

DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURES IN ENGLISH

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Cycle Paris XII – Head of Department

WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT

Overview

The past academic year has been marked, for this department, by the continuation of our efforts to achieve excellence in both teaching and research, on the one hand, and on the other, by the imperative to innovate where appropriate, bearing in mind the Strategic Plan for 2007-12 and its vision of the UWI graduate. The department held a long planned Retreat in October 2007 at which the agenda included, *inter alia*, consideration of the Strategic Plan and its implications for this discipline. A matter of particular concern was the graduate programme, and as a result the Student Postgraduate Representative was invited to make a submission. Out of these discussions arose a departmental sub-committee having as its mandate: “To propose guidelines to improve effectiveness, efficiency and transparency in the administrative aspects of the Department’s postgraduate programme”. The committee held various deliberations, bearing in mind areas of greatest weakness (specifically problems of slow throughput, excessive supervisory loads, students’ complaints of lack of variety of offerings and failure to return assignments in a timely fashion). Most of the recommendations of the subcommittee are being implemented in 2008-09. It is regretted, however, that not as much progress as anticipated a year ago has been achieved in the creation of new graduate programmes (specifically the new MA in Literary and Cultural Studies), a failure which can be attributed to inadequate staff resources, barely allowing the time for colleagues to juggle teaching, supervision and research, while still giving priority to development and planning. It is hoped, however, that in 2008-09 the department will complete discussions on a proposed MFA in Creative Writing – an



obvious opportunity for growth, given the international recognition accorded to many of the region's writers, and given the department's tradition of good relations with many of these writers.

At the undergraduate level, the department was able to achieve generally positive outcomes, reflected in its high ratings in the University's standard Student Assessments; in addition, we held, during each semester of 2007-08, the usual meeting of the Consultative Committee, at which a representative from each course presented an oral (and subsequently a written) report on students' reaction to the course. We found this dialogue to be very useful, both in identifying practical concerns, e.g. unavailability of books, and in highlighting pedagogical challenges.

“Noh Lickle Twang!”: Conference in honour of Louise Bennett-Coverley

In terms of outreach and research, the most significant effort of the department's this year was the conference in honour of the late Louise Bennett-Coverley, for which we had major responsibility. It was a welcome and fruitful opportunity to partner with those who co-hosted this event, specifically the Faculty of Humanities and Education, the Philip Sherlock Centre for Creative Arts, WIACLALS (the West Indian Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies), the Department of Language, Linguistics and Philosophy and the Institute of Caribbean Studies. The programme for the multidisciplinary conference, which was well supported by the public, included plenary sessions (the speakers were Professor Carolyn Cooper, Professor Hubert Devonish, Mr. Linton Kwesi Johnson and Professor Jahan Ramazani), academic panels, round-table discussions and performances. Professor Emeritus Mervyn Morris delivered the keynote address at the Opening Ceremony (January 9), which was well attended, as were the two performance nights, featuring storytelling and dub poetry and including performers of the stature of Linton Kwesi Johnson, Jean Binta Breeze, Mutabaruka, Amina Blackwood-Meeks, Jean Small and Marjorie Whyllie.

In addition to the participation of departmental members, it is gratifying to observe that two MPhil students (Ms. Carol Pinnock, Mrs. Aisha Spenser) presented papers at this conference.

We also note with satisfaction the presence on the organizing committee of a representative of JCDC and that of our colleague from SALISES Dr. Kim Robinson-Walcott. The Institute of Jamaica also collaborated with the conference organizers, hosting, on the final day of the conference, the re-launch of the popular *Laugh with Louise*. The department should acknowledge, in particular, the financial contribution of the Principal, Professor Shirley, who assumed responsibility for the major portion of the budget, as well as that of the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Education, WIACLALS, and the Institute of Caribbean Studies. While the conference represented a significant strain on the department's own budgetary and human resources, we are convinced that the effort was worthwhile, first of all because of the need to celebrate this iconic figure, beloved by many and influential in various domains, secondly because of the enormous support of the Jamaican community as well as that of participants from abroad, and finally because of the valuable seminar papers and key note addresses, which, it is hoped, will form the basis of special editions of the *Journal of West Indian Literature* and the *Jamaica Journal* (edited respectively by Victor Chang and Kim Robinson-Walcott).

Postgraduate Degrees

In October 2007, Mr Harold McDermott, PhD candidate and part-time Tutor in the department, successfully defended his thesis on the poetry of Derek Walcott. Mrs. Celia Sykes received the degree MA in English with distinction at the November graduation ceremony.

