COLONIAL IDENTITY AND THE CARIBBEAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

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A Review of Nigel Bolland’s 2004 Edited work on
The Birth of Caribbean Civilization: A Century of Ideas about Culture and Identity, Nation and Society

Introduction

New and emerging themes on colonial consciousness, colonial memories, counter-memories and the reconstruction of colonial identities are widely addressed in Nigel O. Bolland’s, The Birth of Caribbean Civilization: A Century of Ideas about Culture and Identity, Nation and Society (IRP, 2004). The review considers the intellectual histories articulated by selected sources altogether from the early (1920s-1940), post-colonial (1940s-1960) and contemporary (1960s-1980) periods within the Hispanophone, Francophone and Anglophone West Indies, and is further supported where necessary, by the findings from other intellectuals such as Eric Jennings (1998) on Guadeloupe, Alicia Trotz (2015) on the British Caribbean, and Blanco Rivera (2018) on Puerto Rico. Essentially, works under review involve, from each hemisphere, an early ‘philosopher’ who sought to redefine the identities of colonial people, a post-colonial actor, and a contemporary thinker. Overall, Bolland’s compilation features forty-five seminal intellectuals, from which a third of sources comprise the selected writings discussed in this review.

General Themes

Bolland presents the selected works of Caribbean intellectuals as archives of colonial memory and identity redefinition. He presents to Caribbean people, what he claimed he sought to preserve in a “text he could not find,” a rich history of ‘reconstructing the colonial narrative.’ These are discussions about how Caribbean people began a process of taking ownership of designing their own identities and cultures, about a movement towards revisionism and counter-memories in the face of colonial strongholds. The works also show progression from ideas to action, resulting wars and revolutions, toward post-world war disillusionment, growing nationalism and regionalism. The themes are profound but focused in is underlying motif that Caribbean thinkers are human archives, the griots of colonial memory, and that these memories have been reshaped to create new identities struggling against itself to become itself.

The Hispanophone Intellectuals: Communities of Interest and Beloved Memories

Among the Hispanophone freedom fighters, early nationalists philosophies were expressed by a growing body of poets, namely Puerto Rico’s Lola Rodrígues de Tio, a lyrical poet and revolutionary dedicated to “Puerto Rican self-determination and Caribbean unity”(p.18) and who wrote the renowned “Song of the Boriquen” (1876) encouraging indigenous subjects to rise up and fight and to emulate the efforts of Cuba – a poem which later became the National Anthem of Puerto Rico.

Rodriguez was mentor and collaborator to a much younger José Martí who she helped, while in American exile, to plan the Cuban War. Martí who in his famous article “Our America” (1891) vividly expressed his
rejection of both Spanish political and US economic hegemonies on “who we are,” was a stubborn advocate for preserving Cuba as Cuban’s would have it, of distinguishing Cuba’s culture and mores and memories from those of Spain. He maintained that a people are defined by their culture. In his own words of proclaiming the Patria or fatherland which is Cuba he professed that culture was what gives a people, “like the Cuban people, the ‘community of interests’ and ‘beloved memories’ that unite them by ties of fraternity.

As Jose Marti was the most influential thinker behind the Cuba’s War of Independence (1868) from Spain, so became Fidel Castro in its second War of Independence (1959) and who in his famous speech “History Will Absolve Me” (1954) to legally defend himself in a trial, declared his commitment to lay down his life, willingness to be condemned, for the poor and destitute, jobless and indigent Cubans, the small farmers and workers, the weak and the vulnerable. In this greatly quoted piece of oratory, Castro quoted the words of Jose Marti of his duty to resist imperial control, to dream of a free Cuba, to never seek out advantage but to keep the path of the struggle. Castro’s own anti-imperialist views cemented his loyalty to the Patria or fatherland, condemning all ideologies supporting notions of a colonial motherland, which fattened the elite and suffocated the working poor. Castro’s postcolonial essay “Words to the Intellectuals” (1961) he sought to pass on a tradition of duty to support what he dined as a socioeconomic revolution more so than a political one, and one that would eventually trigger a cultural revolution. As a postcolonial actor, Castro was a strong nationalist and he romanticized nothing of Cuba’s colonizers and colonizing culture.

