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A Caribbean Response to the Question of Third World National Allegories: Jameson, Ahmad and the Return of the Repressed

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If we feel we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or “narrative of the self” about ourselves.

Stuart Hall, “The Question of Cultural Modernity”

“Allegory” and “nation” are two words which cannot appear in the same sentence without evoking the debate between Fredric Jameson and Aijaz Ahmad in *Social Text*, which was spurred by Jameson’s statement that, “[a]ll third-world texts are necessarily ... allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*” (69). This central assertion of his essay in “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multi-National Capitalism” is based on the idea that the relationship between the personal and the political in the First World is organized in a very different way than in the Third World. Jameson writes that “one of the determinants of capitalist culture, that is, the culture of the western realist and modernist novel, is a radical split between the private and the public” (69); he sees this division as non-existent or, as he puts it, “inverted” in the Third-World, where “psychology, or more specifically, libidinal investment, is to be read in primarily political and social terms” (72). For Jameson, the personal is, by definition, political in the Third World, whereas, in the First World, the personal and the political cannot meet due to an epistemic split between the two.

As could be expected, the reception of Jameson’s broad and essentialist claims were perceived by some, among them, Neil Lazarus, as presumptuous:

Jameson is manifestly a systematizing thinker, if scarcely a systematic one. But so reckless and so grandiose were his claims on this particular occasion that they seemed positively to beg to be criticized. And criticized they have been: the “Third-World Literature” essay has been very widely read by scholars in the field of colonial discourse theory; few if any of them have had a good word to say about it. (374)

Ahmad also raised specific objections to Jameson’s essay. In his article, “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory,’” Ahmad calls into question Jameson’s monolithic notion of the Third World. Ahmad critiques Jameson’s “Three Worlds Theory” by highlighting a lack of consistency in the defining rubric for the three distinctions he makes:

I find it significant that first and second worlds are defined in terms of their production systems (capitalism and socialism, respectively), whereas the third category—the third world—is defined purely in terms of an “experience” of externally inserted phenomena. (6)

Ahmad's challenge, though valid, ignores Jameson's awareness of the problematic nature of the term Third-World and his attempt at working with a very tangible, even if loosely defined, historical division of resources and power in the globe:

A final observation on my use of the term "third world." I take the point of criticisms of this expression, particularly those which stress the way in which it obliterates profound differences between a whole range of non-western countries and situations ... I don't, however, see any comparable expression that articulates, as this one does, the fundamental breaks between the capitalist first world, the socialist bloc of the second world, and a range of other countries which have suffered the experience of colonialism and imperialism. (Jameson 67)

Moreover, Ahmad's argument suffers in other ways. First, an engagement with the theory of allegory is completely absent from his text; his few references to allegory are to explain its non-existent status in the choice texts of Urdu literature that he outlines in the essay. Second, when he mentions the allegorical nature of feminist and "black American" (sic) literature in order to prove allegory's presence in first-world literature, he unwittingly lends credence to Jameson's thesis. By affirming the presence of allegory in minority literatures within the First World, Ahmad actually underscores Jameson's connection between allegory and his notion of the Third World. As Jameson points out in his response to Ahmad: "U.S. literature also includes its own third-world cultures" ("A Brief Response" 26).

Jameson's claim that "all Third World texts are ... what I will call national allegories" demanded the type of challenge that it received from Ahmad and others who took issue with its essentialism. Attacking Jameson's response sounds like the necessary, if not the right thing to do, considering the long-standing colonial tradition of misrepresenting cultural products from poorer nations in the wealthy metropolitan centers of the world. Jameson utilizes examples from African and Chinese literature to illustrate his point. Ahmad then uses examples of Urdu literature to prove Jameson wrong. What should the Caribbean response be? Can the Caribbean scholar really resist Jameson's statement when, upon closer inspection, it appears that the most important literary texts of the region, in fact, establish an allegorical connection between the subject and the nation?

Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh, the editors of *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*, explain their interpretive choice of Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* in this way:

The standard critical response to this text and others which cover childhood narratives in the Caribbean is to equate the growth of the individual with that of the island and to draw out examples of colonial oppression in the processes of schooling and socialization ... However, we wish to foreground instead the ways

in which Kincaid resists narratives which can be reduced to “national allegories” ... (371-2)

The effort to locate these sites of resistance in the Caribbean novel is commendable, but it does not invalidate Jameson’s claim,¹ but the amount of ammunition provided by the Caribbean novel might not be sufficient to completely invalidate Jameson’s claim. It might be difficult to accept the interpretation that a significant portion of a literature subscribes to a formulaic pattern, but are those formulaic patterns transcended through counter-readings?

Rather than a counter-reading, a more enabling response might be to acknowledge the strong allegorical strain in the Caribbean novel in order to re-appraise its complexity, and also as a way to expose the metropole’s continuing control over the representation of the periphery. It is important to highlight the dialectical relation between the metropole and the Caribbean in this situation because Caribbean literature is largely a literature exported to large European and North American reading audiences; while in the Caribbean itself “we are occupied by foreign fiction” (Hodge 496). If third-world literature is largely allegorical, as Jameson surmises, wouldn’t it be reasonable to think that this is due to first-world control of the publication industry that makes Caribbean literature available to the reading public?

In *The Politics of Home*, Rosemary George notes the relationship between the publishing industry and third-world allegory when she sets out to analyze “fiction from the ‘Third World’ that cannot be read as national allegory and that is therefore in danger of not being read and sometimes in danger of not being published at all” (108). Ahmad comes closest to recognizing this relationship between allegory and the publishing industry in his comments on the translation of third-world texts:

... the enormous industry of translation which circulates texts among the advanced capitalist countries comes to the most erratic and slowest possible grind when it comes to translation from Asian or African languages. The upshot is that major literary traditions ... remain, beyond a few texts here and there, virtually unknown to the American literary theorist. Consequently, the few writers who happen to write in English are valorized beyond measure ... [and are] immediately elevated to the lonely splendour of a “representative”—of a race, a continent, a civilization, even the “third world.” (5)

