

THE DOMINICAN LANDSCAPE: IN MEMORY OF JEAN RHYS

Pierrette Frickey

I remember a fair tall island
floating in cobalt paint;
the thought of it is a childhood dream
torn by a midnight plaint

There are painted ships and rusty ships
That pass the island by,
and one dark day I'll board a boat
when I am ready to die ...

Phyllis Allfrey¹

To the question "What makes a novel a West Indian novel?" Kenneth Ramchand, referring to Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, replies:

... Miss Rhys employs a variety of devices - detailed descriptions of place, weather; casual references to the colour of the sky and degree of light and shade; allusion to the scents and tints of flowers ... all of which bring to the reader's senses a landscape felt and recognized by a West Indian [she] is concerned as much to evoke the landscape as to explore its impact upon consciousness.²

A visit to Dominica gives the non-Caribbean reader a better understanding of what makes Jean Rhys a West Indian writer. This article is the account of such a visit in 1983 to retrace Rhys's only journey home and to explore the landscape of her fiction.

Although she left Dominica at the age of seventeen, the Dominican landscape colored the way Jean Rhys saw, felt, and recorded experience during her entire writing career. Her work is an account of her life, a voyage from one world to another and from youth to old age, seen through a consciousness profoundly marked by childhood memories. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys makes a symbolic last journey to her island left behind in *Voyage in the Dark*. What V.S. Naipaul calls a journey "not ... from innocence to darkness, but from one void to another" is perhaps best challenged by the ending of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In her last novel, Rhys ends the journey with a return home symbolized by Antoinette's dream, prefacing her plunge to death from Rochester's English tower. In the dream, prefiguring her fall to death, she sees below the tower the pool at Coulibri and in it the reflection of Tia, her black childhood friend. Thus the journey concludes with a return home, which could be achieved only after having acknowledged that other reality within the self, espoused and experienced by Antoinette through her marriage to Rochester. With *Wide Sargasso Sea* ends a drama staged within Rhys's dual consciousness, black and white, West Indian and European. This novel gave Rhys, considered until then a British writer, a place among West Indian writers, and with it the right to reclaim her West Indian identity.

In 1936, accompanied by her second husband, Leslie Tilden Smith, Rhys visited Dominica. Twenty-nine years had passed since she had left the island. Most of her relatives were gone, as was the family estate, Geneva Plantation: "Where the house had been was an empty space there was nothing, nothing. Nothing to look at.... No, it wasn't as I remembered it."⁴ But the landscape had remained the same, "the loveliest place you can imagine..."⁵ This last comment appears in a letter written to Evelyn Scott in 1936. The former, far less enthusiastic reference to Dominica is a recollection of the trip in her autobiography composed shortly before her death. After her 1936 visit, she never returned; she is not among her immediate family, who are buried in the cemetery of the Anglican church in Roseau. The past remembered might have been, however, the more satisfactory of the two journeys, as Rhys could reconstruct the past from what she

recalled from her childhood as well as from her more recent impressions of the island: A visit to Dominica can provide a greater understanding of its landscape and its people, which shaped Rhys's consciousness and, with it, her fiction.

I travelled to Dominica to discover Jean Rhys, with a feeling of violating well-guarded secrets. "I'm awfully jealous of this place," she wrote to Evelyn Scott, "... I can't imagine anybody writing about it, daring to, without loving it.... However I've an idea that what with rain, cockroaches, and bad roads etc Dominica will protect itself from vulgar loves."⁶ The island, the memories of which were so jealously guarded by Rhys, was still as she remembered it, "the loveliest place you can imagine," even though the rain, the cockroaches, and the bad roads remained unchanged. Yet nothing could have altered the power of the Dominican landscape, making everything else inconsequential. As the diminutive LIAT (Leeward Islands Air Transport) commuter plane begins its descent, the outline of the island appears, looking exactly as Rhys had described it, "crumpled into hills and mountains as you would crumple a piece of paper in your hand - rounded green hills and sharply-cut mountains."⁷ Dominica looms solitary, springing from the Caribbean Sea, its emerald green mountains shrouded by clouds. The tiny landing strip of Canefield airport, stretching at the base of this rocky land mass, seems unsolicitous, yet the mesmerizing beauty of the rugged coast makes one oblivious to the unusual landing manoeuvres much talked about by visitors to the island. The first impression one has of the island finds expression in Rhys's statement about Bona Vista. It is "a very beautiful place ... austere, sad, lost, all these things."⁸