Puerto Rico was ceased by the US in 1868, the year of Cuba’s declared independence, the US in the face of the threat of Soviet expansion in its geographical proximity, aggressively sought to annex Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Dominican Republic in one fell swoop. The latter failed but a forty-four year control was held in Cuba from 1968 to 1902 and Puerto Rico with Guam suffered cessation to the United States of America. In the decades following Puerto Rico produced several anti-colonial writers of which José Luis Gonzáles (1926-1996) was critical.

Born to the Hispaniola, then known as Santo Domingo, of a mestizo Dominican Republican mother and white Puerto Rican father, Gonzales was the first intellectual to introduce to the ‘nationalism’ that became a polarizing Puerto Rico versus the US, a white land-owning elite versus the dispossessed poor and Boriquen folk, that Puerto Rico’s ultimate liberty required a unifying identity of all its people including the black mestizo and its African descendientes. In his volume, The Four Storeyed Country: Notes Towards a Definition of Puerto Rican Culture, he not only describes how each historical period connects to the next, but he criticised some traditional beliefs and myths, strived for inclusivity and professed that the African contribution to Puerto Rico was its most important legacy – an argument which caused both “embarrassment and irritation” among some intellectuals. Other intellectuals later supported the argument that Puerto Rico should recognize its African heritage.

Pedro Albizu Campos (1891-1965) could in modern terms be described as having played the key revolutionary role in Puerto Rico as Nelson Mandela played in South Africa. An engineer, chemist and
student of law, having graduated from Harvard University, he rose to become one of Puerto Rico’s most distinguished leader and revolutionary. Despite two pardons, he spent 20 years in prison at the hands of the suppressive US administration which feared his influence on the fight for freedom. Albizu believed, like Fidel Castro, that the only path to liberty was through a revolution and his famous essays on “The Day of the Race” and “Puerto Rican Nationalism” extolled the tenets of unity of all Puerto Rican, the ridiculousness of racial divisions and the evil of America in promoting racist ideals. He too recognized his African heritage, but accorded it equal to his Indian and White heritage.

Albizu was sympathetic to Spain however, and his memories of Spain, certainly against US aggression were much romanticized. This is a concept that Blanco Rivera and Ramos (2018) explore in their work on Puerto Rico’s archival traditions where sympathy and nostalgia for the former colonizer is generated in the collective memories of a people from the sheer hate of another. In the case of Albizu, he regarded the Spanish as the great civilizing force of Puerto Rico, proclaimed that they wanted to grant independence to Puerto Rico but were facing aggressions from the US. He beseeched the masses to hold Spanish dear and never fall into the trap of linguistic assimilation to America’s 50-year imposition of English upon its people and to continue the resistance. It was a shock to some that his views towards Spain was so compassionate, but he wrote that the Spanish, whom Puerto Rican freed themselves on in 1868 were friends rather than foes. It is entirely possible that Albizu sought alliance with the Spanish aid his freedom and it is also possible that having been born nearly three decades after the war for independence, he was the recipient of romanticized narratives of the past, which were in later years fonder to reimagine than the harsh realities imposed by the US.

**The Francophone Thinkers: Colonialism is morally corrupt and France is too beautiful!**

From the French West Indies, the early philosophies are drawn from Frantz Fanon’s psychoanalytical theories of Negritude in *Black Skin, White Mask* and Aimé Césaire’s eminent *Discourse on Colonialism* which reflects on the question of “who am I” in the context of race and identity. Césaire preceded Fanon by a mere twelve years in age, but both were early 20th century sons of Martinique, both known respectively as the most distinguished poet and intellectual philosopher and the most famous intellectual activist and revolutionary born to the French Antilles. Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955) has been cited in almost every work on the topic since it first appeared in 1950 and was subsequently revised later. He was the chief anti-colonialist who professed that European colonization was “morally and spiritually indefensible” and compared the system openly to as bad or even worse than anything Adolph Hitler managed to design in the course of European history. He was lucid in his explanation of how colonization decivilizes the human being and depletes his dignity, a term Rex Nettleford in his 1965 thesis “National Identity and Attitudes to Race in Jamaica” later coined as the “desmadification” of a people. He stressed black identity and consciousness and the imperative of not being duped in the collective hypocrisy that colonialism promoted, since it sought to ‘civilize’ peaceful people it first deem to be barbarous savages, using religion and Christianizing as its main weaponry.
Fanon was the main protagonist of *negritude* a positive philosophy he coined in opposition to what he deemed to be *negrophobia* or a horror of blackness, which he shaped from his psychoanalysis of understanding the mental and psycho-cultural effects that colonization created for enslaved people. **Stuart Hall** claims that Fanon’s thesis in *Black Skin, White Mask* (1952). A synopsis of Fanon’s ideas could be reported as the cause of self-derision among black people comes directly from their aim to please their colonizers. His sentiments were that every colonized people were created from the very death and burial of their cultural originality. Colonized people are forced to speak the language and worship the cultural ideals of the victimizers. He passionately professed linguistic colonization as a tool of division, favour and esteem being given to those who master the tongue of the motherland and disfavour and crudeness accorded those who did not. Fanon spoke of the need for the black race to free itself from specific myths, miseducation, misplaced identities concerning ideas of blackness and reject the “unreflected imposition of culture” (p.232)

