

her best friend, who now appears as the austere Ms. Christopher, who never marries, has no faith in men, but oversees her friend's care until her death. Readers are therefore surprised when upon her friend's death, Ms. Christopher immediately reveals to the son a log of payments and demands reimbursement. Ms. Christopher appears as yet another manifestation of the soucouyant's malevolence and benevolence. The multiple ways in which Chariandy deploys the soucouyant figure suggests that selective memory cannot suffice. He invites instead embracing the positive and the less 'savoury' aspects of our shared Caribbean past.

The best of Caribbean fiction often focuses history and memory and the parts of our past that travel into different geographical contexts. Soucouyant engages this literary preoccupation by demonstrating that first, our communities willfully forget, and that such forgetting is traumatic, particularly for the keepers of family histories. Of equal importance to this reader is that the novel considers what it means for boys to deal with the repercussions of sexual violence against women, as these very women later become their lovers or mothers. This young man's haunting tale is one readers will not soon forget.

Leah Rosenberg. *Nationalism and the Formation of Caribbean Literature*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). 260 pp.; \$69.95 ISBN: 1-4039-8386-0

— Raphael Dalleo

Beginning at least with Kenneth Ramchand's *The West Indian Novel and Its Background*, the 1930s has served as the starting point for West Indian literary history. The labour unrest of the second half of that decade, the launch of the *Beacon* journal in Trinidad and Tobago, and the publication of Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom* have long seemed the best place to begin the story of West Indian literature. But in the past decade, literary historians have started to push that timeline further into the past. New histories of the diverse forms of writing to emerge in the West Indies during the nineteenth century have been assembled in Selwyn Cudjoe's *Beyond Boundaries: The Intellectual Tradition of Trinidad and Tobago in the Nineteenth Century* (2003) and Evelyn O'Callaghan's *Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939* (2004). At the same time, Cudjoe's edited version of the 1854 novel *Emmanuel Appadocca* by Michel Maxwell Philip published in 1997 has been joined by a series of other early Trinidadian novels, including *Warner Arundell*, *Adolphus*, and *Rupert Gray*, all originally published between 1838 and 1907 and re-issued from 2001 to 2006. Amidst this bounty of newly available material inviting fresh considerations of the West Indian canon, Leah Rosenberg's *Nationalism and the Formation of Caribbean Literature* (2007) provides an excellent road-map to the

writing of the period before 1940 and consolidates the new sense of West Indian literary history that is emerging.

Though the title mentions Caribbean literature in general, Rosenberg is mainly focused on two Anglophone islands: she has assembled a remarkably extensive set of archival research to give a sense of just how vibrant the literary scenes of Jamaica and Trinidad were beginning in the 1830s and continuing up through the 1930s. The move to Dominican Jean Rhys in the final chapter suggests that there was important literary activity in other islands during this period, but the discrete focus on Jamaica and Trinidad allows Rosenberg to dig deep into the archives those two islands. Just as Ramchand, Gordon Rohlehr and other critics have done for West Indian literature since 1940, Rosenberg does an excellent job of assembling the political and social context that shaped pre-1940 writing. She paints a detailed picture of what she calls the networks and institutions that provided a framework for writers during this period, including the many literary clubs as well as the journals and newspapers which regularly published poetry and short stories.

This meticulous attention to the material grounds for early West Indian literature allows Rosenberg to carefully steer clear of reductive assumptions about the interplay between literature and social movements, questioning the idea that writers could unproblematically act as spokespeople for the working class or that either "literature or politics in the Caribbean moved in a direct fashion toward black working-class political power" (9). Instead, she paints a complex picture in which writers represented a diverse set of ideologies and class positions, for example in the chapter in which E.L. Joseph, Michel Maxwell Philip and Stephen Cobham are read as representing the interests of white creole, brown and black middle classes, respectively, or the chapter where H.G. de Lisser is seen as the mouthpiece of the planter class.

In addition to this focus on writers' individual positionings, the book effectively places these enunciations in the context of a discursive struggle between the specific writers Rosenberg examines and the islands' ruling classes, other middle class and working class contenders for leadership of the emerging nation, and even other writers. The nuanced reconstructions of these writers as part of a larger societal discussion enable *Nationalism and the Formation of Caribbean Literature* to provide new readings of specific texts in relation to these contexts. These readings make two main contributions: the return to look at well-known writers in innovative ways (as in the chapters on Claude McKay or Jean Rhys), as well as the recovery of writers who have seldom been treated in any detail by critics (such as Joseph, Cobham or Thomas MacDermot). I want to focus on one example of each of those contributions that illustrates the effectiveness of each of these strategies at their best: the chapters on the Beacon writers and on MacDermot. Looking in detail at these two chapters will allow a closer examination of Rosenberg's methodology at work as well as introduce some of the themes that reappear throughout the book.

