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Elaine Campbell

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Abstract

In 1958 Jamaican novelist and teacher Sylvia Wynter named Jamaican Ada Quayle as the first West Indian woman novelist.' Quayle's novel, *The Mistress*, which Wynter terms 'a competent historical piece', leans heavily upon stereotypic West Indian figures of the profligate planter, the beautiful mulatto and the faithful black servant. Its themes of lust, avarice and cruelty seem designed for the colourful jacket of a popular papercover edition, and, indeed, *The Mistress* appeared in a papercover issue in 1961 (London: Four Square Books).

An Expatriate at Home: Dominica's Elma Napier

In 1958 Jamaican novelist and teacher Sylvia Wynter named Jamaican Ada Quayle as the first West Indian woman novelist.¹ Quayle's novel, *The Mistress*, which Wynter terms 'a competent historical piece', leans heavily upon stereotypic West Indian figures of the profligate planter, the beautiful mulatto and the faithful black servant. Its themes of lust, avarice and cruelty seem designed for the colourful jacket of a popular papercover edition, and, indeed, *The Mistress* appeared in a papercover issue in 1961 (London: Four Square Books). The style of the novel was genially teased by Frank Collymore in his brief *BIM* review of it: '*The Mistress* is written in that clipped staccato style which one might be tempted to call the earnest heming way.' With characteristic generosity, Collymore added that 'much can be forgiven' because 'so well is the story developed, so intense its presentation, so powerful its characterization'.² An aspect of the novel that Collymore did not select for praise but which does merit commendation is its inclusion of such authentic Jamaica as the John Canoe dances. Unfortunately, the author's knowledge of Jamaican culture is not adequately displayed; the hints of West Indian lore remain isolated as, for example, when Quayle introduces the mysterious chi-ju-ju. She never pauses in her headlong rush to advance the exciting action of Laura Pettigrew's story in order to integrate the folk content into the rather predictable plot of plantation society decadence and deterioration.

It is with a sense of embarrassment that Wynter sets Ada Quayle among contemporary West Indian novelists like George Lamming, Jan Carew, John Hearne, V.S. Naipaul and Sam Selvon. After citing *The Mistress*, Wynter fails to provide further comment upon Quayle's novel while she criticises at length the novels by the male writers. This appears to be an implicit recognition that beyond the novel's existence as a 'first woman novelist's' piece, it really does not meet the quality of, say, *In the Castle of My Skin* or *Voices under the Window*. The implied valuation is

accurate; the error resides in Wynter's attempt to commend a novel primarily on the basis of its chronological appearance without reference to its inherent quality. Furthermore, *The Mistress*, published by MacGibbon & Kee in 1957, is, in fact, not the first novel by a West Indian woman writer. Five years earlier, Dominican-born Phyllis Shand Allfrey published *The Orchid House* in British, French and American editions. The excellence of Allfrey's novel has promoted its inclusion in most bibliographies of contemporary West Indian writing.³ When *WLWE* guest editors Wendy Keitner and Lois Gottlieb called for papers for their special issue on women writers of the Commonwealth, they received essays on Allfrey from scholars in Canada, Australia and the United States. This demonstration of critical support for Allfrey's long out-of-print novel suggests a consensus regarding its quality. *The Orchid House's* primacy to *The Mistress* is unexceptionable, and Allfrey's West Indian ancestry, which she traces for two hundred years in Dominica, firmly fixes her candidacy as a West Indian woman novelist.

