R. Price

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OPODRON: NEW PATHWAYS TO CARIBBEAN KNOWLEDGE

Caribbean writers: a bio-bibliographical-critical encyclopedia. DONALD E. HERDECK, Editor; MAURICE A. LUBIN, JOHN FIGUEROA, DOROTHY ALEXANDER FIGUEROA, JOSÉ ALCÁNTARA ALMÁNzar, Associate Editors; MARGARET LANIAK-HERDECK, General Editor. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1979. xiv + 943 pp. (Cloth US \$ 70.00)

250 years of Afro-American art: an annotated bibliography. LYNN MOODY IGOE (with JAMES IGOE), New York and London: R.R. Bowker Company, 1981, xxv + 1266 pp. (Cloth US \$ 65.00)

Women in the Caribbean: a bibliography. BERTIE A. COHEN STUART. Leiden: Department of Caribbean Studies, Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology, 1979. 163 pp. (Paper Dfl. 20.00)

Women in the Caribbean: an annotated bibliography. A guide to material available in Barbados. JOYCELIN MASSIAH (with the assistance of AUDINE WILKINSON and NORMA SHOREY). Cave Hill, Barbados: Institute of Social and Economic Research (Eastern Caribbean), University of the West Indies, Occasional Bibliography Series No. 5, 1979. xvii + 133 pp. (Paper US \$ 12.00)

Suriname: a bibliography 1940–1980. GERARD A. NAGELKERKE. Leiden: Department of Caribbean Studies, Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology, 1980. xiv + 336 pp. (Paper Dfl. 35.00)

Netherlands Antilles: a bibliography 17th century – 1980. GERARD A. NAGELKERKE. Leiden: Department of Caribbean Studies, Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology, 1982. xx + 422 pp. (Paper Dfl. 35.00)

The catalogue of the West India Reference Library. INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA, KINGSTON, WEST INDIA REFERENCE LIBRARY. Millwood, New York: Kraus International Publications, 1980. 6 vols., 4349 pp. (Cloth US \$ 550.00)

The past half-decade has witnessed a quiet but truly startling explosion of bibliographical publications devoted to the Carib-

bean. Since the appearance of COMITAS' landmark *Complete Caribbeana* (1977; see also PRICE 1980), it seems that the presses (from old-fashioned, island-based mimeograph machines to the latest floppy-disk-driven computerized wonders in international capitals) have scarcely stopped rolling, while producing a diversity of more specialized bibliographical works on selected topics. This review offers a taste of the latest crop.

Caribbean writers is an unexpected joy, a reference book that, once I had dipped into it, I literally could not put down. Monumental in scope — capsule biographies of some 2000 creative writers, and bibliographical citations of more than 15,000 works in English, French, Spanish, Dutch and several Caribbean creoles — it is nevertheless a warm, almost chatty book. There are introductory essays reviewing various “national” (Cuban, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Haitian) or “regional” (Netherlands Antillean and Suriname, French Antillean, Anglophone West Indian) literatures; there are separate lists of writers, arranged by country, as well as lists of literary journals, relevant bibliographies, critical studies, anthologies and so on; and many of the sparkling word-portraits of individual writers are accompanied by photos or line drawings. The editor leaned heavily and creatively on his literary colleagues in the islands; this is a book that bears the stamp of many Caribbean writers and scholars. No reader will agree with all the individual assessments; as one would expect in a work of this scope, some of the references include errors; and coverage is not always even — the relatively brief essays on CARPENTIER and GUILLÉN are considerably less rich than the entries on CÉSAIRE, NAIPAUL or LAMMING, or again, the Netherlands Antilles seems somewhat better covered than Suriname (which nevertheless contributes 29 writers). But I can think of no better single entrée into the world of Caribbean literature and literary personalities. No research library with Caribbean or literary interests can possibly afford to be without this book, and — in spite of the price tag — many individual scholars may decide that this is one occasion on which to indulge themselves.

