Clara Rachel Eybalin Casséus, Debt and the Haitian Quake: Mapping mobility through the memory of the French port of La Rochelle

Marking a certain memory invokes power. At an international Unesco-sponsored Conference in December 2004, ‘Memory, Coming to Terms with the Slave Trade and Slavery’, the late Jamaican Professor Nettleford’s eloquent intervention on the challenges of knowledge, ignorance and silence around the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) and the struggle against slavery’s intervention came to influence my research interest in the development of transnational communities of Caribbean origin in European cities. Six years later, the Haitian earthquake of 2010 triggered an awakening of contrasting memories on both sides of the Atlantic, challenging post-colonial assumptions that downplay de-territorialized processes at work. My paper part of a larger manuscript project treating the geopolitics of memory fills the gap by providing a contextual frame to revisit decolonial thinking and to map out mobility in the triangle of past dispossession and debt (colonial Saint-Domingue), present peripheralisation (the Caribbean), and future uncertainty (post-quake Haiti). To that end, I investigate the multiple images of one particular port, La Rochelle, the fourth largest slaving port in France in the eighteenth century. I take this focus on migrants’ circularity to further analyse similarities as well as contrasts between memory collected in the Ogier-Fombrun museum (Haiti) and the *Musée du Nouveau-Monde* (La Rochelle). Finally, the context of the current French elections and controversial discourse about colonialism calls for further research about an alternative model with rearrangement of spatial relations placing the production of knowledge along those symbolic and spatial axes that enhance multivocality, resilience and resistance.

Marie Lily Cerat, Decolonizing and (re)theorizing the Haitian experience: Vision of a Haitian *natifnatal[[1]](#footnote-1)* epistemology

By examining the question of language in Haiti, this paper broadens the debate and dialogue among scholars, researchers, educators, language policymakers and language rights advocates about the effects of “linguistic imperialism” (Phillipson 1992) on the development of Haitian Creole and its impact on Haitian children’s education as well as Haitian society at large. Drawing from theoretical approaches in history (James 1989 [1963]; Fouron 2010; Dubois 2012), post-colonialism (Tuhiwai Smith 2010; Canagarajah 2005), linguistics (Calvet 1974; DeGraff 2001; Dejan 2006), language planning and language policy research (Blommaert 2006; Spolksy 2004), and education (Madhere 2010; Plaisir 2010; Shor 1992) has helped shape the scope of this analysis, while also garnering various critical insights from the field of oral literature. In sum, this work reflects an interdisciplinary effort that highlights the impact of linguistic and cultural agents and historical events as it also sheds light on the lived experiences of Haitians within the larger Haitian democratic project begun in 1791/1804.

Nadine King Chambers, Decolonial, Post-Colonial or Neo-Colonial? The rocky, hard places between First Peoples and Arrivants in the Caribbean and beyond

This presentation draws on a mix of oral history, social justice, economic and spatial theory (Gilmore, 2002) to consider the transnational migration of people and resources between the Caribbean and Canada. It will reflect some of my ongoing research on the poorly documented impact of capitalist transnational corporations on Jamaica's rural communities ***and*** the Haisla with the development of a smelter in Kitimaat to process Jamaican ore.

Activism and scholarship strives to answer the questions: What is Black History Month in Idle No More territories ? What repairs the damage of how living First Peoples are removed from Caribbean past and future placemaking (Neeganagwedgin, 2015;Newton,2013)? How does Black and Asian arrivant solidarity (or lack thereof) impact First Peoples at home and abroad (Jackson, 2014; Madden, 2008)?

In pursuit of such goals, Caribbean Feminist Studies (Alexander,2005; Mohammed,1998; Reddock, 2007) and Indigenous Studies (Arvin, 2015; Byrd, 2014; Hau'ofa,1994) could be cross referenced by considering un-cited and incorrectly translated stories by white/male scholars (King, 2016). Where is the work documenting the moments of alliances as activists and/or scholars working separately on interrelated issues of race, violence, gender, anti- capitalism, displacement/dispossession and/or reparations?