There is also growing recognition of Jean Rhys as a West Indian novelist. The small circle of Rhys followers who were familiar with her short stories and novels of the nineteen-twenties and thirties did not view her as such despite her Dominican birth, her three-generation West Indian heritage, and the strong strains of longing for a West Indian homeland that infiltrate her novels set in England and France. It was the publication of *Wide Sargasso Sea* in 1966 that led to Rhys's rediscovery and to the appraisal of her writing as belonging to some tradition slightly outside the mainstream English novel of manners. Rhys's release of more Dominican material in recent short stories (see, for example, 'The Whistling Bird', *The New Yorker*, 11 September 1978) as well as in *Sleep It Off, Lady* supports her identification as a West Indian writer.⁴ Her position achieved its highest affirmation when Kenneth Ramchand wrote in the April 1978 issue of *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*: 'Miss Rhys deserves to be doubly cherished as Elder and Fellow in the house of West Indian fiction.' Although Jean Rhys's first novel, *Quartet*, may not qualify as a West Indian novel because it lacks any West Indian reference, *Voyage in the Dark*, first published in 1934, certainly qualifies for its continual cross-references to a West Indian homeland against which the heroine, Anna Morgan, sets her dislocation in an alien English 'motherland'. Not only does Rhys antedate both Quayle and Allfrey as 'first West Indian woman novelist', she continued to function in the capacity of a West Indian writer throughout her life. Shortly before her death she completed the memoirs of her Dominican childhood and these

recollections of a turn-of-the-century British West Indian island have recently been published in London.

The designation of one writer or another as the 'first' is, however, of limited value. Its importance is more one of literary history than of literary criticism or literary appreciation. It might even be questioned if the qualification of a novelist as 'West Indian' on the basis of his or her place of birth is ultimately fruitful in literary terms. Such classification may satisfy the requirements of a special methodology or of bibliographical compilation, but it is vulnerable to logical grief. It is not unlike trying to assign a piece of fiction to a category of psychological novel, or detective novel, or *bildungsroman* — the classifications cannot be mutually exclusive and the value of the novel as an artistic product can be obfuscated during the exercise of placing it into its most plausible category. A less rigid definition of the West Indian novel (generally one written by a West Indian about West Indians), and the discontinuance of assignments of primacy admit otherwise excluded writers. Under such a dispensation, Africa-born Peter Abrahams, author of *This Island, Now*, can be considered a West Indian novelist as can be Scotland-born Elma Cumming Gibbs Napier.

In their 'Select Bibliography of Women Writers in the Eastern Caribbean', Barbara Comissiong and Marjorie Thorpe, writing from the University of the West Indies in Trinidad, credit Elma Napier as the author of two short stories in 1951 issues of *BIM*. These are 'No Voyage for a Little Barque' in which Napier examines the rum-running which took place between Dominica and its neighbouring French islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe following the second world war, and 'Carnival in Martinique' in which she narrates what happens when the servant girl Jeannette dresses for carnival in her mother's traditional creole gown of red silk with its lace petticoat and turbaned kerchief. A more exhaustive search of *BIM* uncovers in addition Napier's 'Morning by the Mediterranean' (II, 42), 'The Road' (IV, 16), 'On the Road to Antioch' (X, 41), 'O, Call Back Yesterday' (XI, 43), and the continuation of 'O, Call Back Yesterday' (XI, 44). These contributions to the Barbadian little journal are supplemented by the following family contributions: Beth Honychurch's 'Barter' (II, 8), E.L. Honychurch's 'Waiting' (II, 5), Ellice Honychurch's 'Cardboard Skeleton' (III, 9) and E. Gomier's 'Pages from a Diary'.⁵ In addition, Napier's grandson's pen and ink drawing 'Dancing Bonaire: Dominica' forms the frontispiece to *BIM*'s volume XIII, 50, and Lennox Honychurch continues in the Dominican literary tradition with his publication in 1975 of *The*

Dominica Story: A History of the Island. Published by the Letchworth Press in Barbados, the volume is dedicated 'In memory of my grandmother Elma Napier whose life shall forever be an inspiration for me' and is prefaced with an excerpt from Phyllis Allfrey's poem, 'Love for an Island'.