In Bolland’s introduction of **Stuart Hall’s** work on “Myths of Caribbean Identity,” Hall who himself was a living testament to a life of racial tensions and both personal and familial misplaced identity, has found it quite ironic that anti-colonialists such as Césaire spoke such impeccable French which by any measure was far superior to the French spoken in Paris. In fact in Hall’s memory of Martinique he felt it to be more French than France itself. Césaire’s own views were that French does not only belong to the French, there is a black French that is distinct and known in the consciousness of the Antilles. It is of course understood that Césaire was perhaps the only Black Antillian who sat in a served in the French Parliament and that while they pursued Fanon in Algeria, to his eventual death, the seeds planted by both in ideas of Negritude was an inspiration not only among the French, who West Indian history saw the first successful Black Revolution in Haiti’s Toussaint Louverture, but the spirit of an empowered black identity spread to the British West Indies in remarkable ways.

Contemporary French writers and literaturians however such as Guadeloupean **Maryse Condé** see philosophies of Negritude as having only historical values but not modern relevance. She regards Césaire still as the greatest of West Indian writers and declares nobelist Derek Walcott as incomparable to herself, but she sees modern ideals of Créolité as being more relevant to the dominant culture. Like Fanon, and Césaire however, she does not claim to be a speaker of French Creole, and does not incorporate it in her writing more than necessary. She claims her non-native stance does not make her any less West Indian and that West Indian writing has no prescribed authenticity. She regards people within the diaspora with only second-hand memories and experiences of the West Indies to be just as West Indian as any born and bread with the region and attributes even stronger nationalistic and patriotic sentiments to those who have broadened Caribbean philosophy and thinking whilst in exile and separated from their lands. The book reverberates this historic troupe of separation, exile, redefining identity, and return, all in a cyclical loop that is continuous and characteristic of Caribbean migrants, not all of whom are proficient in or have access to Creole as a language.

Guadeloupe however, has shared allegiance in terms of colonial memory and identity. **Eric Jennings** in his essay on *Monuments to Frenchness: The Memory of the Great War and Guadeloupean Identity* (1998)
explains the love hate relationship. He refers to the Great War as an event whereby the people of Guadeloupe demonstrated their faithfulness to France having paid a “blood tax” (p. 565) and where the very period represents a crossroads for the nation, with memories linked dually – both in individual mourning for loved ones lost, but also in collective devotion to France. For some Guadeloupeans their “personal heroism and sacrifice” were the ultimate show of affection to France. So devoted were the people of the Antilles that they adopted a war-torn village (Nevilly-en-Argonne in the Meuse) and gifted it with money they could scarcely afford and war monuments. This adoption symbolized the pride of the elite, but the common folk were indifferent as it fell as an imposition to their finances and remained an irritation within their collective memory – a sore point of French national identity since there was neither remembrance nor recognition given for the thousands of Guadeloupeans who died. Guadeloupe’s elite dedicated much poetry to the French such as La Joie Créole (1915) in which it is stated “France is too beautiful, the allies too handsome!” The Elite held dinners of celebration and eventually afforded as many as ten monuments throughout the island in tribute to World War heroes – yet not a single monument inscription was written in Creole. Today, according to Jennings, the elite reject any notion of themselves being assimilators, in popular culture they condemn openly the very doctrine they once championed. Herein lies the dichotomy of loyalties of colonial and post-modern Guadeloupe, which, like Martinique have no post-colonial heroes to speak of, and who still enjoy the material development as a Department of France.