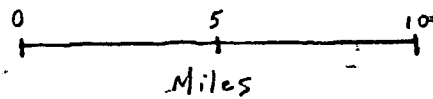
The uniqueness of Dominica lies in its raw, primitive quality and in its contrasting landscapes; much of its virgin forests have never been penetrated by man. The scenery unfolding as one drives the long, circuitous road connecting the capital, Roseau, to Melville Hall, where the older of the two airports is located, is at once majestic, solitary, mysterious, and breathtakingly beautiful. Winding itself up and down the mountains, called "mornes," the road commands spectacular views of the rain forest, the banana plantations, the rivers, some still crossed by hanging rope bridges, and precipitous ravines. The driving, often done in an open Ford truck, an alternative to local taxis and vans, allows for a remarkable intimacy with the landscape. Huge banks of ferns, palms and lianas; gigantic gommiers and chataigners forming a cathedral-like ceiling of green; wild orchids timidly hiding their fragile beauty in the shadow; a silence broken only by the shrill call of the "siffleur de montagne"; and an occasional sisserou flaunting its bright green plumage in the foliage, all evoke solemnity, grandeur, and reverence. One can imagine the power this landscape must have had on the sensitive child Jean Rhys had been.

The essence of what critics such as Kenneth Ramchand call the West-Indianness of Jean Rhys's fiction⁹ is in part explained by the intensity of the Dominican landscape. It is to be found in the fragrance of new world spices, in the gaudy blooms of the heliconias, in the brightly painted canoes of the fishermen crossing an incandescent sea at sunrise. It is in the noise of an exuberant crowd, in the swarming of the crowd in the marketplace, in the cadence of its music and the liveliness of its dances as well as in the austere silence of miles of untamed forest in the interior of the island. Then the words of *Voyage in the Dark* echo in one's mind:

The colours were different, the smells different, the feeling things gave you right down inside yourself was different.... Sometimes I would shut my eyes and pretend that the heat of the fire, or the bed-clothes drawn up round me, was sun-heat ... It was funny, but that was what I thought about more than anything else - the smell of the streets and the smells of frangipanni and lime juice and cinnamon and cloves ... and incense after funerals or Corpus Christi processions ... and the smell of the sea-breeze and the different smell of the land-breeze."¹⁰

as one takes the customary tour to the Boiling Lake, a bubbling cauldron of bluish

Atlantic Ocean



water boiling in a mountain crater in the Valley of Desolation, the magic of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is made real. The island is playing tricks with one's sensibility, luring the visitor and frightening him, as it did Rochester.

The intensity of the landscape and its paradoxical quality extends to the city, where the minority of white creoles, together with an even smaller group of entrepreneurs, researchers and tourists, mingle practically unnoticed among a more colorful and exuberant black crowd in the marketplace of Roseau. Its narrow streets are bordered by clean and brightly painted shacks, dark rum shops, and small grocery stores smelling of freshly ground local coffee. Women vendors still display their baskets of vegetables, fish and sundries on the sidewalks, still chanting, "'all sweet an' charmin', all sweet an' charmin'."¹¹ Echoes of a loud cadence, the traditional Dominican dance, pour out of a music shop; politicians make their speeches on the square; and graceful, colorfully clad women balance heavy loads of sweet-tasting fruits on their heads. The Dominicans are warm and welcoming, often ready to invite a friendly stranger to their homes and to proudly introduce their relatives. An occasional older Dominican might address a white female visitor as "my lady," an uncomfortable reminder of colonialism. And in now independent Dominica, the portrait of Queen Elizabeth II is still prominently displayed among family portraits in the houses of many Dominicans.

