemplar of the new brand of Caribbean performance studies that engages how both text and context work together to create meaning. This review sets the stage for the final section of this issue, which inaugurates what will be another recurring feature in *Anthurium*, the "Visual Arts and Performances" section. Beginning with this issue, *Anthurium* will include reviews of art installations and exhibitions, film releases, musical performances, poetry readings, or other literary and cultural events. These kinds of texts can be more ephemeral than the published ones that literary studies in particular tends to fetishize; we hope that paying more attention to these performative spaces will allow a fuller discussion of culture as embodied and localizable. Katherine Miranda's review of the March 2011 *Synergia: a fusion of art, jazz & poetry* event produced by Rachel Collymore and the Poetic Vibes Collective in Trinidad and Marta Fernández Campa's review of the *Wrestling with the Image* art exhibition curated by Christopher Cozier and Tatiana Flores in Washington, D.C., begin the process of documenting the rich and fascinating diversity of cultural events that Caribbean people are staging throughout the world. Reviews of visual arts and performances will ensure that their existence is not lost to an archive that tends to assimilate published texts more readily than more transitory events.

Reviewing has been a staple of the publications that have built Caribbean literature: the *Beacon* in Trinidad, *Public Opinion* in Jamaica, *La Poesía Sorprendida* in the Dominican

Republic, *Kyk-over-al* in Guyana, *The Caribbean Writer* in St. Croix, and the cultural supplement *En Rojo* in Puerto Rico have all featured robust review sections that allowed these newspapers and journals to promote awareness of new creative work. More recently, *Sargasso*, *Small Axe* and *sx salon*, *Callaloo*, and *The Caribbean Review of Books* have kept alive this important tradition, featuring provocative reviews of creative and scholarly work. With this issue, *Anthurium* hopes to continue to extend this tradition and add new dimensions to it, fostering and expanding the conversations that make up the field of Caribbean studies. We invite our readers to join this discussion by submitting their own reviews of new scholarship, performances, or events that they think speak in important ways to the literatures, cultures, and experiences of Caribbean people throughout the world.