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24 The Caribbean

Abstract: Caribbean literature and theory provide a key staging ground for a postcolonial reformulation of the world literature paradigm. From its beginnings, Caribbean literature has articulated a global vision even as it has developed literary tactics to assert the value of the local and what Édouard Glissant calls "the right to opacity." Caribbean fiction and poetry challenge the Eurocentrism of dominant models of world literature by exposing the creolized condition of metropolitan as well as colonial culture. In so doing, they demonstrate literature's capacity as an aesthetic medium to interrogate, disrupt and remake the world created by colonialism. Thus, Caribbean writing encourages us to attend not only to the ways in which literature registers globalizing processes but also to how it actively constructs new worlds that reflect critically on colonial and neo-colonial power structures.

Key Terms: Caribbean, creolization, opacity, relation, globalization

1 Locations: "An Island Is a World"

The recent revival of the field of world literature, which has claimed much of the disciplinary space previously occupied by postcolonial studies, brings with it certain risks. These include reinscribing a Eurocentric account of the development of literary genres, flattening out the specificities of local literary histories, and weakening the sense of historicity and contestation that the postcolonial studies framework signalled. Particularly troubling has been a diminished understanding of the specificity of literature as a set of aesthetic practices in favour of a sociological account of the circulation of literary texts. Accordingly, some scholars have begun to call for a rethinking of world literature that would historicize and provincialize this framework (cf. Frydman 2014) and that would move beyond a narrowly material and sociological interpretation to emphasize literature's creative and affective dimensions as well as its capacity to actively intervene in the world (cf. Cheah 2016; Hayot 2012; Neumann and Rippl 2017; ↗6 Global Literature, World Literature and Worlding Literature). As this chapter will show, Caribbean literature and theory provide a key resource for such a rethinking. Reevaluating the world literature paradigm through a Caribbean lens, this chapter illustrates the value of a multi-sited approach that foregrounds local and regional perspectives.

The Caribbean is in many respects an ideal site from which to reconceptualize the idea of world literature and reorient it towards an emphasis on the *active* – rather than merely *reactive* – role of literature in the era of globalization. Caribbean writers articulate a distinctive global vision that reflects the region's history as globally

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constituted and the status of the Atlantic slave trade and the plantation complex as forms of proto-globalization. Rooted in the experiences of the Middle Passage and indentureship that produced some of the earliest global commodities, Caribbean writing reminds us of the history of European colonial expansion that, as Aamir Mufti shows, provided the conditions for the emergence of the concept of world literature as "a single and world-extensive reality" (2016, 3). The forced migration, enslavement and decimation of colonized and Indigenous populations, who were brought into often violent contact with European colonists, resulted in the Caribbean becoming what Jamaican critic Stuart Hall describes as a "juncture-point where the many cultural tributaries meet, the 'empty' land (the European colonizers emptied it) where strangers from every other part of the globe collided" (1990, 234). In his theoretical writings, Martinican writer Édouard Glissant draws attention to the unique consciousness that this collision of cultures generated. In his words, the violent upheavals of Atlantic slavery and the ensuing processes of creolization produced not only "an encounter, a shock [...], a *métissage*, but a new and original dimension allowing each person to be there and elsewhere, rooted and open, lost in the mountains and free beneath the sea, in harmony and in errantry" (Glissant 2000, 34). Accordingly, a hallmark of Caribbean writing is the global consciousness that it exhibits.

Caribbean literature and theory make visible global connectivities, both historically and in the present. At the same time, they are distinguished by their assertion of locality, which they reconceptualize as constituted by the global. Just as islands are simultaneously insular and outward looking, so Caribbean writers maintain the integrity of the local even as they situate it as the product of a global network of relations. The title of Trinidadian writer Sam Selvon's 1993 novel *An Island Is a World*, for example, signals both the Caribbean's migratory sensibility and what Alison Donnell identifies as the Caribbean's "equally privileged perspective on another major challenge and reward of occupying a glocal world – that of living together in difference" (2012, 54). The motif of the island as the world, which is reprised in a short story by Selvon's compatriot Tiphanie Yanique (cf. 2010, 7, 13), suggests a reciprocal, rather than oppositional, relationship between the global and the local. In theoretical terms, this distinctive global vision is captured by Glissant's formulation the "tout-monde" (1997, discussed below).

Caribbean writers' global and migratory vision can be traced back at least as far as pan-Africanism and Negritude, intellectual movements that the Guadeloupean novelist Maryse Condé identifies as "forms of globalization" (1998, 2). Thus, as Jason Frydman suggests, bringing a Caribbean and African diasporic perspective to bear on the world literature paradigm reveals its *longue durée* and transperipheral circuits. Still more significant for reevaluations of world literature, however, is the vivid way in which Caribbean writing foregrounds the world-making power of both colonial and postcolonial narrative. As Edmundo O'Gorman argued in *The Invention of America* (1961), early European explorers and chroniclers *invented* rather than *discovered* the so-called "New World," onto which they imposed preexisiting images and assumptions that in turn came to shape life in the Americas. This process of invention is

particularly pronounced in the Caribbean, which was continually reinterpreted by colonial discourse. Alternately imprinted with paradisal and dystopian tropes, the Caribbean became "an invented landscape" (Sheller 2003, 65). Moreover, as Antiguan writer Jamaica Kincaid shows so provocatively in *A Small Place* (1988), this pattern continues in contemporary tourist discourse that wilfully obscures evidence of social inequity in order to preserve the fantasy of the paradisal island. Caribbean writers' attunement to their region's invented, discursive status has empowered them to embrace the capacity of literature to *reinvent* even as they have grappled with the devastating material and cultural consequences of the European colonial vision of the Caribbean.