While strolling through the small capital open to the sea, one must not fail to stop at the corner of St. Mary and Cork Streets to look at what had been Dr. Williams's house. It is there that Ella Gwendoline Rees Williams, later called Jean Rhys, spent her first seventeen years. Commercial signs painted on its side now mar its appearance. The open veranda has disappeared, as has the garden behind it, yet the house itself, its structure intact, its long, dark, spacious parlor admitting light only through the jalousies of closed shutters, is still the same. The wooden staircase where Rhys used to sit as a child watching the party below seems imbued with her presence.¹² Rhys's childhood, described in *Smile Please*, suddenly becomes real as one stands behind the half-closed shutters through which she watched the crowd of lively dancers passing on the sidewalk below on Carnival Day: "The life surged up to us sitting stiff and well behaved, looking on."¹³ Even in the absence of the carnival revelry, the contrast between the confined atmosphere of the parlor and the brightness of the sun outside communicates a sense of repressed vitality. Stepping out of the empty house securely shut by the guide, a man to whom the name Rhys meant nothing, one feels at once privileged to have been admitted to its sanctum and relieved to step into the sunlight.

On a warm, humid summer day typical of Dominica, the traveller's languid steps through the streets of Roseau can lead to other landmarks. The Convent of the Faithful Virgin, with the statue of the madonna still standing in the middle of the courtyard adorned with rose bushes, echoes the footsteps of the shy schoolgirl recalling the painful incident of her first disappointment in friendship with a black school friend, described in *Smile Please*. Many have speculated about Rhys's seemingly ambivalent feelings towards blacks. Across from the convent lives Mrs. Leslie Royer, who attended the school with Rhys in 1911. She recalled the card that each student was required to produce in order to prove legitimacy, illegitimate black and creole children being barred from entrance. She remembered Rhys as "standoffish," unlike her sister Brenda, to whom the Williams children were more attached, far more than to their mother. To her, Rhys appeared "moody and selfish." According to Mrs. Royer, Rhys and her sister Minnie "did not mix socially with blacks and creoles and hardly went out." At the time, Roseau had a social club or "English Club" from which black creoles were excluded.¹⁴

In *Smile Please*, Rhys writes of rioters in the streets of Roseau: "I could not forget the howling sound and there's no doubt that a certain wariness did creep in when I thought about the black people who surrounded me."¹⁵ She also writes of her fear of Meta, her nurse "who talked so much about zombies, soucristants and lous-garous."¹⁶ She relates an episode in which a beautiful black schoolmate whom she had approached shyly gave her a look filled with hatred. Consequently, the young Rhys "never tried to be friendly with

any of the coloured girls again."¹⁷ She perhaps clarifies her seemingly ambiguous stance by declaring, "The black people whom I knew well were different, individuals whom I liked or disliked."¹⁸ She claimed black blood in her family and revealed, "Side by side with my growing wariness of black people there was envy."¹⁹ What she envied most was their laughter, their dances, their joyful exuberant life, an attitude seen by some as a typical colonial view of blacks. For others, it is a reflection of Rhys's duality, West Indian and European, black and white, and her desire to reconcile the two.

