

# Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal

---

Volume 10

Issue 2 *Intellectual Formations: Locating a Caribbean  
Critical Tradition*

Article 16

---

November 2013

## Intellectual (Dis)Formations: Notes From the Borders of the Third Wave

Patricia J. Saunders  
psaunders@miami.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/anthurium>

---

### Recommended Citation

Saunders, Patricia J. (2013) "Intellectual (Dis)Formations: Notes From the Borders of the Third Wave," *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*: Vol. 10 : Iss. 2 , Article 16.

Available at: <http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/anthurium/vol10/iss2/16>

This Part III: Locating a Tradition of West Indian Criticism is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal by an authorized editor of Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact [repository.library@miami.edu](mailto:repository.library@miami.edu).

## “A VISITOR IN THIS MAN’S COUNTRY”

The task of mapping the trajectory of my intellectual formation has never been an easy one for me, having spent a good part of my academic life as a natural scientist (in Agronomy, no less). Ironically, my departure from the sciences provided a pathway for me to return to the Caribbean after a nearly eight-year hiatus of being back in the country I still refer to as home, Trinidad. Growing up in Washington D.C., while also being entrenched in a West Indian community that consisted of a close knit group of immigrants who left families and loved ones in Trinidad, meant on the one hand, being keenly aware of one’s subject status as “Black” while on the other, being equally aware of your status as a “visitor in this man country,” to quote my mother. As I recall my high school years, they were punctuated constantly by clashes between these two realities to which I belonged, one was the world of home, the other the world of school – not much different from that faced by thousands of other immigrants living in the United States. Both of these “worlds” belong to a shared African diasporic experience that I only came to understand in a more intimate way after spending four years at a Historically Black College/University (HBCU).

With the war on drugs underway in a number of major urban centers, the implementation of Reagonomics (and trickle down economics) nationwide, and the continued spread of U.S. imperialist power (exhibited in the U.S. invasion of Grenada), the possibilities for black youth seemed bleak economically and socially. The usual safety nets were still there for youth seeking to get out of the urban and rural spaces in search of something else: sports, music and the military. However, there was a fourth possibility that always had its roots in black middle class communities, but my parent’s still recent arrival to the United States meant that they were unaware of many of these traditions. My family was solidly working class, neither of my parents went to college, and only one of them finished high school but for both of them, a university education was the major benefit that migration afforded their children, so all of my sisters went to college, and my brother joined the Army. My parents entrusted this segment of my education future to my high school guidance counselor (who was also the softball coach and swimming coach...then as now, such was the reality of public schooling in the District of Columbia). The two things I remember most about Francis Powell: he was a member of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity and a committed educator, who spent countless evenings at the dinner tables of families who had the desire (but not necessarily the resources) to see their children go to college. He arranged campus visits, helped with financial aid forms and made sure SAT exams were taken on time. There was an unspoken understanding between several of the counselors and advisors about which schools students would visit, and all but a few of them were HBCUs. I found out much later that many of the

guidance counselors and coaches (I played basketball and softball) were themselves products of HBCUs.

## EXPERIMENTAL INTERSECTIONS: NATURAL SCIENCES, HUMANITIES AND HBCUs

The University of Maryland, Eastern Shore (UMES), was founded as a Land Grant University under the aegis the second Morrill Act of 1890. I will not go into the long and intriguing history of the formation of HBCUs in the United States, but I would encourage readers to research the history of education and innovation in these institutions. But attending a HBCU opened a window of opportunity and insight into another view of Black American life in the United States for me, one very different from the inner city of Washington D.C. Although only two and a half hours separate Washington D.C. from Princess Anne, Maryland, between 1986-1990, this might as well have been a world away in terms of the differences in the social and cultural environment of these two places. Washington D.C. was in the grip of the crack epidemic and had earned the dubious honor of being the murder capital of the United States of America. Meanwhile, just a few hours away, UMES, an African American institution of higher learning steeped in the tradition of educating the nation's black population when Black Americans were denied entrance into white institutions of higher learning. Ironically, the South, once the central location for domestic terror against African Americans during the Jim Crow era, became a viable alternative to what was unfolding in the District of Columbia. I recall several of my classmates being sent South, to Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina and several other places we often hear about in the "Great Migration" which took place between 1940-1970. In this case, we all understood that these locations represented the "country" (meaning rural) environment where parents imagined the crack epidemic and murder rates were considerably lower, and so would give their children a chance of living beyond their twenty-first birthdays. UMES was rural enough, and just south enough to afford the illusion of being immune from what was taking place in the District of Columbia.

