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Caribbean Spaces and Anglophone World Literatures

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Abstract: Caribbean writing in English highlights the call for a pluralization of world literature(s) in a double sense. It is produced in multiple Caribbean spaces, both domestic and diasporic, and it clearly stands for the extension of what used to be a rather small set of (Western) world literature. Moreover, not least as a legacy of the colonial New World/Old World distinction, visions of the world are at the heart of the Caribbean spatial imaginary as probed in many literary works. This article explores the trajectory of Caribbean spaces and Anglophone world literatures as a matter of migration and circulation, but also in terms of the symbolic translation by which experiences of movement and space are aesthetically mediated. Because of its global span across different locations Caribbean writing in English is constituted as world literature almost by definition. However, some works pursue a more circumscribed concern with domestic spaces and local artistic idioms, which affects their translatability and redefines a conventional 'from national to world literature' narrative.

1 Introduction: Spaces of Anglophone Caribbean Writing in the World

Putting it somewhat pointedly, if world literature is constituted by works that travel beyond their "linguistic and cultural point of origin" (Damrosch 2003: 6), a lot of Caribbean writing in English has been world literature all along. Founding figures like C.L.R. James, George Lamming and Edward Kamau Brathwaite started or significantly propelled their careers as emigré writers in between-the-wars Europe and after, and their writing in English clearly helped them make their name. In the wake of WWII and post-1948 'Windrush' migration from the outposts of Empire to England, *Caribbean Voices*, the BBC World Service's radio programme broadcast from 1943 to 1958, was highly influential in promoting, to metropolitan audiences as well as listeners back home, the emerging work of

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authors such as Sam Selvon, Derek Walcott and V.S. Naipaul. Advertisements placed in the West Indies for poems and short stories to be sent up to London and be presented on *Caribbean Voices*, or the programme's long-time editor Henry Swanzy seeking out new talent arriving in the metropolis, are the stuff of legend now. As is the story of how Naipaul, one of Swanzy's successors as editor, came into his own as a writer when typing the first few stories later to be published in *Miguel Street* (1959) in the freelances' room of the BBC's Langham Hotel:

> It was in that Victorian-Edwardian gloom, and at one of those typewriters, that late one afternoon, without having any idea of where I was going, and not perhaps intending to type to the end of the page, I wrote: *Every morning when he got up Hat would sit on the banister of his back verandah and shout across, 'What happening there, Bogart?'* (Naipaul 1984: 18)

What better anecdote than this past "Port of Spain memory" (Naipaul 1984: 18) of a small-town street scene from his childhood Trinidad inscribing itself on Naipaul's present location in a Western literary institution to appreciate the widely-distant but overlapping and converging spaces that inform the creation and early moment of Anglophone Caribbean writing? As Brathwaite remarked in *The History of the Voice* (1984: 87), the BBC's *Caribbean Voices* was the "single most important literary catalyst for Caribbean critical and literary writing in English".

Circulation beyond the Caribbean, then, was a basic and defining condition for many writers and their works right from the start. As a result, Anglophone Caribbean literature characteristically complicates the notion of 'point of origin' and the conventional 'from national to world literature' narrative which the study of world literatures tends to operate with. Evolving alongside processes of nation-building in the era of decolonization, Caribbean literary traditions were significantly launched and influenced from elsewhere. In the contemporary era of increasing global migration, diasporic location and dual-residence writers, this situation has become only more pronounced. In her *Caribbean Spaces: Escape Routes from the Twilight Zone*, Carole Boyce Davies (2013: 1) advisedly speaks of multiple Caribbean spaces as an example of disjunctive yet relational, open and continuously evolving cultural space, quoting the cultural geographer Doreen Massey's "theory of 'ever-becoming' space" (Boyce Davies 2013: 6). In *For Space*, Massey (2005: 9) stresses the view of "space as always under construction [...]. [I]t is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed." In the Caribbean (and beyond), such ever-becoming space encompasses an evolving formation of "plural island geographies" (Boyce Davies 2013: 1), the wider archipelagos, and their substantive links with the "surrounding continental locations" (Boyce Davies 2013: 1) of migrant diasporas. Similarly, Anglophone Caribbean writing has been evolving as a network of plural world literatures, with a diverse, interlocking set of domestic and diasporic locales of production, translation, and

reception. These are, first, world literatures in a subjective genitive sense, especially mobile literatures 'of the world' and circulating across it. At the same time, they are world literatures in an objective genitive sense, literatures 'about the world', registering and co-shaping Caribbean spaces as well as their entanglements with a wider global ecology.[1]