250 years of Afro-American art, like *Caribbean writers*, is a beauty of a bibliography — some 25,000 citations (succinctly annotated, as appropriate) relating to 3900 artists. The geographical range

is narrow: "Afro-American" here means "United States Afro-American," but there is plenty of material of interest to students of Afro-America in the broader sense. Artists such as Guyana-born FRANK BOWLING, whose career has flourished in the U.S., are fully covered, and the 200-plus-page Subject Bibliography includes such entries as "African Survivals," "Architecture," "Basket-making," "Grave Decoration," "Ironwork," "Pottery," and "Quiltmaking." Undoubtedly, this book is at its most complete in dealing with the "fine arts" — there are, for example, 21 tightly-packed pages devoted to ROMARE BEARDEN — but I would applaud the intellectual vision that lies behind their integration here with "folk art" and "crafts" (see, for example, an entry s.v. CAESAR/CESAR who was an 18th-century Boston wood block engraver and "slave of Thomas Fleet"). Not strictly a "Caribbean" bibliography, this is nevertheless a reference work of real interest to those Caribbeanists who also consider themselves Afro-Americanists.

The feminist revolution has spawned two *Women in the Caribbean* bibliographies that appeared, independently, in 1979 — one in Barbados, the other in the Netherlands. The relative looseness of definition of Caribbean women's studies in the 1970s is reflected in the respective author's selections: comparison of the "A" entries in the two Authors' Indexes reveals 11 in MASSIAH's vs. 17 in COHEN STUART's but only two of these entries appear in both works (one of which COHEN STUART misspells)! Although the MASSIAH volume is limited to materials available in Barbados repositories it includes only one-third fewer entries than the 651-item COHEN STUART work. In most cases, MASSIAH's annotations are more informative and incisive than those of COHEN STUART; it is clear that the professional scholar is more at ease than the professional bibliographer, for example, in untangling the significance of the social science literature about Caribbean family and household. MASSIAH's work is mimeographed, COHEN STUART's produced by offset; they use different (but overlapping) systems of topical/geographical classification. Both are somewhat sloppy typographically, compared to the bibliographies reviewed above; but both are labors of love, pioneering efforts to develop and shape a new perspective on Caribbean studies. Given the recent blossoming

and development of women's studies internationally (see, for example, the journal *Signs*), a new (radically-revised and expanded) bibliography about Caribbean women, drawing on these two, should be able to have a clearer vision of its intellectual goals, and make a more incisive contribution to our understanding of the complex range of issues relating to women's lives in the region.

NAGELKERKE's *Suriname* and *Netherlands Antilles* bibliographies are useful if circumscribed tools for regional specialists. Produced by offset, with no annotations, they are straightforward alphabetical lists of those books and periodical articles found in the collection of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Leiden. The indexes are somewhat confusing — essentially a "co-author" index (i.e., including only names other than those used to alphabetize within the body of the work) and a "catchwords/subject" index that, for me at least, missed almost as much as it caught. The neophyte should not expect help in trying to sort out the names and identities of Dutch scholars; for example, nowhere is it pointed out that "B. Thoden van Velzen" is the same person as "H.U.E. Thoden van Velzen," or that "W. Thoden van Velzen-van Wetering" (alphabetized as an author under "T" on p. 265) is the same person who again appears as an author called "W. van Wetering" (alphabetized under "W" on p. 301). An index with relevant cross-references would have helped. The new *Suriname* supersedes NAGELKERKE's 1971 volume that covered 1940–1970; it is intended to be used side by side with his 1972 bibliography that covers the colony's literature in the KITLV from the 17th century to 1940 (NAGELKERKE 1972). (Specialists in Suriname's Amerindian populations will also wish to consult NAGELKERKE 1977.) Including the 2596 entries in the new work, the total number of Suriname items in the Library now comes to well over 5000. Incompleteness remains the central problem for both these bibliographies; although many journal articles are included, papers published in, say, *Man* or *Anthropological Quarterly* — or for that matter in *Caribbean Review* or *Social and Economic Studies* — seem to be listed only if the author happened to send an offprint to the Library. The brief introductions to these books are printed in English and Dutch, with the addition — in the *Nether-*