The slight sketches which Napier contributed to *BIM* constitute neither her total nor her principal prose. Napier's books appear under two names. Elma Napier is the author of the autobiographical works: *Nothing So Blue* published by The Cayme Press in 1927, *Youth Is A Blunder* published by Jonathan Cape in 1948, and *Winter Is in July*, also published by Jonathan Cape, in 1949. She also published two West Indian novels under the pseudonym of Elizabeth Garner: *Duet in Discord*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937; and *A Flying Fish Whispered*, London: Barker Ltd., 1938. There are several reasons why Napier-Garner's books have slipped through the filter of Commonwealth literature commentary but no single reason seems adequate to explain the obscurity into which her books have fallen. She was not a retiring person who wrote secretly in her Dominican hideaway. On the contrary, she was a highly visible political personage in Dominica where she became in 1940 the first woman on the island and the first woman in the entire British West Indies to serve on the legislature. In *Youth Is a Blunder* she reflects from a position of political involvement upon her apolitical upbringing: 'Brought up so unpolitically, it is rather a joke on the part of Fate that I should happen to have been the first woman elected to any Legislative Council in the West Indies' (158). Not only did she serve after the war as an elected representative for the northeastern district of the island, she 'pioneered Village Boards and co-operative ventures as a means of community growth'.⁶ 'Self-help' is a concept of economic provision still in vogue among Dominicans, and Elma Napier tried to develop the first self-help groups on the island following the end of the Second World War when the island was particularly destitute because trade and agriculture had been disrupted. A small island has a long memory and there are still many recollections exchanged of the wartime sacrifice of Dominica's livestock to feed the overwhelming numbers of fugitive French from the neighbouring islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe who sought asylum from Vichy domination. Later, Elma Napier joined with Lionel Laville to lead a people's protest against diverting the completion of the proposed Transinsular Road. The protest was formulated as a mass petition which was sent to the Secretary for the Colonies and from there it went to the House of Commons. It was largely

a result of Napier's activity that the Transinsular Road was completed in 1956.

Like Elma Napier, Phyllis Allfrey also served her native island politically (Allfrey was the Dominican representative for the West Indian Federation), but her literary achievements were not buried as a consequence. The Comissiong-Thorpe bibliography awards Allfrey full credit for her poetry and her novel whereas Napier's only documented contribution is the two *BIM* sketches. Perhaps Napier's use of a pseudonym obscured the fact of her authorship; perhaps the lack of an American edition of *A Flying Fish Whispered* occasioned its loss of literary notice; perhaps Napier's original expatriate status led to her rejection by the early compilers of bibliographies of West Indian literature.

Elma Napier's first book, *Nothing So Blue*, was written while she was still seeking a home where she could establish her individual roots. It belongs to a genre of English literature that is long historied, widely represented, but singularly ignored by teachers and critics. *Nothing So Blue* is in the tradition of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Travels with a Donkey*, William Henry Hudson's *Idle Days in Patagonia*, and Alec Waugh's *Hot Countries*. Collections of travel essays or book-length accounts of the Englishman's adventures abroad date beyond the origins of the novel, but the growth of the novel as a premier genre has eclipsed the art of essay writing, while among the short prose forms, the preference for fiction has replaced the essay by the short story. The recent popular affirmation of prose forms like the biography, diary, and sustained nature sketch may encourage the retrieval of these genres which, like the travel account, have assumed positions of secondary importance. *Nothing So Blue*, dedicated to Elma Napier's second husband, Lennox Napier, is divided into four sections that accommodate the various parts of the world to which Napier's travels took her. 'Les Iles Sous Le Vent' contains multiple sketches of incidents and places in the South Pacific islands of Tahiti, Moorea and Maiao. This is terrain that evokes reflections of Stevenson, and the collection's title is from Stevenson:

For who would gravely set his face
To go to this or t'other place?
There's nothing under Heaven so blue
That's fairly worth the travelling to.

The stylishly-written sketches are the transcriptions of experiences acquired by a voyager who is not travelling as an idle tourist or holiday