In Bolland's excerpted interview with Marys Condé, she tried to explain the intellectual tradition of the French as opposed to the English by indicating that the literature of the French Antilles grew out of the negritude movement but that of the Anglophone grew out of a feeling of otherness. She felt that British Caribbean thinkers saw themselves as being subjugated within a white world but did not seek to define themselves as black individuals. In other words, within the British Tradition there are no self-defining philosophies. It would be true to say Condé in her commentary (p.282) overlooked the work of Marcus Mosiah Garvey, CLR James and Sir Arthur Lewis when she claimed that Anglophone writers “...describe their relationship to this world, and make no attempt to define themselves in terms of the White world, the Western world.”

**The British Intellectuals: Until we build an independent culture, we are wards of a superior race!**

Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887-1940) has been included in Higman (1999) historiography of West Indian Historians. This inclusion has also been challenged since he created for himself no body of works, but that his speeches, letters, teachings and what came to be considered philosophies, were the collected archives of Amy Jacques Garvey who altogether published seven volumes of his work. Herself deemed a Garveyite, she might have been more worthily considered the historian. Garvey himself however, is rightly identified as an Anglophone thinker, intellectual, freedom fighter and philosopher being the father of Pan-Africanism, the committed liberator of Black people’s return to Africa, proponent of black independence and right to exclusive ownership of their own land. He is the prophet of the Rastafari, and the proclaimed inspiration to African American revolutionaries such as Martin, Luther King and Malcolm X. Garvey was a central figure in the Harlem Renaissance and lived 16 of his 53 years in foreign lands.
Garvey’s Writings

Garvey wrote in 1913 about the *BWI in the Mirror of Civilization: History Making by Colonial Negroes* in which he wrote a concise history of the colonization of the Caribbean in particular Jamaica’s history from the arrival of the British to the 1940s. It was in this work that he predicted the dismantling of the British realms and dominion. In 1916 his Letter to Major Robert R. Moton whom he hoped to invite to Jamaica to shed light on race relations and build esteem for the black audience, was complete with a remarkable psychoanalysis that reads much clearer and articulated so accurately, about black identity, how we see ourselves, others, and how we must lift up the race. Garvey declared that the absence of black unity is the result of Blacks having developed no independent leadership and are mostly deprived of an education. He sought to get Moton to understand the audience he would be addressing, hinting that the best among them are teachers, but teachers who show no initiative for the professional world is organized just as the plantation world. Garvey referred to educated Negroes as “moral cowards” (p.320). Garvey proclaimed the tenets of progress and humanity, self-reliance and respect, no force like success, need for a nation and country and to give up the attitude of being “Monkey Apeing Leaders” his encouragement was that “the best race creates of and by itself” and “the best race does not live on the patronage and philanthropy of others, but makes an effort to do for itself.” Garvey’s renowned legacy as Jamaica’s first named National Hero and as a leading Caribbean philosopher and Pan-Africanist is an enduring legacy and heritage.