At the same time, UMES was an attractive international institution, particularly for students in the natural sciences from African nation states who came to study Agricultural Science in the hope of resuscitating the declining agricultural industries in places like Cameroon and Kenya. It is difficult to describe a more eclectically constructed campus community than what I experienced at UMES, from the international students, to the other urbanites like myself who were, for the first time in their lives, living in what would aptly (but not politically correctly) be called "the sticks." We made the most of it, largely

by urbanizing the rural environment in ways that only HBCU campuses can, by drawing on the long history of a number of social and political organizations and recuperating them in small social circles on campus. The student groups ranged from the African Student Organizations, fraternities and sororities, the Future Farmers of America, honor societies and countless other formal organizations. There were also solidly structured networks of exchanges with other agricultural and mechanical institutions (like Texas A & M, Florida A & M, and Alabama A & M). By my junior year, I had presented my research at a number of these institutions and was being encouraged to consider graduate work in Agricultural Science. There was always a sense at UMES that an undergraduate education (particularly in the sciences) was the first step, not the only one. My early experiences at UMES were shaped by hours spent on the farms on campus (where Frank Perdue was a significant donor to the Food Science and Technology Program) and then study groups on the Romantic poets; Byron, Shelley and Coleridge being my favorite. In my third year at UMES, a course in Afro-American Literature was offered and in the following year (1990) an “experimental course” in Third World Literature was taught for first time (in my time in four years) in the Department of English. There was a waiting list for the course, and naturally the English majors got first preference for enrolling. I sat in on the course, and told the professor I would continue to do so even if I didn’t get credit for the course. When she discovered I was enrolled for eighteen credits in what was my final semester, she eventually allowed me to add the course. I looked back at my transcript recently to make sure I was recalling this correctly, and there it was labeled clearly: EXP CRSE ENG – Third World Lit. My seminar paper, on *Praise Song for the Widow*, by Paule Marshall, was one of three essays selected for submission to an international literature conference I had not heard of until that moment: the Second International Conference of Caribbean Women Writers, which was to be held in Port of Spain, Trinidad in April of 1990.

#### THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CARIBBEAN WOMEN WRITERS (TRINIDAD)

I imagine that for those of my generation, who are scholars of Caribbean, African American or African Diaspora literature, the decade from 1990-2000 was a remarkable period of transformation and growth. There were several pivotal conversations during the conference, all were intense to say the least (certainly to an undergraduate student) and the sustained, impassioned level of engagement about ideas seemed to be as vital to the participants as the air they breathed. One conversation in particular fired my imagination because it provided a framework for what I had been experiencing since my arrival in the United States fifteen

years earlier, the fragmentation of West Indians living abroad raised by Beryl Gilroy (in her case, it was Britain, not the United States). This conversation about fragmentation and identity reformation recurred throughout the conference – with an array of insights too wide to recount here, but the main interlocutors included: Paule Marshall, Marlene NourbeSe Philip, Dionne Brand, Olive Senior, Michelle Cliff, Merle Hodge, and Lorna Goodison, just to name a few. I left Trinidad with these conversations ringing in my ear and used them to shape my statement of purpose as I applied to graduate programs in English at several institutions, but the conversation also continued in a long series of letters over three years between Beryl Gilroy and myself. Hers was a voice I grew to appreciate more succinctly only after reading her second novel, *Boy Sandwich* (1989), which recounts a young Black British boy born to Caribbean parents living in Brixton during the height of tremendous racial prejudice in London. Her novel chronicles a number of infamous incidents of racial violence, most notably the New Cross fire that killed thirteen Black British youth when someone threw a fire bomb into a crowded house party. *Boy Sandwich* addresses the fragmented sense of identity between Tyrone’s “Island” family (which is the only name Gilroy gives for his parents and grandparents place of birth) and the British community who rejects his parents and grandparents. The most compelling aspect of the novel is the disenfranchisement of the countless elderly West Indian immigrants in England as the protagonist’s grandparents are evicted from a home for the elderly in the early pages of the novel. By the end of the novel, after moving his parents and grandparents back to the Island, Tyrone realizes that the Island is no more inviting and “homely” to them than London, in fact it is far less accommodating, so he opts to return to England agreeing with his grandfather’s insightful advice: “Better di devil you know, to di devil you don’t” (120). His girlfriend (who was badly burned in the house fire), on the other hand, refuses to return to England, seeing nothing there for her but continued racism, prejudice and hatred. There was something about this narrative that captured my imagination as I began graduate school. I think it was the idea that returning home (to Trinidad) was a possibility, one I hadn’t really considered prior to my return for the conference. My conversations with Beryl Gilroy sustained my thinking about Caribbean literature for several years after my admission to the University of Pittsburgh, the only school that seemed willing to forgive the “transgressions” of being a scientist.