The chapter on the *Beacon* begins by noting how literary histories usually

identify writers associated with that journal—C.L.R. James and Alfred Mendes in particular—as the first real dawning of West Indian literature because of their ability to forge an alliance between the writer and the folk. Rosenberg places these writers in the context of a variety of literary and social events taking place at the same time that previous literary historians writing about the *Beacon* have not yet mentioned, including Seepersad Naipaul's arrival at the *Trinidad Guardian* (123), the efforts to make carnival respectable taking place in the Argos newspaper (129-133), and a court case involving Mendes and a well-known calypsonian (138-139). Assembling these discursive contexts allows Rosenberg to show how “with respect to key political issues, the *Beacon* was significantly more conservative than contemporary black middle-class and Indo-Trinidadian organizations” (126).

Rosenberg contends that critics have focused only on a handful of stories published in the journals *Trinidad* and *Beacon* that took the black, urban working class as its protagonists because these stories could then be read retrospectively as anticipating the literary boom of the 1950s and 1960s. By looking at the representations of urban blacks, Indo-Trinidadians, and women, she makes a strong case that these stories are less about establishing solidarity with the working class than they are about the same kind of competition for discursive authority that takes place in Mendes' libel suit and in the less celebrated stories that appeared in these journals discrediting the white upper class for moral degeneracy. Reading all of these different voices in dialogue shows the *Beacon* writers as strong advocates for a particular vision of middle class leadership, opposed to the rule of the traditional elite as well as the rising trade unions or the calypsonians who could act as more organic spokesmen of the lower classes. Rosenberg's readings of this era disrupt the idea of the *Beacon* writers as allies and advocates for the working classes, forcing literary studies to look at this era in a much more complicated way.

While James and Mendes feature prominently in the West Indian canon, Jamaican Thomas MacDermot is frequently mentioned as an early pioneer by literary histories but his work is seldom seriously engaged. Rosenberg devotes a chapter to analyzing the two major texts he published, the novella *Becka's Buckra Baby* (1903) and the novel *One Brown Girl and—* (1909), in the context of the local institutions that he established as editor of *the Jamaica Times* and founder of the All Jamaica Library. These institutions reflected MacDermot's serious commitment to “create a class of writers and a reading public in colonial Jamaica” (49), even while these publication projects depended on what Rosenberg calls the “consent” and even “patronage” (41) of the colonial state. The result is a conflicted ideology that emphasized the local to an extent that “demanded an independence from the metropole to which many anticolonial nationalists did not even aspire” (34) even as it bought into and reinforced many of the fundamental tenets of colonial rule. MacDermot's writings demonstrate these contradictions through their adherence to an ideology of respectability for women as well as the black working class. His longer work as well as the stories published under MacDermot's editorship in *the Jamaica Times* seek to emphasize the progressive nature of gender relations in Ja-

maica, but at the same time reproduce the colonial idea of Victorian womanhood as an index of civilization. The contradictory place of women in MacDermot's ideology produces a text like *One Brown Girl and—*, where even the plot itself cannot be resolved because "Jamaica, Jamaican nationalism, and Jamaican literature in 1909 [...] needed reform and a consciousness so out of reach that they could not be articulated" (58). In engaging so closely with MacDermot's writing and the conversations in which it participated, Rosenberg makes a strong case for why he and other writers like him from this time period, who may not have opposed the British empire but still sought to articulate a West Indian nationalism almost unrecognizable to us today, should play a much more important part in how we think about the West Indian canon.

The conclusions reached about MacDermot's "contradictory" (34) project raise the broader question of teleology that Rosenberg brings up repeatedly in the book. Does this not present MacDermot as a failed nationalist, who cannot as effectively resolve the demands of his colonial circumstances as the generation of the 1950s? Would he, and the other writers of this period, have seen nationalist desire for more political and cultural power as incompatible with continued inclusion in the British empire the way contemporary writers and critics might? In making those questions central, Rosenberg aligns herself with Alison Donnell's argument in *Twentieth-Century Caribbean Literature* against a teleological view of early West Indian writing as a stage towards the full-blown nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s. But some of Rosenberg's conclusions—that MacDermot sought a political project that could not yet be articulated, that "*Rupert Gray* appears to move yet closer to a national Caribbean literature" (25) even if its loyalty to empire means it doesn't quite get there, or that in the play *Pocomania* "Marson's portrayal of gender and class represented a crucial step in th[e] direction" of "a culture that did not threaten to recolonize the very people it sought to liberate" (180)—make it very hard not to think of the generation of the 1950s as better able to overcome these contradictions.

Even as she calls the projects of the pre-1940 writers contradictory, then, Rosenberg makes visible how loyalty to empire and desire for national autonomy and social justice may not have seemed contradictory within the context of the debates and movements taking place at the time. Independence advocated by someone like de Lisser could work as a tool for consolidating the power of the local elite even as those seeking to empower blacks and the working classes during this period may have seen a multicultural commonwealth as preferable to nationalism based in 'purity' or hierarchy. Looking back from the vantage of the dissolution of empire, it is difficult to see how progressive thinkers could have been convinced that their goals could have been achieved under British rule; but as Rosenberg points out, "now that the promises of independence have long since proved empty and imperial nations regularly deprive West Indian nations of sovereignty," the idea that "anticolonial nationalism may not have been much more effective than nineteenth-century political thought" seems worth entertaining (8).