The visit to Dominica seemed to confirm the latter. Jean Rhys loved and hated; she loved those who did not hurt her; she despised those who did. Furthermore, her double consciousness, symbolized by the marriage of Antoinette and Rochester in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, explains the ambivalence of her feelings towards blacks and towards life in general. "It is in myself . . . All. Good, evil, love, hate, life, death, beauty, ugliness" she would say in the confession at the end of *Smile Please*.²⁰ So it is not surprising to find that people who have known Rhys should differ in their appraisal of her. Just as Leslie Royer saw coldness and selfishness, Ena, the daughter of Rhys's brother Owen, remembered her as "a warm and kind person." I visited Ena Williams, who had met her aunt and Leslie Tilden Smith at the Hotel Lapaz, where they were staying during their visit in 1936. Ena, then twenty-four, had been wearing a hat over her opulent plaited dark hair, as she described it. With tenderness, she remembered her aunt removing the hat and combing through her hair, undoing the braids, the hair falling over her shoulders. When Ena "bashfully" mentioned her young daughter, Myrtle, Rhys insisted on seeing the child and said that she "would like to take Ena and her baby to London but that she had to travel much." In one of her "always short" letters, Rhys promised to return to Dominica. Ena Williams clearly had fond memories of her aunt, whom she described as extremely good-looking, much younger in appearance than a woman in her fifties, with "good proportions" and "lovely reddish blond hair." She remembered most of all her aunt's kindness.²¹ Others whose names had been mentioned, in particular Father Prosemans and Elsie Richie, could not be contacted.

Among the few people who know about the Williamses is Alexis Nicholls, the grandson of Dr. Henry Alfred Nicholls, a physician acquainted with William Rhys Williams, who also practiced medicine in Roseau. Dr. Williams, Rhys's father, was "well thought of and respected" by the islanders, according to Alexis Nicholls. If Dr. Nicholls "wore gloves when treating his black patients," Dr. Williams did not. He was close to blacks, with whom he was often seen. He was "an easy man with a penchant for exotic philosophies and religions, an eye for pretty women of all races, and a passion for reading."²² It is said that he and his daughter were extremely close, as Rhys writes in *Smile Please*. "I can remember him walking with me arm in arm up and down the verandah, how pleased I was."²³ This was in contrast to her rapport with her mother, "a sad and distant" woman.²⁴ "She seemed to find me a nuisance and I grew to dread her . . . Yes, she drifted away from me and when I tried to interest her, she was indifferent."²⁵ After the death of Rhys Williams and his wife Minna Lockhart, the house on Saint Mary and Cork Streets was sold for £400; the Geneva Plantation, the Lockhart estate which burned three times, was last owned by the late Norman Lockhart, whose wife lives in Trinidad.²⁶

Before leaving for Dominica, I had read the work of the granddaughter of Dr. Nicholls, the Dominican writer Phyllis Shand Allfrey. And it was while taking a jeep to the mountains of Dominica that I saw, walking along the road, a very thin and fragile-looking woman with the bluest eyes, her lovely white hair pulled in a chignon. For some inexplicable reason, I knew it was Phyllis Allfrey. Not far was the little water mill, the frugal but gracious abode in which she and her husband, Robert, made their home. Visitors were rare, and they were overjoyed to have company. During one of their visits, Allfrey spoke of Jean Rhys, whom her mother had known when Rhys was in her early teens. She had often heard her mother talk about the Williamses, but it was only much later in London that Allfrey and Rhys finally met. Allfrey depicted Rhys as moody, with outbursts of bad temper. During one of her visits, Rhys asked her "how were the white people now in Dominica." Allfrey answered that they were "of the common variety,"

Smiths and the Browns." Rhys, incensed by the remark, reminded Allfrey that she, too, was a Smith and refused to speak to her for the rest of the day. Allfrey, who had been invited to dinner, cooked the meal.²⁷

Rhys was married at that time to Leslie Tilden Smith who, according to Phyllis Allfrey, was "gentle and good to Jean." The marriage was "a happy interlude," Rhys being "very much a victim of men, like her heroines."²⁸ She spoke of Rhys's physical attractiveness and her elegance, adding that Rhys loved clothes and make-up and even insisted on wearing high-heeled shoes during her sojourn in Dominica instead of comfortable sandals. "She would have been back," said Allfrey, "if she could have travelled on a luxury liner. She refused to fly from Dominica to Martinique." These remarks were not intended to disparage Rhys, whom Phyllis Allfrey loved dearly and admired. In a special tribute written upon the death of Jean Rhys, Allfrey wrote, "What I admired most about her was her persistent courage. Through pain, starvation, heart-break and ill-health she kept on writing to the very end."²⁹