Boyce Davies' intervention to "extend the understanding of the Caribbean beyond 'small space'" (2013: 1) is a timely conceptual move to accommodate global cultural flows, which also allows for mapping the development of Anglophone world literatures from and about the region. As a "deterritorialized diaspora" (cf. Cohen 2008), both the Caribbean and the literary traditions emanating from it are frequently elusive and difficult to place. In this light, calling to mind their multiple passages and linkages, historical as well as current, attends to the possible (dis-)integration of Caribbean spaces around the globe. Boyce Davies thus takes into view "a series of passages and locations between the Americas that facilitate movement as they identify a set of specific traumas" (2013: 6), including but also moving "beyond the macro 'middle passage,' between Africa and the New World, in order to speak about the way we understand cultural spaces" (2013: 6). In this way, her approach may serve to highlight the circulation and world stature of Anglophone Caribbean literatures, including the extent of translation which writers engage in as they process experiences of movement and (different) space(s). From the proverbial challenge to relate to snow and daffodils as encountered in the European canon to the attempt to capture the hurricane and other tropical realities in literary form, translation is at the heart of Caribbean writing in English. In this way, it is a case in point for Susan Stanford Friedman's emphasis on "the role of transnational cultural traffic in the originary sites of creativity" (2012: 503). Criticizing the focus on "circulation *after* the original aesthetic production" in much of world literature studies, Friedman draws attention to "the cultural translations shaping their creation" (2012: 503), well before any further (linguistic) translation is made, that is.

Retracing some of the parallel trajectories of Caribbean spaces and Anglophone world literatures, I will take my cue from Friedman's emphasis on the role of cultural translation in the process of writing to discuss social factors – the migration of writers, the circulation and recognition of their works – alongside symbolic aspects to do with the aesthetic mediation of transnational movements

1 In pluralizing Anglophone Caribbean world literatures as indicated here, my analysis owes to the reformulation of 'world literature' proposed by the editors of this special issue of *Anglia*, who extend the concept beyond a canon of 'great works' as well as beyond the idea of ex post facto circulation and translation (cf. Neumann 2017).

and space.[2] As Friedman points out: "Circulation impacts art *before* and *during* the creative process as well as *after*" (2012: 503). This all-around impact of circulation is one reason why Caribbean writing in English does not quite follow a linear development from national to world literature. Another reason is the founding influence of outer- and transnational locales and transmission circuits such as the BBC's *Caribbean Voices*, which I will take up again in the second section of this article below. Paradoxically but crucially, the level of recognition they achieved while becoming known via global air waves allowed many writers to move on and probe aesthetic idioms more in tune with local Caribbean realities, such as the use of Creole instead of Standard English (cf. Neumann 2016).

The third section of this article will move on from matters of circulation, that is, world literature in a subjective genitive sense, to aspects of symbolization and translation in Anglophone Caribbean writing as world literature in the objective genitive sense. For it is not least through the global reach of their spatial imaginaries that Anglophone Caribbean world literatures are constituted as such, whether it is by working through the colonial legacy of Old World/New World distinctions or by exploring the Caribbean as part of a wider world-ecology, as has been scrutinized in recent approaches of postcolonial ecocriticism (cf. Campbell and Niblett 2016b).

2 From World Literature to New National Literature and Back

As a critical paradigm, world literature now shares a broad consensus in discussions of postcolonial bodies of writing such as Anglophone Caribbean literature.[3] Typically, it is conceived in literary historical terms, appearing at the latter end of a development from "new national to world literature" (King 2016) or "from postcolonial to transcultural world literature" (Schulze-Engler 2007). Almost always, there is a descriptive as well as normative dimension at play – descriptive with regard to the extant and expanding processes of literary travel and exchange

2 I also draw on Birgit Neumann's conceptualization (cf. Neumann 2017), who locates world literature on at least three different levels; first, the level of production including the far-flung itineraries of nomadic writers' lives; second, the level of literary, text-internal configurations of the world; and third, the level of reception including flows of institutionalized distribution, publishing policies and practices of translation.

3 For an earlier publication preceding the current post-2000s interest in and conceptualization of world literature in English see King (1974).

in a globalized world, and normative because the idea of discrete nations and cultures is felt to be rendered obsolete as a result, to be maintained only at the peril of national*ist* chauvinism. Part and parcel with the normative dimension is the contestatory nature of postcolonial writing, which eventually strives beyond a centre/periphery model of (world) literatures in English. As Bruce King delineates: "[T]he centrality of British literature was challenged by the development of other national literatures until it was commonly accepted that we live during a time of International or World Literature" (2016: 3). The constellation which postcolonial or 'new' national literatures become resolved in, ideally, is a period of 'transcultural' world literature, certainly not entirely free of lingering asymmetries, but informed by a "circulation model based in current cultural theories of traveling cultures (e.g., Clifford; Tsing), transnational cultural traffic (e.g., Appadurai), and cultural hybridity (e.g., Rosaldo; Bhabha)" (Friedman 2012: 501). It is a "multipolar, decentred system of literary communication that lies at the heart of the idea of transcultural world literature" (Schulze-Engler 2007: 29).

