TOWARDS A TAXONOMY OF THE DOMINANT ANTI-COLONIAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF CARIBBEAN CULTURE

by

Dr. Richard L. W. Clarke

Department of Language, Linguistics and Literatures

U. W. I, Cave Hill

The Suspicion of / Resistance to 'Theory'[1]

This essay originates in my perception that there is a lingering but unjustified suspicion in some quarters of the Post-colonial world in general and the Caribbean in particular of so-called 'Theory.'[2] There are a number of possible reasons for this unease with 'Theory.' It may be partly based on the perceived 'new-fangledness' of 'Theory' and thus may in part be something of a 'generational thing.' Another possible reason may be a reluctance to admit that meaning does not inhere in the text itself but is, rather, a function of the interpretive paradigms which we inevitably apply. Many critics, even today, are unwilling to admit that interpretation does not occur in a vacuum and is determined by the nature of the questions put to the text. Yet another cause may be what I believe is a misapprehension concerning the alleged ahistoricism of many contemporary philosophical and theoretical schools. This criticism, frequently directed at proponents of the

Yale School of Deconstruction (De Man), serves as the basis for a sweeping indictment of all Post-Structuralism which in fact ignores the heterogeneity of Post-Structuralisms.[3] Caribbean critics who would profess allegiance to the 'intentional' and the 'affective' fallacies or the purely 'objective' approach of formalist modes of criticism such as that practised by the New Critics have been few and far between in a region where a broadly sociological approach to criticism has been predominant, albeit in various forms.

However, I believe that what resistance to 'Theory' there is mostly derives from an understandable fear of what appears to be a new wave of intellectual colonisation emanating from Europe and North America and which is thought to be part and parcel of what in recent years some have termed 'cultural imperialism' and which even more recently others have taken to calling 'globalisation.' The latter is the term for what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have termed the 'process of the world becoming a single place.'[4] For many, this process is something to be rejected as merely another 'form of domination by 'First World' countries over 'Third World' ones, in which individual distinctions of culture and society become erased by an increasingly homogeneous global culture, and local economies are more firmly incorporated into a system of global capital.'[5] The principal argument against a global culture and economy is that these phenomena 'did not just spontaneously erupt but originated in and continue to be perpetuated from the centres of capitalist power.'[6] The process of globalisation is thought to be inseparable from the structure of power relations which exists in the world today which is, of course, a legacy of European imperialism: it is a 'continuation of an imperial dynamic of influence, control, dissemination and hegemony that operates according to an already initiated structure of power

that emerged in the sixteenth century in the great confluence of imperialism, capitalism and modernity.'[7]

Viewed from this point of view, 'Theory' is merely one more manifestation of the tragic phenomenon described in the previous paragraph, a perpetuation of what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin term 'top-down dominance.'[8] *Post-colonial* theorists like Said, Bhabha, and Spivak who have engaged in a sustained way with Post-Structuralist philosophies of language and literature, are often taken to task, implicitly or explicitly, by their *anti-colonial*[9] critics for being Eurocentric, that is, for regurgitating in their own research on the Post-colonial condition the dominant contemporary European modes of thinking, and are often charged with something akin to following the latest fad.[10] Many of their most fierce critics (e.g. Benita Parry), are largely honest about their own Marxist and, by extension, materialist affiliations.[11] They acknowledge their preference for earlier dialectical, anti-colonial modes of cultural decolonization epitomized by Fanon, and emphasise their rejection of what Parry unjustly terms the 'facile textualism' that informs the work of theorists such as Bhabha.[12] My point in this essay is, however, that many of those most hostile towards 'Theory,' especially within the Caribbean region, are not always as honest about the Eurocentric modes of thought which also inevitably inhabit their own perspectives.

