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# Editorial Preface

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It is with great pleasure that I introduce you, dear *JWIL* reader, to the second of our two-part April 2021 publication. Volume 29, number 1, edited by Marta Fernández Campa and our esteemed editor in chief Evelyn O’Callaghan, traces the importance of archives to the field of Caribbean literature, and I do hope you will peruse the excellent and thoughtful essays they have gathered, which explore the unique decolonizing possibilities, vulnerabilities and commitments that Caribbean literary archives embody. The articles offer insight into writers’ archives, the role of stories in archiving diasporic and local knowledge, how literary texts can expand historiography and how archival findings can revise literary histories.

This issue, volume 29, number 2—which benefited from the assistance of Dr. Ronald Cummings, the newest member of the *JWIL* editorial collective—highlights equally exciting scholarship that reflects the dynamic state of the ever-evolving field of Caribbean literature and literary criticism. The eight essays, one interview and three book reviews offer examinations of the work of both more recent Caribbean authors and long-established giants in the field. The mutability and power of the Caribbean in both its literary and physical landscape has never been clearer. I write this preface under the shadow of the eruptions of La Soufrière volcano in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which continues to highlight the vulnerability of the region to both natural and man-made catastrophes, as well the interconnected fates of the different countries of the region. Also as I write, Trinidad is back under lockdown in the face of rising COVID-19 rates over a year after this pandemic started. The inequities that the global South experiences are evident anew in the general lack of availability in the region of vaccines, even as richer global North countries experience surfeits. Caribbean creativity in the face of the exigencies of the pandemic is also evident, however, as in the recently completed NGC 2021 Bocas Lit Fest, staged entirely virtually, where rich and joyful intellectual exchanges and vibrant literary and artistic offerings were made accessible to participants from all over the world. As always for Caribbean peoples, the boundaries between home and away remain porous, even as the yearning for embodied experiences of home persists in complex variations wherever we are. This is such an exciting moment for Caribbean literature and scholarship, as we experience a florescence of novels, poetry, short stories, films, essays and critical engagements in so many parts of the region and its various diasporas. This issue bristles with that energy in the form of new looks at how writers engage with historicity, fresh perspectives on the work and needs of literary historiography and astute attention to the unique ways in which Caribbean writers tell hard truths about our postcolonial realities, attempt to explode colonial and generic strictures and draw upon local traditions to pursue the hard, urgent and elusive work of decolonization.

J. Dillon Brown's essay starts us off with a sensitive and nuanced treatment of the question of the role of the artist in confronting history, an ever-pressing issue for Caribbean writers. In his reading of Wilson Harris's novel *Jonestown*, which Brown notes is "the only one of Harris's twenty-six novels whose title suggests direct historical referentiality," Brown assesses the implications of Harris's application of his famous mythopoeic approach to an event of the recent past, one that remains palpable in Caribbean and US imaginations. The essay explores in thoughtful ways the promises and pitfalls of mobilizing Caribbean traumas via more abstract artistic forms. Samantha Stephens's essay on the possibilities of concrete poetry when wielded by Caribbean poets Kei Miller and Olive Senior takes us deep into the terrain of Caribbean challenges to generic forms and unique disruptions of conventions of narrativity and cultural references. Stephens insists on the power of imprecision in both Miller's and Senior's work where their use of the clay jar and calabash shapes, respectively, to engage with poetic form and content draws upon a specifically Caribbean lexicon while operating as a rhizomatic cartography that challenges colonial meaning/map making. We thank both Olive Senior and Kei Miller for graciously granting permission to reproduce their work for inclusion in this essay.

Treviene A. Harris leads us boldly into a new point of entry for considering David Chariandy's powerful first novel, *Soucouyant*. Assessing the appearance of sound in the novel in the form of both the scream of the eponymous soucouyant and the references to the calypso "Rum and Coca Cola" contained within the text, Harris offers unique insights into the ability of literature to bring submerged cultural memories to light and its limitations for representing embodied experiences of marginalization and haunting trauma. The idea of the echoing and uncontainable nature of the Caribbean past considered here appears throughout the issue. In his debut scholarly publication, Xavier Lee explores the ways in which Patrick Chamoiseau's *L'esclave vieil homme et le molosse* engages both formally and thematically with the afterlife of slavery and the plantation. Lee's observations about how Chamoiseau reshapes both temporality and folklore tie nicely together with both Brown's and Stephens's engagements with formal concerns in Caribbean writing and with Amanda Bryan's essay on the uses of folklore. Lee meticulously elucidates the "fugitive form" that Chamoiseau offers as an anti-formalist project that pays homage to both Caribbean folklore and Maroon traditions of refusal and reconfiguration.