Given the patterns of forced and voluntary migration that have shaped the history of the region, including its literary history, the idea of discrete national literatures has never applied all that well to the Caribbean. Instead as one critic observes, "Anglophone Caribbean literature characteristically complicates the notion of 'point of origin' and the conventional 'from national to world literature' narrative" (Rupp 2017, 146). Indeed, for Caribbean literature, worldliness is not a quality that is acquired subsequent to the work's creation through circulation beyond its point of origin, as in David Damrosch's model (cf. 2003, 4; ↗2 Re-Reading Classical Approaches), but rather is constitutive of the work. For as Hall asserts, as a result of its colonial history, the Caribbean became "the signifier of migration itself – of travelling, voyaging and return as fate, as destiny; of the Antillean as the prototype of the modern or postmodern New World nomad, continually moving between centre and periphery" (1990, 234). At the same time, the now standard theoretical view of the Caribbean as the paradigmatic instance of globalization risks emptying the region of its local specificity and reducing it to a metaphor. Mimi Sheller accordingly has questioned globalization theorists' appropriation of the Caribbean concept of creolization in an act of "theoretical piracy" (2003, 195). Relatedly, Donnell cautions against privileging the diasporic, exilic perspective within Caribbean writing while neglecting the importance of locality and of locally produced writing (cf. 2006, Ch. 2).

2 Literary Strategies of World-Making

2.1 Circulating in the World

Caribbean fiction and poetry support competing theoretical models of world literature. Through its thematic focus on the movement of populations, commodities and literature itself, Caribbean writing resonates with the circulation model advanced by Damrosch that emphasizes spatial extension and the material movement of literary texts in the world. Narratives of migration pervade Caribbean writing. To take a classic example, in Barbadian writer George Lamming's novel *The Emigrants* (1954), a group

of Caribbean emigrants makes the sea voyage to the Mother Country in the 1950s, where their idealized image of England is quickly deflated. For Lamming's emigrants, "what mattered supremely was to be there, in England. [...] for there beyond the water too large for his view was England rising from beneath her anonymous surface of grey to meet a sample of the men who are called her subjects and whose only certain knowledge said that to be in England was all that mattered" (1994, 107). The English immigration officials take a different view, however: "How could sane men leave the sun and the sea where it was summer all the way, abandon the natural relaxation that might almost be a kind of permanent lethargy, to gamble their last coin on a voyage to England. England of all places. The officials sunk their necks within the space of their collars. They could not understand what England meant to these men" (Lamming 1994, 108). This collision between the "idea of England" that Lamming's emigrants absorb from their colonial upbringing (1992, 25) and the sobering reality that confronts them upon arriving in the Mother Country is one that is staged by many other Caribbean texts. Moreover, if Lamming's generation made the theme of exile foundational to early postwar Caribbean writing, more recent works that address a range of other exilic settings, such as the wintery Canadian landscape of Trinidadian poet Dionne Brand's *Land to Light On* (1997), have continued to situate questions of migration, exile, arrival and belonging at the centre of the literary tradition. Notably, however, these texts upend an understanding of world literature as accruing its worldliness and literary value through its circulation. Instead, because Caribbean locality is always already constituted by the global, processes of circulation are generative – and a constant feature – of these works.

At the same time as thematizing the circulation of populations, Caribbean literature also foregrounds the circulation of literary texts. In particular, it traces the circulation of canonical European literature in colonial spaces, frequently referencing staples of the colonial curriculum such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Scott and Wordsworth. In novels such as Jamaican writer Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* (1984), scenes of reading and recitation reveal how colonial educators used English literature to entrench social control. Yet these scenes also disclose the potential for the colonized schoolchild's reception of the English book to deviate from the intended meaning. Thus, Cliff's adolescent protagonist challenges her teachers' and parents' interpretation of Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819) as part of her larger questioning of the racist ideology that structures pre-independence Jamaican society. The colonial classroom similarly features in Jamaican poet Louise Bennett's "Sammy Intres" (1942), which disruptively parodies the colonial pedagogy of memorization and recitation (cf. Neigh 2017, Ch. 3).

Scenes of reading also figure in a second category of works that addresses the circulation of literary texts – in this case, the circulation of contemporary Caribbean literature within the global literary marketplace. The market success of ethnic and multicultural fiction has meant that Caribbean writers have come under increasing pressure from the forces of commodification. The publishing industry demands from

Caribbean writers exoticism, sensuality and cultural authenticity. As Elena Machado Sáez has recently shown, some Caribbean diaspora authors respond to these pressures by staging the challenges of communication between author and reader in a globalized literary marketplace (↗15 Marketing Anglophone World Literatures). Drawing on the work of scholars of postcolonial print culture such as Graham Huggan (2001) and Sarah Brouillette (2007), Machado Saéz explores how second-generation Caribbean diaspora writers in the Global North negotiate tensions surrounding the market's commodification of ethnicity by embedding within their fiction an awareness of the contexts of production, enunciation and reception that condition their texts. Writers such as David Chariandy and Monique Roffey address these market tensions "by symbolically encoding the interpretive dialogue between text and reader in terms of an (im)possible intimacy" (Machado Sáez 2015, 2). In Machado Sáez's analysis, such writers develop a "market aesthetics" that enables them to negotiate productively between the pressures of the marketplace and an ethical imperative to alert the reader to the devastating legacies of colonialism. Responding to the reader's "market lens" (Machado Sáez 2015, 1), they advance revisionary histories that counter the dehistoricizing and amnesiac bent of contemporary discourses of globalization.

