Jamaica's Difficult Subjects
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There is a passage in scripture about God’s care for Elijah that resonated with me throughout the process of writing and publishing this book. Unlike Elijah, I was not chased into the wilderness in fear of my life, but getting a first book published is hard. This was a long, often lonely, sometimes frustrating, and arduous journey that I could not have finished without incredible support networks. As with Elijah, the decision not to give up was often beyond me, and I would like to acknowledge those who for me embodied God’s grace and divine provision, whose various versions of “arise and eat” helped me make it from one end of this first-book wilderness to the next.

In its infancy, this project was expertly guided by Sandra Pouchet Paquet, Lindsey Tucker, and Faith Smith, who each approached my work with interest and insight, all the while pushing me to refine my arguments and produce a specific yet contextualized project that could one day be a monograph. My intrepid dissertation advisor, Patricia J. Saunders, held my work to rigorous standards and questioned it at all stages—even post-defense when I spent three days rewriting the dissertation’s introduction at her dining room table. Pat taught me how to be a more precise and discerning scholar and I am grateful to call her my mentor, my colleague, and my friend.

The Caribbean Literary Studies program at the University of Miami also played a significant role in my early critical formation. Its various symposia and conferences provided a community of Caribbeanists with whom I could
converse and who asked the clarifying questions about the earliest versions of this project. *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal* and *Modern Fiction Studies* published early versions of chapters one and four, and I am grateful for permission to include the revised versions here.

These are indeed difficult times in academic publishing, and the constriction is felt acutely by those of us trying to publish first books. Moreover, attempting to publish a single-nation study proved more of a challenge than I expected. I feel lucky that Sandy Crooms took an interest in my project and never asked once for me to add the literature of another country to it. Sandy’s careful selection of reviewers also produced reader reports that dramatically transformed this project. The anonymity of their reports means I cannot thank them by name, but their contributions to framing every single worthwhile thing in this book are invaluable, and I could not have asked for better interlocutors. Though Sandy did not see this book’s completion, Malcolm Litchfield and Lindsay A. Martin, along with their wonderful team, seamlessly managed the transitional process. I am especially grateful to Tara Cyphers and Rebecca S. Bender whose careful work brought uniform coherence to this book and all the texts it communicates with. This is no small feat for a book written by someone with an affinity for footnotes and multiple editions of the same books.

The tenure track can be an overwhelming place for young academics, especially those of us a long way from home and family, but my truly excellent colleagues at the University of Missouri foster a supportive environment in which their junior faculty can be productive. Senior colleagues like Anand Prahlad, Karen Piper, David Read, and Sam Cohen have been mentors. Devoney Looser deserves special mention for helping me negotiate the rocky and treacherous terrain of manuscript proposals and for fielding more than her share of tears. I have also found great friends in my colleagues April Langley, Christopher Okonkwo, Alexandra Socarides, Anne Myers, and Mary Moore. April’s friendship meant that I was at home and had a sense of family in Missouri from day one; Chris encouraged me to own the controversial things I feel and have to say, and to say them loudly in print; Alex’s friendship and keen critical insights taught me how to turn a challenge into an opportunity and have shaped every facet of this project since the day it ceased being a dissertation; Anne’s timely invitations for non-work-related activities went a long way in offsetting many of the disappointments and discouragements that are inevitably a part of these projects; and time with Mary in her office or over long dinners also provided much-needed soul-sustaining respites.

And then there are my nonacademic friends, mi people dem, di yaad massive. These are the people who prayed, encouraged, offered to read things, and
loved me through more than their fair share of my frustration—often from far away—while I worked on this project. In order of appearance: Teri-Ann Lawson, Micaela Wright, Lesley Chin-Ormsby, Kimberly Hall, Tanya Faugue, Andrea Shaw, Prudence Layne, Anna-Bo Chung-Emmanuel, Yoko Young Sang, Jason Lowe, Jason Wilkes, and Nadia Johnson.

Finally, there are the people who are the salt that gives my life savor. Allison Harrison keeps my big head in check and teaches me new ways to be brave every single day. Lisa Harrison has said prayers for me when I would not say them for myself and supports me in consistently renewable ways, regardless. Esmin Harrison is the model of patience, perseverance, grace, and womanhood, to which I aspire in all things personal and professional. Audley Harrison has sat with me for hours while I worked, urging “gwaan work man, soon finish” every time he sensed my need to hear it. Audley and Esmin are my Jamaican parents, who gave everything to their children, who by faith have always already seen our finish lines, and who have dared us to defy any perceived limitation in reaching them. If there are any trenchant observations and critiques in this book, they are here because Andrew Hoberek asked many of the questions that yielded them. He also said the things that produced much-needed laughter and did the things that communicated more about friendship and love than mere words can. Andy is my greatest interlocutor, and this book would have been very different without his insight into all things Sheri.