Ahmad is right when he observes that the translation industry could provide greater accessibility to a broader spectrum of third-world texts. What Ahmad’s analysis is missing, however, are the ways in which the translation industry might be operating as a mechanism of first-world control over the representation of the Third World through *careful selection* of texts to be translated and, therefore, made available to the rest of the world. Moreover, restrictions on the texts available in English are not only dependant on “the few writers who happen to write in English,” as Ahmad says, but on the ways in which writers from poorer Anglophone countries—who are, in fact,

quite numerous—are socialized through education, disciplined through the publishing industry, and rewarded by their audiences for *allegorizing* their experience. In other words, it could be argued that the First World ensures that the literary representation of the Third World is allegorical through choices in translation, limitations in accessibility and availability of texts, as well as through the hegemonic regulation of the types of narratives which are elicited from its writers, who are expected to write as *l'ecrivain engagé* and who may be discouraged from writing in less overtly politico-allegorical genres like detective fiction, romance novels or science fiction, for example. In order to illustrate the natural and unconscious way in which these allegorical expectations might be enacted, it becomes interesting to note that Ahmad's piece is itself a fine example of third-world allegorical writing: "But, then, when I was on the fifth page of this text (specifically, on the sentence starting with 'All third-world texts are necessarily ...' etc.), I realized that what was being theorized was, among many other things, *myself*" (3-4, emphasis mine). Ahmad's assumption that statements about the Third World are ultimately about himself lend support to Jameson's belief in "the primacy of national allegory in third-world culture" (84), and its corollary, "in the third-world situation the intellectual is always in one way or another a political intellectual" (74). As such, Ahmad's allegorization of his own experience works alongside his comments on black and feminist writing to undermine his own argument in favor of Jameson's.

Ahmad's rejection of the allegorical nature of third-world writing expresses a deep anxiety, also present in the statement by Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh, through their perceived need for counter-readings and their own replication of allegorical rhetorical tropes. This anxiety may stem, it appears to me, from the negative association of allegory with the idea of "simplicity." Jameson writes:

This new mapping process brings me to the cautionary remark I wanted to make about allegory itself—a form long discredited in the west and the specific target of the Romantic revolution of Wordsworth and Coleridge, yet a linguistic structure which also seems to be experiencing a remarkable reawakening of interest in contemporary literary theory. (73)

Apart from being helpful in explaining deeply felt anxieties over implied charges of "simplicity," Jameson's statement is also helpful in understanding how the channeling and containment of third-world narratives in the realm of allegory may be directly related to the genre's depreciated status and first-world investment in maintaining the representation of the third-world as undervalued and inferior. Jameson continues: "We [in the First World] have been trained in a deep cultural conviction that the lived experience of our private existences is somehow incommensurable with the abstractions of economic science and political dynamics" (69). The differences that Jameson outlines for the First World as private versus public, and the Third World as allegorical, serves to re-articulate a developmental discourse which emplots the Third World as backward and at a stage in which the basic structures of human societal organization have not yet been sufficiently established as to allow for the free and disencumbered creative

spirit of the subject to narrate its “inner truths” without recourse or parallel to the public, the communal or the national. Thus it might be argued that the First World has an investment in maintaining the Third World’s association with allegory in order to assure its own first-world representational superiority.

The charge of essentialism against Jameson’s claim that “*the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*” (69, emphasis in original) is perfectly legitimate; the division he makes between the First and Third Worlds is questionable, and so is the flat, reductionist one-to-one correspondence he sometimes makes between the subject and the nation. In short, the latter might appear to be a revived form of cultural colonization in which the cultural production of the Third World is defined as “immature,” to use developmental language, by the First World.

However, rather than replicating a frontal critical collision with Jameson’s provocative essay, I find it more useful to extend Jameson’s argument through an examination of literature from a particular location within the Third World—the Caribbean—in order to investigate the validity of the national allegory claim and to understand the nature of national allegories themselves, their political implications and their social functions. As such, this essay is founded on the idea that the shared experience of slavery under the plantation system is responsible for the literary reassertion of the self in the cultural production of the Caribbean. The political drive for independence and redefinition of colonial status during the mid-century throughout the area deployed the reassertion of this denied subjectivity in the political realm. Responding to the Jameson/Ahmad debate from a Caribbean perspective, I sketch a theoretical genealogy of the self and its collusion with the idea of the nation in order to argue that this denial of subjectivity found expression in the form of allegorical autobiography throughout the Caribbean in the 1950s and has continued to dominate its literature and criticism since.

The Return of the Repressed in Caribbean Literature

Across languages, Caribbean literature deals with the plantation system and its effects. Whether it was sugarcane, bananas, cotton, pineapples or rubber, the plantation produced a reign of inequality that exploited large numbers of workers for the profit of a European minority and its descendents. The massive relocation of peoples needed to manage this economic system, the new identities arising from these relocations and ethnic mixtures, the social inequity of the plantocracy and its legacy in present systems of government, and the idea of liberation, colonialism and decolonization are important themes in Caribbean literature arising from common Caribbean histories as plantation societies. In the words of Antonio Benítez-Rojo:

I believe that beyond their nature—sugar, coffee, etc.—beyond the colonizing power that set them up, beyond the epoch in which the dominant economy in one or another colony was founded, the plantation turns out to be one of the principal

instruments for studying the area, if not indeed the most important. This is so because the Caribbean, in substantial measure, was shaped by Europe for the plantation, and the generalized historical convergences shown by the different territories in the region are always related to that purpose. (39)

For Benítez-Rojo, the plantation's centrality in the Caribbean experience accounts not only for the cultural similarities between the different territories, it also accounts for the particularities that make each island distinct: "The differences that existed among the Caribbean colonies, and even the differences that we now perceive, were created in large part by the epoch in which the Plantation took over within each" (63).

Perhaps the most profound mark of the plantation system in Caribbean culture and one of the most salient themes in its literature involves the denial of subjectivity of the enslaved and indentured masses. According to *Le Code Noir* (1685), for example, the slave was technically a non-being, a piece of merchandise to be transported, sold, bought and utilized as if s/he were an inanimate object.² In *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, Orlando Patterson furthers this understanding of the slave as property by elaborating the concept of slavery as a form social death:

My objection to these definitions is not that I do not consider slaves to be property objects. The problem, rather, is that to define slavery *only* as the treatment of human beings as property fails as a definition, since it does not really specify any distinct category of persons. (21)

Citing the institution of marriage as an example, Patterson argues that proprietary claims are made in a variety of human relations that are different from slavery. Instead of the property model, Patterson advances the idea that across cultures slaves are constructed as socially dead through a process that he calls "natal alienation:"

This is achieved in a unique way in the relation of slavery: the definition of the slave, however recruited, as a socially dead person. Alienated from all "rights" or claims of birth, he ceased to belong in his own right to any legitimate social order. All slaves experienced, at the very least, a secondary excommunication. (5)

According to Patterson, "natal alienation" produced "the loss of ties of birth in both ascending and descending generations ... the loss of native status, of deracination" (7). As a result of this alienation from familial lineage, Patterson argues that "the slave had no socially recognized existence outside of his master" and "became a social nonperson" (5).