2.2 Remaking the World

Although Caribbean writing lends itself to the circulation model of world literature, it also validates an alternative model put forward by Pheng Cheah (↗6 Global Literature, World Literature and Worlding Literature) that emphasizes the agential and experiential dimensions of literature. Cheah conjoins the frameworks of postcolonial and world studies to encourage "a radical rethinking of world literature as literature that is an active power in the making of worlds" (2016, 2). Relatedly, Eric Hayot proposes that we redirect our attention to the "world-forming quality of the work" (2012, 25), to the aesthetic worlds that literary texts generate and that are "always a relation to and theory of the lived world" (2012, 44). For Hayot, these aesthetic worlds put forward an "approach" to the lived world, "a rearticulation, or even an active refusal of the world-norms of their age" (2012, 43, 45). Cheah's and Hayot's emphasis on the world-creating function of literature reorients the world literature discussion towards an analysis of literature's capacity to produce images of the world that contribute to its *remaking*.

The world-making power of literature that Cheah and Hayot foreground is foundational to Caribbean poetics. In a passage from his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, the St. Lucian poet Derek Walcott suggests that the fundamental task of the Caribbean writer is to remake the world:

> Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of its original shape. It is such a love that reassembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked

> heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars. This gathering of broken pieces is the care and pain of the Antilles, and if the pieces are disparate, ill-fitting, they contain more pain than their original sculpture, those icons and sacred vessels taken for granted in their ancestral places. Antillean art is this restoration of our shattered histories, our shards of vocabulary, our archipelago becoming a synonym for pieces broken off from the original continent.
>
> And this is the exact process of the making of poetry, of what should be called not its "making" but its remaking, the fragmented memory, the armature that frames the god, even the rite that surrenders it to a final pyre [...]. (Walcott 1998, 69)

In Walcott's famous image of the broken vase, the radically fragmentary condition of Caribbean culture, which is mirrored by the archipelagic topography, presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the Caribbean writer. In the aftermath of the ruptures of the Middle Passage, the writer has no choice but to forge a new language, "assembling nouns from necessity" (Walcott 1998, 70). The value of creative invention as a tool for survival is underscored by the Edenic and Crusoenian metaphors that Walcott favours in his early writing and that resurface in the Nobel speech (cf. 1998, 70). In Walcott's optimistic vision, the Caribbean writer is a second Adam who is empowered to create new worlds, to find new metaphors and new names for things even as he remains haunted by the devastation that has come before.

Walcott's vision of the task of the poet as one of remaking the world chimes with revisionary theorizations of world literature in which literature does not merely react to or passively record globalization but instead plays an active role in resisting cultural and economic neo-imperialisms. Displaying an acute awareness of the invented status of the Caribbean – the extent to which the region was reshaped by European colonial imaginative projections with devastating material consequences – Caribbean writers embrace their power to denaturalize and reinvent. We can identify five key modalities of world-making in Caribbean writing: the cartographic, the ecological, the historical revisionist/speculative, the intertextual and the creolizing. Examining literary texts according to their deployment of these modalities – rather than their degree of circulation or translation – enables us to attend to less widely known works that illustrate Caribbean writers' specific strategies of world-making. Moreover, this approach also makes possible a generic focus on poetry, thereby correcting the almost exclusive emphasis on novels in discussions of world literature.

Cartography

One of the central literary manoeuvres through which Caribbean writers remap the world created by European colonialism is by invoking literal maps. In his poem "Islands" from his trilogy *The Arrivants* (1973), Bajan writer Kamau Brathwaite rereads the map of the Antilles to uncover "history's hot / lies" (1973, 204, ll. 2–3). "Looking through a map / of the islands," Brathwaite's speaker learns "how time / has trapped/ its humbled servants here" (1973, 204, ll. 16–19) and how "hope /

splinters" (1973, 205, ll. 36–7). Brathwaite's repositioning of the Eurocolonial map supports Cheah's theoretical account of postcolonial world literatures as both cognitively remapping the world and as "generat[ing] alternative cartographies" (2016, 17). The alternative cartographies produced by Caribbean writers expose the contingency and ideological underpinnings of European colonial projections of worldliness and their calamitous historical aftermath.

A particularly sustained and rich instance of the cartographic strategy is Jamaican writer Kei Miller's poetry collection *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion* (2014). Miller's sequence of poems challenges the dominance of the Eurocolonial map by introducing alternative cartographies such as the speaker's mother's "atlas of dolls:"

> Unable to travel, my mother makes us
> promise to always bring back dolls
>
> as if glass eyes could bear sufficient
> witness to where she has not been,
>
> the what of the world she has not seen. (Miller 2014, 64, ll. 1–5)

The mother's dolls, which "stand regal on white doilies, waving / like queens from their high balconies" (2014, 64, ll. 8–9), ironize the grandeur of imperial monarchs while underscoring the mother's own immobility. A second alternative atlas is introduced in *The Cartographer* through the periodic insertion of poems explaining the historical origins of idiosyncratic Jamaican place names such as Me-No-Sen-You-No-Come and Flog Man. These explanatory poems recover brutal histories of colonial violence that the conventional atlas obscures.