Historically speaking, however, the transition from new national to world literature was neither clear-cut nor unidirectional in the case of Anglophone Caribbean writing, and some of the ramifications of the process merit discussion both for and beyond this specific case. A telling example for the more circular movement from world literature to new national literature and back as sketched above is Sam Selvon's landmark novel *The Lonely Londoners* (1956). Selvon had started writing poetry on the side during WWII when serving as a wireless operator for a local branch of the Royal Navy on ships that patrolled the Caribbean. In 1946 he went to work at the *Trinidad Guardian*, before relocating to London in 1950, where he took up a job at the Indian Embassy while continuing writing in his spare time. However, it was as a presenter on *Caribbean Voices*, reading from his own and other writers' works, that Selvon's literary career took off. In 1952, he published his first novel, *A Brighter Sun*, which was followed by *An Island Is a World* in 1955. Both books depicted the lives of East Indians in Trinidad, filtering the effect of their sometimes strained relationship with the island's other populations, in *A Brighter Sun*, through the eyes of novel's young protagonist Tiger:

> Tiger sat on the step and watched night coming. The big thought he had postponed came back. It had happened when his parents talked about Joe and Rita. At the time rum was in his head, but now it was all clear. Why should I only look for an Indian friend? What wrong with Joe and Rita? Is true I used to play with Indian friend in the estate, but that ain't no reason why I must shut my heart to other people. (Selvon 1952/1976: 48)

So, "the first two books were about the people and places that Selvon knew in his homeland" (Birbalsingh 1996: 49), and it was the first time that an East Indian author had painted such a portrait of the people and their place.

In the remote space of London's post-war West Indian diaspora where Selvon paid homage to his island, both books "caught the attention of British critics" (Birbalsingh 1996: 49) and were well-received. Crucially, it was this level of recognition, afforded in a not altogether unproblematic context of bringing colonial writing up to metropolitan, 'world-literary' standards which provided the basis for Selvon's seminal contribution to a new West Indian literature in *The Lonely Londoners*, for all the achievement made with his first two novels. Unlike the two previous books, this third novel is set in an expatriate location, with its large "cast of West Indian and African men seeking companionship and support in a bleak, impoverished and unfriendly white London" (Innes 2002: 434). This diverse group of lonely outsiders constitutes itself less through their memory of a shared place of origin than through their "mutual presence in London" (Innes 2002: 434). It is not only for its setting and subject matter, however, but even more so because of its innovative use of form, language, and literary technique that *The Lonely Londoners* became a pioneering text for diasporic migrant as well as West Indian national writing: "*The Lonely Londoners* is important for another reason: the whole narrative was written in what was then called West Indian dialect, that is to say, in the speech idioms of the West Indian people" (Birbalsingh 1996: 50). While Selvon had used small doses of creolized West Indian speech before (as in the passage from *A Brighter Sun* quoted above), *The Lonely Londoners* is the first full-length novel where dialect is sustained throughout and used in both narrative and dialogue. The experience of migration, transplantation, and disorienting diasporic space, as well as the extent of cultural translation this affords, are registered, quite literally, in and through this particular language, which the book is suffused with as memorably signposted at the novel's opening:

> One grim winter evening, when it had a kind of unrealness about London, with a fog sleeping restlessly over the city and the lights showing in the blur as if is not London at all but some strange place on another planet, Moses Aloetta hop on a number 46 bus at the corner of Chepstow Road and Westbourne Grove to go to Waterloo to meet a fellar who was coming from Trinidad on the boat-train. (Selvon 1956/1995: 29)

It is important to note that Selvon chooses not simply to reflect a given West Indian variety, but that he creates a subtle blend of Trinidadian and other idioms of the region, as well as of Standard English. The result is a vernacular yet highly stylized, literary language, serving, among other purposes, to project the idea of one West Indian nation. This idea was "the pre-federation and pre-independence vision of the Caribbean [...] as a Caribbean nation – not a series of island nations

and separate locations but as regionally integrated (politically, economically, and structurally)" (Boyce Davies 2013: 41). Preceding the West Indian Federation which commenced in 1958, as well as later 1960s decolonization, the "Caribbean nation-paradigm" (Boyce Davies 2013: 41) was current in the 1950s when Selvon was writing. It extended well beyond this time, as Boyce Davies points out, even if in practice it was eventually short-lived when, as Derek Walcott chronicles in "The Sea is History" (1979/1984: 367), "each rock broke into its own nation" after independence.