Rosenberg poses these difficult questions and is fully aware of the challenges her own narrative faces in trying to answer them. Whether or not it is ever entirely possible or entirely desirable to escape from what Donnell describes as the pathways laid down during the nationalist moment—as illusory as West Indian economic and cultural independence has proven, it is hard not to think in terms of the modern nation-state as the most desirable political arrangement—Rosenberg raises these as important issues that Caribbean studies needs to confront, and demonstrates the ways that opening up the archive can invigorate that process. In this review, I have only been able to touch on a few of the many fascinating pieces Rosenberg discovers in that archive. The discussion of the relationship between the advertisements (and even product placement!) in de Lisser’s novels and the emerging Jewish merchant class in Jamaica (68), of McKay’s relationship to the British Romantic poets (96), of Jean de Boissiere’s radically queer critique of imperialism and capitalism (154-155), or of Marson’s ambivalent ideas about modern womanhood shown by her repeated rewritings of the ending of *Pocomania* (176), are just some of the other discoveries this extensive research has turned up. Taken together, these pieces make *Nationalism and the Formation of Caribbean Literature* a remarkable reshaping of the story of Caribbean literature’s development essential for anyone interested in that history.

Lorna Goodison. *From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her Island*. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007). ISBN 978-0-06-133755-0

— Maureen Warner Lewis

Lorna Goodison’s memoir *From Harvey River* is mytho-poetically framed by two dream-visions. In the initial dream, the narrator meets with her mother in heaven and is handed the book which becomes the memoir; by this mechanism she honours the originator of the stories she recounts in this “memoir of my mother and her people”, as the book’s sub-title reads. In the closing frame, Lorna mutates into a mermaid in the Harvey River, encountering in its cool waters several of her relatives and unnamed ancestors. This dream-vision comes to her in faraway Hanover in Germany, the original location for the mirrored Hanover parish in Jamaica. In that German prototype, the alienation of her sensibility is imaged in her perception of it as “a place solid with darkness which smells like the rusting interior of a brass trunk.” (276) But out of this incubator-tomb, she can find her own Hanover: because of the rehearsal of her family stories, she can name herself and claim her identity as descendant of the “generations” of Europeans, Africans, and their joint progeny who people the river along with her.

Immediately before this final vision there is an inspiringly beautiful full-page cameo of her mother Doris as a mature woman, opposite what may be consid-

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Andrew Armstrong is a temporary lecturer in Literatures in English in the Department of Language, Linguistics and Literature, UWI Cave Hill. His PhD dissertation was on narrative strategies in contemporary African Fiction and Film, and he teaches African Literature and Film as well as West Indian Literature.

Lorna M. Burns holds the PhD from the University of Glasgow. Her thesis was entitled "Creolising the Canon: Engagements with Legacy and Relation in Contemporary Postcolonial Writing".

Richard Clarke is a lecturer in literary theory at the Cave Hill campus of the University of the West Indies. He specialises in Continental philosophy, Pragmatism, and literary, rhetorical, psychological, social and political theory. He is also the editor of *Shibboleths: a Journal of Comparative Theory* (www.shibboleths.net), PhilWeb: Theoretical Resources On- and Off-Line (www.phillwebb.net) and the Encyclopaedia of Theory (www.literary-theory.net).

Donald Cleary is a postgraduate student working on his MA in the Department of Literatures in English, University of the West Indies, Mona.

Raphael Dalleo is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Florida Atlantic University, where he teaches U.S. Latino/a, Caribbean, and postcolonial literatures and cultural studies. His essays have appeared in *ARIEL*, *Anthurium*, *South Asian Review*, *Latino Studies* and *Small Axe*. He is co-author of *The Latino/a Canon and the Emergence of Post-Sixties Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), an analysis of the relationship of contemporary diasporic Caribbean literature to politics and the market.

Curdella Forbes is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Howard University. Her essays on Caribbean literature, Caribbean literary theory and Shakespeare have appeared in various academic journals. She is the author of *From Nation to Diaspora: Samuel Selvon, George Lamming and the Cultural Performance of Gender* (UWI Press 2005) and three books of fiction: *Songs of Silence* (Heinemann 2002); *Flying with Icarus* (Walker Books 2003); and *A Permanent Freedom* (Peepal Tree Press 2008).

Donnette Francis is an Associate Professor of English at SUNY Binghamton. Her research and writing focuses on contemporary Caribbean literatures. Her book, *Fictions of Citizenship*, is forthcoming in 2009.

Maureen Warner Lewis is Professor Emerita in the Department of Literatures in