Miller opens *The Cartographer* with an epigraph from his fellow Jamaican poet Louise Bennett's poem "Independance" (1962). With characteristic humor and Creole diction, Bennett's speaker "Miss Lou" reprimands the world map for rendering Jamaica as an insignificant "speck:"

> She hope dem caution worl-map
> Fi stop draw Jamaica small
> For de lickle speck cyaan show
> We independantness at all!
>
> Moresomever we must tell map dat
> We don't like we position –
> Please kindly tek we out a sea
> An draw we in de ocean (Bennett 1982, 129, ll. 17–24)

In *The Cartographer*, Miller extends the dialogue with the Eurocolonial map begun by Bennett through the sometimes tense exchange that he stages between the eponymous Cartographer and the Rastaman. While the Cartographer claims to be able to produce a dispassionate map of the island, the Rastaman challenges the empirical

value and purported neutrality of the Cartographer's "Babylon science," favouring instead the "maps drawn by Jah's large hands" (Miller 2014, 23, l. 2). Further unsettling the Cartographer's scientific and colonialist enterprise, the unruly Jamaican landscape itself resists measurement.

The collection's third poem, "Establishing the Metre," exposes the contingency of cartographic systems by dramatizing the act of mapping. At the same time, it introduces a crucial link between map-making and writing poetry, playing on the double meaning of *metre* as both a unit of cartographic measurement and as the unit through which we measure the rhythm of a line of verse:

> Between France and Spain they dared to stretch
> uncalibrated measuring tapes. And foot
> by weary foot, they found a rhythm
> the measure that exists in everything. (Miller 2014, 11, ll. 7–10)

By exploiting the double resonance of terms such as *metre*, *measure* and *scanning*, Miller proposes poetry as an alternative form of charting the world. Thus, he reclaims the island from the colonizer's cartographic gaze as well as from pictorial representations that render much of its history invisible.

While some Caribbean texts invoke actual maps, cartography also figures in Caribbean writing in a less literal sense. Cliff's novel *Free Enterprise* (1993), for example, remaps the global terrain of resistance movements, tracing the trajectories of African diaspora women's defiance of slavery regimes in order to make linkages across national and regional borders. Cliff's connective and interethnic vision of global solidarities is emblematized by the storytelling circle that forms among the inhabitants of a leper colony. At the colony, a Jamaican abolitionist joins a global cast of oppressed peoples, including a Hawaiian, a Tahitian, a poor white Kentuckian and a Jew from Suriname. Resituating the Caribbean within this global emancipatory frame, Cliff's polyphonic novel connects disparate geographies and spaces of resistance.

A key motif in *Free Enterprise* is J.M.W. Turner's 1840 painting *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying*, which depicts shackled slaves drowning in the sea as a slave ship sails away from them in the distance. *Slavers Throwing Overboard* also provides the inspiration for Guyanese writer David Dabydeen's long poem "Turner" (1994). In "Turner," Dabydeen remaps the aquatic space of Turner's canvas by reanimating the slave figure from the painting's foreground:

> In loneliness and grief for that vast space
> That still carries my whisper to her ears,
> Vaster than the circumference of the sea
> That so swiftly drowned by early cries
> In its unending roar. There is no land
> In sight, no voice carries from that land,
> My mother does not answer, I cannot hear her
> Calling [...] (Dabydeen 1994, 22, ll. 17–24)

Countering the painting's reception history, which was dominated by aesthetic debates that marginalized its subject matter of slavery, Dabydeen reinterprets the sea as a space, not of aesthetic pleasure, but of traumatic history and the loss of memory. Similarly, the sea emerges as a haunted space in Tobagonian poet NourbeSe Philip's experimental poem *Zong!* (2008), which addresses the legal case that is often misidentified as the subject of Turner's painting. Philip's poem reconfigures the text of a 1783 legal ruling regarding the loss of "property" that was incurred when the crew of the *Zong* threw 132 living African slaves overboard. The opening poem of Philip's collection re-visualizes the watery terrain of the slave trade by situating the reader in the space of the Atlantic itself. In *Zong! #1*, the word *water* is broken apart and scattered across the page, encircling a void that suggests the profound losses of the Middle Passage (cf. Philip 2008, 3–4).

Dabydeen's and Philip's poetic rechartings of the sea follow on Walcott's well-known poem "The Sea is History" (1979). For Walcott, the sea is not only a receptacle for the now illegible stories of drowned slaves; it also signals a crucial challenge to the idea of History itself. The poem opens with the European historian's linear understanding of history as a progressive sequence of monumental achievements. The speaker, however, refuses to accede to this monumental narrative, turning to the submarine architecture to generate an alternative discourse. Responding to the historians' provocation "but where is your Renaissance?" (Walcott 1992, 365, l. 33), the speaker responds:

> Sir, it is locked in them sea-sands
> Out there past the reef's moiling shelf,
> Where the men-o-war floated down;
>
> Strop on these goggles, I'll guide you there myself.
> It's all subtle and submarine,
> Through colonnades of coral,
>
> Past the gothic windows of sea fans (Walcott 1992 [1979], 365, ll. 34–40)

Remapped by Caribbean writers such as Walcott, the sea is not only a watery graveyard for drowned slaves but also a liberatory space that opens up alternative frameworks to progressivist narratives of history as well as a territorial logic of origins.