Cyril Lionel Robert James (1901-1989), known famously as CLR James the author of the politically charged novel *The Black Jacobins* is regarded as one of the most extraordinary thinkers in Caribbean History. A Trinidadian by birth, James can be described as the consummate Caribbeanist, an early writer, journalist and commentary Cricket analyst, he was a prodigy in his prolific production of West Indian writings and dedicated the Black Jacobins in memory of Toussaint L’Ouverture whom he credits as the first and greatest model of Black liberation. In his 1963 essay “From Toussaint L’Ouverture to Fidel Castro” which he wrote as an appendix to the *The Black Jacobins*, he expressed open Pan-Caribbean sentiments that Cuba’s revolution was the replay of what Haiti initiated a century before, an that all colonized spaced in the Caribbean typified by sugar plantation and slavery shared the same experiences and fate. James professed a sentiment that is most granular to Caribbean coloniality, That of its uniqueness. He says, “It is an original pattern. Not European, not African, not part of the American main, but West Indian, sui generis, with no parallel anywhere else.” This is the most profound finding this writer shares in terms of the Caribbean colonial experience, that it has provided the matrix of a singular phenomenon of human existence, given many terms and qualities, but incomparable in its entirety. CLR James was a huge proponent of Federation; he was an intellectual father of his people incarcerated by Eric Williams, when feared to be a Trotskyist. It is the ethos of the West Indian, to be afraid of even himself, to think that nationalism is to be erased by the unification of the Antilles. James wrote about this very sentiment in describing West Indian writers, that with the exception of one, Vic Reid, all West Indian writers and thinkers lived outside the West Indies and were educated in the metropolis, the motherland of their oppressors. And Vic Reid himself, when he wrote, it was of Africa, not home from which he was detached. The mind of the West Indian thinkers lives within its own diaspora and in fear of the very ideas generated
within migrant spaces. We go to other places, so we can redefine ourselves at home, as we would wish to be as free, as those in spaces we occupy, in which we are still not free to be, but free to dream of freedom; is how this writer sums up the feelings of CLR James and capture the complexity of the British West Indian intellectual.

W. Arthur Lewis (1915-1991), Caribbean intellectual and first Principal of the University of the West Indies followed in the tradition of his contemporaries CLR James as an avid regionalist and Marcus Garvey as a liberator of the mind and in promoting a spirit of emancipating ourselves culturally and economically. He professed that the West Indian should never beg, never travel around the world trying to gain favour from foreigners, but to understand that he is endowed with unique gifts and abilities to create his own wealth and to “do for himself”. In his speech “On Being Different” to graduates at Cave Hill, this St Lucian impressed upon them that ‘being different’ meant understanding difference. That to be truly learned one must engage comparison. To be a writer, one must study other writers, to be a historian, one must read histories and to learn a language, one must study other languages. He believed success to come from focus and application of self and that ‘being different’ as West Indians we must be grounded in the widest possible knowledge of the world and how it works. He throws out the idea that insularity was useless and that if we “locked ourselves in a box of pure Westindianness” (p. 523) we shall have achieved nothing worthwhile.

Conceptual Evaluation

The Intellectual tradition among the Hispanophone Caribbean was the earliest aroused and propagated. It is understood that Spain’s imperial history in the New World was the earliest and many ideas germinated among its thinkers, which were the bases for contemporary theories such as that of Braithwaite’s creolization and Beckford’s plantation economy and persistent poverty. The Hispanophone thinkers however were, in contrast to the French Antilles, not only deeply nationalistic, but beyond the elite classes, deeply separatist and militant against the Spanish and then US dominance. However, although the Revolution was the liberating force, it never addressed issues of race, of women and women’s rights, and the Hispanic Caribbean was in effect, among the last to abolish the slave trade and slavery itself.

Indeed, one of the lasting weaknesses of Hispanic identity in the Atlantic New World is its non-acknowledgement of African ancestry and legacies, and its almost negligent status given to its indigenous mestizo people of mixed heritage. The dominance of Eurocentric concepts of class and colour, for which the Hispanic administration was the most meticulous for grading at least 18-20 shades of skin, blood-counting and human miscegenated typologies from which the defamatory mulatto (like a mule) comes, complete with hair types and textures from 'fine to course' and several other demarcations of physical human qualities, have never quite disappeared from the Hispanic culture. It must be noted however that Hispanic creolization was very different from other hemispheric societies. The Spanish deported as much Hispanics from Spain as there were already living in Cuba, Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico, making these truly settler colonies, the reason for the almost complete absence of any creolized forms of language of a variety distinct from Spain. Nationalistic impressions of language were only enforced upon US threat of
imposing English. Ironically, anti-imperialist sentiments of the hispanophone Caribbean against Spanish cultural infiltration was embraced by the very people who sought to escape it, in the face of US rulership. Cuba’s nationalism could only be said to have been preserved within the Revolution, and then, not still among the land-owning elite who took refugee status in the US.

