

# *Tout Moun*

*Caribbean Journal of Cultural Studies*

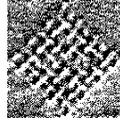
*Seeking Space  
Shaping Aesthetics*

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## Introduction



HANNAH REGIS AND DAVID MASTEY

We have assembled this special issue of *Tout Moun* in honour of Jean Antoine-Dunne, who retired from the Department of Literary, Cultural, and Communication Studies (whose faculty members oversee this publication) in 2016 as Senior Lecturer. Antoine-Dunne gave over a decade of sterling service to The University of the West Indies (UWI) St. Augustine. She became Senior Lecturer of Literatures in English in 2007, having previously worked in Ireland at the Waterford Institute of Technology, Trinity College, Dublin, and University College, Dublin. Since coming to UWI she has continued to pursue her eclectic passions for literature, film, and human rights law in both her teaching and research. She is the author of *Derek Walcott's Love Affair with Film* (Peepal Tree Press, 2017) and is working on another book, *Caribbean Ghostings*. Antoine-Dunne frequently collaborated with colleagues locally and abroad, for example as editor of the collected volumes *Interlocking Basins of a Globe: Essays on Derek Walcott* (Peepal Tree Press, 2013) and *The Montage Principle: Eisenstein in New Cultural and Critical Contexts* (2003). She also served as editor of special issues for *Caribbean Quarterly* and *Journal of West Indian Literature*. We assemble this current issue of *Tout Moun* in that same spirit of collaboration.

Antoine-Dunne is a prolific writer and filmmaker, having published more than two dozen research papers and essays on Caribbean literature and film. One major focus is the late Nobel Prize-winning poet Derek Walcott. Her documentary *Walcott as Poet and Seer* (2018) pays tribute to Walcott's intense reflective attention to poetry and the land from which it emerges. The film scrutinizes Walcott's use of landscape, the Caribbean body, light, the oral tradition, and montage in the crafting of his poetics. She is also the producer and director of the short films *Rivers of Sound: Rohlehr's Life and Works* (2014) and *Disabled/Mislabelled* (2015). She also co-designed the Film Programme at UWI St. Augustine, the first degree programme of its kind in the Anglophone Caribbean, and served as its first coordinator.

Adding to the diversity of her research interests, Antoine-Dunne is well known for her research on Samuel Beckett, in particular her ground-breaking essay "Beckett and Eisenstein on Light and Contrapuntal Montage" (2001), having conducted considerable archival research in Dublin and at the Samuel Beckett Collection at the University of Texas at Austin. She has also produced a series of reflective scholarly works and newspaper articles on disability, with the aim of sensitizing the public to the needs (as well as the potential) of persons with disabilities. Most notably in this regard, she founded and co-ordinated the UWI-based Network and Outreach for Disability Education and Sensitization (NODES) and organized conferences for many years.

We begin this special issue with a range of research essays that reflect the diversity of Antoine-Dunne's interests. The first piece, "Distortion and Cinema in the Work of Samuel Beckett," is by Jean herself and generally representative of both the incisive analysis and style of her writing. The essay concerns Beckett's (and Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's) attempts to translate his artistic vision into practical method. Antoine-Dunne focuses specifically on their manipulation of the senses, particularly visual perception, but also the kinesthetic and representations of the body.

Genevieve Ruth Phagoo in "Caribbean Interrogation of the Empire's Foundation Myth" analyses narrative appropriations and revisions of Trojan and Arthurian myths as anodynes for Afro-Caribbean loss of home, identity, lineage, landscape and language. Phagoo argues that Walcott in *Omeros* legitimizes "Caribbean origins through its epic Trojan frame with its Arthurian resonance". Walcott creatively reconstructs Caribbean subjectivity, dismantling traditional Western binaries with its denigrating impulses in favour of simultaneity as the vehicle for syncretism: "the primordial ancestral past, latent in the imagination, re-surfaces in the present and ennoble formerly dislocated peoples, providing a sense of belonging and kinship with each other and with the land."

Michael Jeffress's essay "Disability Framing in a Caribbean University Newspaper," concerns representations of disability in the university's official newspaper *UWI Today*. Jeffress's study, the first of its kind in the region, finds that almost half of the issues published between 2008 and 2017 include stories directly related to disability. Significantly, although some pieces contain more negative connotations than are traditionally found in news media, the majority feature "positive, progressive themes that can potentially promote advocacy and equality," some of which are certainly a consequence of Antoine-Dunne's advocacy efforts on campus.