Ecology

As "The Sea is History" illustrates, closely related to the cartographic strategy is a rereading of the natural world. As part of their cognitive remapping of the spaces generated by colonialism, Caribbean texts reinterpret nature and highlight its transformation under colonial rule. Reworking central tropes of colonial discourse such as the picturesque and the gothic, many Caribbean writers adopt what Chris Campbell

and Michael Niblett term a "world-ecological perspective" (2016, 14) that understands environmental calamities as continuous with human ones such as the Middle Passage (↗8 Anglophone World Literatures and World Ecologies). In her address to the Western tourist in *A Small Place*, for example, Kincaid highlights the environmental consequences of tourism while making links with the slavery past:

> You must not wonder what exactly happened to the contents of your lavatory when you flushed it. You must not wonder where your bathwater went when you pulled out the stopper. You must not wonder what happened when you brushed your teeth. Oh, it might all end up in the water you are thinking of taking a swim in; the contents of your lavatory might, just might, graze gently against your ankle as you wade carefree in the water, for you see, in Antigua, there is no proper sewer-disposal system. But the Caribbean Sea is very big and the Atlantic Ocean is even bigger; it would amaze even you to know the number of black slaves this ocean has swallowed up.
>
> (Kincaid 1989, 13–14)

Attuning the reader to the ecological as well as ethical implications of tourism, Kincaid's text supports Campbell and Niblett's contention that in adopting an ecological perspective, Caribbean writing "not only represents material reality but also, in producing it as an object of perception and understanding, contributes to the remaking of that reality" (2016, 5).

While colonial discourse designated the Caribbean as a space of nature rather than history, Caribbean writers understand nature and history as closely entangled. They revisit the landscapes of colonialism to expose the intimate relationship of nature and empire and to register histories that have been obscured by official records. In "Sugar Cane" (1983), Guyanese poet Grace Nichols engages the landscape of the plantation in order to reconstruct Caribbean women's histories. Addressing the crop that primarily motivated colonial expansion in the Caribbean, "Sugar Cane" subverts colonial discourse's feminization and eroticization of the land as a virginal space to be penetrated by the colonizer. Nichols's poem can be read as responding to James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane* (1764), in which, Dabydeen charges, "the barbaric [plantation] experience is wrapped in a napkin of poetic diction and converted into civilised expression" (1986, 46). Nichols's rewriting works to uncover the brutal history of exploitation and sexual violence that Grainger's poem elides, for sugarcane "isn't what / he seem" (Nichols 1983, 32, ll. 3–4). Inverting colonial power dynamics, the poem uses personification and typographical effects to return agency to the female slaves upon whom the sugar cane's survival depends:

> Growing up
> is an art
>
> he don't have
> any control of
>
> it is us
> who groom and weed him (Nichols 1983, 33, ll. 28–33)

One might expect that the plantation's opposite would be the garden. Yet the garden, too, is revealed by Caribbean women writers in particular as deeply embedded in the history of imperialism. In Jamaican writer Olive Senior's poem "Brief Lives" (1994), the speaker reveals with macabre humour that "Gardening in the Tropics, you never know / what you'll turn up. Quite often, bones" (1994, 83, ll. 1–2). In "Plants," Senior reinforces the association of gardens with empire by playfully drawing attention to the imperialistic tendency of plants:

> [...] Perhaps you've regarded,
> as beneath your notice, armies of mangrove
> on the march, roots in the air, clinging
> tendrils anchoring themselves everywhere?
>
> The world is full of shoots bent on conquest,
> invasive seedlings seeking wide open spaces,
> materiel gathered for explosive dispersal
> in capsules and seed cases. (Senior 1994, 61, ll. 9–16)

Kincaid similarly associates the garden with colonial rule, remarking how the British practice of populating colonial botanical gardens exclusively with plants from other parts of the empire echoed the circulation of human populations under colonialism. Describing the botanical garden of her Antiguan childhood, Kincaid recalls that it "reinforced for me how powerful were the people who had conquered me; they could bring to me the botany of the world they owned" (1999, 120; cf. Casteel 2007, Ch. 4). Senior's and Kincaid's writing thus resituates the seemingly innocent space of the garden to expose ecological dimensions of the imperial project. In their work, the Caribbean garden emerges as a deeply local space that at the same time opens up onto the world. Just as islands are simultaneously insular and outward looking, the garden connotes both rootedness and global contact.

Historical Revisionism and Speculation

Caribbean texts not only interrogate the coloniality of space but also advance alternative temporalities. If Walcott's "The Sea is History" challenges linear narratives of history, his long poem *Tiepolo's Hound* (2000) reorients dominant accounts of modernity by retrieving forgotten worlds. In particular, *Tiepolo's Hound* recovers the neglected early biography of the St. Thomas-born Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro. Countering standard art historical narratives and challenging an understanding of cultural influence as flowing in a unidirectional fashion from centre to periphery, Walcott's speaker asserts that Pissarro's aesthetic sensibility stems directly from his Caribbean upbringing. Walcott's Pissarro advises his friend Cézanne

to change his dingy palette to colours
brightened by his tutor's tropical eyes,

a different language for a different light,
more crystalline, more broken like the sea

on island afternoons, scorchingly bright
and built in prisms. He should learn to see. (Walcott 2000, 56)

Imaginatively reconstructing Pissarro's nineteenth-century Jewish Caribbean upbringing, Walcott's poem uncovers the Caribbean origins of European modernism and exposes the amnesiac tendencies of European art history (cf. Casteel 2016, Ch. 1). In contrast to binary models of world literature that trace the dissemination of cultural forms from centre to periphery, and that posit singular origins, *Tiepolo's Hound* reveals the metropolitan centre (in this case, Paris) as only one node within a complex network of relationships that produce modernity. Thus, the poem challenges Eurochronology, which in Hayot's definition "tell[s] a progressive history of aesthetic innovation in which the contributions of the non-West remain supplemental, or constitute thematic appendixes to form" (2012, 6; cf. Appadurai 1996; Prendergast 2004). From early in his career, Walcott sought to disrupt linear time through his rejection of a Bloomian model of literary influence in favour of simultaneity. Describing the "freshness" of his encounter with Greek epics, he remarks in an interview that "if you think of art merely in terms of chronology, you are going to be patronizing to certain cultures. But if you think of art as a simultaneity that is inevitable in terms of certain people, then Joyce is a contemporary of Homer" (Walcott 1997, 241).

