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NEW CENTURY/NEW HORIZONS

Emerging Scholars of Caribbean
Literatures, Languages and Cultures



2002, II

SARGASSO

LITERATURE

LANGUAGE



CULTURE

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Sargasso 2002, II
New Century/New Horizons:
Emerging Scholars of Caribbean Literatures, Languages, and Cultures

Sargasso, a journal of Caribbean literature, language, and culture edited at the University of Puerto Rico, publishes critical essays, interviews, book reviews, and some poems and short stories. *Sargasso* particularly welcomes material written by and/or about the people of the Caribbean region and its diaspora. Essays and critical studies should conform to the style of the *MLA Handbook*. Short stories should be no more than 2,500 words in length, and poems should be kept to no more than twenty to thirty lines. All correspondence must include S.A.S.E. For electronic submission, write to: lofiet@isla.net

Mailing Address: *Sargasso*
 P.O. Box 22831, UPR Station
 San Juan, Puerto Rico 00931-2831

The Ph.D. Program in Caribbean Literature and Linguistics, Department of English, College of Humanities, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, Puerto Rico publishes *Sargasso*. It also hosts the annual Caribbean Doctoral Studies Symposium, an extension of the Rockefeller Foundation-funded Caribbean 2000 Project, 1994-1999, and frequently publishes papers presented as part of the Symposium.

Lowell Fiet, Editor-in-Chief

This issue edited by:

Elsa Luciano Feal and Sally Everson, Editors
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Antonio García Padilla, President of the University of Puerto Rico
 Gladys Escalona de Motta, Chancellor, Río Piedras Campus

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Introduction

Our "Emerging Scholars" editorial board consists primarily of a group of students from the doctoral program in Caribbean Studies in the English Department at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras. From the beginning our main purpose was to recognize and promote work done by graduate students in Caribbean literature and linguistics. We received many provocative submissions and were excited to see that our call for papers traveled around the world, prompting responses from the USA, Canada, Great Britain and Europe.

Deciding what papers to publish was not an easy task—we certainly battled over some that were difficult to turn down, but a choice had to be made in the end. We wrestled with some essays because of what some read as the politics behind a piece or because one reader claimed an essay lacked focus while another found its wider emphasis fascinating. These debates about which ones to include challenged us to re-read, to reconsider in a new light some texts which we had at first either embraced or altogether rejected. Though challenging at times, this process was filled with refreshing moments and has ultimately proven to be encouraging and rewarding. Occasionally we turned to the authors for clarification about key points in their essays and were always impressed by their professionalism and their openness to explanation and dialogue. Thus, we are proud to present a truly collaborative collection of work representing the efforts of emerging scholars from many parts of the world.

Our contributors have turned to the novel, theatre, poetry, and language for their research. They deal with the works of established authors like Una Marson and Louise Bennett and with the more contemporary like Michelle Cliff and Cristina García, showing the diversity of thought and interest among the emerging scholars and presenting what we hope are fresh new insights and perspectives into the work by Caribbean writers. The poetry, essays, and reviews

presented here are wide-ranging yet overlapping in theme; nevertheless, each piece exhibits the disparate ways in which we might examine the Caribbean from our own unique perspectives.

Though many of the works that follow can be considered innovative and interdisciplinary in nature, as a whole they do not reflect our original desire to bridge work in literature and linguistics. An unfortunate, yet somewhat familiar, surprise was that few papers were submitted in the area of linguistics. Consequently we are able to include only one paper by a linguist. The sharp boundaries imposed by our respective disciplines and training remain evident.

Writing now we are reminded again that scholars have varying ideas and beliefs about human nature, society, art, and academia. What seems most contentious at times is *our* role, the role of emerging scholars, in each of these realms. Should our conceptions of what Caribbean Studies is as well as what we think it should be influence the questions we ask? Do both of these factors influence how all of us frame our work, select and examine material and draw our conclusions? Should one vision be weighted more than another? We hope that you will keep in mind some of these questions as you read the works we have selected for this volume.

Thanks to all of those who submitted their work, and to the many who helped with this project along the way. We are especially grateful to Irina Rodríguez, Edgardo Pérez Montijo, and María Cristina Rodríguez for their input at crucial moments. A special thanks to Dr. Lowell Fiet for his help and vote of confidence. We hope all of you enjoy this issue of *Sargasso*.

The Editorial Committee

Raphael Dalleo, Sally Everson,
David Lizardi, Elsa Luciano Feal,
Don E. Wallacek

Poetry

The first time she saw snow

The first time
She saw snow
Between the Man Ray
And the Monet
She turned to her not-yet-lover
Soon to be ex-lover
And she said
Snow!