In respect to the literary reassertion of this denied subjectivity, the publication of Joseph Zobel's *La Rue Cases-Nègres* (1950) is the first of a series of autobiographical novels published in that decade which defined the genre for subsequent writers. Closely followed by George Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin* (1953), René Marqués' *La Víspera del Hombre* (1957), and

by close to two dozen important novels since, Zobel's *La Rue Cases-Nègres* is an integral part of the foundation of large corpus of Caribbean texts in which a child-protagonist's maturation and growth becomes a discursive mechanism for the articulation of ideas concerning the construction of the self, and the connection and reliance of this self with communal compositions such as the nation.³

The insufficiencies of the term *bildungsroman* for Caribbean coming of age narratives and the need for a more appropriate descriptor for this genre has been noted by Caribbeanists, particularly feminist Caribbeanists. Dorothy Denniston argues that *bildungsroman* applies to Goethian texts in which the individual fights to break free from his society, and that this is not the case in Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, "a text about individual development that is inseparable from the development of the collective body" (7): "Because it prioritizes—indeed, celebrates—a black community as empowering to the individual, the novel moves beyond Western literary paradigms to unveil a distinctly African orientation" (7). Geta LeSeur also observes the limitations of the term *bildungsroman* in her reading of *Brown Girl, Brownstones* when she notes that, "Selina's quest for identity is distinct in its complex focus from the conventional western male-oriented *Bildungsroman* theme" ("Novel of Development" 123). Writing on Kincaid's *Annie John*, Adlai Murdoch notes that "the concatenation of sex and race, geography and culture, tends to cause the novel to diverge somewhat from the white, male, European tradition of the *Bildungsroman*" (326).

Similarly, Lucy Wilson notes the inapplicability of the term when applied to the coming-of-age narratives of Caribbean women that she examines:

... the historical and cultural roots of the *Bildungsroman* and the courtship novel in nineteenth century bourgeois European society are philosophically incompatible with the depiction of characters whose existence is premised on hundreds of years of oppression and exploitation by those same European societies. ("Relational Autonomy" 283)

Like Denniston, Wilson notes that the *bildungsroman* is predicated on Enlightenment ideas of the self's autonomy that are not characteristic of Caribbean coming-of-age narratives in which there is an integration between the self and the community. Noticing that "[f]rom birth, the female protagonists in these coming-of-age narratives are defined by their connections to others" ("Dialogic Interplay" 178), Wilson coins the terms "Novel of Relational Autonomy" and "Novel of Dialogic Interplay." While the *bildungsroman*'s hero saw his surrounding society as alienating and his coming-of-age process as being one of breaking free from its constraints, the Caribbean coming-of-age heroine sees herself as a representative of and spokesperson for her society. This literary reassertion of the self enacts a discursive emancipation from the denial of subjectivity imposed by slavery. The communal quality of this subjectivity identifies it allegorically with the idea of the nation, thus addressing a key issue of the Jameson/Ahmad debate.

Troubled Waters: The Postcolonial in the Caribbean

The postcolonial context of Ahmad's critique and the extension of this critique to problematics in Caribbean cultural production foreground the uneasy tension between the fields of Postcolonial and Caribbean studies. In general, within Caribbeanist academic circles there is a suspicion of postcolonial theory among some, who perceive the discourse as a totalizing construction with the ability to erase the specificity of Caribbean culture and history. Donnell and Walsh express this dissatisfaction most clearly when they speculate on the future of Caribbean literature in the Academy:

There appears to be a serious question mark over the survival of Caribbean literature given the generalizing and homogenizing tendencies of "Post-Colonial Studies" ... There is also an immense diversity within the Caribbean region which necessitates detailed analysis that is often difficult to achieve within an overarching theoretical model. Indeed, although the post-colonial umbrella has enabled the academic recognition and widespread teaching of many formerly marginal literatures and writers, it can function according to a rather reductive agenda of resistance, rewriting and revisionism which irons out the cultural specificity of the different regional writings. (438-9)

Their critique is not unfounded. The presence of Caribbean texts discussed in postcolonial theory is negligible and there is an evident erasure of the geographical context of the few Caribbean texts, which are in fact utilized by prominent postcolonial theorists. For instance, one of the pillars of postcolonial theory, Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, relies heavily on *The Black Jacobins*—a work by Trinidadian cultural critic C.L.R. James on the Haitian revolution. Despite its dependence on James' book, *Culture and Imperialism* avoids any commentary on Trinidad, Haiti or the Caribbean for that matter. Gayatri Spivak's *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* contains a chapter entitled "Literature" that includes a reading of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*—one of the most widely recognized Caribbean texts—without mentioning anything about Jamaica, Dominica or the Caribbean which would frame the work within its regional context. The postcolonial tendency to invoke Caribbean texts without noting their geographical sources acquires an element of outright rejection of Caribbean scholarship in Spivak's appraisal of Retamar's "Calibán" when she notes: "I will refer to a passage from Roberto Fernandez Retamar's 'Calibán,' although, as I hope will be clear by the end of this book, I myself do not think that the postcolonial should take Calibán as an inescapable model" (117). Spivak's rejection of Retamar's analysis and, most importantly, her exclusion of Shakespeare's "Caribbean" native from Postcolonial studies, mark an important divide between Caribbean and Postcolonial studies. In short, the absence of the Caribbean in postcolonial theoretical discourse and the de-contextualized readings given to the Caribbean texts which are discussed betray the representation and expectation of postcolonial theory's addressing the cultural and political concerns of the decolonized, decolonizing world in an egalitarian manner. Spivak's and Said's works demonstrate that there is ample evidence to support the claim that

“[t]he practice of regulating the post-colonial proper has led not only to a narrow construction of Caribbean writers and texts, but also to the exclusion of certain works” (Donnell and Walsh 440).

At the underlying level, however, perhaps the fundamental issue dividing Caribbean studies and Postcolonial studies can be traced to the geographical orientation of the originary work of postcolonialism: Said’s *Orientalism*. Said states that the project of *Orientalism* is “to demonstrate ... that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (3). Said’s vision of the “Orient” as the singular locus of alterity for Europe ignores the Caribbean’s important role in the formation of European subjectivity from the early Renaissance and onwards. Further ignoring the duration and profitability of European slavery for sugar production in the Caribbean, Said’s project is most questionable to Caribbeanists when he declares: “The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies” (1).

In synthesis, Caribbean dissatisfaction with the postcolonial may stem from the fact that, in the spirit of Said’s *Orientalism*, Postcolonial studies’ geographical orientation is towards the East Indies rather than towards the West Indies. As a result, the few Caribbean writers, such as Frantz Fanon and C.L.R. James, that are invoked in postcolonial discussions are not read within their Caribbean context but are utilized to theorize about the Middle East or South Asia. Moreover, the fact that Caribbean constitutes a pre-Enlightenment colonization and the “Orient” a post-Enlightenment colonization, the temporal differences between these colonization projects make the subsumption of the Caribbean and the “Orient” under a single organizing label problematic. Furthermore, racism between ethnic South Asians and people of African descent—particularly considering the history of East Indian indentured servitude and migration to the Caribbean after emancipation—finds its way into the academy and exacerbates the tensions between Postcolonial and Caribbean studies.