## FRAGMENTATION AS AN INTELLECTUAL BLUEPRINT: THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

There was nothing to lead me to think that Pittsburgh would be an ideal place to study Caribbean literature – in many ways it wasn't. But the University of Pittsburgh was a hotbed of intellectual activity for post-colonial and cultural studies and that brought me close enough to begin my inquiries about the formations of post-colonial Caribbean nation states. I arrived just as Gyatri Spivak was leaving the Department of English at Pitt, but in her wake, there were waves of trans-nationalist scholars and writers who frequented the University of Pittsburgh. Their generosity, largely in the informal conversation and reading groups, helped shape my sense of what it meant to be a Black Diaspora scholar in the United States, none more so than Dennis Brutus, poet and anti-apartheid activist exiled in the United States and a member of the Africana Studies Department at Pitt. He was largely responsible for my decision to accept a fellowship from the African Heritage Nationality Room (in 1991). In the wake of Gulf War I, study abroad programs to the African continent were being cancelled and I was in the unlikely position of having a fairly large sum of money with the only requirements being: travel to an African country for a period of at least one month for the purpose of study. After a study abroad program to Ghana got cancelled at the eleventh hour, I found an African Languages program sponsored by the University of Wisconsin-Madison and traveled with a group of students to Kano, Nigeria for a summer to learn Hausa and study African literature. Traveling to Nigeria afforded a two-week layover in London to do an independent study of sorts with Buchi Emecheta, Janice Shineborne and Beryl Gilroy. This informal education took the form of extended conversations (usually at a café or a pub) about black women's writing, the political work of literary representation, and gender and sexuality among communities of African diaspora immigrants. One of the more protracted conversations we had centered on a production of Jean Rhys's short story, "Let Them Call It Jazz" (1962) I saw while in London. Once again, the poignancy for me rested in the distinct differences between Rhys's representations of London and the experience of migration, and those of others writing about the experience of exile in London during the same period (I'm thinking here of George Lamming, Samuel Selvon and V.S. Naipaul).

#### BA NA JIN HAUSA! I DO NOT HEAR (SPEAK) HAUSA!

I hoped Nigeria would give me the space and time to think more broadly about what connections there might be between the way Caribbean and African women constructed their trans-Atlantic experiences differently from male writers. I was beginning to understand what this meant in the context of literary histories and traditions, but Nigeria would teach me much more about how these literary representations sought to address the social manifestations of inequity for

communities of women in the African diaspora. Arriving in Kaduna State on the heels of religious riots between Muslims and Christians and the very recent presidential election that declared Moshood Abiola President (the election was annulled months later and Abiola was imprisoned for treason) made for an unimaginably difficult transition. A woman of African descent, who could not speak any Hausa, was left-handed, and living in a Muslim community complicated things even further. Once I understood the importance of not eating from the communal plate with my left hand, life was infinitely easier – gentle reminders and others volunteering to serve my food solved the problem in less than a fortnight. I was one of only three people of African descent in a group of eighteen who traveled to Nigeria, and all fifteen of my study abroad companions were already fluent in Hausa. Many of our “handlers” took it upon themselves to rectify what they felt was an unimaginable embarrassment, they refused to speak English to me no matter how lost or frustrated I was, to them my not being able to speak Hausa was a personal short coming. When they found out I had just begun to study it, they cut me a tiny bit of slack, particularly when I kept asking the men I met how their pregnancies were progressing (the Hausa word for body and pregnancy are similar - *jike* is the body, and *ciki* is pregnancy, the differences is in the emphasis on the first letter). The only Hausa I remember are the greetings that were a mandatory part of getting *anything* done in Nigeria.