Like glove and coat
A word never much used
Before

The kiss of O's on her lips
Made him smile
And later it would find them
In the Rite Aid
Buying condoms
And more cigarettes

But for now
It found them
In Central Park West
His mouth
Tasted like tin
Like Irish whiskey
Not yet drunk
Like last night's insistent "please
Let's make love"

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Reviews

**Caryl Phillips. *A New World Order*.
New York: Vintage International Books, 2001.**

Taken individually, the essays collected in Caryl Phillips' latest publication, *A New World Order*, may not seem to add up to much. Most of them trod well-worn ground: whether discussing O.J. Simpson, Steven Spielberg, Edouard Glissant, or Sam Selvon, Phillips brings extreme lucidity to the subject but generally keeps to conventional wisdom. But taken as a whole, these essays chart the expanses of the Black Atlantic. Phillips, born in St. Kitts in 1958, raised and educated in England, and resident of the United States for the past 15 years, may be the contemporary writer most at home in the world that Paul Gilroy describes as *The Black Atlantic*, a world of circulating people and culture that once revolved around the forced transportation of Africans to the New World and later the Windrush emigrants to Great Britain, and now features countless daily flights criss-crossing the ocean carrying laborers, tourists and returnees on journeys without origin or final destination. Like Gilroy, Phillips marks the territory of the Black Atlantic both as the geographic space between Europe, Africa, and North America, as well as by the intellectual space blacks have carved out in Western modernity.

The essays collected in *A New World Order* are divided into four sections: the United States, Africa, the Caribbean, and Britain. Phillips begins with his self-identified artistic roots, the African-American literary tradition. His first essay, "Native Son by Richard Wright," reflects on the novel which convinced Phillips that he could become a writer. He acknowledges the irony that he, a British man, found his voice through African-American letters, through DuBois, Baldwin, and Ellison. Yet it is the meandering itineraries of these writers which most seems to attract Phillips. He notes that DuBois, Baldwin and Wright all felt

themselves to be American, yet each eventually felt compelled to abandon the country of their birth and cast themselves into the maelstrom of exile. The essay on Marvin Gaye is this section's gem, allowing Phillips to show his acuity for Gaye's diasporic perspective and the ways exile in Europe affected his art.

The Africa section of *A New World Order* is by far the shortest of the four. The essays offer little insight into the peoples and cultures of this vast continent, yet in these pages Phillips lays bare his own troubled sense of unhomeliness and unbelonging. In these essays, Africa is described from the perspective of its diaspora, by one of its children whose inheritance is deeply problematic and whose contemporary claim on the continent is unclear. These essays have neither the familiarity nor the special perspective of the insider-outsider that Phillips brings to other sections. Africa remains opaque to him, and he can only visit there as a diasporic tourist making a pilgrimage to the site of an ancient pain.

Although Phillips is most frequently identified as a Caribbean writer, he admits that Caribbean novels have often seemed to him "foreign, exotic even" (129). It is this perspective, as one "of, and not of, this place" (3), that he brings to Caribbean literature. Sometimes this leads him into egregious errors, such as when he mentions Jamaica Kincaid's "two autobiographical novels *Down by the River* and *Annie John*" (144)—the first book is of course *At the Bottom of the River*, a collection of Kincaid's stories, not a novel. Yet despite his "foreignness," he finds Caribbean literature—the novels and travelogues of Kincaid and Naipaul, the historical-theoretical reflections of Glissant and James, or the poetry of Derek Walcott—to be the writings of the insider-outsider like himself.

The introductory essay places all four of these sites on equal footing, as places that are homes, but not home. The chapter on Britain shows a fondness and understanding for that culture which betrays that this site is more home than any of the others. The essays on British literature and the legacy of Windrush have a mix of subtlety and insight missing from the other sections. Phillips takes the contentious premise that the most innovative British literature has been, since at least the 19th century, written by outsiders to English society, whether Thackeray, Conrad, Orwell, and Wyndham Lewis, or Wilson Harris, Salman Rushdie, and Kazuo Ishiguro. He poignantly describes the pain and pleasure of his allegiance to the Leeds football club, a cultural tie that has lasted throughout his life. As a whole, this section paints a multicultural Britain to which West Indians, South Asians, and other

outsiders have always contributed, but in which they are finally beginning to belong.

The essays from *A New World Order* form a whole with the rest of Phillips' writings in their restless search for home and belonging. In the last essay, it becomes apparent that while Phillips may not be ready to settle on any of the four locales that he has explored, his wandering has helped him *produce* a place he can belong, the metaphorical home of his writing, but also the "real" imagined home of the Black Atlantic:

After thirteen years of compulsive itinerancy, I know my Atlantic 'home' to be triangular in shape with Britain at one apex, the west coast of Africa at another, and the new world of North America (including the Caribbean) forming the third point of the triangle...there will never be any closure to this conundrum of 'home'...I have chosen to create for myself an imaginary 'home' to live alongside the one that I am incapable of fully trusting. My increasingly precarious, imaginary, Atlantic world (305, 308).