If Walcott disrupts Eurochronology by transporting us to an alternative nineteenth-century past, Jamaican writer Nalo Hopkinson's speculative fiction does so by bringing the reader into the future. Inflecting science fiction with Caribbean mythology and Creole diction, Hopkinson's distinctively Caribbean brand of sci fi offers a particularly vivid example of the world-making power of literature. A Caribbean projection of worldliness, Hopkinson's novel *Midnight Robber* (2000) produces, not the 'New World' in figurative terms, but literally a new world: the planet of Toussaint on which Caribbean emigrants from Earth have settled.

While their slave ancestors were forcibly displaced to the Americas, the Caribbean settlers of Toussaint "make this crossing as free people this time" (Hopkinson 2000, 21). Toussaint's inhabitants celebrate their arrival on the new planet with a traditional Jonkanoo festival. Echoing the colonial-era Jonkanoo masquerade performers, who wore hats in the shape of sea ships to commemorate the Middle Passage, Toussaint's revelers don rocket ship hats. Toussaint's inhabitants continually reference 'old-time' ways such as Jonkanoo and stories such as that of the Jamaican Maroon leader Nanny. Images of this past life are stored in Toussaint's 'data banks' and projected onto viewing screens to satisfy the curiosity of the young protagonist Tan-Tan. Thus while adopting a futuristic setting, *Midnight Robber* significantly references the

past. The name of the new planet itself refers to a leader of the Haitian Revolution, Toussaint L'Ouverture.

Midnight Robber constructs Toussaint as a shadow version of Earth much as in the novel, Toussaint is shadowed by the planet of New Half-Way Tree:

> You never wonder where them all does go, the drifters, the ragamuffins-them, the ones who think the world must be have something better for them, if them could only find which part it is? ... Well master, the Nation Worlds does ship them all to New Half-Way Tree, the mirror planet of Toussaint. ... You know how a thing and the shadow of that thing could be almost the same place together? You know the way a shadow is a dark version of the real thing, the dub side? Well, New Half-Way Tree is a dub version of Toussaint, hanging like a ripe maami apple in one fold of a dimension veil. (Hopkinson 2000, 2)

Over the course of the novel, the flaws of the ostensibly utopian society that has developed on Toussaint are revealed through comparison with New Half-Way Tree. While free of labour, Toussaint is dominated by the constant, oppressive presence of AI surveillance. Analogously, by projecting the "mirror planets" of Toussaint and New Half-Way Tree, Hopkinson's novel comments critically on contemporary globalized conditions of labour and technology on Earth and envisions alternative possible social orders.

Intertextuality

As several of the preceding examples attest, one of the central strategies through which Caribbean writers remake the world is intertextuality. If intertextuality is the mechanism through which literature remembers its own past (cf. Lachmann 1997; Erll 2011, 70), in Caribbean literature intertextuality becomes a means of remembering and interrogating colonial history and discourse. Intertextual strategies resituate the colonial text, exposing and critically reassessing the worldview that it embodies. A notable practitioner of intertextuality is the St. Kitts-born British writer Caryl Phillips. In his slavery novel *Cambridge* (1991), Phillips ventriloquizes the voice of a nineteenth-century British woman who journeys out to her father's West Indian plantation on the eve of emancipation. Phillips juxtaposes Emily's travel narrative (which echoes the writings of Lady Maria Nugent and others), with a slave narrative that is strongly reminiscent of Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa* (1789). Phillips's pronounced pastiche of literary genres and ventriloquism of multiple voices unsettles mono-vocal narratives while hybridizing history and fiction. By juxtaposing two literary genres – the colonial travel diary and the slave narrative – Phillips not only remembers the colonial past but makes visible the discursive operations of colonialism. His rendering of Emily's narrative, which exposes her racial and class prejudices, draws attention to the contradictions and blind spots of colonial discourse. Inhabiting not only the slave Cambridge's voice but also that of the white female colonist, Phillips takes the

reader inside the mentality of the colonizer. Notably, Phillips's sympathetic portrayal of Emily's predicament as a nineteenth-century woman who is subject to her father's will illustrates that intertextuality in Caribbean literature is not always oppositional. While some Caribbean rewritings, such as Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), are sharply contestatory, intertextuality can also be sympathetic or even affiliative, as in Walcott's embrace of classical myth and the Old Masters of European art.

Another key intertextual strategy employed by Caribbean writers is to incorporate oral forms that destabilize the authority of the written text. As Frydman observes, some models of world literature posit a hierarchical and developmental relationship between the oral and the written by charting a progressive movement in which the oral is converted into the textual (cf. 2014, 11). By contrast, Caribbean texts operate in the interstices between speech and writing, incorporating elements of oral culture as a means of subverting the worldview embedded in the novel form or conventional versification. Cliff's novel *Abeng*, for example, establishes intertextual relationships not only with Scott and Dickens but also with oral forms such as calypsos and slave songs. Chapter Seven of *Abeng* is prefaced by a Jamaican work song in Creole. Within the chapter itself, the protagonist Claire observes a funeral procession: "The procession moved forward underneath a steady hum, which at first seemed of the same key and pitch, but soon differentiated into harmony, led by the high falsetto of a man, whose voice circled the hum and turned it into a mourning chant. The words of the chant were strange, unrecognizable" (Cliff 1995, 50). In contrast to the simplicity of the English hymn that follows, the African chant is complex and impenetrable to Claire. Her mother explains: "They are singing in an old language; it is an ancient song, which the slaves carried with them from Africa" (Cliff 1995, 50). Here, the inclusion of Creole songs and passages describing slave music signal an alternative worldview that coexists uneasily with the novel's *bildungsroman* narrative.

