

Statement from the editors

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Commonwealth wishes to make the following statement:

Commonwealth published in issue 23-1, Autumn 2000 (pp. 51-57) an essay by Emilia Ippolito entitled 'Women's Version and Dub Version: Paradigms of Creolisation of Culture in Erna Brodber's *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home*'. We have since discovered that a significant portion of this essay is disturbingly similar to a chapter from Evelyn O'Callaghan's book *Woman Version: Theoretical Approaches to West Indian Fiction by Women*, Macmillan (1993), pp. 59-65. We were not aware of this fact when we accepted the article for publication and wish to reaffirm our belief in the necessity for our publications to be wholly original. We therefore offer our most sincere apologies to Dr O'Callaghan and to her publisher.

Dr O'Callaghan has wished to express her own feelings about this unfortunate incident in the following statement:

November 29, 2001

Dear Professor Durix

I would like to thank the editorial board of *Commonwealth* for the opportunity to respond to the discovery of plagiarism of my work. As a member of the editorial advisory committee for the *Journal of West Indian Literature*, I received last year a review copy of a new book, *Caribbean Women Writers: Identity and Gender* by Emilia Ippolito, based on her doctoral dissertation. I was upset to discover that, while the bibliography omitted my earlier book, *Woman Version: Theoretical Approaches to West Indian Fiction by Women* (Macmillan Caribbean, 1993), several sections of her book were drawn virtually word-for-word from mine; she even subtitled a chapter 'Woman Version'! When the publisher, Camden House (an imprint of Boydell and Brewer), investigated the matter they found that Ms Ippolito had indeed 'borrowed' from my work, in addition to at least two others.

They sincerely apologised, withdrew the book from stock, and wrote to that effect to all reviewers.

As I subsequently learned, *Commonwealth*, in good faith, published an article by Ms Ippolito, which made similar unacknowledged use of my work. On being made aware of the circumstances, the editors immediately expressed their regret.

So far, so good. The field of anglophone Caribbean women's writing is increasingly popular, but there are as yet relatively few established critics who study and publish in the area, and all are aware of each other's work. I was not the only one to recognize such a blatant example of plagiarism. Given the lip-service paid in Ippolito's text to respect for post-colonial efforts to rewrite the European canon, I was not the only one to feel deep resentment at the casual appropriation of Caribbean critical work by a lecturer at the time employed by a European university, and the apparent endorsement of this by an international publishing house. What worries me is how many *other* postgraduates in academic institutions with limited specialization in Caribbean writing, will be tempted to adopt similar strategies. Therefore, this seems to me a good opportunity to make a plea for all who teach in and supervise research on the field, and publishers who disseminate the results, to involve *Caribbean* scholars and critics at some stage, perhaps as external examiners/manuscript readers. Plagiarism, the illicit appropriation of someone else's labour, isn't anything new in academia; but it seems easier to carry off in non-canonical areas of study. Let us all cooperate to limit this latest form of exploitation.

Yours sincerely,

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