While the relevance of Postcolonial studies to an understanding of the Caribbean is undeniable, one must be suspicious of the field’s current totalizing tendencies. This Caribbean response to the Jameson/Ahmad debate on national allegory attempts a reinscription of the Caribbean with the postcolonial and in so doing seeks a *re/Orient/ation* of the field towards the colonized lands of the Western Hemisphere and their cultural production.

The Subject of the Enlightenment: Self, Nation, Empire

How are we to understand the recurrence and preponderance of “the self” in Caribbean narratives after 1950? After all, many of these narratives are thinly disguised autobiographies, narrated in first person by a child-protagonist who, in many ways, emblemizes the nation. The self is important to Caribbean identity because due to a history of slavery, *métissage* and colonization, the question of “Who am I” acquires a more profound significance and becomes

loaded with cultural and racial themes, which are not found with the same intensity in the European setting. I posit that, in order to understand the self as it functions in the Caribbean, it becomes important to analyze the way in which it was produced historically in the interaction between the Caribbean and Europe.

It is widely accepted among intellectual circles that the idea of the modern subject was ushered into existence between the Renaissance Humanism of the sixteenth century and Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. As Stuart Hall writes in “The Question of Cultural Identity,” the idea that the individual came into existence during the Enlightenment does not imply the absence of earlier conceptualizations of personhood:

This does not mean that people were not individuals in pre-modern times, but that individuality was “lived,” “experienced,” and “conceptualized” differently ... One’s status, rank, and position in the “great chain of being”—the secular and divine order of things—overshadowed any sense that one was a sovereign individual. (602)

During the course of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries great changes occurred to the conception of the individual in European societies. As feudalism broke down as a mode of production in Europe, pre-modern conceptualizations of the individual were disengaged more and more from their fixed location in the great chain of being; the social role of peasant, vassal or priest were no longer solely determinant of identity as social position was no longer considered divinely ordained. The concept of “Man,” an earlier form of the modern subject, was being shaped from a wide variety of discursive positions: Renaissance Humanism placed Man at the center of the universe; the Reformation and Protestantism emphasized the notion of the individual with a conscience in direct relation to God, without the necessary mediation of the Church; and the Enlightenment, with its belief in the intellectual ability of Man as a rational, empirical being endowed with individuality and the right to freedom from oppression. Perhaps the most important thematic current in Western philosophy is the one that involves a discussion of the concept of “the self.” René Descartes (1596-1650), who is often cited as the founder of modern philosophy, theorized the existence of spatial substance (matter) and thinking substance (mind), this latter being, according to his theory, the seat of individual, rational, thinking, free subject. His thesis “Cogito Ergo Sum,” became the inauguration of the modern discussion of the subject. John Locke in his “Essay Concerning Human Understanding” defined the individual as “the sameness of a rational being;” in other words, the individual was coterminous with its identity: “as far back as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person” (212-3). After Locke, the Enlightenment concern for the individual confronted the social context in which individuals are found. An example of this is Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, a work, which among many things, attempted to reconcile the Enlightenment idea of the individual with the larger social economic collectivity.

More recently, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* locates the birth of the subject, or the "soul" as he calls it, in the late eighteenth century's shift from corporeal punishment to psychological social control. In this "correlative history of the modern soul" (23), Foucault, in line with traditional European philosophical history on subjectivity, ignores the colonies. For Foucault, the subject emerges out of technologies of social control and he does not take into direct account dialectical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, which is crucial in the formation of the subject. An important philosophical task consists therefore in excavating the occulted contribution and participation of the Caribbean in the Enlightenment project of subject formation. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* provides a perfect example of how such a project would operate. As a work entirely focusing on events taking place in Europe, it excludes any discussion of the imperial ambitions and undertakings of Europe in its colonies, even when these overseas undertakings were related to and enabled social life in the European metropole. Though Foucault misses any discussion of slavery, his description of the movement from mechanisms of torture of the body to the creation of a disciplined and surveilled soul in Enlightenment France can be used to show how this parallels the institution of slavery and emancipation in the Caribbean during the same period: "At the beginning of the nineteenth century, then, the great spectacle of physical punishment disappeared; the tortured body was avoided; the theatrical representation of pain was excluded from punishment" (14).

Mechanisms of corporeal torture are giving way, trans-Atlantically, to new forms of individuated and surveilled control by the granting of subject status to criminals and other political pariahs in Europe and to slaves in the colonies. The discourse of human rights in Europe is a parallel formation to abolitionism in the colonies. Philosophical histories need to be read in conjunction with global events taking place at the same time. For this reason, European philosophical histories of the self, in particular, should be supplemented by a study of parallel political projects of domestic consolidation and overseas expansion.

It is important to note the chronological correspondence between the formation of "the self" in European thought, the European project of national consolidation and the colonization of the Caribbean and the rest of the Americas. At the same time in which the concept of the self emerges in European thought, the large European powers are in a desperate frenzy to establish, protect and exploit their overseas colonies. The co-occurrence of these three projects—subjectivity, nationalism and colonization—becomes clear when viewed from the Caribbean as the site of analytical perspective. Both the birth of the subject and the process of European national consolidation were achieved and affirmed by negating the Caribbean and constituting it as Other. The European assumption of the concept of the individual required its denial in other population groups, such as Amerindians and Africans, who did not count as persons under the system of *encomiendas* and slavery.⁴ As Françoise Lionnet reminds us in *Postcolonial Representations*: "Enlightenment claims about selfhood and individuality were underwritten by the simultaneous othering of those who had to be spoken *for* because they were said not to possess reason" (5). Moreover, the European nationalist project utilized its Caribbean colonies to

unite European minority ethno-linguistic groups under its dominion. The European project of overseas colonization is a continuation of the domestic project of erasing difference within the territorial ambitions of the nation. Once it traverses the ocean, however, the project of colonization has the effect of naturalizing the domestic project by displacing difference beyond its shores. According to this model, Bretons, Occitans and Normans acquire Frenchness through their not-being *Antillaises*. The model replicates itself with Spanish and English nationalisms, their domestic ethnic minorities and their separate colonial projects.