By referencing the Basin-Rim called home; it may be time for Caribbean scholars to develop solidarity protocols from experience wresting with institutions that replicate the regulating legacy of Empire (Lowe, 2015) over 'Indigeneity'.What if scholarship - stripped of experts external to our communities - was driven by ethics developed to centre accountability ***with*** citation reflecting the decolonization dreams powering these fields of study (Smith, 1999)?

Kelly Delancy, History to Heritage: A Heritage Assessment of Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera, The Bahamas

This paper is an examination of the heritage concept and identity at the settlement of Tarpum Bay on the island of Eleuthera, The Bahamas. As objects, qualities or traditions inherited and passed down through generations, heritage is rooted and often inextricably linked to history. To date, historical documentation on the communities of Eleuthera has been minimal and many settlements are known by outsiders as little more than maritime communities. Using history as a proxy, this research identifies, along with the community, the heritage of Tarpum Bay for effective cultural resource management. At the same time, the study contributes documentation toward the development of a more accurate picture of insular and national identity.

This paper is largely discourse based and develops the concept of heritage by identifying shared or disparate values and traits within the settlement. It interrogates the intersections between memory, migration and decolonization through oral histories of residents and descendants. I find that social memory here is not associated with space or the built environment as in recent archaeology, but rather familial bonds and an intangible connection to a community of people.

By accessing collective memory through oral history, I also find how metanarratives constructed during the struggle for national independence (approximately 1950-1973) and visions of a post-colonial Bahamian future permeated from the capital through to the outer islands of The Bahamas to form a national consciousness that led to independence in 1973, but also the economic decline of many of the island communities, such as Tarpum Bay.

Ruth Minott Egglestone, Finding the Anancyesque in Shakespeare’s*Julius Caesar* and the decolonisation project in Jamaica between 1938 and 1958

This paper seeks to find an allegorical connection between Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*anda time of transition towards decolonisation in Jamaica between 1938 and 1958. Helpfully, the political historian Richard Hart provides a first-hand account of this period in *Towards Decolonisation: Political, labour and economic development in Jamaica 1938-1945* (Canoe: Kingston, 1999). Looking back, in his company, at the cast of types (patriots and statesmen plus rogues and opportunists) who would later became major players within a Jamaican nationalist framework; we see that one man could in fact play many parts.  In this scenario, Richard Hart – himself a *magga tincka* and a potential Cassius – could also be seen as Cinna the poet.

For generations, the values of honour, dignity, equality and civic duty have been rekindled by Shakespeare’s play within a public/grammar school educational mould, recognisable across the Commonwealth. The question, ‘Who is the hero of the play?’ remains unresolved but received wisdom has it that Brutus, a man of seemingly unimpeachable honour, is a strong candidate.  My attention as a young Kingstonian teacher was, however, riveted by the voice of Cassius – the one who thought too much – with its emphasis on dignity and self-respect. I have since realised that teaching *Julius Caesar*in this way in1983 was an exercise in decolonial intellectual disobedience.  The existence of a Patwa translation published in 2013, *De Tragedy au Julias Ceazaa* by Liam Martin, further enhances a Jamaican response *from the heart*to the series of uncomfortable questions posed by Shakespeare’s gamesmanship.

Miguel Gualdrón, Memories of the abyss: Glissant’s philosophy of Caribbean history in the context of Césaire and Fanon.

In this paper I will defend the idea that the history of the colonization of the Caribbean, and in particular the history of the French Antilles as described by Édouard Glissant, cannot be read as a linear and continuous due to the fact that at its beginning there is nothing but a “brutal dislocation”. Hand in hand with the genocide of the indigenous peoples that inhabited the region, what lies at the “beginning” of the European colonization of the region is only the experience of a non-experience, the memory of something that could not have taken place. This is what Glissant calls ‘the abyss’. However, this does not make impossible to do a history of the Caribbean; only what he calls a *History*, with a capital H. With this gesture, Glissant locates his decolonial thought in a moment that I would like to describe as *intermediate* between Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon: on the one hand, liberation cannot come from an identitarian construction of these communities as fundamentally African, developing a general notion of *négritude*, because the experience (or non-experience) of the abyss effectively marks a rupture with it. On the other hand, Glissant does not want to break completely with that identity that was created through an apparatus of enslavement, transportation, colonization, and exploitation. Thus, in contradistinction to Fanon, who demands a break with history (in particular with the concept of Black, or Blackness) in order to decolonize and liberate, Glissant wants to link emancipation to the history of those same devices employed in the creation of “blackness” and the resistance to them: the history of a *productive* abyss.