As Frank Birbalsingh notes, "[i]n the 1950s, writing in creole was revolutionary, and it helped to draw attention to the new body of writing that came to be West Indian literature" (1996: 50). Attested not least by its now-canonical status, *The Lonely Londoners* stands at the vanguard of this revolution, even if "Selvon was not operating alone; Edgar Mittelholzer, George Lamming, Roger Mais, John Hearne, Jan Carew, and many others were writing at the time" (Birbalsingh 1996: 50). It was "[t]hrough the efforts of all these people, [that] West Indian literature experienced a rebirth in London in the 1950s" (Birbalsingh 1996: 50). Thinking of these events as a 'rebirth' is important so as not to "ignore the pre-1950 period of Caribbean literature altogether" (Donnell 2006: 35). As Alison Donnell has cogently argued, the construction of Caribbean canons in the wake of mid-century writing went at the cost of works from the first half of the twentieth century, as well as of early female authors who were excluded "by recourse to a consistent but limited archive" (Donnell 2006: 36). Donnell's readings of early women poets such as Una Marson and Vivian Virtue go a long way towards dispelling a familiar but lopsided myth of origin surrounding the middle of twentieth century. However, what was indeed revolutionary, or distinctive about this particular moment, was the way in which authors like Selvon could build on the circulation of their works in a metropolitan literary space for an experiment in formal innovation, which would characteristically localize or indigenize their writing and point back (or gesture towards) a new national literary tradition.

Focusing on the mid-twentieth-century moment of expatriate Anglophone Caribbean writing under the purview of metropolitan world literature, then, is not to suggest that "there was no writing from the West Indies in English" (Birbalsingh 1996: 49) previously. Rather, "it means that the idea of a body of writing called West Indian literature did not really exist" (Birbalsingh 1996: 49). In other words, the 'idea' of West Indian national literature emerges from a platform of circulation beyond the region, counter-intuitively reversing what is usually construed as a trajectory from national to world literature. While this does not automatically have to reveal a larger pattern of national/world literature dynamics, there is yet more evidence that it might do with respect to Anglophone Caribbean writing. For example, working towards the use of Creole as an accepted

literary language is a belated development generally, moving away from a previous level of recognition based on the use of Standard English. It is a development indicated by the place of Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* in his work, but it extends to many other writers such as, famously, Louise Bennett, whose "Colonization in Reverse" (1966) not only describes post-Empire migration to England, but contains a manifesto for linguistic reverse colonization of English as literary language more specifically. Brathwaite's writings on "nation language" and his call for a corresponding poetics to capture tropical realities such as "the experience of a hurricane" (1981: 20) come at a later point of Caribbean literary history, too. Finally, taking an example from popular culture: For anyone primarily familiar with the thick Jamaican Creole that resonates with Bob Marley's most well-known songs, listening back to his early albums might offer a surprise for the relatively standard English that he used at the beginning of his career.[4] For Marley, too, it was only after reaching a certain level of national and international acclaim that he turned to local speech, which then earned him his lasting worldwide fame.[5]

If these examples show the circular (rather than one-directional) movement from world literature to national literature and back, it bears repeating that the original metropolitan scenario, containing institutions such as the BBC's *Caribbean Voices*, is by no means unproblematic for the hierarchical and asymmetrical system of literary patronage it implied. As Philip Nanton observes (2011: 586), *Caribbean Voices*, "like any other human activity, had a political context".[6] Part of this was the fact that "[Henry] Swanzy, as a white colonial male intervening in West Indian literary developments, was ripe to be seen as an outsider imposing a notion of 'standards' on a region some distance away" (Nanton 2011: 586). Swanzy, an Irishman, took over as editor in 1946 from the Jamaican poet, journalist and playwright Una Marson, the programme's first editor from 1943 to 1945.[7] He stayed on for eight years until 1954, after which his post circulated between various West Indian writers for another couple of years before *Caribbean Voices* came to an end in 1958. Swanzy's own colonial background as an Irishman in England would seem to qualify his position as a white European, but, according to Nanton (2011: 589), "assessments of the programme have regarded it in two

4 The case of Bob Marley is also mentioned in a podcast interview with David Damrosch (cf. Damrosch 2012).

5 On the role of "Black English as Creole Tongue" and its African, Caribbean, and American inflections in US-American literature as world literature see Dimock (2007).

6 On the 'politics' of the programme see also Griffith (2001).

7 On Una Marson's work for the BBC and on precursor programmes to *Caribbean Voices* such as *Calling the West Indies* see Jarrett-Macaulay (1998: 141–174).

mutually exclusive ways". On the one hand, it has been criticized as a "concealed form of colonial imposition", while being commended for offering writers "remuneration, criticism and ultimately access to British metropolitan readership and beyond" (Nanton 2011: 589) on the other. Swanzy's own statements on his editorial policies suggest a largely liberal though paternalistic outlook in places, expressing a concern for "standards recognised in the wider English-speaking world" (Swanzy 1949: 21) and for exotic "local colour" (Nanton 2011: 586) in the texts to be presented.