The simultaneous appearance of the individual, the nation and empire during the Enlightenment is not a random historical coincidence but a collection of symptoms at the personal and political levels of the philosophical underpinnings of the Age: Development. In *Development Betrayed*, Richard Noorgard explains that the modern idea of progress has been the underlying legitimator of empire and the othering of colonized cultures:

Belief in progress provided the justification for Westerners to expand the geographical domain of modernity. Helping people of other cultures to progress beyond their backwardness was seen to be good, even if these people did not recognize it. Individuals within non-Western cultures abandoned their culture's belief system, technologies, and associated institutions and adopted Western ways because they too believed in progress. (52)

Based on the notion of a maturing self, the very idea of the modern individual is contingent upon and arises from Enlightenment notions of development. Infancy is a thoroughly modern concept marking a developmental stage anterior to the mature individual, constituting it as its oppositional other. Philippe Ariès *Centuries of Childhood* establishes "the child" as a cultural construction gestating during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and born in the eighteenth century. In order to support his claim, he comments on the almost complete absence of representations of childhood in Medieval art to point to its non-existence prior to the Renaissance (31).

The importance of Rousseau in the construction of the child should not be underestimated given that it was he "who promulgated the manifesto of the child in modernity through *Émile* (1762)" (Jenks 98). Moreover, the construction of the European self as a mature individual became dependent on the conflation of the colonial Other with infancy: "Rousseau's '*savage*' (a being wholly without the anthropological connotations of primitiveness), is a *child* highly charged with dispositions to love and to learn, and equipped with the propensity to become a good spouse, parent and citizen" (98-99, emphasis mine). The birth of the triplet offsprings of development—the individual, the nation and empire—during the Enlightenment implied the constitution of non-individuals in the overseas colonies. While the *Philosophes* debated in Paris the inalienable liberty of "man," in the Caribbean most of the population was under slavery and therefore forbidden to assume full personhood. The contradictions implied by these oppositions constituted the Caribbean as the site of contestation for these competing Modernist-

Enlightenment discourses. From the early days of European colonization, the notion of the self and its implied denial in Other populations elected the Caribbean as a field of combat. The Sepúlveda/ Las Casas debate in Valladolid in the year 1550 concerning the nature of Amerindian slavery and the uncertainty as to their possession of a “soul” signaled the first great philosophical attempt at resolving the contradictions within the European discourse of the self. The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) erupted as a result of the friction between the *liberté, égalité, fraternité* discourses of the French Revolution and the factual persistence of slavery as a mode of production in the colony of Saint-Domingue. The abolitionist movements started by the English, followed by the French and subsequently by the Spanish re-articulated in their rhetoric many of the aspects of the Sepúlveda/Las Casas debate, and attempted to settle once more the open-ended critique of Enlightenment thinking: “Who can be a subject?”

In short, the Caribbean has a long history as a battleground for competing discourses within the Enlightenment project and a site of confluence of modernity’s notions of national and individual identity. I argue that it was the Caribbean that gave Europe its modern national and personal subjectivities at the expense of its own sense of self, and that it is the awareness of this absence that is responsible for the strong assertion of the notion of self in Caribbean allegorical autobiography. Thus, the affirmation of the self in the Caribbean novel needs to be studied as an overdetermined formation, responding to pressure from multiple sources: the metropole’s investment in manipulating and perpetuating “third-world” narratives of allegory—a genre promoted as unsophisticated by some—and the Caribbean need to reassert a subjectivity that has been historically denied it.⁵

Five Ruptures in the Formulation of the Self

If modern European thought was concerned with the description and formulation of a unitary, coherent, stable, even monolithic concept of the subject, Postmodernism has begun analyzing the dismantling of this notion of the self. The Jamaican, London-based academic Stuart Hall has been very influential in historicizing the dissolution of the notion of the self in Western philosophical history. In several of his works, such as his contributions to *Modernity: Introduction to Modern Societies* and *Becoming National*, he proposes several major disruptions that constitute the sign-posts which mark historical critiques of the notion of unitary identities, and preface postmodern identities; he describes the latter as multiple, decentered, dislocated and fragmented.

Hall names these five “ruptures” after the intellectuals whose work has most saliently undermined the stability of the self. The first rupture constellates around the writings of Karl Marx. Hall highlights the way in which Marx’s comment that “men make history, but only on the basis of conditions which are not of their own making,” was reinterpreted in the 1960s to mean that individuals are ultimately not the agents of their own history, since they are dependent on

the culture they inherit (qtd. in “The Question of Cultural Identity” 606). In other words, more than subjects, individuals are locations in the historical timeline of any given society. Moreover, Hall notes the further destabilization of the self in the writings the Marxist philosopher, Louis Althusser (1918-89) who concluded that:

... by putting social relations (modes of production, exploitation of labor power, the circuits of capital) rather than an abstract notion of Man at the center of his theoretical system, Marx displaced two key propositions of modern philosophy: “(1) that there is a universal essence of man; (2) that this essence is the attribute of ‘each single individual’ who is the real subject.” (“The Question of Cultural Identity” 606)

The second “great decentering,” according to Hall, is found in the tradition of Freudian psychoanalysis. According to Hall, Freud’s description of the psyche and symbolic workings of the unconscious challenged the Cartesian idea of the subject of Reason. To Hall’s analysis, I would also add Freud’s work on schizophrenia, or the dissolution of the personality. Hall also mentions how the work of Jacques Lacan, building on that of Freud’s, further critiques the notion of the unitary self in his presentation of identity as something which is not innate to the child, but learned and formed in relation to others in the early days of infancy, in “the mirror stage.”

The third “great decentering” that Hall describes can be found in the work associated with Ferdinand de Saussure. Hall understands de Saussure’s work to have undermined the notion of the self as unitary by: (1) pointing out that individuals are not the agents, but the objects of language; (2) and that the meaning of words are not grounded in a fixed relation to their referents in the real world, but that they are connected arbitrarily in an unstable, changeable fashion. The first point about undermining the notion of the unitary subject is clear: similar to the way in which Marx decenters the individual by foregrounding social relations, it can be said that speakers of any particular given language are nothing more than locations on a temporal axis in the history of that language. In respect to Hall’s second point, the way in which Jacques Derrida and others take up de Saussure’s work continues the questioning of the stable subject by underscoring the unstable nature of meaning—a meaning that extends beyond language to other systems of representational difference such as those structuring personal identity.