William ‘Lez’ Henry, “While nuff ah right and rahbit; we write and arrange”: Deejay lyricism and the transcendental use of the voice in alternative public spaces in the UK.

“While nuff ah right and rahbit; we write and arrange”, is taken from the British deejay, Trevor Natch, on Diamonds, Sound System in London, 1984. The suggestion was that during that historical moment, many deejays were content to either rely on gimmicks when chatting on the mic, or they were content to pirate (copy) other performers. For this reason, there was a dichotomy that placed those types of performers, ‘pirates’, at one end of the deejay spectrum, and the ‘originators’, who prided themselves on research and composition, at the other. To make this aspect of the culture known, the paper will present an overstanding of the centrality of these types of lyricism that were far more than forms of resistance, but were in fact post- colonial forms of linguistic, cultural antagonism.

Significantly it was the practised usage of ‘oral skills’ in the British deejays’ take on patwa (Jamaican language), couched in Rastafarian and Garveyite sensibilities, that underpinned and ensured the perpetuation of these politically driven, vernacular cultures right up to the present moment. By focusing on samples of this lyricism, the paper will argue that these types of expressive musical culture, still combat the imposition of a Eurocentric ‘alien’ worldview on African peoples on an Outernational level, across Gilroy’s ‘Black Atlantic’. By doing so alternative public arenas were created that both fostered and facilitated ways of locating an autonomous socio-cultural self, that unified members of the Caribbean in novel and interesting ways in the UK - the ‘belly of the beast’.

Adom Philogene Heron, The name of the father in the Caribbean: myth, metaphor and multiplicity

 The father occupies a vexed place in Caribbean popular thought and sentiment. Typically represented as absent and dispossessed, Caribbean fatherhood is often evoked as a signifier of stolen origins, plantation privations and social pathologies. In this presentation I briefly interrogate this metaphorical figuring of paternal absence, challenging what I call the ‘myth of the dead father’ - the popular history the Caribbean tells itself about fatherhood; about the black father symbolically slain by the white patriarch in the primal plantation scene.

I then employ ethnography from the Eastern Caribbean island of Dominica to push us beyond this myth of binary archetypes. I tell the story of a boy with 3 fathers, which I argue, urges us to consider how fathering symbolically fragments into multiplicity amidst the pragmatism of the everyday. By attending to such cases I suggest we might begin to challenge the coloniality of absence-presence binaries and recognise contemporary Caribbean fathering on its own, variegated terms.

Laura Lomas, Lourdes Casal's Decolonial Writing in Havana and New York, 1957-1979

Cuban black marxist feminist Lourdes Casal articulates a decolonial perspective in her earliest writings, as a University student in Havana, but radicalizes that decoloniality by incorporating a critique informed by a developing black radical consciousness in the 1960s and 1970s. Although largely forgotten because her body of writing straddles disciplines and language traditions in Spanish and English, Lourdes Casal belongs to genealogies of a pioneering feminist and anti-racist critique within decolonial practice. This essay compares her early theoretical essay, "Problemas Hispanoamericanos," published in a student-run university-journal in Havana, to her indispensable late work on "Contemporary Race Relations in Cuba," published by the Minority Rights Group in London in 1979. Whereas the earlier essay embodies her early investment in criollo discourse on hispanic Americanism, her later essays--including her autobiographical piece, "Memories of a Black Cuban Childhood"--revise this early position to reflect the influence of Black consciousness and Caribbean anti-racist movements as a critical aspect of decolonization. This essay limns the eonnections and enduring friendship between Casal and Anglophone Caribbean writers such as Andrew Salkey to suggest that the strategic critique of her own decolonial tradition in the Americas benefits from association with African diaspora critics such as Anani Dzidzienyo and Caribbean-diaspora writers from a range of discipines.