The standards imposed by *Caribbean Voices* under the aegis of Henry Swanzy are clearly influenced by an 'older' center/periphery world-literary model, as well as by an exoticist perception of West Indian writing as something like 'world music', to borrow an analogy. It was against this backdrop that the show attracted criticism from literary practitioners in the region, such as A.J. Seymour, editor of a literary magazine in Guyana. Seymour took issue, among other things, with the appearance of English experts on *Caribbean Voices*, who in his eyes "seem to rather patronize West Indian writing, as if they want to make it minor British writing" (Seymour, qtd. in Nanton 2011: 587). In a letter to Gladys Lindo from 1952, the show's regional BBC agent in Jamaica, Seymour pointed out that "outside standards are meaning less and less to us" (Seymour, qtd. in Nanton 2011: 587). Moreover, it is significant that authors like Sam Selvon, Louise Bennett and Bob Marley took the growing body and profile of West Indian writing, at home and abroad, as a springboard to develop standards of their own, such as the use of 'non-standard' West Indian varieties as a new literary and artistic language. In the circular, to-and-fro dynamics between world and national literature suggested here, they thus used their metropolitan platform strategically both to chart new national literary traditions, and to work towards transforming the hierarchical model of major and minor English-language writing on a world-scale which institutions like *Caribbean Voices* continued to be bound up with. It is certainly true that "liberal metropolitan forces such as *Caribbean Voices* opened up a space for Anglophone Caribbean literature to break out of its parochial and territorial framework" (Nanton 2011: 590). However, if "[p]artly as a result, Caribbean literature is recognised today as a distinct and important branch of world literatures in English" (Nanton 2011: 590), it is important to note that, in the process, the idea of 'world literature' as well as the status of 'English' have undergone some considerable change as well. Criss-crossing between world and national literature in Caribbean spaces spanning the globe, writers have also displaced the 'parochial and territorial' framework of erstwhile Eurocentric world literature and of the English language, pluralizing the former into world literatures and pushing the latter in the direction of 'global Englishes' (cf. Pennycook 2006).

3 Anglophone Caribbean World Literatures and the World-Ecology

The foregoing discussion has recapitulated some central stages in the development of Anglophone Caribbean writing, moving back and forth between the region and the wider world of Caribbean spaces. The resulting patterns of circulation and the founding influence of metropolitan institutions highlight the extent to which Anglophone Caribbean writing has evolved as world literature in a subjective genitive sense, now comprising a set of diverse literatures of and around the world, and based in the region as well as in various continental diasporas of the Americas and Europe. Precisely because of this global scope, however, it is also in its objective genitive sense that Anglophone Caribbean world literature needs to be assessed. For the world-wide Caribbean spaces it travels across are by no means external to it.[8] On the contrary, as an instance of ever-becoming cultural space they are registered, charted and co-produced in the writing – as a cultural translation between movements and different locations (cf. Neumann 2017), as a working through of colonial New World/Old world distinctions, and as an engagement of the role of the Caribbean in, and of its entanglements with, a wider 'world-ecology'.

This last problematics is explored and prominently placed in the recent volume *The Caribbean: Aesthetics, World-Ecology, Politics* (Campbell and Niblett 2016b), which takes up major research avenues in postcolonial ecocriticism and develops them in the direction of what are probed as related concepts of world-ecology (as formulated by the environmental historian Jason Moore) and world literature. So far, one of the key contributions of postcolonial ecocriticism has been the use of local postcolonial case studies and epistemologies – such as in *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture* (DeLoughrey, Gosson and Handley 2005) and *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (DeLoughrey and Handley 2011) – to revise some central assumptions of ecocriticism as characterize the field's origins in a Western, North American academic context. Among other interventions, postcolonial ecocritics have drawn attention to the long-standing man-made impact on supposedly natural landscapes to refute the binary conception that these exist outside of history,

8 For a similar conceptualization of world literature in the subjective as well as objective genitive sense see Bhabha (1994: 12): "Where, once, the transmission of national traditions was the major theme of world literature, perhaps we can now suggest that transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees – these border and frontier conditions – may be the terrains of world literature."

culture, or civilization. Here, creative and critical writing from the Caribbean has been seen to provide a timely corrective, a specific ecological knowledge enabled by the region's history, and enabling a fundamental redefinition of human-nature relations.

In Jason Moore's concept of world-ecology (cf. Moore 2013), informed by worlds systems theory and drawn upon in *The Caribbean: Aesthetics, World-Ecology, Politics*, local ecologies are subsumed in the wider world-system of global capitalism. As Chris Campbell and Michael Niblett summarize Moore's argument in the introduction to their edited volume, in the capitalist world-system "human and biophysical natures are intertwined at every scale, from the microbiome and the body to world empires and global markets" (2016a: 3). Capitalism, thus, is not a compartmentalized economic or social regime, but an integrated world-system of economy, politics, finance, trade, and ecology. World-literature, if similarly understood in terms of world systems theory, is the medium which registers the workings of this capitalist world-ecology, which "exists as the matrix within which all modern literature takes shape" (2016a: 8).[9] One of the main impulses of the encompassing concept world-ecology for postcolonial eco-criticism is that "it extends our understanding of the 'eco' in ecocriticism" (Campbell and Niblett 2016a: 3) – from more immediately environmental concerns like "extreme weather events" to representations of world-ecological aspects such as "the ravages of state violence as a tool in the co-production of nature" (Campbell and Niblett 2016a: 3).