seeker, but as one required to travel by the exigencies of earning a living. Exactly why the author and her husband (presumably the narrative 'we') were in the South Pacific is not stated, but there is sufficient information to suggest that they were involved in bottom-level trade agreements. For example, the requirement to sit all day on the verandah of a chief's house in Maiao in almost perfect silence while beset by mosquitoes is associated with negotiating 'the price of copra and the possibility of a cargo'. The second section, 'Indo-Chine', reveals a capacity for gentle satire: the narrator is engaged at length by a French merchant whose mission in Pnom-Penh is to achieve an introduction to the chief priest of the Buddhist monks. The merchant's purpose is not to render homage to a religious leader but to present the 'Chef des Bonzes' with a black silk umbrella manufactured in Lyons. 'If the chief priest uses one of my umbrellas ... the others will do the same. My fortune is made.' 'Queensland' offers an abrupt shift of scene. The background loses any touches of exoticism and acquires instead the gritty quality of the Australian bush where Elma Cumming spent the years of her first marriage to Maurice Gibbs. Gibbs was sent by his family to man an Australian sheep station, and this section of *Nothing So Blue* should be treasured for its insight into the cultural shock Australia represented to young expatriates sent from England, Ireland and Scotland to pioneer landholdings as unlike in climate and topography as anything the United Kingdom could possibly offer. The fifty pages of 'Queensland' could be excerpted as required reading for a course in 'The Expatriate Wife'. 'Backwards and Forwards' picks up miscellaneous assignments. The narrator is glimpsed in Teneriffe, Burma, Rio de Janeiro, traversing the locks of the Panama Canal, in the Solomon Islands, and back to Perth and Melbourne in Australia. She has not yet encountered the fate that was to lead her to her permanent home in Dominica.

One of the sketches appeared in the Australian monthly *Home* prior to publication in the collection, but 'the greater number of these sketches ... appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*'. It is impossible to know how widely read they might have been in their combined periodical and hardcover appearances, but it is interesting that Jean Rhys opens her *Sleep It Off, Lady* short story 'The Insect World' by having her protagonist Audrey read a book 'called *Nothing So Blue*. It was set in the tropics.' Audrey's book is described by Rhys in detail and it does not sound at all like Elma Napier's book. Perhaps Rhys used only Napier's title and invented her own details. Or the allusions to Stevenson's poem may represent a literary coincidence. The two women writers who were

to emerge eventually as Dominican novelists never crossed paths on Dominica. Rhys left the island in the nineteen-tens whereas Napier did not arrive until sometime in the thirties.

Precisely when Lennox and Elma Napier arrived in Dominica with their family is unclear. The narrator of Napier's first novel, *Duet in Discord*, alludes to her arrival in Dominica in an interior monologue under circumstances that appear to be at least partially autobiographic. (The narrator is forty-three; Napier was herself in her early or mid-forties when the novel was published in 1937 — the National Union Catalogue lists her birth year as 1892.) Carol says,

But I, who have known myself for forty years in other surroundings, am still amazed at the twist of fortune that has brought me to the desolate rock-bound coast of a West Indian island. I take stock of myself sometimes and wonder if I am quite true and not living in a fantastic dream from which I shall wake to find myself some place where there is other noise than the crash of surf and the humming of little shimmering birds. Of all the white women in the island — there are perhaps fifty — I think that I alone live here because I like it. And 'like' is of all words the most ridiculous with which to express the love that I have for this place, love that has something almost physical about it, so that in moments of pain I have quite literally lain full length and drawn solace from the ground.⁷

Whatever constituted the 'twist of fortune' that impelled the Napiers to Dominica, they evidently embraced the island as home so completely that by the mid-thirties the signature of Lennox P. Napier appears at the bottom of a manifesto for self-government. True to her vision of herself as a basically unpolitical person, Napier wrote her first novel as a totally personal exploration of an unlikely love affair between a middle-aged widow and a twenty-six year old bachelor. The women's liberation movement and female film direction make this sort of plotting familiar today, but it was an unusual construction in the thirties. Doris Lessing has undertaken the same construction in *The Summer Before the Dark*, but even in that novel of 1973, Kate Brown says with a tart accent: 'Popular wisdom claims that this particular class of love affair is the most poignant, tender, poetic, exquisite one there is, altogether the choicest on the menu.' Lessing's novel is billed on its papercover as 'a woman's second chance — an adult odyssey into the perils of freedom'. Forty years earlier, Napier undertook a novelistic exploration of such a second chance. Her novel is more coherent than Lessing's and while both novels evidence a certain 'yeasty' quality, there is a ring of authority throughout *Duet in Discord* that makes Tony and Carol's relationship more credible than Kate Brown and Jeffrey Merton's. Further, there is a sexual honesty

about the earlier novel that almost matches the later's, and the mere fact of its appearance four decades earlier is the more remarkable.