Joan Andzeuh Nche, Questioning relation and the Poetics of Home in Derek Walcott’s *The Arkansas Testament*

This paper explores how Derek Walcott’s (St Lucia) poetry takes account of a society where the values of home must be redefined using the following poems: ‘Cul de sac valley’ and ‘The light of the world’. The poet uses this discursive space as a venue where fragments of a historical past could be negotiated and home reconstructed. The poet’s interrogation of the question of identity and its relation with others provides a good starting point for unravelling the complex reality of displacement, with questions raised concerning how people of the Caribbean (St Lucia) might lay claim or relate to their environments based on both past and present experiences? And how these experiences can be used as a way forward?

Both June Bobb (1998) and Paul Breslin (2001) posit that Walcott uses the creole of his island to celebrate his people and enforce his own identity. Central to the work of Walcott are issues of identity, racism, colonialization and decolonization. This paper evaluates the poet’s journey through art, indicating how he creates a space where he must not only be heard, but also a space for reconciliation between the past and the present.

Édouard Glissant’s theories of the ‘rhizome’, ‘opacity’ and ‘creolization’ in his work *Poetics of Relation* (2010) will serve the theoretical framework of this paper. Underlining his theory is idea that it is in valuing diversity that the creation of relation is possible. The poet’s poetics is a paradox of hope and despair as he exposes not only post-independence victimization, but stubborn love for homeland and a courageous quest for stability and wholeness at home.

Denise Noble, The Decolonial Poetics of Memory and Re-Memorying

This paper draws on and extends work contained in my book *Decolonising and Feminizing Freedom: a Caribbean Genealogy (2017.)* The paper focuses on two key aspects of British Caribbean migrant and post-migrant practices of personal, familial and public memory and re-memorying out of which a Caribbean genealogy of Black Britishness has been formed. Drawing on interviews with women of Caribbean descent in London, and Michael McMillan’s Front Room exhibition, this paper discusses first the structure of memory that emerged from the interviews and brings it into conversation with the collective re-memorying practices emerging from the exhibition. I argue that both delineate a historiography of Black Britishness traced through the postcolonial, transnational and the diasporic in negotiation with and against the grain of hegemonic national narrations of both Britishness and Black Britishness.

Conceptually, this is guided by Toni Morrison’s concept of re-memorying as a methodology for historical and epistemic recovery, and by Barnor Hesse’s use of the term axiological restitution to refer to the cultural politics of memory and popular historiography in Black communities as a means of socially legislating the recovery of the ethics and aesthetics of Black bodily and cultural integrity from the distortions or mutilations of modernity and racism.

This paper argues that critical re-memorying in multiple modalities produces changing yet on-going transnational and diasporic identifications and poetics that can constitute valuable ethical, cultural, political and scholarly re/sources in the production of collective counter-histories and decolonising knowledges in the pursuit of axiological restitution and epistemic justice.

Tina K. Ramnarine, Music and Memory in two decolonising contexts

This presentation focuses on music and memory in two decolonising contexts (Trinidad and Tobago and Britain). It refers, in particular, to orchestral practices and re-conceptualisations of the past to raise issues about social equality in the cultures of decolonisation. Through two case-studies (drawn from my larger research project on orchestras globally), it adopts ethnographic views of orchestral practices to explore the articulation of different subject positions in current debates, especially regarding social relevance and memories of decolonisation. The discussion centres on key questions about music in view of British imperial legacies: 1) how cultural and political borders are orchestrated anew in the era of decolonisation and 2) how postcolonial relationships are played out in musical performances.