While the first three decenterings remained constant in the thinking of Hall through the years, in his essay “The Question of Cultural Identity” (1995), Hall began redefining the fourth decentering and adding a fifth one. While the earlier Hall, in “Ethnicity: Identity and Difference” (1989), constellated the fourth decentering around the writings of Nietzsche, the 1995 Hall shifted the decentering to the writings of Foucault, a sensible shift considering Foucault’s indebtedness to and recapturing of Nietzschean thought in the period of late modernity. According to Hall, Foucault’s contribution to the decentering of the subject, and Nietzsche’s retrospectively, involves the relativization of the Western world, which had been able to establish its own particular “truth” as universal and singular Truth through its attainment of world power. The

consequences of the postmodern presentation of this Western Truth as only a particular knowledge among many enacts a significant decentering of the Western subject. Moreover, I would add to Hall's analysis that it is precisely in the ambitious Foucauldian project of "the genealogy of the modern subject," where the most important debunking of the subject occurs; the subject's nature is revealed to be unstable and changing according to the different disciplinary mechanisms of individuation across time. The last and latest decentering in Hall's outline is constituted by feminism, which he considers an identitarian project working against the Cartesian subject. It appears to me that the point Hall wants to make concerning feminism is its ability to insist on the need to acknowledge and center identities outside the archaic, yet still operational, appellation of the subject, Man.

Hall's historicizing of the decentering of the subject in late modernity is of great relevance to Caribbean allegorical autobiography because it helps to contextualize the genre within contemporaneous critical discourse. This corpus of Caribbean novels in which the self is so powerfully articulated occupies an odd, at times uncomfortable, place alongside the simultaneous critique of the self which critics such as Hall describe.⁶ bell hooks expresses the anxiety of these competing discourses by describing the conspiracy theory some give credence to when taking the incongruity into account:

Considering that it is as subject one comes to voice, then the postmodernist focus on the critique of identity appears at first glance to threaten and close down the possibility that this discourse and practice will allow those who have suffered the crippling effects of colonization and domination to gain or regain a hearing ... It never surprises me when black folks respond to the critique of essentialism, especially when it denies the validity of identity politics, by saying, "Yeah, it's easy to give up identity, when you got one." Should we not be suspicious of postmodern critiques of the "subject" when they surface at a historical moment when many subjugated people feel themselves coming to voice for the first time. (425)

hooks aptly describes the puzzling *décalage*, the apparent lack of temporal correspondence between the fictional assertion of the self as coherent and a simultaneous philosophical current which postulates the self as fragmented.⁷ How can this slippage between theory and fiction be accounted for? Are we to arrive at the dangerous conclusion that the Caribbean insistence on the self is evidence of its backward and retrograde status?⁸ Though the Caribbean assertion of the self appears to be incongruous with the simultaneous critique of the self in critical theory, they are actually movements which cooperate with each other: The displacement of the Cartesian Western self in critical theory is directly related to the assertion of Caribbean selfhood as part of the reorganization of power from unitary to multiple. In fact, the decentering of the Cartesian subject from its privileged central position necessitates the centering of other selves formerly located on the edges of Modernity. And so, the assertion of the Caribbean self and the debunking of the Cartesian self turn out not to be conflicting discourses, but partner processes working

towards the proliferation of identities.⁹ Therefore, it becomes important to consider Caribbean allegorical autobiography as a fictional discourse that participates in the decentering of the subject, which Hall historicizes in the period of late modernity.

But, the claiming of subjectivity remains a questionable strategy for the Caribbean. Ironically, the Caribbean affirmation of its subjectivity is also an enactment of its denial. When the Caribbean says “I,” it is also saying, “I am a subject of Western Enlightenment discourse,” and “I have internalized the colonizing discourse of the West.” For the Caribbean, saying yes to the “I” also means saying “no” to (it)self.¹⁰ In this sense, any resistance to Modernity is itself always already “modern,” as the episteme of modernity is revolution. Therefore, in addition to the postmodern descriptors of decenteredness, fragmentation, and dislocation, I believe that the relationship between postmodernism and the idea of subversion needs to be qualified as a defining feature of the postmodern. Postmodernism needs to be considered as a self-reflecting form of modernity, conscious of the futility of subversion. Postmodernist “apathy” relies on the awareness that any struggle for liberation, such as the claiming of subjectivity, is always already inscribed and participates within the Enlightenment modernist project that the struggle attempts to surpass.

The modern notion of subjectivity, in its national and personal modes, is produced in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries in the colonial dialectic between forming European nation-states and their overseas plantation colonies. The constitution of the Caribbean as “colony” permitted the antithetical affirmation of Europe as “national.” The questionable humanity ascribed to Amerindians and Africans allowed Europeans to affirm their own subjectivity racially. Paradoxically, as this idea of the national and personal subject begins to disintegrate in late modernity, as evidenced by the diminution of the nation state in a globalized world economy and in critical theory’s description of the decentered subject, Caribbean fiction often insists on the idea of the self. This affirmation of the self is explained as the return of the repressed and silenced subject which was denied an identity in order to give Europe its own. Furthermore, this claiming of the self is the result of the hegemonic publishing industry and reader markets of the First World which “demand” an allegorization of the third-world self in order to promote it as simple, unsophisticated and backwards. Lastly, this reassertion of the self functions as an attempt to decenter the monolithic subject of Europe through emphatically insisting on a Caribbean self. Nevertheless, however successful this decentering attempt might be, the problematic adoption of the Enlightenment notion of the self by the Caribbean equally demonstrates the extent of “mental colonization” to which the Caribbean has been subjected and the ways in which its struggles for independence often merely perform its dependence and subscription to colonial ideology.¹¹

The Synecdoche of Nation and Self

Why does the individual appear to require co-articulation with the national? This symbiosis of the self and the nation is oftentimes too close to allow for the separation of its component parts under the examining light of criticism. Nevertheless, the most salient features of their co-existence can be noted. It is important to underscore the simultaneous birth of the self and the nation, during the early Renaissance and Enlightenment, because therein lies the conceptual connection between these two fraternal twins of allegory. The subject and the nation are two concepts central to modernity, each depending on the other to exist. The nation cannot exist without the subject and neither can the subject survive without a nation. If for no other reason, the nation requires a subject to populate it. Because the subject is ultimately always a subject of the nation, the notion of subject reveals itself to have a close kinship as well with the idea of citizen. Inasmuch as the subject is a part of the nation, the two concepts exist in a synecdochical relationship with each other. This part-for-the-whole relationship between the subject and the nation is perhaps best elucidated by considering the ways in which both ideas are the avatars of location. One of the ambitions of the state has always been to establish a certain “territory” as its referent—that is commonly understood. But what is often overlooked is the way in which identity is location as well, one that finds its coordinates within the sphere of the nation. Critical theory interprets the subject’s mapping of its community and nation as “Who am I?” when the more appropriate interpretation is: “Where am I?” Remembering their simultaneous birth in the early modernity of European colonization and seeing the nation and the self as siblings in location make their co-occurrence and equation with each other in allegorical narratives from the third-world and from the Caribbean much more understandable.