During one of our meetings, over the usual tea and crumpets, Phyllis Allfrey mentioned that Rhys had unconsciously taken passages from her novel, *The Orchid House*, published prior to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and names from it, Christophine and Baptiste. Asked if she had mentioned this to Rhys, she said that she would have done so, but did not want to hurt her. An alternative explanation is offered by Elaine Campbell in her introduction to *The Orchid House*. Campbell suggests that Rhys may have used the name of Christophine as a "private tribute" in memory of "Phina," Allfrey's daughter killed in a jeep accident in Botswana.³⁰ Allfrey admired Rhys's talent, her craft as a writer, the perfectionism which made her such a superb stylist. She, like Diana Athill, remembered seeing Rhys writing and rewriting, sometimes scribbling a word or two on a page and throwing it into the paper basket to start all over again.³¹

But in spite of her recognition abroad, very few Dominicans knew Jean Rhys's name or had read her books. There were only a few copies of *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Voyage in the Dark* in a small bookshop in Roseau. The only place which had first editions of all of Rhys's works was the Carnegie Library, built in 1902 with funds from the philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. The library as Rhys knew it in 1936 had a lovely garden and fountain which no longer exist.³² It is a diminutive building, south of Roseau, between the sea and the road and across from the Botanical Gardens. The librarians are anxious to talk about Jean Rhys and proud to show her books to the rare visitor who inquires about her. In 1983, a new library opened at Portsmouth on the northeastern coast; time did not allow for a visit.

Leaving the library, one must visit the Botanical Gardens. A short walk along a street bordered by blossoming bougainvillea leads to its entrance. Flanked by the verdant slope of a mountain, the Gardens, slightly damaged by the 1979 hurricane, are still spectacular. Bamboo trees reach great height in the Caribbean rain forest and can resist high winds. In the center of the Gardens a large hut built with the branches of giant bamboos attracts the curiosity of the visitor. Begun as an economic and experimental center which opened in 1889, the Gardens grew plants from all over the tropical world, and seedlings from these plants were distributed to farmers. Today, its greenhouse still serves this function, and one of its attractions is the sheer variety of ornamental tropical plants on display. The work, still ongoing in 1983 to clean and replant after the hurricane, did not detract from the lushness of rubber and palm trees, the opulence of the red and yellow blossoms on flowering bushes, and the sheer expanse of intense green. Resting on one of the benches, one can imagine the young Rhys walking through the same Gardens in the company of her dreaded nurse, Meta, or playing the singing game "loobi li."³³

Not far from the library and the Gardens is the Quarantine, a very old arsenal-like building, looking empty and desolate. It was there, Rhys tells us, that "the crews and passengers of infected ships were confined."³⁴ Its grey stone walls, the chilling

coolness of the sea breeze blowing through the stone arches, the darkness of the rooms, and the empty space in front of it, once used as a playground, are unchanged. "On the surface at least it was a safe, bland, self-satisfied place, and yet something lurked in the sunlight."³⁵ In what used to be a playground where the Roseau children used to play, the swings Rhys recalled have disappeared. Only the stone benches remain. The place is cold and solitary.

Roseau stretches along the coast. Above the tin roofs, above the church steeples, above the few houses built high on the slopes and the roads climbing and disappearing in the distant rain forest, are the towering giant mornes; the highest is Diablotin. And it is there, nestled between mountains, that Dr. Williams acquired two estates, Bona Vista and a smaller estate which Rhys calls Morgan's Rest. "The larger of the two, Bona Vista, was very beautiful, wild, lonely, remote."³⁶ On its veranda, overlooking a chain of mornes, was mounted a telescope through which she could follow the movements of the ships on the bay of Roseau.³⁷ The place, according to Rhys, was above the village of Massacre.