Janelle Rodriques's and Kedon Willis's works explore the ways in which the pathos and the potential of the erotic are harnessed by contemporary Caribbean writers. Deftly using the work of Audre Lorde to distinguish between iterations of the potentially liberatory erotic and the exploitative pornographic, Rodriques assesses how Nicole Dennis-Benn's devastating novel *Here Comes the Sun* indicts the Jamaican nation-state for its exclusionary configurations of citizenship and the costs for black women of the country offering itself up as a sexual paradise for tourists. Rodriques shows the consequences for black women's internalizations of colonial and neocolonial heteronormative expectations of embodiment, ones that foreclose the possibilities of radical self-love and acceptance of queer identity. Also assessing representations of sexuality and queerness, Kedon Willis turns a keen eye to overlooked allusions in Marlon James's teeming *A Brief History of Seven Killings*, arguing that queer male erotics are presented by James as a potent "engine for postcolonial utopian imagining," one that offers "the possibility of psychic liberation from white cultural oppression."

The theme of imagined utopian possibilities, even if stymied, features throughout the issue, and particularly prominently in the final two scholarly essays which examine quests for alternate Caribbean futures. Cole A. Carvour delves into the fictional worlds of Edwidge Danticat to investigate the implications for Danticat's incorporation of the trope of the "flying African" into her *Krik? Krak!* and her short story "Without Inspection." Noting Danticat's distinct pairing of images of flight with those of falling and identifying differences from the ways in which the 'flying symbolic' appears in North American iterations, Carvour argues for the cultural distinctiveness of Danticat's use of this imagery to both reimagine this trope and to offer more complex formulations of agency. Relying on Édouard Glissant's theories of errantry, Amanda Bryan revisits Nalo Hopkinson's under-examined incorporation of the Robber Queen folk tales into her celebrated speculative fiction novel *Midnight Robber*. Bryan argues for closer attention to the traditions of folklore that Hopkinson invokes via her featuring of these tales and highlights the emergence of a specifically relational model for expressing and highlighting female strength.

Miguel Vasquez's interview with the pioneering Caribbean scholar Sandra Pouchet Paquet continues important work that is being done in the field (including in the sister April 2021 *JWIL* issue on Caribbean literary archives) of expanding Caribbean literary historiography. This rich, illuminating exchange ranges over Paquet's cross-hemispheric movements, her intellectual development and mentoring by figures such as George Lamming and Derek Walcott and her own indelible influences on the shaping of Caribbean studies in the US especially, but with ripple effects everywhere that Caribbean literature is taught and studied. Vasquez's interview reflects and highlights both the importance (and prevalence) of generous intergenerational mentorship in the field of Caribbean studies and the importance of and vulnerabilities involved in building and sustaining institutional support for Caribbean studies and scholarship.

Finally, in our ever-lively book reviews section, Bénédicte Ledent continues the theme of corrections to the elisions of mainstream historiography with her review of Anthony Kellman's *Tracing Jaja*, which recreates the fascinating story of the Nigerian king Jubo Jubogha, who was exiled to the Caribbean by the British Crown. In her review of *Searching for Sycorax: Black Women's Hauntings of Contemporary Horror*, Paula Morgan traces the scathing dual intervention that Kinitra D. Brooks makes into the treatment of black women in the genre of horror and into black feminist criticism's dismissive treatment of horror as a genre to be taken seriously. In his review, Ian Bethell Bennett meditates on Kei Miller's engagements with themes of violence, paradise, inequity, and sexuality in the poetry collection *In Nearby Bushes*.

We extend special thanks to artists Khaffi Beckles, whose *A Temporary Reconciliation* graces our cover, and Tessa Mars, whose untitled work from her *Praying for The Visa* series accompanies Kedon Willis's essay, for sharing their evocative pieces with us.

I hope you enjoy the issue and invite you to check back in November 2021 for our special issue on dub poetry and in April 2022 for our tribute to Kamau Brathwaite. May the wealth of these offerings fuel your own creativity and scholarly interventions.