The self is articulated jointly with the nation because, in order to exist as an integral and contained formation, the boundaries of the self need to be defined. The best way for these boundaries to be drawn is against the national or communal background. The nation frames the subject, delineating its temporal and spatial borders as a temporally finite and spatially positioned being. Conversely, the nation requires the subject because national narratives aggrandize personal narratives to build their own. The nation extrapolates the subject’s narrative to build a magnified narrative for the collectivity represented by itself. If the nation has a life and a birth, if it endures sorrows and celebrates, it is because the elements constituting its image are personal in origin. Identity is more than a relational affair between individuals in a dual encounter of self and other: Caribbean national allegories point to the fact that identity is also relational with respect to a large community, such as the nation, which can emplot and locate the individual in its history and territory.

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson provides a genealogy of the modern idea of the nation and a useful definition of the nation as an imagined political community. The role of “imagination” in his definition is of great significance as it foregrounds the role of symbolic representation in nationalism. Anderson reminds us that the nation “is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them,

or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). If the subject is continuously co-articulated with the nation, it is because, as Anderson suggests, the nation is a mental fabrication of the subject. More importantly, Anderson’s thesis is of relevance to a study of autobiographical allegories of the state because it helps to understand the ways in which the textual process of citizen self-identification with the nation occurs. *Imagined Communities* looks at the role of religious ritual, the printed word and vernacular languages as spheres in which the subjects have connected themselves, in an imaginary relationship, with the collectivity of the nation.

I want to propose that, in addition to these spheres of imagination, one of the ways in which the nation is imagined is through national allegory. Through allegory, the nation is imagined as the extension and magnification of the protagonist’s self. Caribbean allegorical autobiography disseminates representations of the nation into which audiences might read their lives and feel a sense of belonging in the imaginary community of the collective national self. The child-protagonist-child as the point of identification for the reader, who is through this process inserted in the imagined representation of the nation in the novel. These Caribbean novels function in a manner similar to that of prayers and newspapers, which at different historical moments help to create “that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations” (Anderson 36). The act of reading, though performed in private, connects the reader to the network of other readers of the same text, thereby creating an imagined national community.

Ernest Renan’s “Qu’est-ce qu’une Nation?” (1882) is one of the classic statements on the issue of nationalism, and it is one that has been of great importance to Anderson’s idea of “imagined communities.” After refuting the notions of race, language, interests, religion, geography and military concerns as necessary unifying features for a nation, Renan defines the nation as:

Une nation es donc une grande solidarité, constituée par le sentiment des sacrifices qu’on a faits et de ceux qu’on est disposé à faire encore. Elle suppose un passé; elle se résume pourtant dans le présent par un fait tangible: le cosentement, le désir clairement exprimé de continuer la vie commune. (54)

A nation is then a great solidarity constituted by the feeling of sacrifices that people have made and by those that they are willing to make again. It supposes a past; it is summarized in the present by a tangible fact: the consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue life together. (translation mine)

Renan’s notion of the nation as a collectivity united through consent is interestingly temporalized as past, present and future activity. This temporalization is also very aware of the imagined nature of the nation in its allusion to the construction of a mythic past and its subterranean

implication that consent is something that can be promoted. The idea that the narrative of the self is used as the model for the narrative of the nation is already clear in Renan's early text:

La nation, comme l'individu, est l'aboutissant d'un long passé d'efforts, de sacrifices et de dévouements ... L'existence d'une nation est ... un plébiscite de tous le jours, comme l'existence de l'individu est une affirmation perpétuelle de vie. (41, emphases mine)

The nation, like the individual, is the end-result of a long past of efforts, of sacrifices and dedication ... The existence of a nation, like the existence of the individual, is an eternal affirmation of life. (translation mine)

In other words, the nation is a generalizable self, which depends on the discourses of the individual in order to construct its own plural identity.

Another theorist who helps to elucidate the nature of the connection between the self and the nation in the novel form is Mikhail Bakhtin. In "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism," Bakhtin outlines a history of the novel, whose culmination is the novel in which Man and the world are directly associated with each other:

The fifth and last type of novel of emergence is the most significant one. In it man's individual emergence is inseparably linked to historical emergence. Man's emergence is accomplished in real historical time, with all of its necessity, its fullness, its future, and its profoundly chronotopic nature. In the four preceding types, man's emergence proceeded against the immobile background of the world, ready-made and basically quite stable ... Man emerged but the world itself did not ... Man's emergence ... [occurred while] everything in the world itself remained in its place ... fundamentally immobile and ready-made, given. (23)

Bakhtin encodes the duality between the self (Man) and the nation (the world) in his own particular language. Bakhtin points to a rupture with this non-correspondence between the self and its social context in his description of the bildungsroman, in which, "human emergence is of a different nature. It is no longer man's own private affair. He emerges *along with the world* and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself" (23, emphasis in original). If the world emerges with Man in these novels, as Bakhtin says, it is because the subject is the personification and textual embodiment of its "world," its social context, its nation. Bakhtin's "chronotope" is a subject and its context's simultaneous representation in literary discourse.

The link, which Bakhtin establishes between the two notions, is their simultaneous coincidence in progressive time. This is precisely what takes place in Caribbean allegorical autobiography, in which the maturation of the child-protagonist is directly related to the political evolution of the nation. It is not surprising that development should be the bond uniting the subject and the nation, for the notion of progress is also a foundational trope of Enlightenment

discourse: “Enlightenment thought ... embraced the idea of progress, and actively sought that break with the history and tradition which modernity espouses” (Harvey 12). The idea of break with the past through rupture and revolution propelled modernist progress forward. The underlying narrative of the major theoretical advances of the Age depended on this idea of developmental progress. The Hegelian view of history as unfolding towards absolute spirit presents a version of this notion of developmental progress. In her article, “But That Was in Another Country,” Rosemary George discusses the way in which this Hegelian developmentalism utilized the stages of human development as a metaphor for a cultural trajectory, placing the West as telos and the rest as anterior and inferior: “To Hegel, Africa was the ‘darkness of the womb;’ the Orient (China and India) ‘the childhood of man;’ Classical Greek and Rome ‘the youthful era of mankind;’ and European or ‘Germanic’ man, ‘the adult who has reached his full human potential’”(137). In the same vein, Marx’s notion of history as the result of class struggles outlined a timeline punctuated by periods of social unrest, and Darwinian biology’s emphasis on the evolutionary processes of genetic change posited developmental progress as model with which to understand the diversity of earth’s life forms.