My argument here is, in short, that what opposition to 'Theory' there is in the region is most often mounted upon the basis of an adherence to the dominant, equally Eurocentric critical paradigms handed down from earlier eras, an affiliation that is not always acknowledged. I would like to

suggest that there are at least four dominant paradigms (this taxonomy is by no means exhaustive) which I will attempt to outline with the broadest of strokes in this paper. My argument in this regard is, too, that, even though these paradigms were undoubtedly appropriate to earlier stages of the process of decolonisation and certainly seminal in their influence, their usefulness has been severely compromised in several important ways in the light of recent research principally in the philosophy of language and on the nature of human identity.

The Dominant Critical Paradigms

The Modernist

A useful starting point for my purposes is Homi Bhabha.[13] He distinguishes between two important models of West Indian criticism, the 'Leavisite/Universalist' and the 'Nationalist' which he associates with the work of Kenneth Ramchand and Gordon Rohlehr respectively. Ramchand's outlook is one, Bhabha points out, inspired by F. R. Leavis. This influence is quite clear when Ramchand states that 'literature matters as literature, not as a substitute for something else', that 'close reading and verbal analysis' are imperative, and that literature has a Sidneyesque moral impact upon 'feeling, thoughts and standards of living.'[14] Bhabha contends that the 'material *specificity* of how language works . . . evaporates in the religiosity of immanent universal meanings that Leavis proposes and Ramchand echoes' because differences of class, gender and race are 'always superseded in the quest for universal meanings' and results in the 'affirmation of a Transcendental Human Nature.'[15] Ramchand overlooks, Bhabha adds, not only Leavis's

Eurocentrism but also his fierce English nationalism.

A similar indebtedness to some of the central tenets of late Victorian and early Modernist thought can also be glimpsed in the work of the early Kamau Brathwaite.[16] The latter's attempts both to construct a sense of the West Indian literary tradition and to 'root' the literary in the specifics of the Caribbean natural and social landscape did not only amount to what Nadi Edwards describes correctly as an 'interrogation, inversion and redeployment of the Arnoldian/Eliotian constellation of ideas.'[17] While the process of 'abrogation and appropriation' to which Edwards alludes can certainly be glimpsed in the way especially that Brathwaite uses key Eliotesque terms like 'dissociation of sensibility'[18] to somewhat different ends or in his allusions to the relationship between 'tradition' and the 'individual talent,'[19] the degree to which Brathwaite's project at this stage of his career is imbricated in the organicist and historicist problematic which largely informed nineteenth century European thought (epitomised by Kant, Herder and Hegel) ought not to be underemphasised.[20]

The specifics are understandably divergent, given the different time and place. The socio-historical factors of exile and homelessness are the glue that binds West Indian literary works of various genres together, according to Brathwaite, factors that would seem to stand in stark contradistinction to the largely formalist criteria which inform the autotelic model of literary history famously articulated by Eliot as well as many of his other seminal statements.[21] However, the theoretical problematic is, upon closer inspection, identical: to be precise, the urge to establish a sense of continuity between disparate literary endeavours by stressing a single major organising

principle; the predisposition to think diachronically and in organicist fashion (that is, in terms of 'roots'); the emphasis upon the dialectic of tradition and innovation; etc. Brathwaite's anguished protestations on the question of the deracination of the victims of the African diaspora derive, I would suggest, from the same 'arborescent' problematic (as Liisa Malkki puts it) as that within which the Edmund Burkes, Thomas Carlyles, and Matthew Arnolds of the nineteenth century as well as, more particularly, T. S. Eliot some years later were inclined to operate.[22]

Indeed, Brathwaite's insistence upon the rootedness of literature in the community and its history ('art and coherence can come only out of a coherent pattern of traditional values,'[23] he writes, as a result of which 'no artist . . . can maintain a meaningful flow of work without reference to his society and its tradition'[24]) and his emphasis upon the indispensability of formulating a 'nation language'[25] appropriate to the West Indies seem almost to come straight out of essays by Eliot such as 'The Social Function of Poetry.' Consider Brathwaite's lamentations concerning the 'fragmented'[26] nature of Caribbean culture and the concomitant pervasive 'sense of rootlessness,'[27] or such classic statements as 'the central force of our life of awareness is African. As black people in the Caribbean, that is how we feel it should be,'[28] or his view that in the Caribbean, the