Shelene Gomes, in "Global *Sufferahs*: Rastafari Cosmopolitan Citizenship," addresses another issue of great concern to Antoine-Dunne: migration and Caribbean identity. Through her ethnographic fieldwork in Shashamane, Ethiopia, Gomes explores the complex identities of first- and second-generation Rastafari migrants to their spiritual homelands. Her particular interest here is the tension that arises from their status as *faranji*, or foreigners, long after then-Emperor Haile Selassie I's extension of an invitation to immigrate to Ethiopia after World War 2. Gomes examines the flexible nature of social status among members of this Rastafari enclave, noting in particular the conflict between membership in a physically situated spiritual community and citizenship rights in this postcolonial state.

Vijay Maharaj's "Politics and the Aesthetics of Recognition in Caribbean Film: A Case of Too Many Masseurs?" uses Antoine-Dunne's insights on Caribbean film in her analysis of proliferation of versions in Naipaul's *The Mystic Masseur* and their implications for shaping Caribbean aesthetics. Quoting Naipaul's line: "at a time when masseurs were ten a penny in Trinidad" (*The Mystic*

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*Masseur* 1), Maharaj quips that the coinage of Trinidad is no longer measured in pennies, but masseurs still proliferate. Moreover, in an ironic reversal of what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o identifies as a lone flower technique in V. S. Naipaul’s creative process, the masseur of his first novel *The Mystic Masseur* has proliferated and ramified as well over the years, often bearing but an oblique resemblance to the one first released into the world in 1957. One is hard pressed to say unequivocally therefore that the character Ganesh who is sufficiently renowned as to have made it into the *Chambers Dictionary of Literary Characters* is the same one that readers met in 1957. This essay explores the politics of the aesthetic changes that went into the production of some of the versions of *The Mystic Masseur* available for consumption today.

A brief standpoint piece by Paula Morgan engages aesthetic choices deployed to convey the impact of traumatic histories on Caribbean ontologies. In “Propitiating Vengeful Duppies of History: Creative Writers as Tomb Raiders” Morgan argues that creative writers are probing “the interface between the psychological condition of having been colonized and contemporary cultural and material practices. They are probing societal woundedness, grappling with an ethical stance to memorialization of trauma, imaginatively pursuing modes of spatializing woundedness, as well as generating spaces in which trauma can be alleviated.” The essay reads NourbeSe Philip’s evocation of the judicial statement as archive in *Zong!* and Brodber’s representation of the nearly dead overseer’s body as cryptological archive in *The Rainmaker’s Mistake*. The silenced and submerged realities which the overseer embodies must be exhumed generations later, if the progeny of enslaved Africans are to find their way “in the free”.

This special issue presents two interviews. The first, conducted by Patricia Mohammed and entitled “‘Intuitive Apprehension that Goes Beyond Knowledge’: An Interview with Jean Antoine-Dunne,” probes the sensibility of an honoured colleague. Supplemented with photos from her personal collection, Antoine-Dunne and Mohammed converse on her life as well as the contexts and motivations for her work. The interview is both passionate and personal.

Amilcar Sanatan’s interview with Mariel Barrow, founder of the arts journal *Caribbean InTransit*, focuses on the strides made, achievements gained and the constraints which still exist with respect to the digital humanities, digital archiving, and the creative industries within the Caribbean region. Barrow’s multipronged and valuable contribution as a scholar, teacher, artist and activist in the advancement of Caribbean culture and in the use of digital technologies is explored in this revealing conversation.

The personal narratives and creative writings which follow are rich and diverse. Leading this segment is a reflective essay by Shani Mootoo, distinguished writer, artist, and filmmaker. In “Landscape, Citizenship and Belonging,” she meditates on the influence of her experiences as an immigrant in Canada, as well as those of her family – moving from Trinidad to Ireland and back again. She also muses on the impact of her lesbian identity, on her creative work.

Ronald Francis's debut short story, "Born Too Soon", offers multiple perspectives on a single event, the birth of the narrator-protagonist, and his life thereafter in which various family members offer differing stories and interpretations of their role in preventing him from being killed in the womb. The reader, like the teller of the story, is left to determine if there is, or could be, any one truth to the events recounted. This is a narrative predominated by women characters such as the mother, aunt, and grandmother ubiquitous in Caribbean stories; and it is imbued with Caribbean tropes of superstition, storytelling, rumour and hearsay.