This is the realization that earlier generations of artists like DuBois, Wright, Baldwin, and Gaye could not reach; fleeing the United States to take up dwelling in Europe or Africa could never fulfill the longing for home and belonging that life as an African-American had created. There is a home for Caryl Phillips, albeit a contingent, imaginary, impossible one.

The lesson of *A New World Order* is that we must create our homes in an increasingly, and often uncomfortably, interconnected world:

The New World. A twenty-first-century world... The old static order in which one people speaks down to another, lesser, people is dead. The colonial, or postcolonial, model has collapsed. In its place we have a new world order in which there will soon be one global conversation with limited participation open to all, and full participation available to no one. In this new world order nobody will feel fully at home (5).

This is the disordered new order that Phillips announces, a leveling web so unlike the hierarchical and heavily policed new world order the United States government continues to try to impose. It is a world order which takes the New World as its inspiration, and the Caribbean as its model:

it could be argued that the synthesising new world vision of the Caribbean provides the perfect model for the age in which we live. An

age in which migrations across boundaries are an increasingly familiar part of our individual lives as national borders collapse and are redrawn. An age in which nations bind together in regional clusters and eliminate old immigration laws, and in which illegal movements from one country to another become increasingly desperate as economies fail and wars continue to rage... Perhaps the answer is to be found in the culture and literature of the Caribbean archipelago (132).

Raphael Dalleo,
State University of New York, Stony Brook

**Rafael L. Ramírez, Victor I. García-Toro
and Ineke Cunningham (eds.)
*Caribbean Masculinities: Working Papers
HIV/AIDS Research and Education Center,
San Juan: University of Puerto Rico, 2002.***

This anthology of anthropological and sociological scholarship on masculinities and sexuality/gender systems spans across the Anglophone and Hispanophone Caribbean as well as Brazil, opening the way for much needed cross-Caribbean cultural studies. All of the papers were originally presented by members of the Caribbean Masculinities Network at a conference held at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras in March 1999, which was sponsored by *Proyecto Atlantea* and the University's HIV/AIDS Research and Education Center. In their introduction, the editors indicate that the articles address many of the Network's research topics including: representations of gender and sexuality in popular cultural productions; mapping sexual communities, cultures and territories; masculinity and violence; men's health particularly HIV/AIDS and other STDs; and gender relations. *Caribbean Masculinities* also stresses how gender relations and sexuality are fundamental to the regulatory power of the State, holding that it attempts to construct, circulate and control expressions of gender and sexuality as well as resistance to these practices. Also included is an extensive bibliography which is indispensable for any researcher looking at contemporary gender and sexual systems in the Caribbean and its diaspora.

Though all of the contributors are from the social sciences (sociology or anthropology), many use multidisciplinary approaches and a

variety of resources including popular cultural productions, interviews, demographics and participant observation narratives. This makes their work relevant to scholars from other areas such as literature, linguistics, cultural studies and history. The opening article of the collection, "Culture, Political Economy, and Sex/Gender Systems," by Richard Parker provides a review of anthropological studies of masculine homosexuality in Brazil and Latin America in general, indicating the way traditional notions of sexuality among the popular classes based on active/passive roles have been shifting towards the Anglo-European categories of homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality in large part due to the AIDS epidemic. He concludes that in an increasingly interconnected world in which sexual identities or categories are not simply imposed and static but negotiated and fluid, researchers need to deconstruct monolithic myths of gender and sexuality in favor of "a far more complex economy of the body" in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Another key article along the lines of laying a conceptual framework for analyzing constructions of masculinities that result in "differential access of men to power and control" is "Masculine Identity and Sexuality: A Study of Puerto Rican Blue-Collar Workers," by the editors and Myriam L. Vélez-Galván. Their pilot study, which surveyed 41 Puerto Rican working-class men along with ten in-depth interviews, finds that strict heterosexuality and rejection of homosexuality were the most important constituents of their sexual and 'masculine' identities. However, they conclude that the future study needs to cut across class and sexual orientation in order to sketch out the way in which masculinities are constructed and negotiated within Puerto Rico. In "Power Games and Totalitarian Masculinity in the Dominican Republic," E. Antonio de Moya's elaborates the construction of masculinities by identifying over 200 labels used to characterize men in that culture. From these he posits four interrelated categories of masculinity: hegemonic, subordinate, marginal, and residual. His study draws from three types of sources: participant observation in public places, informal discussions, and his own autobiographical memories and experiences. Most interesting is the residual category which is comprised of *viragos* or virile women that are reacted to and labeled as if they were competitive men.

While Antonio de Moya admits the need to understand the complementary cultures of the *calle/casa* (household/street), Mark B. Padilla in his personal account, "Ethnographic Reflections on the First Gay Pride March in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic," challenges this paradigmatic opposition first formulated by Peter Wilson, which limits women to the *casa* sphere. The parade, celebrated on March 23,