The West Indian setting of *Duet in Discord* does not serve simply as background for the interlude of the mismatched lovers. It continually extends out from and reflects back upon the personality of the narrator. The setting is specifically Dominican rather than generally West Indian and its specificity focuses upon the section of the island where Elma Napier lived. Pointe Baptiste with its views seawards of Marie Galante to the Iles des Saintes and inland to Morne au Diable and Morne Diablotin, the particularity of rocks, vegetation, animal and sea life actually overwhelm the novel to the extent that *Duet in Discord* is more genuinely a record of the author's love affair with an island. Her appropriation of Dominica does not stop with the natural surroundings. It includes the peasant life in the village of Calibishie. Napier's view is not the peasant's, but neither is it the tourist's. It is rather the view of an intelligent and involved woman interacting with both her neighbours and her adopted homeland.

Napier's second Dominican novel is less introspective and in it she expresses a higher level of social concern. Although, again, the central relationship is one between two members of the island's small white community, one an expatriate and the other a creole, Napier's increasing political consciousness invades *A Flying Fish Whispered*. The novel is dedicated to Patricia (one of Mrs Napier's daughters) and it is divided into the two major sections of 'Fever and Flame' and 'Coconuts and a Cattle' with a twenty-page 'Interlude' between the two. The heroine is twenty-nine year old, unmarried Teresa Craddock who lives with her brother Tommy in their family home, Ca Ira. The creole name of the Craddock estate suggests the family's flexibility while it contrasts effectively with the harsh sounding name of Neva, Derek Morell's plantation on the 'other side of the island' — the Atlantic Ocean side. Derek Morell and his wife Janet are newcomers to St Celia — the fictional name for Dominica. They arrive imbued with the values of the work ethic (Napier pointedly remarks upon their Methodism). By denying their neighbours the traditional privileges of collecting fallen coconuts and beaching fishing boats, the Morells alienate the islanders. Their aim is to succeed financially as planters in an effort to compensate for the impoverishment of their respective childhoods. This aspect of the Morells' motivation is implied rather than explained by Napier who obviously supports the code of neighbourly co-operation and the assistance of the poor by the less poor.

In the first section of the novel, Napier sets up another unlikely love

affair: that of Teresa Craddock and forty year old, married Derek Morell. For the first one hundred and twenty-nine pages, Napier carefully establishes the growth of a love affair between these two dissimilar people. Again, she interweaves with the love story aspects of Dominican and expatriate culture. For example, in criticism of English expatriate behaviour in the West Indies, Napier has a minor character say, 'English women in the West Indies do their own cooking to economize on ingredients. But they keep servants for the sake of being able to write home with pride in their number.'⁸ It is apparent that Napier no longer considered herself a member of the expatriate community by the time she wrote *A Flying Fish Whispered*.

The novel holds a special appeal for readers who know and love Dominica because in it Napier includes small items that can refer only to that island. As an illustration, she features crapauds as Government House dinner fare. Crapauds, called 'mountain chickens' by Dominicans, are large frogs that are considered a delicacy on the island and are reserved for serving on special occasions. With an outstanding descriptive talent Napier incorporates into her story her observations of Dominica's distinctive flora and fauna: the giant gommiers and the mahaut cochon trees, the Sisserou parrot that exists nowhere else in the world, the little agouti, and the ramiers or wood pigeons that are treated as game birds. More important is Napier's record of what she perceives to be social errors. Her emphasis is upon inequalities accorded women and blacks. She protests against the double sexual standard, 'He ... would believe ... that there was one sauce for the goose and another for the gander' and attacks male complacency, '...she did not believe that women quarrelled inevitably about men'. She deplores the assumption that women are not intellectually equipped to serve as jurists, and laments the disfavour into which the suffragist movement had fallen: 'Women — as women — don't die for their rights any more.'