Exchange with Malmo University

This exchange, which is in its second year, saw the visit to Mona in October 2007 of Mr. Philip Clover, who participated in the teaching of E10G. Reciprocally, Dr. Bucknor traveled to Sweden during the second semester, 2007-08, spending three weeks teaching in the English programme, and also presenting papers at Malmo University and Vaxjo University. We are pleased to note that the two Mona students selected for the exchange performed well academically - although there were some initial problems of adjustment to a new environment. One student from Malmo spent the second semester of the academic year at Mona, and he also enjoyed a fruitful semester.

Visiting Fulbright Fellow

Dr. Frances Botkin, from Towson University, USA, spent semester 2 as a Visiting Fulbright Fellow attached to the department. She made a useful contribution to the teaching programme, doing tutorials and several guest lectures in E10B; she also presented a paper in the departmental series on her research on Three-Fingered Jack, and expressed great satisfaction with her stay at Mona, having requested and obtained an extension until August 2008.

Student-oriented activities

Among the activities organized for the benefit of students this year was a successful seminar on the topic "Life after Mona: Career Options for English majors" (April 10). This forum, which follows a tradition in this department intended to highlight careers deemed non-traditional for English majors, allowed students to interact with three graduates, one from the field of banking, another a copywriter in an advertising agency, and the third an administrator in the UWI system. The department attaches considerable importance to this kind of event, and hopes to repeat the event early in the next academic year on a larger scale.

On April 22, Dr. Erna Brodber allowed students of her Creative Writing course (E26D) to read their work in public, for the benefit of a critical audience, prior to submitting the portfolio which is the basis of their assessment for the course. The event was enthusiastically supported by the students, and we note with appreciation the presence of two well-known writers, Dr. Velma Pollard and Mrs. Amina Blackwood-Meeks, who provided constructive criticism. The Head was approached after this event with a request from the students that the department facilitate their wish to form a "Writers' Club" for this group and other creative writers, and this will hopefully be achieved in 2008-09. This project is particularly important at a time when the department has recently decided to explore the possibility of expanding its offerings in creative writing at the undergraduate level, bearing in mind the obvious interest in this area within the student body.

The department continued its regular Staff/ Student Seminar Series, and notes with satisfaction the participation in this vital forum of several graduate students.

Staff Changes

In 2007-08, Dr. Michael Bucknor, a colleague who has made an invaluable contribution to teaching, particularly in the area of literary theory, was absent on a Mona Academic Fellowship; on the other hand, we were extremely pleased to welcome back, after three years' absence on no-pay leave, Dr. Curdella Forbes, who is known for her cutting-edge research, an example of which is the postgraduate course E64C – Postcolonialism and Shakespeare Criticism, which she taught in semester 2. The department notes with regret Dr. Forbes' resignation, effective July 31, 2008, and wishes her well as she returns to Howard University. Dr. Gregory Stephens' service with the University came to an end on July 31, 2008.

Research Awards

In January 2008, Nadi (Norval) Edwards was the recipient of the award for the Best publication – Article in the Faculty of Humanities and Education, for his essay entitled

“Edward Baugh: the Critic as mediator”, published in the *Journal of West Indian Literature*.

Outreach

In addition to its involvement in organizing the conference in honour of the late Louise Bennett-Coverley, the department's activities in 2007-08 included the following:

- The Launch of the recently published *From Harvey River*, a memoir by celebrated Jamaican writer Lorna Goodison, on Friday, December 14.
- The Launch (in collaboration with the UWI Press), on February 15, 2008, of *Archibald Monteath: Igbo, Jamaican, Moravian* by Professor Emerita Maureen Warner-Lewis.
- The Launch (in collaboration with the Philip Sherlock Centre for the Creative Arts) of Olive Senior's latest volume of poetry *Shell*, March 9, 2008.
- Dr. Michael Bucknor, in his capacity as chair of the regional panel of judges for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, was

responsible for the organization of the Announcement Ceremony, on March 13, 2008.

PAPERS PRESENTED

Dr Michael Bucknor

- “Sounding Off: Performing Ritual Revolt in Olive Senior’s Gardening in the Tropics.” Louise Bennett Conference, UWI, Mona, Jamaica. January 9-11, 2008, (Also presented at Malmö University, Sweden, April 16, 2008).

Professor Carolyn Cooper

- “Pedestrian Crosses? Sites of Dislocation in Post-colonial Jamaica”, Association of Cultural Studies Crossroads Conference, UWI, Mona, July 2008.
- “(W)uman Tong(ue): Writing a Bilingual Newspaper Column in ‘post-colonial’ Jamaica”, Caribbean Women Writers’ Symposium, UWI, Cave Hill, July 2008.
- “*No Woman, No Cry*: Rita Marley’s Feminist Fable”, 27th Annual Conference on West Indian Literature, UWI, Cave Hill, February 2008.
- “Burying Miss Lou: Contested Rites of Passage in Contemporary Jamaica”, Plenary Address at the conference “Noh Lickle Twang: Louise Bennett-Coverley, the Legend and the Legacy,” January 9-11, 2008, UWI, Mona, Jamaica.
- “Erotic Maroonage: Embodying Emancipation in Jamaican Dancehall Culture”, Yale University, November 3, 2007.
- “No Matter Where You Come From: Pan-Africanist Consciousness in Caribbean Popular Culture”, Second Annual Anatol Rodgers Memorial Lecture, College of the Bahamas, November 8, 2007.