I spent that summer reading Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* and *The Bride Price*, while spending an inordinate amount of time in the Kaduna Central Market practicing my Hausa and sitting with the women eating kola nut, a taste one had to acquire in order to make it through any social introduction or gathering. The largest part of my education during the summer took place, not in the formal learning environments, but in the marketplaces where women occupied public spaces very differently than elsewhere in the townships. This would be one of the most invaluable experiences I would take away from my time in Nigeria; learning will meet you wherever you are, if you are willing to engage your current surroundings, no matter how uncomfortable.

## ENGLISH STUDIES 2.0: HYBRIDIZATION, CULTURAL STUDIES AND *THE BLACK ATLANTIC*

In addition to my time in Nigeria, my academic life at the University of Pittsburgh included several detours: a semester-long stay at the University of Maryland where I took courses from Mary Helen Washington and Maryse Conde, several summer research visits to the West Indiana Collection at the University of the West Indies, Trinidad; and enrollment in a range of courses so broad that it’s still dizzying many years later. One of the lasting relationships I formed during this

period of being a journeywoman was the mentorship and friendship with Mary Helen Washington, who provided one of the earliest models of what a public intellectual life for women of color looked like. Upon returning to Pittsburgh, I met Reinhard Sander, who was a Visiting Professor in Africana Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. I had no idea who Reinhard was but he knew the world of Caribbean literature in a way that no one I had met since the Trinidad conference did. After reading the first two chapters of his book, *The Trinidad Awakening* (1978), I immediately contacted Reinhard and asked him if he would undertake an independent study with me to retrace some of the literary history he discusses in his book. With some effort, I got my hands on copies of a few of the books, many of which were out of print (*Black Fauns*, *Minty Alley*, and *Pitch Lake*) and Reinhard provided me with copies of a few of the stories included in his study. This was probably my first “formal” course in Caribbean literature during my time at Pitt. In the meantime, Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* was reshaping much of the conversations taking place in post-colonial studies through the broad embrace of nationalism, towards a broader, trans-Atlantic model of engaging questions of modernity and the cultural flows so critical in the new age of globalization.

New courses began to wash through the academic landscape and curriculums once wedded to periodization shifted to try to reflect the critical focus on “hybridity” and “destabilizing the center” that was all the rage in American academic institutions. In my last years of coursework, I took a Latin American Subaltern Studies course with John Beverly, a Foucault, Lacan, Derrida seminar offered in the Communications department and a Feminist Theories of the Body course offered in English. The latter included students from the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Women’s Studies, Religious Studies, and the School of Medicine – lots of different notions of the “body” packed into one course. Between the conversations about desire and fetishization of/for the body of Christ, anorexic bodies, black women’s, and queer bodies and discussion about S&M and pornography, the discussions as I recall them were exhausting, frustrating, and stimulating all at once. But this new critical landscape had specific implications for students who were trying to complete dissertations in something called “English Studies.” The University of Pittsburgh had a reputation for producing students whose dissertations looked a lot like the curriculum I described above: a chapter on films studies, one on composition rhetoric, and a few on literary criticism. I had witnessed the defenses of several of them, they were all remarkably expansive, but in the end what made them “work,” so to speak, was the fact that they were engaged in mapping a set of critical questions across a wide terrain of texts – what I began to refer to as a “cultural studies approach” to English studies.