Finally, Caribbean writers also introduce intermedial configurations (↗14 Intermediality and Remediation; cf. Neumann and Rippl 2020). We saw with Dabydeen's long poem "Turner" how black figures in European visual art can be resignified. Indeed, Dabydeen applies this ekphrastic method not only to the drowning slave figure in Turner's *Slaveship* but also to Hogarth's engravings, in particular to plate 2 of *A Harlot's Progress* (1732), which depicts a turbanned slave boy. In her slavery novel *The Long Song* (2010), Jamaican British writer Andrea Levy similarly reinterprets a work of visual art, "Dido Elizabeth Belle and Lady Elizabeth Murray" (1779). Levy's *The Long Song* not only alludes to this painting but contains a scene in which a Jamaican planter and his wife are painted together with their slave July. In the novel, the artist includes July to convey her owners' status as well as to introduce an exotic element (echoing the turbanned figure of Dido Belle in the original painting). Yet July upstages her masters to become the focal point of the painting much as the novel itself repositions slavery as central, rather than peripheral, to British history. The dense networks of intertextuality that *The Long Song* and other Caribbean writing unfold convey the deeply intertwined and interdependent relationship of metropolitan and colonial culture.

Creolization

If the intertextual incorporation of orality effects a generic disruption of the novel form, a still more profound disruption of Eurocentric norms and perspectives is achieved through the transformation of the language of literature itself. Caribbean writers' assertion of Creole as a valid literary language has been critical to their ability to defamiliarize the world constructed by colonialism and to preserve the particularity of the local. This strategy is so pervasive in Caribbean writing that Carolyn Cooper argues that "Anglophone Caribbean literature" is in fact a misnomer that obscures the multilingualism within Caribbean literary language. She proposes "creole-anglophone" as an alternative term that better addresses the linguistic range and complexity of Caribbean writing (2012, 155).

The preeminent example of the use of Creole to defamiliarize metropolitan narratives and spaces is Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956). While Selvon's contemporary V.S. Naipaul maintains the normative convention of restricting the use of Creole to the dialogue in *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), Selvon makes a radical departure by employing Creole as the language of narration in his account of immigrant Caribbean life in London in the 1950s. In *The Lonely Londoners*, Selvon fashions a modified dialect that negotiates a balance between maintaining a Caribbean sensibility and ensuring accessibility to the non-Caribbean reader. Selvon's fashioning of this language enables him to introduce the oral rhythms of Creole speech and calypso music and to convey his characters' encounter with the metropole through their own very particular worldview. In a wonderful passage in which a recent arrival observes the unfamiliar effect of the cold on his breath, his fellow emigrant responds that in England, their language needs to be "melted" to be understood:

> "The only thing", Galahad say when they was in the tube going to the Water, "is that when I talk smoke coming out of my mouth."
>
> "Is so it is in this country", Moses say. "Sometimes the words freeze and you have to melt it to hear the talk." (Selvon 1956, 15)

The Caribbeanizing imagery that Selvon employs in *The Lonely Londoners*, such as the introduction of the tropical analogy of the "force-ripe orange" to describe the English sun (2006, 23), further grounds the novel in a Caribbean sensibility.

Bennett similarly asserts the legitimacy of Creole as a literary language in poems such as "Colonisation in Reverse" (1949) in which Jamaican emigrants to the Mother Country "tun history upside dung!" (Bennett 1982, 117, l. 16). Like Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, Bennett's use of Creole in her presentation of the encounter with the metropole enables her to negotiate between the global and the local, to situate the Caribbean within a larger web of relations while maintaining a strong sense of local particularity. In her radio monologue "Jamaica Language," Bennett recalls Creole's origins as a language of subversion and subterfuge in the plantation society: "But we African ancestors pop we English forefahders-dem. Yes! Pop dem an disguise up

de English Language fi projec fi-dem African Language in such a way dat we English forefahders-dem still couldn understan what we African ancestors-dem wasa talk bout when dem wasa talk to dem one annodder!" (1993, 2). Extending this tradition of linguistic resistance, the establishment of Creole as a literary language challenges normative representations and inscribes a Caribbean sensibility (on creolization discourse, cf. Shepherd and Richards 2002).

3 Theoretical Perspectives

The influential formulations of worldliness that Caribbean cultural theorists have produced question some of the central premises of Eurocentric and binary models of world literature. *Weltliteratur* at its nineteenth century origins assumed the discrete character of cultural identities and traditions as well as a fixed relationship between culture and territory (cf. Mufti 2016, 78; ↗1 The Beginnings of the Concept). By contrast, Caribbean theorists challenge this territorially bounded understanding and the opposition of authentic vs. derivative cultures. Glissant, for example, asserts that the distinction between "atavistic" and "composite" societies is a false one. He observes that if one reaches far enough back into these apparently homogeneous cultures' histories, one finds that they too have undergone creolizing processes (cf. Glissant 1997, 194–195). What is more, he proposes that "aujourd'hui, le monde entier s'archipélise et se créolise" [today, the whole world is archipelizing and creolizing itself] (Glissant 1997, 194, author's translation). The seminal theorization of creolization is Brathwaite's *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica* (1971), which expanded the application of the term beyond its original linguistic meaning to identify a transformative process of intercultural exchange, indigenization and creative reinvention emerging from the plantation within unequal relations of power. More recently, Michaeline A. Crichlow's *Globalization and the Post-Creole Imagination* (2009) extends the discussion of creolization beyond the plantation to suggest how earlier forms of creolization are being repurposed in response to globalization. She asks how creolized subjects are negotiating globalization and the attendant "challenges and opportunities of making themselves and their worlds" (Crichlow 2009, 20).