By moving the novel's action to an island with a less favourable racial climate than St Celia's, in 'Interlude' Napier offers a reprieve from the love theme of the novel while demonstrating her racial partisanship. Like Rhys, she expresses a non-sentimental preference for the social behaviour of black people. In *Duet in Discord*, Napier literally and figuratively says 'black is beautiful' whereas in *A Flying Fish Whispered* she goes beyond mere affirmation to a confrontation with the specific injustices inflicted on black people. For example, she denounces the plight of Parham Island's landless peasantry living precariously on estates having thousands of uncultivated acres. She attacks the sugar factory's discrimi-

natory practice of paying to peasants a shilling less for a tonne of cane than it pays to planters. And she examines the meaning of enfranchisement for a peasant people. All these issues of sexual and racial social imbalance are presented with a poise and control that preserve the novel from deteriorating into a polemical tract. In the last one hundred and twenty-nine pages of the novel, Napier adroitly resolves the love interest of Derek Morell and Teresa Craddock with a realisation that their dissimilarities of attitude are too great to serve as a foundation for an abiding relationship despite the sexual attraction the two hold for one another.

Ten years after the publication of *A Flying Fish Whispered*, the first volume of Napier's autobiography appeared. Dated 'Dominica. 1940-5', *Youth Is A Blunder* is dedicated to the children of her daughter Daphne: 'Dedicated to my grandchildren, Antony and Elizabeth Agar.' Part one covers her childhood, the period 1896 to 1906, and part two covers the years 1906 to 1912, or up to her first marriage to Maurice Gibbs, the son of the Honourable Henry Gibbs and the grandson of the first Lord Aldenham. Napier's memoir of her childhood and adolescence is a fascinating chronicle of the Edwardian period in England. Her mother was an American, Florence Josephine Garner, and her father was Sir William Gordon Gordon Cumming, Baronet, who was ostracized in 1891 over the 'Baccarat or Tranby Croft Case'. Sir William had been accused of cheating at cards and the Prince of Wales was subpoenaed as a witness. The Prince's 'hostile evidence' caused the loss of Sir William's case although, according to Napier, 'thousands of people, including his counsel, Sir Edward Clarke, believed him innocent'. Florence Garner married him 'the day after the verdict was given' despite the social scandal resulting from the press coverage of the court case. In 1949, Napier published the continuation of her autobiography, *Winter Is in July*, starting with her twentieth birthday, her marriage to Gibbs, the birth of her first baby through the death of her father to her second marriage and the birth of her fourth child. These are the years during which she lived as an expatriate wife in Australia and it is doubtlessly from this period that the short stories of *Nothing So Blue* were drawn. It is regrettable that these memoirs were not continued in a third volume which would have provided an explanation for her settlement in Dominica with Lennox Napier and her children.

In a lengthy letter to Alec Waugh, Elma Napier discloses that she was at work on a new Dominican book in 1949, but it is unclear whether it was to be another novel or a continuation of the memoirs. Her letter to Waugh expresses appreciation for Waugh's citation in his chapter

'Typical Dominica' in *The Sugar Islands*. Alec Waugh had written:

I was to hear much talk of Dominica during the 1930s. In London and New York, the Dominica legend was taking shape. The expatriate colony was growing. Stephen Hawsis, for example, went there, and Elma Napier and John Knapp.... Elma Napier, the daughter of Sir William Gordon Cumming, one of the chief figures of the Tranby Croft baccarat scandal, widely travelled and the authoress of several books, is very much a person in her own right.⁹

Further along in 'Typical Dominica' Waugh elaborated:

A widow now, on the brink of sixty, she has two properties, one on the leeward coast which she has let, the other in the north-east corner of the island at Pointe Baptiste. Though she does not work either of her estates, she is a busy woman. There is nothing escapist about her life; not only has she written three or four books there, but she is active in local politics. She serves on the legislative council, as an elected member, a thing that no other woman, white or black, has ever done. There are no proper roads in her districts, and it takes her five days to cover it. She takes her obligations very seriously. (100-101)

It was in response to these comments that Napier wrote Waugh from Pointe Baptiste on 30 January 1949:

I cannot begin to tell you how gratified I was to receive this morning your *Sugar Islands*. Thank you very much indeed for a charming present and delightful inscription. I have not yet had time to read more than the Dominica chapter...