One of the main objectives of the visit to Dominica was to find Bona Vista, since Rhys had used it as the setting for *Wide Sargasso Sea*. As expected, no one in Roseau knew its location. The only sensible thing to do, then, was to go to Massacre and begin from there. After many unsuccessful inquiries about the Williams family, the futility of attempting to find the mountain estate became clear. I was about to abandon the search when I chanced upon a very old man who remembered the location of the retreat and pointed to the mountain above Massacre. This corresponded to what Phyllis Allfrey had thought was the location of the house. The attire of the younger man sent to lead the expedition ought to have been an indication of what was to come. Wearing heavy rubber boots, a machete in hand, he took the lead in expert stride. The two-hour climb on foot through often uncleared jungle paths would have discouraged the most ardent hiker. The abandoned winding path overlooking precipitous drops climbed abruptly through tall jungle grass, cut by the swinging cutlass of the tireless man leading the way. Shallow creeks had to be crossed, mud trampled through, and when all further effort seemed fruitless, my guide announced "Bona Vista." One's first impression is utterly disappointing; the frame structure of the "shabby white house"³⁸ has not survived seventy-odd years. Only the foundation of the house remained. The disappointment of having made such a journey in vain was, however, short-lived, as the setting of *Wide Sargasso Sea* suddenly became clear and tangibly real.

The outline of a garden appeared, and a small path, cool in the shade, led to the place where a house had obviously been. The hills and the dark portentous mountains surrounding them look exactly as described in the novel. A spring gurgled by what had once been the house. Stationing oneself in front of the steps leading to the foundation, presumably where the veranda had been, one has a magnificent view of the bay of Roseau shimmering at a distance between two mountains. Enormous trees spread branches over a tangled undergrowth filled with ferns, the "gold ferns, green and cool on the outside but with gold underneath which left an imprint if you slapped a frond on your hand."³⁹ The contrasting darkness of this wooded area and the dazzling light of the sea shining at a distance, the overwhelming green of the foliage glistening after a downpour of tropical rain, the spicy scent of the ginger lilies, cloves and cinnamon, all convey a sense of beauty and power.

The discovery of Bona Vista marked the end of that first pilgrimage. The following year, the visit to Dominica proved somehow disappointing in comparison with the first. What seemed to have mattered most, the landscape of the island and an understanding of its effect on Rhys's sensibility, was now vividly inscribed in memory and perhaps even embellished by it. Once felt, it could not be forgotten. The futility of searching in the ruins of the past for some tangible evidence of a world long gone became apparent with the realization that the Lockhart Estate, Geneva Plantation, was as Rhys remembered it in 1936, "Nothing to look at"⁴⁰ An attempt to visit it made this clear. The ruins of the Lockhart Estate, near the village of Grand Bay, are now in the possession of

Rastafarians who prefer to remain undisturbed, and the Dominicans who know about the estate say that nothing is left of it.⁴¹ The drive from Roseau to the southernmost point of the island is, however, worth taking. Rhys had travelled parts of its way on horseback in the company of her favorite Aunt Brenda, whom she called "Auntie B," on their way to Geneva.⁴²

Picturesque villages dot the coastline, Loubiere, Pointe Michel, and Soufrière, their main streets bordering the Caribbean from which they are separated by rows of palm trees, with an occasional flamboyant tree flaunting its incandescent blossoms. One of the most memorable sights in Dominica is the colorful flamboyant which dots the coastline, its red blossoms vivid against the intense blue of the sea and the dark green of the landscape. The village Soufrière, one of the earliest sites of French settlement, is of particular interest because of its old Catholic Church, built by the French. This massive stone structure, nestled in the luxuriance of oversized palms at the bottom of a hill, faces the water. Soufrière leads to Scott's Head, the tiny peninsula from which Martinique can be seen. It stands now deserted, the silence broken only by the voices of occasional fishermen leaving for home, a speared octopus in hand. Nothing remains to remind travelers of its once major role as a signal station and defense post in the battle against the French. Here the road ends.