This presentation offers a preview of how I have been extending perspectives on the potential capacities of the orchestra to shape civil society (Ramnarine 2011) by focusing on music in imperial legacies and on how the orchestra as an institution is implicated in the cultural transitions of decolonising politics (Ramnarine 2017). It juxtaposes different kinds of orchestras (the symphony and steel). It highlights imperial legacies, as well as cultural survivals in heritage and reclamation projects. Some useful theoretical tools for thinking about these issues are offered by Elder’s politically engaged scholarship on performance practices (e.g. 1994) and the new histories of the British Empire (e.g. Hall and Rose 2006, Schwartz 2011). In addition, inspired by Bill Schwartz’s reflexive historical work and Lez Henry’s musical reflexivity, my presentation reflects on experience and contributes performer-researcher understandings of the complex relationships between decolonising orchestral practices.

Siméon Siméonov, The Consular Caribbean in the Age of Revolution: The Role of U.S. and British Consulates in the Spanish American Revolutions

My research focuses on an institution that shaped the modern world, yet remains poorly understood by contemporary historians: consular establishments. Political and diplomatic historians have recently sought to address this gap by emphasizing consuls as diplomatic agents who played an important role in the establishment of diplomatic relations in the Atlantic World. Cultural historians have also begun to study consuls, whom they mainly regard as mediators between European and non-European polities.

However, these groups of scholars have not yet examined consular agency in the Western hemisphere as a transnational and institutional phenomenon. By means of transnational communication and institution-building, consuls developed many of the practices that we associate with the modern nation-state. Consuls came to identify foreign nationals; authorize international trade; they shaped state policy regarding immigration, importation, and healthcare; they exercised extraterritorial jurisdiction in legal disputes involving foreign citizens.

In the nineteenth century, the Caribbean became a main theatre of important transformations in consular institutional history. My paper examines the role of U.S. and British consulates in this period to show that diplomatic conflicts sparked by the proliferation of U.S. and British consuls catalyzed the development of Caribbean capitalism and the process of Spanish American independence. British and U.S. consuls undermined Spanish sovereignty in America and gained economic advantages that placed Britain and the U.S. as the foremost economic and diplomatic partners of the Spanish American revolutionary governments.

Maria A. Lee Strohmayer, Curating the Nation: The Politics of Recognition in a Bahamian National Museum

The Commonwealth of The Bahamas achieved independence in 1973, yet plans to open a national museum have not reached fruition. Drawing on this vacancy, I analyze what could be entailed in thinking about the Bahamian nation from the curatorial standpoint of a national museum. I employ a framework grounded in museum anthropology to identify specific areas that this institution might consider. Within this framework, I incorporate the challenge of museum practitioners to “decolonize the museum”. The Bahamas has no museum to decolonize per se, however, the political constructions of Bahamian national identity could be “decolonized” and studied in a museum context. While many kinds of diverse experiences can be explored, I address the opportunity to rethink race, color, and Bahamian national identity in light of an exclusionary black Bahamian rhetoric deployed in early nation-building projects from 1973 to 1992. More broadly, I consider how a national museum of this nature could facilitate a more fluid notion of Bahamian national identity.

James Williams, ‘More baká than border’: Shibboleths in Junot Díaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

Junot Díaz’s 2007 novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, represents in significant part a working-through of Haitian-Dominican relations in the twentieth century. Reading the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic as just another reapplication of the ‘curse’ of colonialism, Díaz explores the complex negotiations of language and race inherent in the acts of consolidation of power under totalitarian government. I propose to place this context of an ongoing and reinscribed colonialism in conversation with Díaz’s much-celebrated linguistic experimentation which has elsewhere been reduced to, for example, ‘a sort of streetwise brand of Spanglish’ (Michiko Kakutani, *New York Times*, Sep 4 2007). I argue that instead, multilingual gestures in the novel exist in unavoidable dialogue with the material realities of language as experienced by the subjects of totalitarianism, which sought to underscore its control through a determined policing of acts of speech.

1. *Natifnatal* is the Haitian Creole term for homegrown/local. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)