How could I be anything but pleased about your version of me? It couldn't be nicer, except that I still have three years to go towards sixty. But advancing years is not one of my troubles and I make no bones about dates. Incidentally, who is Jean Rhys? I must try and read her. None of us have ever heard of her.

Cape is doing my second volume some time this year, to be called *Winter* is in July, and I have been working hard on a West Indian one, *Calibishie Chronicle*. One paragraph of yours I have borrowed with acknowledgements. I hope you don't mind. It is from *Sunlit Caribbean*, about Dominica. Anyway, I am still only on my second draft and I generally do about fourteen. A slow worker.¹⁰

Calibishie Chronicle has never been published and it is possible that the manuscript remains with Napier's descendants in Dominica. If its literary quality meets the standard established in *Duet in Discord* and *A Flying Fish Whispered*, it deserves to be exposed to the light of the West Indian literary day.

In addition to the information Napier's letter to Waugh provides about her biography and her literary activity, it reveals that Jean Rhys's literary achievements were as unrecognized in her native country as they were in England and the United States during the period now referred to as Rhys's 'underground years'. It may be another Elma Napier 'twist of

fortune' that has brought Rhys, the creole writer that no one on Dominica had 'ever heard of', back into public notice while Napier, a once widely-recognized author and political figure,¹¹ receives credit for only two *BIM* essays.

NOTES

1. Sylvia Wynter, 'Strangers at the Gate', *The Times Colonies Review* (Fourth Quarter, 1958), p. 26.
2. Frank A. Collymore, 'Brief Notices', *BIM*, 7, No 27 (July-Dec. 1958), 185-86.
3. It appears in the following: Ruta Mara Sani, 'Bibliographical Survey of the West Indian Novel (Kalamazoo, Michigan. Western Michigan University, 1972); Anthony Boxill, 'Bibliography of West Indian Fiction 1900-1970', *World Literature Written in English*, No 19 (April 1971); Kenneth Ramchand, 'Author Bibliography' and 'Year by Year Bibliography', *The West Indian Novel and its Background* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970, 1972, 1974); Barbara Comissiong and Marjorie Thorpe, 'Select Bibliography of Women Writers in the Eastern Caribbean', *WLWE*, 17, No 1 (April 1978).
4. Joseph and Johanna Jones identified Jean Rhys as a West Indian novelist in *Authors and Areas of the West Indies* (Austin, Texas: Steck-Vaughn Company, 1970), but no woman writer appears in the Caribbean section of *Modern Commonwealth Literature*, John H. Ferres and Martin Tucker, eds. (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1977).
5. Reinhard W. Sander identifies E. Gomier as a pseudonym for Ellice Honychurch in the *BIM Bibliography Index* (Kraus Reprint, 1977), p. 42.
6. Lennox Honychurch, *The Dominica Story* (Barbados: Letchworth Press, Ltd., 1975), p. 96. This book is the source of information about Elma Napier's political career.
7. Elizabeth Garner, *Duet in Discord* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937), pp. 8-9.
8. Elizabeth Garner, *A Flying Fish Whispered* (London: Arthur Barker Ltd., 1938), p. 25. This novel is especially difficult to find in the United States. It is not listed in the National Union Catalogue although it is indexed in the British Museum Library Catalogue. In London it can be found both at the British Library and at the Hammersmith Central Library where it is catalogued under the Joint Fiction Reserve.
9. Alec Waugh, *The Sugar Islands* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1949), p. 95. The subsequent reference to this work is to this edition and appears in the text.
10. This letter is in the Alec Waugh collection of Boston University's Twentieth Century Archives.
11. Alec Waugh again invokes Elma Napier in his latest novel, *The Fatal Gift*. In the novel's foreword he says, 'Nor did I see any point in finding a pseudonym for Dominica. The island is unique and this particular story could only have happened there. In Dominica my hero would have met Elma Napier, John Archbold and Stephen Haweis, so I have written about them as I would have done, and indeed have done, in a travelogue. I think this is legitimate in a novel, and I hope the reader will not be confused.'