As Jean-François Lyotard stresses in *The Postmodern Condition*, one of the most important theoretical contributions of Postmodernism has been its criticism of the modernist notion of revolutionary, developmental progress:

In contemporary society and culture—postindustrial society, postmodern culture—the question of the legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation. (37)

Likewise, Walter Benjamin’s notion of “the Angel of History” in the essay “Theses on the Philosophy of History” challenges the idea of developmental progress by presenting it as a negative and destructive ideology. Presenting History as an angel propelled backwards in time by the destructive storm of progress, Benjamin provides a visual representation of the forcefulness and dangers of this conceptualization of time. European colonial expansion, slavery, the Holocaust and the ecological destruction of the planet stand as some of the most disturbing results of developmental progress.

The coarticulation of the self and the nation in the Caribbean novel illustrates the power of narrative to connect, congeal and unite disparate elements. Developmental progress is the narrative relating self and nation together in the allegorical structure of Caribbean autobiography. These narratives of allegory, in turn, cement the imagined community of the nation in the minds of the reading collectivity, fomenting the construction of the common past and the “consent” which Renan described as prerequisites of nationhood.

Conclusion

Jameson's thinking has evolved since the publication of the *Social Text* articles and has refined the limiting notions of nation and Third World in "On Literary and Cultural Import-Substitution in the Third World: The Case of the Testimonio," a more recent article that once again revisits the issue of autobiographical narratives. Here, Jameson theorizes that the commonality and point of confluence between contemporary first and third world literary subjectivities can be found in the shared feature of "anonymity," which "here means not the loss of personal identity, of the proper name, but the multiplication of those things" (185-186). For Jameson, this anonymity implies "the passing of the older psychic subject" (189), which in the Third World is exemplified by a multiplication of selves through collectively authored testimonies, communal stories and in the First World through the questioning of authorship evidenced by the disappearance of the notion of personal style and the pervasiveness of the collage. While maintaining a distinction between First and Third Worlds, the theorizing of them jointly responds to the emergence of diasporic novels that cannot be easily classified as belonging to either world alone. The preference this time for a vocabulary of "community" and "collectivities" rather than "nation" appear to signal the reevaluation of belonging that such diasporic texts generate.

The opposition of prominent postcolonial critics such as Ahmad to Jameson's claim was grounded on the association of allegory with narrative simplicity. I have proposed a re-consideration of the notion of allegory as complex literary form grounded in the history of modernity as Europe collided with the New World in the Caribbean plantocracy. The denied subjectivity of the enslaved emerges unfettered in the decolonization moment of the mid-twentieth century, forging a link between the maturing self and the independent nation through allegory—thus becoming an important constitutive element of Caribbean literary production. Far from being a simplistic genre pronouncing literature from the area as elementary, allegory functions as a powerful anticolonial discursive mechanism exposing the need for personal and collective self-determination in the Caribbean.

Notes

¹George Lamming himself makes reference to the allegorical nature of his *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953). In his 1983 Introduction to the novel he writes: “In the desolate, frozen heart of London, at the age of twenty-three, I tried to reconstruct the world of my childhood and early adolescence. It was also the world of a whole Caribbean reality” (xxxviii).

²*Le Code Noir*, Article 7: “Leur défendons pareillement de tenir le marché *des nègres et de toutes autres marchandises* les dites jours sur pareille peine de confiscation des marchandises que se trouveront alors au marché, et d’amende arbitraire contre les marchands.”

[We also forbid the commerce of *blacks and any other merchandise* the aforementioned days under similar penalty of confiscation of merchandise which are found in the market and of fines to the merchants.] (Emphasis and English translation mine).

³I would like to direct the reader to articles in which I discuss these and other Caribbean novels at length: “Caribbean New York: Paule Marshall’s *Brown Girl, Brownstones* and Piri Thomas’ *Down These Mean Streets*,” “Development and Same-Sex Desire in Caribbean Allegorical Autobiography: Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night* and Jamaica Kincaid’s *Annie John* and *Lucy*,” “Beating the Bastard: Discourses of Domestic and Educational Violence in Autobiographical Novels of Mid-Twentieth Century Caribbean Decolonization,” “Postmodern Developments in Michelle Cliff’s *No Telephone to Heaven* and Esmeralda Santiago’s *When I was Puerto Rican*.”

⁴Note that in the European context, women and the landless masses were also excluded from full rights as individuals. In general, what were initially differences of class in the European context became racialized in the colonies, allowing for the upward mobility of European women and the poor in the New World.

⁵It is important to keep in mind that these two driving motivations are not necessarily seen as competing; in the Caribbean, resistance and adoption are not necessarily oppositional strategies. Perhaps the most emblematic depiction of this is the Saint-Domingue slaves who would receive multiple baptisms, both adopting Christianity and subverting its ritual at the same time.

⁶My periodization of the Caribbean allegorical novel coincides with Hall’s major decenterings. In “The Question of Cultural Identity,” Hall writes: “I shall offer a brief sketch of five great advances in social theory and the human sciences which have occurred in, or had their major impact upon, thought in *the period of late-modernity (the second half of the twentieth century)*, and whose main effect, it is argued, has been the final de-centering of the Cartesian subject” [606, emphasis mine]. Though Marx, Freud, de Saussure and Nietzsche write much earlier, Hall points out that “the major impact” of their work has not been felt until recently.

⁷In *Orientalism*, Said also stresses the persistence of these developmental narratives in minority discourse in spite of current theoretical discussions that declare the obsolescence of these types

of narratives: “Yet whereas postmodernism in one of its most famous programmatic statements (Jean-François Lyotard’s) stresses the disappearance of the grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment, the emphasis behind much of the work done by the first generation of post-colonial artists and scholars is exactly the opposite: the grand narratives remain ...” (349).

⁸Jameson voices the possibility of this interpretation: “The third-world novel will not offer the satisfactions of Proust or Joyce; what is more damaging than that, perhaps, is its tendency to remind us of outmoded stages of our own first-world cultural development and to cause us to conclude that ‘they are still writing novels like Dreiser or Sherwood Anderson’” (65).

⁹This is a proliferation which bell hooks develops in her essay to imply the need to represent the multiple experiences of Blacks against the dangers of essentialism.

¹⁰Perhaps this Caribbean paradox is nowhere better illustrated than in the writings of C.L.R. James. He writes: “What interests me, and is, I think, of general interest is that as far back as I can trace *my consciousness* the original found itself and came to maturity within a system that was the result of centuries of development in another land, was transplanted as a hot-house flower is transplanted and bore some strange fruit” (*Beyond a Boundary* 50; emphasis mine). In addition to the defamiliarizing effect of adopting an identity not quite one’s own, I believe it is important to contrast James’ acceptance of “consciousness” as “transplanted” against my analysis of it being “generated in the interaction” between the Caribbean and Europe.

¹¹See Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics and Language in African Literature*.

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