Dr Curdella Forbes

- “Yearning for Utopia: Earth, Body, Deviance and Festive-Carnival Failure in *Cereus Blooms at Night*”, 27th Annual

Conference on West Indian Literature, UWI, Cave Hill,
February 2008.

Professor John Lennard

- “Quantity and Quality in Literature”, Symposium on Qualitative Inquiry, Department of Educational Studies, October 2007.

Dr Mawuena Logan

- “(Achieving) Immortality: African Epistemology in the Works of Zora Neale Hurston and Maryse Condé.” 19th Annual Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities in Eatonville, Florida, USA, January/February 2008.

PUBLICATIONS

Books

Dr Curdella Forbes

Book (fiction)

- * A Permanent Freedom. Leeds, Peepal Tree Press, 2008.

Refereed Journal Articles

Professor Carolyn Cooper

- * “No Woman No Cry: Rita Marley’s Feminist Fable”. *Bim: Arts for the 21st Century* 1.2, May-October 2008.
- * “The Tourist and the Native: Rereading Myths of Conquest in *Lucy* and *Last Virgin in Paradise*”, *Lucayos* 1, Spring 2008: 21-32.

Dr Norval Edwards

- * “Notes on the Age of Dis: Reading Kingston through Agamben”, *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, No. 25 (Feb. 2008):1-15.
- * “Tradition, the Critic and Cross-Cultural Poetics: Wilson Harris as Literary Theorist”, *Journal of West Indian Literature* 16.2 (April 2008):1-30.

Dr Curdella Forbes

- * “Fracturing Subjectivities: International Space and the Discourse of Individualism in Colin Channer’s *Waiting in Vain* and Jamaica Kincaid’s *Mr Potter*.” *Small Axe* 25 (March 2008): 16-37.
- * “Say.” *BIM: Arts for the 21st Century* 1. 2 (2008): 109-121.

Dr Anthea Morrison

- * “Making Life: Displacement (and its antidote) in the work of Lorna Goodison”, *Lucayos* 1, Spring 2008: 78-89.

Dr Gregory Stephens

- * “Interpenetration in the Borderlands: Recovering Memory and Rewriting Scripts in Fuentes’ *Old Gringo*” (Article). <http://borderlandstudies.net/stephens.pdf>

Professor John Lennard

Short Monographs

- * “Paul Scott: The Raj Quartet and Staying On”, Tirril: Humanities-Ebooks LLOP, 2008, 98pp.

Dr Mawuena Logan

Refereed Encyclopedia Entries:

- * “African Wars.” *Encyclopedia of the Middle Passage: Greenwood Milestones in African American History*, eds. Toyin Falola and Amanda Warnock , Greenwood Press, 2007.
- * Westport, CT, & London: Greenwood Press, 2007
- * “Jamaica.” *Encyclopedia of the Middle Passage*.
- * “Ouidah.” *Encyclopedia of the Middle Passage*.
- * “The Slave Coast.” *Encyclopedia of the Middle Passage*.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Ms Lisa Brown

- Secretary, West Indian Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (WIACLALS)

Dr Michael Bucknor

- Chief Judge, Canada and Caribbean Regional Adjudication panel for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, 2007-2009.
- Chief Examiner, CAPE Literatures in English for the Caribbean Examinations Council.
- Editor, *Journal of West Indian Literature* (JWIL).
- Member, Editorial Board, Pathways.

Dr Victor L. Chang

- Treasurer, West Indian Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (WIACLALS).
- Chief Editor, *Journal of West Indian Literature* (JWIL).
- Editor, Pathways

Professor Carolyn Cooper

- Member, Board of Directors, Development Partners and Management International Limited, Kingston

Dr Norval Edwards

- Member, Advisory Board, Issues in Critical Investigation, Vanderbilt University

Dr Curdella Forbes

- Chief Examiner, English B, Caribbean Examinations Council

Dr Mawuena Logan

- Guest Lecturer, Holy Childhood Prep School, Kingston, Jamaica, 2008
- Judge, Miss Quality Academic Talent Competition, Kingston, Jamaica, 2008

CATEGORIES OF STUDENTS

Undergraduate

Number Registered

Year I	507
Year II	511
Year III	408
TOTAL:	1,426

Postgraduate

Registration

PhD	6
MPhil	12
MA	26

Award of Degrees

PhD	Harold McDermott
MA	Eileen Fay Alexander Kimisha Thompson