> recognition of an ancestral relationship with the folk or aboriginal culture involves the artist . . . in a journey into the past and hinterland which is at the same time a movement of possession into present and future. Through this movement of possession we become ourselves, truly our own creators. . . .[29]

Compare these with such comments of Eliot as 'poetry differs from every other art in having a value for the people of the poet's race and language, which it can have for no other'[30]; or the view

that there is 'no art more stubbornly national than poetry'[31]: a

> people may have its language taken away from it, suppressed, and another language compelled upon the schools; but unless you teach that people to *feel* in a new language, you have not eradicated the old one, and it will reappear in poetry, which is the vehicle of feeling.[32]

Brathwaite would seem intent, both in his earlier critical essays on West Indian literature and in his poetry, upon proving this very point.[33] He would, arguably, find little to disagree with concerning Eliot's admonition that the poet's 'direct duty is to his language, first to improve, second to extend and improve'[34]: in 'expressing what other people feel . . . he is making people more aware of what they feel already, and therefore teaching them something about themselves.'[35]

The Marxist

If the first major critical paradigm may be termed the Modernist, I would argue that Rohlehr's critical writings ought to be viewed in relation to the second and perhaps most important critical paradigm operative in the study of Caribbean culture: the Marxist. This approach is espoused by such notables as C. L. R. James, Aimé Césaire, George Lamming, and the Kenyan Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, among others.[36] The Marxist Base/superstructure model implicitly or explicitly informs the majority of the cultural criticism written in the Caribbean. It was the classic *Study Caste, Class, and Race* by the African American Marxist Oliver Cromwell Cox[37] which has provided a whole generation of non-European historians and critics who have come to prominence since the Second World War (such as Eric Williams) with the basic rudiments of a Marxist account of anti-negro racism at least in the Atlantic world.[38] The gist of their argument is a familiar one: the

historical phenomenon of colonialism and the racism attendant upon it emerged during and have been an integral part of the capitalist stage of European history (from its beginnings in the mercantilist period to its blossoming after the Industrial Revolution). The successful development on a large scale of commerce and industry in Europe and the gradual rise to social dominance of the bourgeoisie was founded upon the availability of cheap raw materials. These, together with other natural resources (such as gold and diamonds, etc.), they found in and imported from other lands which Europeans 'discovered' as they started to look beyond their own geographical borders. With the conquest of the so-called New World by Columbus in 1492 and its subsequent colonisation and development, the need for labour on a hitherto unprecedented scale to work in the mines, fields, etc. propelled both the enslavement of the native population and the importation of immense numbers of human beings from Africa to meet the demand for labour. The slave is the example par excellent of capitalism at work, of course: the slave-owner is able to extract from his/her labour the maximum amount of what Marx terms 'surplus value' in *Capital*. This exploitation of both native and imported peoples subsequently necessitated the invention of ideological justifications. Racism for these critics is an ideology designed to legitimate the most vicious excesses involved in the enslavement of one group of people by another for economic profits. In this model, racism is an ideology ultimately reducible, in the final analysis, to the class-structure.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o offers perhaps the best summation of the indispensability of the Marxist approach to the study of literature in the Post-colonial world in general and the Caribbean in particular.[39] His thesis is that the literary canon was a useful tool of imperialism in the heyday of

colonialism and continues to be so in the present era of neocolonialism. Rejecting all ahistorical approaches to the study of literature, Ngugi argues that literature 'as a creative process and also as an end is conditioned by historical social forces and pressures': literature is 'partisan' precisely because any writer 'comes from a particular class and race and nation.'[40] A national literature is, thus, 'not only a reflection of that people's collective reality, collective experience, but also embodies that community's way of looking at the world and its place in the making of that world' -- it 'both reflects reality and also attempts to persuade to take a certain attitude to that reality.'[41]

Ngugi is particularly interested in the role played by the various cultural practices in the colonialist and imperialist process:

> to make economic and political control the more complete the colonizing power tries to control cultural environment: education, religion, language, literature, songs, forms of dances, every form of expression, hoping to control a people's values and ultimately their world outlook, their image and definition of self.[42]

In short, cultural imperialism was 'part and parcel of the thorough system of economic and political oppression of the colonized peoples', literature being a 'more subtle weapon' because it works through 'influencing emotions, the imagination, the consciousness of a people in a certain way; to make the colonized see the world as seen, analysed, and defined by the artists and intellectuals of the Western ruling classes'[43] in ways that were most often racist or at least ethnocentric in their formulation.