Anglophone Caribbean writing, for its part, has a pivotal role to bespeak this wider world-ecology as a matter of "the centrality of the Caribbean to the development of the capitalist world-system and the often rapid and catastrophic nature of the ecological transformations experienced by the region" (Campbell and Niblett 2016a: 3). Writing from and about the region, in other words, stands at the hub of global developments as they manifest themselves locally. Registering and reflecting back on these developments is an important way for Anglophone Caribbean writing to function as world literature. Before I go on to discuss concrete examples of this particular world-ecological knowledge in literary texts, however, I want to briefly fill in two other facets which likewise reference a global imaginary and which similarly contribute to the nature of Anglophone Caribbean writing as literature about the world.

9 For the understanding of world literature according to world systems theory, see Franco Moretti's article "Conjectures on World Literature" (Moretti 2000), which initiated many recent debates over the concept and is referenced by Campbell and Niblett (2016a: 7). World systems theory also informs Moretti's later contributions (cf. Moretti 2007) and Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* (1999/2005).

As indicated before, a first major way in which it is constituted as world literature in this objective genitive sense, is the frequency of cultural translation happening between various distant Caribbean spaces. Almost any text which takes place somewhere across this sprawling structure or traverses it will contain passages of such translation, often interpreting the experience of a new, unknown location in terms of another, familiar one. Thus, the beginning of Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* quoted earlier, for all the strange sense of place it projects about London, simultaneously references Moses' homeland, which is recalled by the arrival of a friend on the boat-train from Trinidad, and against the memory of which the protagonist's current location in the imperial metropole is defamiliarized. Tellingly, moreover, the relationship between these two locales is figured in such terms that the global, planetary scale of Caribbean spaces comes into view: London appears as so distant and discrepant precisely because of its geographical and experiential distance from Moses' island on the other side of the globe: "as if is not London at all, but some strange place on another planet" (Selvon 1956/1995: 29).

Another example in which the expanse of Caribbean spaces is memorably staged is the beginning of V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*. Here, the protagonist, the author's half-autobiographical, half-fictional alter ego, finds himself in the alien setting of rural Wiltshire, performing an act of translation that at first cannot but register the incommensurability of the experience: "I saw what I saw very clearly. But I didn't know what I was looking at. I had nothing to fit it into. I was still in a kind of limbo" (Naipaul 1987/2011: 11). Hence the narrator's minute documentation of his process of seeing, which for a long time is one of observing and trying to make out before only gradually beginning to be able to make sense and understand: "For the first four days it rained. I could hardly see where I was. [...] Later – when the land had more meaning, when it had absorbed more of my life than the tropical street where I had grown up – I was able to think of the flat wet fields with the ditches as 'water meadows' or 'wet meadows'" (Naipaul 1987/2011: 3). Typically for Naipaul, the memory of his "tropical island" (Naipaul 1987/2011: 5), save for a few bits of colonial schooling he received there, does not get him very far in England:

> There were certain things I knew, though. I knew the name of the town I had come to by train. It was Salisbury. It was almost the first English town I had got to know, the first I had been given some idea of, from the reproduction of the Constable painting of Salisbury Cathedral in my third-standard reader. Far away in my tropical island, before I was ten. (Naipaul 1987/2011: 5)

It is part of the narrator's 'enigma' of arrival that he has little to build on, so that translation almost amounts to learning a new language from scratch. Yet precisely for the fact that his tropical island and the English country remain worlds

apart does the wide expanse of Caribbean spaces become visible once more. Moreover, and paradoxically, the relative lack of translation in *The Enigma of Arrival* is responsible for a high degree of translatability and resonance which the novel has enjoyed with European readers. One review in particular is worth pointing out, ascribing an "almost Mahleresque majesty" (Schiff 1997: 147) to Naipaul's writing: "It came at the reader in repeating waves, depositing bits of information, and then receding, only to surge forward again, a little farther this time, depositing a little more. Gradually you came to realize that Naipaul was writing about nothing less than the life of the mind – but in an almost epistemological sense" (Schiff 1997: 147).

If in these examples the global expanse of Caribbean spaces emerges from extrapolating and translating the distance between them, a complementary perspective can be found in the totalizing vision by which writers have deconstructed the New World/Old World distinction inherited from the Western literary canon. Many poems, such as John Agard's "Old World New World" (2002) and Philip Nanton's "Punctuation Marks" (1992), revise this Eurocentric view by pointing to the long pre-history of the Americas and to previous phases of Amerindian nomadic migration and discovery within the Caribbean in particular. In his much-discussed essay, "The Muse of History", Derek Walcott writes the following: "I give the strange and bitter and yet ennobling thanks for the monumental groaning and soldering of two great worlds, like the halves of a fruit seamed by its own bitter juice" (1974/1998: 64). The quotation is remarkable for its vision of the world as one, combining both "great worlds" as is amply replicated in Walcott's own work, of course, with its multiple references and revisions of the European canon. At the same time, the organic image of "two halves of a fruit" as a miniature globe by no means glosses over painful history. In fact, the acute sense impressions of (bitter) taste, (piercing) sound and (burning) touch evoked – "bitter juice", "monumental groaning" and "soldering" – resound strongly with such world-ecological transformations as slavery, colonialism, plantation agriculture, deforestation and forced labour, which Anglophone Caribbean writing generally is highly sensitive to.