Only a very few landmarks, such as Scott's Head and the Cabrits garrison at Fort Shirley, speak today of the turbulent history which left its scar on the recently emancipated world described by Rhys at the beginning of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The record of this history in *The Story of Dominica* (1979) by Lennox Honeychurch is of far more value to the researcher than is a visit to the few surviving ruins testifying to the struggle against colonial oppressors, the bloody feud between Protestants and Catholics, and the rebellion of the maroons. Today Dominica is building on the ruins of the past. New roads, new libraries, and new schools are being created.

The childhood experiences recorded in *Smile Please* by Rhys some seventy years after she had left Dominica imply a conscious effort to remember in order to reconstruct the past with as much accuracy as possible. Her fiction, on the other hand, gave her consciousness free play to transform the impressions she had registered during her life. The strongest of these impressions come from Rhys's childhood, a time when her sensitivity was most likely to be strongly affected. The fallacy of interpreting her fiction as a true record of her life lies in the confusion of reality with its transformation into a work of art. There is no question that the landscape described in this paper had a tremendous impact on her writing. What is most important, however, is a comparison between the reality of the setting and its recreation in a work such as *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Rhys's characters might symbolize the duality of her consciousness, partly British and partly West Indian, each clashing within the self as violently as the struggle between Antoinette and Rochester, but the story of *Wide Sargasso Sea* remains no more than what Rhys intended it to be, the story of Brontë's madwoman in the attic. Rhys's West Indian identity is expressed in her understanding of the power of the West Indies to claim as its own a woman such as Rochester's first wife. That Rhys had absorbed the influence of that world herself allowed her to recast Brontë's West Indian, making her truer and more believable to the West Indian reader who knows, and to the non-West Indian reader who can imagine.

Dominica has changed a great deal since the young Rhys left for England, but the power of the Dominican landscape has not, neither the "silent mountains" nor "the eternal sea," the market, the street vendors, the exuberance of the crowd, nor the profound silence of a mountain retreat buried in the lush, untamed rain forest. A visit to Dominica adds an invaluable dimension to the appraisal of Rhys's work and to the empathy necessary to fully grasp the meaning of her fiction.

NOTES

- ¹From "The Child's Return," written for Jean Rhys. Phyllis Allfrey, "Jean Rhys: a tribute," *Kunapipi*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1979), p. 24.
- ²Kenneth Ramchand, *An Introduction to the Study of West Indian Literature*, Sunbury-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson & Sons Limited, 1976, pp. 94-95.
- ³V.S. Naipaul, "Without a Dog's Chance," *New York Review of Books*, 18 May 1972, p. 29.
- ⁴Jean Rhys, *Smile Please*, London: André Deutsch, 1979, pp. 37-38.
- ⁵*Jean Rhys Letters, 1931-1966*, Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly, editors, London: André Deutsch, 1984, p. 28.
- ⁶*Ibid.*, p. 29.
- ⁷Jean Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark*, London: André Deutsch, 1967, p. 17.
- ⁸*Smile Please*, op.cit., p. 81.
- ⁹Ramchand, op.cit., pp. 91-107.
- ¹⁰*Voyage in the Dark*, op.cit., p. 7.
- ¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 7.
- ¹²*Smile Please*, p. 65.
- ¹³*Ibid.*, p. 52.
- ¹⁴Leslie Royer, personal interview, Roseau, Dominica, August 1983.
- ¹⁵*Smile Please*, p. 48.
- ¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 30.
- ¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 49.
- ¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 48.
- ¹⁹*Smile Please*, p. 48.
- ²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 161.
- ²¹Ena Williams, personal interview, Goodwill, Dominica, August 1983.
- ²²Alexis Nicholls, personal interview, Roseau, Dominica, 1983.
- ²³*Smile Please*, p. 72.
- ²⁴Interview, Nicholls, op cit.
- ²⁵*Smile Please*, p. 43.
- ²⁶Interview, Nicholls.
- ²⁷Phyllis Allfrey, personal interview, Copt Hall, Dominica, August 1983.