## GET OUT OF YOUR HEAD/HOME AND “INTO COMMUNITY”

Summer research visits to Trinidad gave me a taste of what it might be like to be a part of an intellectual community where Caribbean Studies was the center of intellectual life, rather than the periphery, and I knew this was what I needed to finish my dissertation. Moreover, it gave me an even deeper philosophical point of departure for my journey into understanding my reality as an American citizen whose extended family still (and always have) resided in Trinidad. There is something unnerving about writing about identity (hybridity, creole identity, etc.) while holding your own tenuous relationship to the place of your birth and the place of your residence at arms length. I often wondered if the stakes were as high for my classmates who were doing work in post-colonial studies, but had the comfort of critical distance from the places and political conditions we were theorizing about. I should have anticipated that my frequent visits to Trinidad would eventually lead to some level of ambivalence about where I “belonged” personally and professionally. For some reason, although I took citizenship in the late 1980s, I felt my status as “visitor” more keenly during graduate school than at any other period in my life in the U.S. I think this was partly due to the fact that, for the first time, I was in a community that was neither West Indian nor African American, but also because of the unfortunate circumstances of visiting Trinidad more frequently because there had been a death in my family. The relatives dying were people who had raised me in Trinidad, who I had lived with briefly in Canada or worse, family I did not know well at all. This provoked a bit of an existential crisis for me because I felt I was losing essential parts of what made me whole. To put this in context, my parents live in the U.S., along with a handful of cousins, but both of my parents have nine siblings, and all but two of them lived in Trinidad. So, the prospect of losing family members I had only spent time with as a child seemed jarring, especially knowing that I had so little family in the place I grew up, but still never felt comfortable calling home.

Shalini Puri’s arrival at the University of Pittsburgh came at a most opportune moment because I was done with course work and struggling to pull the dissertation project together. While there were other scholars in post-colonial literature in the English Department, Shalini was the first faculty member whose work focused on Caribbean literature and cultural theory. It might seem overly simplistic to suggest that having a Caribbeanist on faculty made my project seem more immanently possible, but prior to her arrival I had encountered (or heard of) a handful of Caribbeanists scattered around the U.S. (Sandra Pouchet Paquet, Rhonda Cobham-Sander, Carole Boyce Davies, Darryl Cumber Dance, to name a few). But her critical perspective in her own scholarly research provided another context for thinking through some of the theoretical debates about Caribbean nationalism and cultural hybridity that were underway. Her mentorship coincided

with an expanding landscape of opportunities for scholarly work – two such pivotal spaces were the Marxist Literary Group, held at the University of Pittsburgh regularly during the summer while I was there, and the Caribbean Summer Writer’s Institute (CSWI) at the University of Miami. The Marxist Literary Group exposed me to a number of faculty members and students whose intellectual work was deeply rooted (and rooted) in a commitment to social justice movements outside of American academic institutions, and for whom their intellectual work constituted an avenue for social change. These were not things one really had the space to think about in the traditional structure of graduate courses, unless it was raised in conversations about pedagogy.

I have described the six weeks at the CSWI as one of the most defining moments in my intellectual life – being in the company of twenty-five or so other students of Caribbean literature and criticism (from all over the U.S., the Caribbean region, Canada and the U.K.) under the direction of George Lamming, Michael Dash, Sandra Pouchet Paquet, and many others too numerous to mention here, was the launching pad toward the finish line for my PhD. I heard Mary Helen Washington say something once (about her work as an academic) during my brief time in Maryland: my work as a scholar is only possible if I am “in community.” The CSWI was a manifestation of what she meant... being part of a community of interlocutors, with stakes in similar literary canons and theoretical approaches who will challenge your thinking and perspectives by bringing theirs into the mix, and insisting on a level of accountability, not just for your work, or your field, but broader debates in other areas that impacted Caribbean studies as a whole. This notion of community was something that each of us gathered in Miami longed for in our respective institutions, and the six weeks didn’t really satiate that desire for this kind of intellectual environment, in my case I think it heightened the desire.

Returning to Pittsburgh was like a dose of cold water after a long, warm slumber, and a few months later, I took a leave of absence from the University of Pittsburgh and went to Trinidad for a semester. While I was in Trinidad kicking around, reading and going to lectures, several of the faculty members at U.W.I. decided that it wasn’t a good idea for a young scholar to be there and not “attached” to the University in some way. In a few weeks, I was part of a research colloquium hosted by the Centre for Gender and Development Studies and later, was invited to give a talk in one of the graduate seminars in Liberal Arts. After my presentation at the research colloquium (where I was asked several questions I honestly had not even thought to ask, far less to answer), Bridget Brereton, the imminent Caribbean historian and Gender Studies scholar, suggested that I come by her office and talk to her more about the dissertation I was (not) writing. At our first meeting, she generously offered to lend me her copy of *Crown Jewel* and suggested that I go back to the West Indiana archive