Jannine Horsford, one of the contemporary poets of the literary renaissance taking place in Trinidad and Tobago, has had her poetry published regionally and internationally. Her four poems in this issue delve into deep emotions couched in the metaphors of food and domesticity; and pay homage to sisterhood, the island of Tobago, and to ancestral links embodied in a seemingly quotidian and invaluable household object that may have been overlooked but which ironically turns out to be an heirloom that symbolizes the significance of memorializing a family's past.

Darin Gibson's visual essay in its use of colour, lines, perspective and commentary embody a psychological element which resonates with the concept of the imaginary. It centres around images of reflection, the messiah, newness, hope, violence, beginnings and memory encapsulates some of the themes of this issue and of the selected texts by contributors. The duality evoked in Gibson's imagery and words is echoed in the novels, short story, poems, review, and interview included in this issue.

Antoine-Dunne is well respected by students and staff alike at UWI. She has supervised several PhDs and MPhils, some of whom have become highly productive academics. As her substantial resume suggests, she was a frequent collaborator with other scholars around the world, many of whom were impacted by her enthusiasm and confidence. We conclude this introduction with a reflection by Louise Hardwick, Professor of French Studies at the University of Birmingham, who conveys these sentiments effectively:

I was lucky enough to 'meet' Jean via the internet, when she contacted me several years ago about my work on Francophone Caribbean cinema. I was surprised and delighted to receive her email out of the blue, as I had only just taken my first tentative steps into the world of Caribbean Cinema criticism. I'd always felt a little nervous to make the leap, having had a purely literary training, but the more I saw of Francophone Caribbean cinema, the more I felt compelled to write about it. My first article on Caribbean cinema (looking at *Nèg Maron* by Jean-Claude Flamand-Barny) had recently come out, and it was a real pleasure to hear from such a distinguished colleague who clearly took a real interest in comparative Caribbean Studies.

That first contact says it all, really: Jean's energy, determination to develop a nascent field of study, and persuasiveness were second to none! Before I knew it,

I was agreeing to contribute a piece to a project that she was leading, which resulted in her fantastic guest-edited issue of *Caribbean Quarterly* on 'Visions and Revisions: Film/in(g) the Caribbean' which came out in 2015. For an early career scholar, working in the UK, it was a really significant milestone to have the opportunity to present research in this leading Caribbean journal.

We finally met in person when Jean presented at a conference on Caribbean Cinema organised by my colleague Conrad James in Hispanic Studies, and I hoped I'd find a way to bring Jean back to Birmingham and work with her a little further. That opportunity finally presented itself when I came across a Visiting Fellows scheme organised by the University of London's Institute for Latin American Studies. Jean agreed to apply with me, and to my delight, it worked out and we were awarded modest funding for activities in Birmingham.

The events included a public film screening of Jamaican reggae classic *The Harder They Come* at Mockingbird Cinema in Birmingham City Centre, followed by a fantastic Q&A session with Jean. Mockingbird publicised the event widely via social media, and feedback on this event from the public was excellent – we even had visitors travel from London to be there!

The programme also included campus screenings of rare Caribbean films in English and Dutch. These films were *Ava and Gabriel*, directed by Felix de Rooy (1990) and *I is a Long Memoried Woman* by Frances-Anne Solomon, a screening that was timed to coincide with International Women's Day. Screenings were all well attended by graduate students, who had the chance to ask Jean questions in special Q&A sessions after each screening.

Jean also gave a fantastic guest lecture, 'Tracking Signposts to a Caribbean Cinema Aesthetic'. This special guest lecture, in English, explored Caribbean cinema across a range of languages (English, French, Spanish and Dutch). Jean presented an engaging overview of important developments – narrative and aesthetic – in Caribbean cinema over the last few decades, as well as addressing the challenging question of what makes a 'Caribbean' film with some lively debate afterwards!

All the events were publicised on campus and online, using the international Society for Caribbean Studies mailing list, an established research project blog on my Caribbean activities ([www.josephzobel.wordpress.com](http://www.josephzobel.wordpress.com)) and using the related Twitter feed, @zobelproject <https://twitter.com/ZobelProject> Colleagues unable to attend in person skyped in from elsewhere in the UK, and were also keen to

ask questions! As a lasting legacy of the project, a video of Jean's guest lecture is now available online at:

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/lcahm/departments/languages/news/2017/jean-antoine-dunne-guest-lecture.aspx>

Jean's generosity, enthusiasm and drive left a deep impression on all the colleagues, students and members of the public who were lucky enough to catch her in Birmingham! I'm now hoping we can arrange a 'next time'!"