Walcott's ecologically-inflected meditation thus provides an opportunity to segue to the larger role of Anglophone Caribbean world literatures as a medium of world-ecology. Texts that display expressly environmentalist concerns may be a more recent phenomenon, but the impact of global capitalism and of attendant forms such as international tourism on the region has long been registered in Caribbean literary traditions. Geophysical forces such as the hurricane and extreme weather conditions, the deforestation of the islands and the import of foreign crops in the context of plantation agriculture, or distinctive features of the island landscapes such as the beach, the hinterland, the sea and the underwater

world are a mainstay of Caribbean geopoetics, its "language of landscape" (Phillips Casteel 2011: n. pag.).[10] These topics, tropes and *topoi* root Anglophone Caribbean writing locally, but they are a metonym for larger processes of world-ecology which they address.

Discussing "The Political Ecology of Storms in Caribbean Literature", in her contribution to *The Caribbean: Aesthetics, World-Ecology, Politics*, Sharae Deckard provides ample evidence of the centrality of hurricanes to the region's literary and ecological imagination. Like many other elements of Caribbean geopoetics, the hurricane is a characteristically multivalent trope, a devastating and endangering as well as a life-giving and unruly geophysical force which has frequently thwarted outside political (neo-)colonial regimes. A threat to natural and human life in the region, the hurricane is simultaneously an emblem of resistance. As Deckard notes, the "hurricane as kairotic event can function in its most radical form as the prefiguration of modalities of revolt and rebellion" (2016: 35).

Moreover, while so closely connected to a tropical setting, it is the co-product of a larger weather and world-ecological dynamics. In Grace Nichols' poem "Hurricane Hits England" (1996), which Deckard includes in her analysis, the double, local and global, nature of the hurricane is receptively registered. Taking the event of a 1987 tropical storm, whose outskirts extended across the Atlantic into the British Isles, as a real-life reference, Nichols intricately and intimately details how it reverberates with her fictional speaker. First of all, the storm serves to characterize the speaker's situation as a migrant in Britain when she greets it as "my sweeping back home cousin", addressing it by a range of vernacular names – "Huracan", "Oya", "Shango" and "Hattie" (Nichols 1996: 34). This arrival of a familiar, anthropomorphized storm undoes her alienation in the foreign land: "It took a hurricane to bring her closer / To the landscape" (Nichols 1996: 34). Much more than a meditation on the contemporary migrant condition, though, the poem contemplates a larger narrative of global ecological and trans-Atlantic connections. As a "howling ship of the wind" and a "dark / ancestral spectre" (Nichols 1996: 35), the storm carries echoes of the history of the slave trade and slavery that stands at the beginning of the modern capitalist world-ecology. In Nichols' poem, this historical resonance is tellingly rendered as a deeper recognition of intricate human-nature relations, as the speaker gives herself over to the forces of the hurricane:

> Tropical Oya of the Weather
> I am aligning myself, to you

10 For a study of the sea and "sea passages" as a topos in Caribbean poetry see Neumann and Rupp (2016).

> I am following the movement of
> your winds
> I am riding the mystery of
> your storm. (Nichols 1996: 35)

Gradually, the speaker's inner emotional landscape is figured and transformed in natural terms – "the frozen lake in me", "the very trees in me" –, culminating in the poem's final insight "That the earth is the earth is / the earth" (Nichols 1996: 35). With a possible nod to Gertrude Stein's famous line "A rose is a rose is a rose", human-nature oneness is configured in a very concrete, material, more-than-metaphorical way. Together with this intertextual echo and the fact that Nichols' "Hurricane Hits England" is a widely-circulating, much-anthologized poem, as pointed out by Deckard, the sense of planetary ecological consciousness it ends with clearly underlines its status as world literature.

Another central topos which similarly links Anglophone Caribbean writing and the world-ecology is the tropical garden. Like the hurricane, it is a polyvalent trope, variously appearing as the stereotypical garden Eden of the European imagination, as a de facto space of century-long environmental exploitation, and as a site of postcolonial resistance and regeneration. In Olive Senior's poetry collection *Gardening in the Tropics* (1994) most if not all of these possible meanings are explored. For example, in "Plants", Senior warns against any attempt at transfiguring the island flora by declaring that "Plants are deceptive" (1994/1995: 61). Rather than authenticating a 'natural' landscape, plants and gardens in the Caribbean are part of the "imperialistic grand design" of plantation agriculture and of importing alien crops from elsewhere:

> 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 1994/1995: 61)