and look again at some of the stories written by the women who were affiliated with *The Beacon* and some of the editorials written in response to the publication of *Trinidad* and *The Beacon*. More importantly, she urged me to look at the editorials that had nothing to do with literature – those that focused on women’s wages, debates about divorce so that I could appreciate the social environment of Trinidad at the time that James, Gomes and DeBoissiere were writing. This research became the basis for the first chapter of my dissertation that focused on the formation of literary “publics” as a necessary part nationalist politics in Trinidad. While in the archive, I understood the importance of Reinhard’s book – there were countless short stories in these literary magazines that were no longer in circulation, during a time when the field was beginning to take on a more definitive shape in U.S. academic institutions and in the Caribbean region.

Having received a dissertation fellowship, I settled in to begin writing and realized once again that I felt woefully disconnected from my personal and professional communities. By the time I had returned to Pitt, many of my classmates has graduated, and no longer in courses, I felt set afloat once more. I recall preparing a “speech” to convince Shalini Puri, who was now my dissertation chair, that I should go back to Trinidad to complete my dissertation. I think the conversation started and ended with her asking me why didn’t I just go back Trinidad and write my dissertation? It was clear that she understood the value of being part of a community that included Gordon Rohlehr, Rhonda Reddock, Bridget Brereton and Merle Hodge meant for me, given what stage I was at in my graduate career. I learned later that Shalini, herself, was a part of this vital community. There was also a group of younger scholars of my generation who I had met during my time at the Center for Gender and Development Studies and the West Indiana Collection at St. Augustine (Michelle Rowley, Lynette Brown Joseph and later Faith Smith) – they were scholars whose research and scholarship took them to U.S. to do graduate work, others were scholars working for U.N. agencies – but they were *all* moving between the U.S. and the Caribbean region doing research, visiting family and writing dissertations, manuscripts and reports. The two years I spent in Trinidad shed light on something I hadn’t noticed before: there was a significant number of scholars of my generation who were also figuring out that being a Caribbean studies scholar might mean keeping one foot uncomfortably rooted in the region (for personal and professional reasons), while managing the responsibilities in our “home” institutions in the U.S. For the better part of twenty years, my life as an academic has been punctuated by extended periods of living abroad in Trinidad (and for shorter periods, in London), and I have come to understand this reality not so much as fragmentation, but as a constitutive part of who I am, personally and most certainly, professionally. This will always be the case, as it has been for scholars a

generation before me who were raised in the Caribbean, and now work and live in the U.S.

After ten years on the faculty here at the University of Miami, I appreciate the extent to which my experiences, fragmented as they seemed, were not that different from the generation of scholars before me. I have often listened to friends and mentors talk about their intermittent years spent in Jamaica, Trinidad, London, Germany or Toronto, before settling into one academic institution. And here, I am not only speaking of U.S.-based academics – this is the reality for Caribbeanists in the region also, and I would venture to say it has always been this way. Will it always be this way? I wonder... not so much because I think it is necessary, but because there are more and more opportunities for transnational collaborations that allow scholars in the Caribbean to remain routed/rooted (so to speak) in more than one location (or tradition for that matter), without feeling the necessity (though the pressure is often there) to choose one over the other. Although, the emphasis on time to completion in graduate programs today does not necessarily encourage this kind of broad intellectual exploration, in large part because funding is much more scarce. Most of my travel and study abroad was supported by external fellowships, and we know that much of this support for graduate students has shrunk significantly. So, the combination of emphasizing time to completion and limited resources to support intellectual exploration is changing the academic terrain in fundamental ways, whether good or bad remains to be seen.

I'm very aware of the fact that this tradition of creating "safe," rigorous, critical, innovative intellectual spaces (beyond the classroom) has been bequeathed to a number of us as Black/Caribbean female academics – whether this gender dynamic is one of our (or the profession's) own making, is another conversation for another time. It is surely one of the reasons we constantly find ourselves at the forefront of organizing numerous symposiums, roundtable discussions, conferences, and special sessions and national and international conferences. It is as much for our own continued growth and development as it is for the next generation of Caribbeanists who may well take these spaces for granted now but will, no doubt, recognize the value of these spaces later in their careers, as I have come to do.