

34th Annual Conference of the Caribbean Studies Association
Kingston, Jamaica, June 1-5, 2009
Gordon K. & Sybil Lewis Award

The Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) is pleased to announce the 2009 Gordon K. and Sybil Lewis Award, which carries with it a monetary award of \$1000, thanks to the generous Lewis Family donation and continuing support of the CSA. The Award commemorates not one but two distinguished Caribbeanists, who though no longer with us physically, are always with us in spirit. Their ideas about, and passion for the Caribbean live on in our every endeavour.

Most Caribbean scholars are well acquainted with Gordon K. Lewis classics: *The Growth of the Modern West Indies* (1968), *Puerto Rico: Freedom and Power in the Caribbean* (1963), and *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought: The Historical Evolution of Caribbean Society in its Ideological Aspects, 1492-1900* (1983).

According to established criteria, the book selected for the Gordon K. & Sybil Lewis Award should approach the chosen subject or aspect of Caribbean life, conditions and situations from an interdisciplinary perspective; should clearly be shown to have regional impact; and may be written in any of the four major languages of the Caribbean - Dutch, English, French, or Spanish. Monographs encompassing all disciplines and fields of Caribbean scholarship are considered, and preference given to books written by one or more authors as opposed to edited volumes. Books are judged on originality, depth and breadth of research, advance of methodology or theory, and extent to which a Pan-Caribbean problem or issue is addressed (a case study that affects Caribbean people in general is acceptable).

The Review Committee comprised the immediate past president, Anton Allahar, one past president, Anthony Maingot, in-coming president, Linden Lewis, and 9 members-at-large who generously volunteered their time, knowledge and expertise: Margaret Shrimpton, Alissa Trotz, Jocelyne Guilbault, Jorge Giovannetti, Jan DeCosmo, David Trotman, José Raúl Perales, Gabriela Vargas-Cetina and Steffan Igor Ayora Diaz. The final Selection Committee comprised the immediate past president, Anton Allahar, along with Margaret Shrimpton and Alissa Trotz. We received a total of 47 books from various publishers. Of these 30 were eligible, and 17 were not, owing to the fact that they were published in 2006 and earlier. The submissions came from a total of 17 publishers, some sending multiple submissions. While several embraced the Hispanic and French Caribbean, all were in English. Once more we urge our colleagues from the Dutch, French and Spanish language groupings to speak with their publishers and consider submission of their work in future.

This year, as in previous years, it was a most difficult decision. We want the membership to appreciate the diversity of focus, the disciplinary differences in style, content and approach, the challenges of having to judge books written in different languages, and the difficulty of getting colleagues to agree to serve on the reading committee at what is often the busiest time in the year of the academic. We are discussing ways of formalizing and institutionalizing the process, of setting clear criteria and devising methods for rationalizing the overall process. The books submitted spanned the gamut of criteria for the award, as well as the disciplines represented at CSA: literature, sociology, history, political studies, cultural studies, gender studies and so on.

There were some fascinating territory-specific case studies and well-grounded comparative work, and highly promising work from young scholars which augurs well for the future of Caribbean Studies.

It is with great pleasure, therefore, that, on behalf of the Selection Committee, we announce that instead of one winner, this year we are delighted to have two authors share the prize for the 2009 Gordon K. & Sybil Lewis Award:

Roberts, Peter A. *The Roots of Caribbean Identity. Language, race and ecology.* Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Price, Richard. *Travels with Tooy: History, memory and the African American Imagination.* University of Chicago Press, 2008.

We also wish to single out for Honourable Mention:

Pratt Guterl, Matthew. *The American Mediterranean: Southern Slaveholders in the Age of Emancipation.* Harvard University Press, 2008.

Anton Allahar
Margaret Shrimpton
Alissa Trotz

Citations:

Richard Price. *Travels with Tooy: History, Memory and the African-American Imagination.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

This book is the result of several decades of research into the Saramaka maroons, in Surinam and in Cayenne, French Guiana. One of the enduring metaphors of Caribbean people is that of the historical orphan, the maroon, the one who is not sure of where s/he belongs and who is on a life-long quest for identity and rootedness. In this marvelous book Richard Price does what he has done so often in his long career of Caribbean scholarship: he provokes, titillates and excites our imagination. Through the person of Tooy, Price explores the condition of displacement that so characterizes the experience of slavery, whether for those who were actually captured and enslaved, or for their descendants who live that enslavement vicariously via myth and poignantly abetted by the cruel sting of colonial style racism. The volume is a fascinating ethnographic study, a detailed history of a way of life, not past and gone, but living and present. It is the tale not only of Tooy, the Saramaka captain in Cayenne, but also a collective history that weaves into the individual stories of Tooy and his family, as well as with the lives of Richard and Sally Price, reaching from the island of Martinique to the depths of the Mainland Caribbean, and always negotiating with the complex legal, cultural and political ties of the French Creole and of France. The text is a revealing challenge to many specialists - historians, anthropologists and Afro-americanists as well as to the Saramaka Maroons themselves. Linguists and literary specialists

should be included also in this list: it is a remarkable linguistic study and moreover, the value of the information presented lies in Price's recognition and emphasis not on the link between lexical items and culture, but rather that it is the phrases, proverbs, prayers, and diverse oral stories that are the keys to opening up our paths into understanding our own and other cultures. The volume meets the criteria of the GKSL in many obvious ways, and it even extends those criteria by venturing into the realm of contemporary fiction, offering the promise that Gordon K. Lewis' legacy is not frozen, but open to embracing evolution and change.

Peter Roberts. *The Roots of Caribbean Identity: Language, Race and Ecology*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.

This is an impressive interdisciplinary tome that crosses linguistic, geographic and temporal boundaries in its attempt to explore 'the roots' of Caribbean identity by focusing on movement and dynamism, the interaction and mutual constitution of people and environment, and specifically the interaction of language, place, ecology and race. The volume is theoretically informed and on the specific question of identity rootedness, whether the identity in question is assigned or asserted, we are introduced to transmission theory, contrastive theory, and environmental theory, along with a rich mix of empirical information related to human populations. The author is able to address the Caribbean in a catholic fashion using language, linguistics, ecology, geography and history to portray the rich diversity that is Caribbean society, that defies reference to any monolithic entity called the Caribbean, yet suggests possibilities of Caribbeanness that go beyond history, geography and politics. Written by a scholar of linguistics, this volume is a significant contribution to our study of the Caribbean on a number of counts, not least because of its ambitious scope across time, from 1492 to the late 19th Century. Roberts discusses race, place, imagination and social construction and makes an original foray into the question of Caribbean identity as a quality or property that resides in language and naming. The common origins of various Caribbean peoples from specific parts of the African continent, the different styles and regimes of colonial domination, the resistance of slaves (and later of other forced labourers), the European languages that continue to separate us, are all explored in this wonderfully rich attempt that sits squarely in the tradition of Gordon K. Lewis' scholarship.