lands Antilles volume — of a Papiamentu version. NAGELKERKE has tried hard to locate items of relevance in the KITLV, though the result is somewhat marred by a more-than-usual number of typos, dropped words, and misspellings, probably introduced in the final typing. Specialists on Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles are in the compiler's debt for his continuing toil in these largely thankless and distinctly unromantic fields of specialized regional bibliography.

Potential users of *Netherlands Antilles* will wish to note, as well, the recent appearance of an historical bibliography on the same region by J. HARTOG (1981). The fifth and final volume of his series of books on the history of Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao and the Bovenwindse Eilanden (which began appearing in 1953), this work devotes p. 87–129 to a grand listing of historical sources (through 1979) — 2158 works (compared to 2852 in NAGELKERKE), that were encountered during HARTOG's long career as historian and librarian.

The catalogue of the West India Reference Library raises problems unlike the other works here reviewed. Six weighty volumes (one of which, in the set I was sent, was bound upside-down) containing nearly 100,000 library catalogue cards, including acquisitions through 1975, are all reproduced by photo-offset. The slips on books, pamphlets and periodical articles are arranged in two sequences of three volumes each — "Authors and Titles" and "Subjects." The famous map/print/photo/manuscript portion of the collection is not included. In a penetrating review of the *Catalogue*, that incidentally sketches in the history of this major Caribbean collection, SIDNEY MINTZ (1982) minces no words. "Surely the most striking feature of this publication is the fact that one finds within its thousands of pages not one single line added by the publisher, or by any scholar, to orient or assist the hapless reader." That's right: not a hint about the extent or nature of periodicals indexing, not a word about the Library or the Institute of Jamaica. As MINTZ, legitimately exercised, argues (*ibid.*), "a copying machine is not quite enough. It is even an open question whether a catalogue, copied in this fashion without some scholar's imaginative reflection on how it may be used, and without the addition of some explanatory texts, is a bibliography at all."

Personally, I find this a shameless publication. It would have taken only a relatively small amount of thought, planning and effort on the part of the publisher and its academic advisor (whose name appears as "General Editor" in connection with these volumes) to have brought out a work that was worthy of the pioneering bibliographical efforts of FRANK CUNDALL and his successors at the Institute. These volumes, then, truly represent a missed opportunity. Kraus International and the other photo-offset/card catalogue publishers might do well to pause and consider whether in the rush to get into print they do not sometimes shortchange both scholars and the very libraries whose catalogues they reproduce. More serious, less opportunistic "bibliographies" are in everyone's best interest — scholars, libraries and not least of all reference publishers, all of whom must ride out, in uneasy partnership, current economic hard times.

Today, one need no longer be surprised that the epigraph to a book like *Caribbean writers* is taken from Surinamer JOHANNA SCHOUTEN-ELSENHOUT's Sranan poem "Kodjo": *Mi wan' opodron/Lek friman borgu.//Kondre,/Dat' ede/M'e dorfu tide* (rather unsatisfactorily translated by HERDECK et al. as: "I want the drumming in the open/like a citizen who is free./People!/For this/do I dare today.). To a certain extent all scholarship (and especially the practice of bibliography) is a lonely endeavor. But Caribbean scholars, traditionally divided by linguistic, political and geographical boundaries, have in some respects been particularly isolated and insular. The burgeoning production of serious reference books about the Caribbean is one very welcome sign of increasing pan-Caribbean scholarly communication. Let us all *opodron*. The airplane has helped. But so do books like these.

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RICHARD PRICE
Department of Anthropology
The Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, MD. 21218, U.S.A.