The Francophone thinkers, like the early Hispanophone thinkers are regarded as seminal to Black identity because their thinking so intricately involved the masses. The hispanophone worker and the Francophone lumpen proletariat were the revolutionaries, the source of the Jacobin ideal, the anti-monarchists, the purveyors of liberty, equality and fraternity. There are but two women thinkers presented. A remarkable point of note is what appears to be an almost wholesale ‘ownership’ of Créolité by the Francophone writers coming out of the 1989 *Elogé de la Créolité* (In Praise of Creoleness) a work produced by Raphaël Confiant, Patrick Chamoiseau and Jean Bernabé. An ideology Condé found to be of contemporary relevance to French Antillian writing. Boland does not put into perspective, the overlapping of this intellectual traditions, but a close chronological reading will reveal that two decades prior Edward Kamau Braithwaite in 1970 wrote the essay *Timehri* and in 1971 published *The Development of a Creole Society, 1770-1820* (the findings of his doctoral thesis in 1968). A closer reading will also show that the seeds of creolization were laid by Fernando Ortiz’s (1881-1969) coining of the concept and thesis he developed on transculturation. Creolization as an experiential process and matrix for cultural shaping does involve transculturation, multiculturalism, plurality, diversity, and migration and Caribbean identities are born of this what Barry Higman (1999) calls ‘fragmentation.’ It would appear that the French, on Créolité, having not experienced a post-colonial spring with its anti-colonial counter-memories and narratives towards nationalism, are fairly late to the party!

The French, conflicted though they appear, may however have been strongest where the British thinkers were weakest and vice versa, since with the exception of Haiti, there was no attempt at liberation from imperial control. French thinkers had to reflect on their black identity in a society where such identities were sanctioned, but the British with Marcus Garvey and others, faced strong persecution for Pan Africanist sentiments.

The Critique

The Hispanophone study in Bolland’s edition, comprises thirteen thinkers of whom only two are Puerto Rican women, Lola Rodrigues de Tio being the oldest and Esmerlda Santiago being the youngest. Ironically, the unity of cultural identity promoted by Rodriguez was exactly what Santiago in her 1993 “Island of Lost Causes” wrote about as a most “elusive cultural identity.” (p.157). The body of literature are shared among Cubans and Puerto Ricans with no incorporation of the literature of the people of the Dominican Republic for the nationalism of that country. It would appear that Santo Domingo as was then called, because of their lobby to annex themselves to the US in 1868, and the failure of this venture being born out, not by their own resistance, but by a rejection of the US Congress not to govern so many black and brown people, that the Dominican Republic was regarded as a possible ‘traitor’ to the cause of the Spanish Revolution in much the same way that they were not helpful to the earlier movement towards the
Saint Domingue Rebellion which resulted in the French Revolution. Bolland might have elaborated on the exclusion of this large Hispanic population, the first Capital of New Spain in the New World, that the historic exceptionality of that space might be understood for its dearth contribution to the hispanophone intellectual history.

A general feature of Bolland’s work, which he himself describes as a conspicuous gender bias, is the scarcity of women intellectuals approximately 8 of 45 foundational and influential works, which might reflect the gender imbalance of the earlier 20th century when two world wars brought about a spring of colonial consciousness and reflections contending with the West Indian destiny. It is perhaps not known that in the 19th century Cuba alone produced several women who worked beyond the home, farm and taverns, as journalists and freedom fighters, who also suffered persecution and exile, but who fought for equal work and pay and abortion rights. It was a movement that Fidel termed “a revolution within a revolution” though he himself did not in his independence speech refer to women or women's rights. Indeed, even the language affirmed maleness in the Patria or Fatherland which stood in defiance of the ideals of the motherland.

The under-representation of women struggle in the nationalistic movement is evident by the inclusion of two Puerto Rican, no Cuban intellectuals, two French contemporaries in Marys Condé and Edwidge Danticat who writes biographically from the diaspora on the experience of her native homeland Haiti as can be seen in We are Ugly, But We are Here a journal entirely composed of memories, some lived and some passed down in stories, particularly of the first Haitian Queen Anacaona who was murdered by the Spaniards, the Taino Queen who gave the land its name Ayiti. Bolland however explains that the historical treatment of women confined to domestic spheres of living, kept them away from public life, he say “none of them were expected to make statements about their identities, cultures and societies.” For these reasons, there appear to be no early writings were produced by women.