In tandem with these insights into the unbounded and impure character of culture, in the 1990s Caribbean theorists reconceptualized identity as migratory and relational. Hall, in his influential essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1990), advances an understanding of cultural identity not as a fixed, transcendent essence, but as undergoing a continual process of transformation that is conditioned by historical and ideological forces. For Hall, Caribbean diaspora identity is grounded less in a common origin (Africa, India) than in a common historical experience (slavery, colonization). Glissant's metaphor for this decentered understanding of identity is the rhizome, a botanical figure borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari that simultaneously

signals a rejection of singular origins and a continuing connection to place (cf. Glissant 1997, 21–22). In *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Paul Gilroy similarly resists essentialist models of fixed origins. He argues that African diaspora cultures cannot be interpreted through national and ethnic paradigms but instead require a transnational, intercultural perspective that reveals how the West is deeply imbricated in colonial economies and notions of race.

Thus while some world literature scholars such as Franco Moretti have tended to reinscribe a centre/periphery binary (cf. Moretti 2000; 2003), Caribbean theorists have long insisted on the fundamentally entangled character of metropolitan and colonial cultures. Preeminently, Glissant introduces a series of concepts that recast the relationship between metropole and periphery, and between the local and the global. Glissant's "poetics of relation" addresses both the specifity of place and its connectedness to a larger global setting. Celia Britton provides a helpful gloss of Glissant's idea of Relation: "'Relation' is in the first place a relation of equality with and respect for the Other as *different* from oneself. It applies to individuals but more especially to other cultures and other societies. It is nonhierarchial and nonreductive; that is, it does not try to impose a universal value system but respects the *particular* qualities of the community in question" (1999, 11). Reinforcing this emphasis on particularity, Glissant's companion concept of the "tout-monde" offers a valuable alternative to models of world literature that flatten the specificity of individual contexts of literary production. Resisting the assimilation of diversity into sameness, Glissant's *tout-monde* is not a homogeneous totality but instead preserves the integrity of the particular:

> La mondialisation, conçue come non-lieu, en effet mènerait à une dilution standardisée. Mais pour chacun de nous, la trace qui va de son lieu au monde et retour et aller encore et retour encore indique la seule permanence. Le monde en sa totalité accomplie ne peut pas être considéré comme raison suffisante, généralité enfantant sa propre généralisation. La trame du monde s'avive de toutes les particularités, quantifiées; de tous les lieux, reconnus. La totalité n'est pas ce qu'on dit être l'universel. Elle est la quantité finie et réalisée de l'infini détail du réel. Et qui, d'être au détail, n'est pas totalitaire. (Glissant 1997, 192)

> Globalization, understood as non-place, would in effect lead to a standardized dilution. But for each of us, the path that goes from one's place to the world and returns and leaves again and returns represents the only permanence. The world in its accomplished totality cannot be considered a sufficient reason, a generality that generates its own generalization. The texture of the world rests in all of its particularities, quantified; in all the places, recognized. Totality is not what one calls the universal. It is the finite and extant quantity of the infinite detail of the real. And which, because of being distinguishable in its components, is not totalitarian.
> (author's translation)

Thus, resisting the forces of homogenization, Glissant advances a global consciousness that succumbs neither to particularism on the one hand nor to abstraction on the other.

Glissant's critique of universalism unsettles the expectation that world literatures are readily accessible through anthologization and translation – what Emily Apter

calls the "translatability assumption" (2013, 3). Challenging the "requirement for transparency" that lies at the base of Western thought (Glissant 2000, 190), Glissant instead proclaims "the right to opacity:" the ethical imperative to acknowledge the irreducible difference of the Other (1997, 29). In this regard, as Gerard Aching suggests, Glissant's theories can help to ensure "that the challenges and opacities of difference remain central to acts of reading in and across the world" (2012, 46). As we have seen, the right to opacity is most explicitly asserted in Caribbean literature through the use of untranslated regional Creoles. If, as Bennett and others suggest, language itself became a site of resistance on the plantation, the literary use of Creole can analogously be understood as a tactic that resists the homogenizing prioritization of the English language in the academic study of world literature and in the global literary marketplace.

Ultimately, then, the central contribution of Caribbean poetics to discussions of world literature is its assertion of the irreducibility of the local. Caribbean writers and theorists celebrate the value of "small places" thematically, formally and linguistically even as they situate these localities as fundamentally and constitutively enmeshed in global currents that have shaped the region from its colonial beginnings. In so doing, they demonstrate the power of literature as an aesthetic medium to generate worlds; confronted with a profoundly fragmented cultural inheritance, they draw on their creativity to mend the vase (in Walcott's image), to remake the world. Read against Caribbean writers' long tradition of reflecting on global relations, and the rich array of theoretical concepts and literary strategies of world-making that they have introduced, the world literature paradigm comes under significant pressure to pluralize itself and to adopt a less hierarchical, more multi-sited approach.

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