

*Gerard Aching*

## PREFACE

• • •

Welcome to the pages of CALABASH's fourth issue. Yes, . . . to the journal's pages! This issue will be the first to be launched electronically, and we're very pleased because this new format means that we will be able to continue to provide a wealth of creative work from writers, playwrights, poets, artists, and intellectuals—some of them internationally recognized, all of them clearly talented—from the Caribbean, North America, and Europe. Almost a year ago, when we began to mull over this new stage of the journal's young life, we discussed this move with a fair degree of skepticism. First and foremost on our minds was the bias that an electronic journal could not replace the beautiful objects that the first three issues of CALABASH were and always will be. As we all know, Jacqueline Bishop plainly deserves our congratulations and gratitude for her intelligent and exquisite work. Yet our unrepentantly romantic inclination to lament the loss of certain features that we associate with reading the journal—the tangible weight of every issue, the contemplation of the visual art that graced each cover, the indelibility of its printed words, and the reflex that our pages can only be *turned*—soon yielded to economic realities. Even before the current economic prognosis became less virtual and more palpable, it was evident that CALABASH's survival would require an imaginative solution.

It is notoriously difficult to secure permanent funding for journals such as ours. There seems to be an unstated assumption among foundations and universities that literary and academic journals are, by definition, ephemeral. I won't delve into the age-old conundrum of whether journals dwindle "naturally" or die on the vine because funds are no longer forthcoming. However, there is a certain irony to be gleaned from the fact that we were perennially being reminded that the printed words that we consider indelible

get published and printed under the most virtual economic contingencies imaginable: CALABASH's first three issues were printed on the promise that future sales would be forthcoming. And they were, but not to the extent that would have made us, or any journal for that matter, self-sustaining. So, in taking this plunge, in bringing you the latest works from a burgeoning community of important and dynamic creative artists, writers, and thinkers via this format, we have merely substituted one virtual reality for another. Rather than continuing to place ourselves at the mercy of virtual sales during these times, we have chosen to transform CALABASH into an electronic journal that could disseminate its pages across the globe with minimum production costs. The fact that submissions to the journal can also be sent to us online means that the community of creative artists, writers, and thinkers will expand not only in terms of readership but also in terms of the ways in which new voices from the Caribbean and beyond will be tempted and invited to send us their work. We very much look forward to the new possibilities that this electronic format will provide because we remain convinced that we have only just begun to scratch the surface of the creative and intellectual work that is being produced in, around, and about the Caribbean.

Finally, we are keenly aware of the fact that access to computer technology and the Internet—especially in the Caribbean—should not be taken for granted. We hope that community libraries might be able to solve this problem. At the same time, we have also given thought to providing formats that do not require the latest software in order to bring CALABASH's pages into view. With respect to the kind of accessibility to creative work that the journal will provide from now on, I would like to thank all of our contributors—especially those who are internationally acclaimed—for the generosity with which they agreed to make their work available in the public domain. I do not hesitate to affirm that, in keeping with the hopes and wishes of our editorial and advisory boards, they look forward to engaging readers and writers everywhere.

We eagerly await your responses.

Best wishes,  
Editor.