Tellingly, these images resonate with a violent history of colonial military conquest, the slave trade and forced labour (cf. Phillips Casteel 2011: 485), lending itself well to an extended understanding and postcolonial reading of the 'eco' in ecoriticism by juxtaposing the political, the social, the economic and the natural as interrelated factors of an overarching world-ecology. Like the hurricane, however, the plants depicted here already contain within themselves seeds of resistance, with a strong sense that the "capsules", "seed cases" and other explosive materials will soon backfire. In a broader, global-historical vision, this scenario is confirmed at the end of the poem:

> They'll outlast us, they were always there
> one step ahead of us: plants gone to seed,
> generating the original profligate,
> extravagant, reckless, improvident, weed. (Senior 1994/1995: 61)

Images of resistant, resilient nature such as these recur frequently in Senior's collection, such as in her poem "Pineapple", but they are a prominent feature of Anglophone Caribbean texts about the island flora and its entanglements with the world at large.

Interestingly, reading Anglophone Caribbean explorations of ecology in global terms is by no means all-pervasive in Caribbean literary studies. In her analysis of Senior's collection, Alison Donnell sees *Gardening in the Tropics* as enacting an important qualification on the dominant diasporic models of criticism which also inform world-literary conceptions of writing from the region. As Donnell notes, "[a]lthough she now divides her time between Jamaica and Canada, Senior's work is always located in the Caribbean, more specifically in rural Jamaica, and [...] it is the locatedness of her work that enables us to think about the diaspora paradigm in new and interesting ways" (2006: 95). Placing the work of Erna Brodber as another female author alongside Senior's poetry, Donnell retrieves tendencies towards "the preservation of non-metropolitan traditions and the possibility of a home-grown poetics" (2006: 103). These do not necessarily contradict, but perhaps indeed ought to complement major lines of diasporic criticism such as the black Atlantic model popularized by Paul Gilroy's seminal study *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993): "As the work of both Senior and Erna Brodber demonstrates, in the Caribbean model of the Black Atlantic, the nation is not the opposite of the transnational" (Donnell 2006: 95).

4 Conclusion

The above quotation concluding my discussion of Anglophone Caribbean writing and world-ecology shows once more the dialectic relationship between national and world literature paradigms which I have traced throughout this article. Rather than performing a unidirectional development from the former to the latter, national and world literature have evolved as complementary and mutually-inflecting modes of production, translation and reception. This is as true of post-1950s writers using their newly acquired prestige in the West to inspire a vernacular West Indian literary tradition as is it of post-1980s and 1990s explorations of Caribbean landscapes which, contemporaneous with the rise of diaspora criticism, can be seen to enact a "reterritorialisation of the Black Atlantic model"

(Donnell 2006: 104). Importantly, for all the contours of a transcultural world literature emerging, it by no means renders obsolete "the emphasis on local and regional contexts, on their intertextual and dialogical relationships to a multiplicity of intellectual debates, cultural movements and oral traditions" (Schulze-Engler 2008: 28). While there is little doubt that Caribbean writing occupies a central place in the world literatures of English today, coordinates of 'nation' and 'region' continue to be as important to its spatial and literary imagination as 'diaspora' and 'world'. This, incidentally, is a major dimension which Carole Boyce Davies recognizes in her diasporic model of Caribbean spaces, too. For these are created by "movements in both directions" (Boyce Davies 2013: 11), by "*escape routes*" (2013: 13) leading not only from the Caribbean to continental locations north and south, but also leading back to it. Once again, the production of Caribbean spaces thus provides a fitting analogy for the bi- or multidirectional trajectories of Anglophone Caribbean literatures as engaged by writers who have emigrated, travelled, returned, or stayed.

Another caveat against identifying Anglophone Caribbean writing too squarely with a concept of world literature is the strikingly uneven attention paid under this rubric. In Anglophone Caribbean as in other postcolonial bodies of writing, the accumulation of world-literary cultural capital appears to continue to be the prerogative of a few "hypercanonized" writers (Hassan 2001: 298). That said, the *Longman Anthology of World Literature* (Damrosch 2004) includes as many as four writers from the Anglophone Caribbean – Claude McKay, Derek Walcott, V.S. Naipaul and Jamaica Kincaid – alongside Alejo Carpentier from Cuba and the two Francophone writers Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire. However, compared to Walcott's œuvre, especially works like *Omeros* (1990), even other founding Caribbean epics such as Brathwaite's *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (1973) have met with lesser international resonance, arguably as a result of their use of 'nation language' and thus of their more limited translatability to audiences beyond the region (cf. Neumann 2017). Elsewhere, speaking at the 2015 Jaipur Literature Festival, the octogenarian V.S. Naipaul agreed with his interviewer that from the 1950s generation of writers his name was the only one that had remained to mean anything to readers outside of the academy. For all the ambivalent metropolitan tutelage of West Indian writing in the middle of the twentieth century, nothing quite like it followed, and nor would it have been possible to extend formats like *Caribbean Voices* beyond their specific historical moment. How Anglophone Caribbean world literatures will develop beyond the current moment of generational change the future will tell.

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