In Bolland’s work half of the collection are dedicated to the British intellectual tradition. He offers that this imbalance is based on his greater familiarity with the Anglophone works and his “total ignorance” (p.xxii) as he puts it with the Dutch Caribbean for example. The British tradition saw the inclusion of four female writers in the works of Elsa Goveia, Michelle Cliff, Merle Hodge and Elma Francois. It might have been strengthened by the early writings of Una Marson and Louise Bennett, the postcolonial champions such as Silvia Wynter who long proclaimed the “overrepresentation of man,” or Jamaica Kinkeade and contemporary writers such as Rhoda Reddock and Caroline Cooper, already reviewed as modern philosophers. One oddity is that Bolland often necessarily, cited the work of Sydney Mintz without the benefit including him as an American Anthropologist, but it is undeniable the vast contributions made by both Mintz who brought to light several critical areas of Caribbean history left unexplored and at risk of being erased from the collective memory, such as the writing of the history of the settlement of Free Villages and what land ownership and autonomous community settlements meant to Black Jamaicans in the immediate post-emancipation years. It is also integral the seminal work of B.W. Higman and Roy Augier as historians and preservers of Caribbean identity and memories. The fairly recent project to combine Caribbean intellectual tradition
and its social, economic and political history into an archived collection of West Indian History is a most significant point of reflection.

**Points of Reflection**

Caribbean intellectual traditions bespeak ideas of personhood, community, nationalism and further regionalism. There are tendencies to see these paths as conflicted, when in reality they are not. Pedro Albizu Campos spoke in his letter of the need to move towards Puerto Rico’s national independence, the Confederation of the Hispanic Antilles and the Latin American Union. The liberation of the masses, meant the liberation of the land, of the neighbourhood and the hemisphere. This falls into a stark and unfortunate contradiction for the British Caribbean which saw Federation as a threat to nationalism, and the uncontiguous geography of the islands as a hindrance to unity. It has been articulated in this writers research with persons alive at the time, that;

Jamaica would have lost a great leader like Norman Manley, for he would have to go live in Port of Spain as President of the Federation. We would not have had our national flag, our anthem or our wonderful ackee and saltfish!

It is rarely noted that a significant number of developed and first world countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia, Russia, Nigeria, Germany, India, Switzerland, Mexico among others despite being profoundly nationalistic, have all applied regionalism, and federalist structures to governance, if only for the clear advantage of geographical proximity. The intellectual traditions were failed by subsequent generations and exploited by the dominant world right-left ideologies and bourgeoning cold war politics of the times. Memories of the colonial thinkers were disregarded to the detriment today of countries such as Jamaica whose future de-escalated while those nations it shunned, have surpassed it in economic development.

**Conclusion: On Colonial Identity and Memory**

Stuart Hall in deconstructing myths of cultural identity concluded that.

> "Questions about identity are always questions about representation. About invention and not simply the discovery of tradition. They are exercises in selective memory and they almost always involve the silencing of something in order to allow something else to speak." (p.579)

Hall’s lived experiences navigating complex race relations both at home and abroad led him to conclude that defining ourselves must always involve the ‘silencing and remembering’ for identity is always about producing in the future, an account of the past, which signifies that identity creation is always, he claims, a narrative and a story told to oneself of who you are, where you came from, but most importantly where you are going. We step into our identities and images we paint from past pain, past perspectives and past trauma and past fears. He believed we bring specific things together, a retention of old customs – our Africanisms which
were always unrecognized, unreflected and deeply subconscious, but which become altered and influenced by colonization; but that we ourselves become that which typifies colonial habits. We create Little England, and Little France, reject our creoles and master the mother tongue and as Trotz (2015) claims, our islands neighbours begin to colonize each other through visas and immigration controls and rejections. How the Haitian, Guyanese and Jamaican is treated in Barbados and Trinidad is not necessarily how the Antiguan or Caymanian is treated. These behaviours of high and low cultures are traceable to colonial traditions and they are practiced negatively within the Caribbean today, where nationalistic pride, have done nothing more than to widen the divide and memories of the past are either lost to us or re-crafted for political prestige.

Hall reminds, that identity is not just something we tell ourselves about ourselves, it is something that predictable changes our historical circumstances and reshapes our futures.

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1 Discussion and email conversation with Rovan Locke (December 2020)