Ngugi accordingly views the struggle for national liberation as a 'dialectical negation of the colonial process.'[44] This is preeminently an economic and political struggle, one necessarily waged

under the banner of ‘racial nationalism’[45]: it is, he writes, a Manichaean conflict, ‘“we” black people against “them” whites; Africans versus Europeans.’[46] The racial form of this struggle is inevitable because ‘under colonialism, exploitation and privilege take the form of an iron caste structure.’[47] In other words, in Ngugi’s scheme of things, skin-colour is an accidental feature of the essentially economic relationship that underpins colonialism as a result of which racism is ultimately reducible to its economic roots in class-antagonism.

The struggle to decolonise is also waged at the cultural level, however, the goal of which is to ‘restore the African personality to its true human creative potentialities in history,’[48] The culture of the coloniser must be rejected and replaced with that which embodies a ‘structure of values *dialectically* opposed to those of the ruling class of the oppressing race and nation.’[49] The ‘aim is in other words to change a people’s world outlook, . . . to seize back the right and the initiative to define oneself’[50] by substituting Africentric for Eurocentric cultural products, especially within the education system. Such a ‘committed’[51] orature and literature ‘defines a people not in terms of always being acted upon but also in terms of actors.’[52] It is a but a short step from Ngugi’s thinking here to his eventual rejection altogether of the language of the coloniser.[53]

What Bhabha describes as Rohlehr’s ‘nationalistic’ model of criticism falls, I would assert, well within the parameters outlined above. The influence on the endeavours of Ngugi, Lamming, Brathwaite, Rohlehr, et al. of the Cultural Nationalist / Black Arts Movement in the U.S.A. (Malcolm X, Stokeley Carmichael, etc.) as well as its Pan-Africanist predecessors (W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, etc.), similarly shaped as these all were by a mixture of Marxist and

Nationalist thought, is one that ought to be clear.[54] Hence, such statements by Rohlehr as: 'Truly creative writing about the past and the present'[55] has always been concerned with this need to 'understand and explore "the basic pressures inherent" in the West Indian situation. It has always been a question of trying to understand self, of self-knowledge.'[56] A crucial part of this process is the attempt to 'counter the numerous damaging stereotypes which white people invented about black people'[57] in order to 'reject the idea that the blacks were simply the objects, and never the subjects, of their history until comparatively recent times.'[58]

Bhabha offers an important critique of such 'anti-colonialist, anti-racist 'Nationalist' criticism.'[59] Engaged as it is in the not unlaudable task of 'image-analysis,'[60] he argues, it represses the 'ideological and discursive *construction* of racial difference.'[61] Attention to the negative stereotyping of non-Europeans 'demands a mimetic reading'[62] which seeks to refer the text's 'representations to a pre-given reality.'[63] This results in a 'mode of criticism that emphasises the signified as independent of the *means* of its representation.'[64] Demands that the 'derogatory stereotype . . . be replaced by the positive . . . images'[65] is made on the basis, Bhabha contends, that the 'stereotype is *distorted* in relation to a *given* norm or model.'[66] The 'Black image'[67] is often a function of a 'given socialist-nationalist thesis of liberation'[68] which is 'frequently accompanied by a Lukácsian emphasis on "typicality" and "totality"'[69] as well as an unquestioned dialectical model of history.

The Existentialist

The third major paradigm, the Existentialist, betrays a mixture of influences drawn from continental European philosophy via the work of Frantz Fanon in particular. Preeminent among these influences is Existentialist Phenomenology. (There are indissoluble links between the Existentialist and the Marxist paradigm. Perhaps, therefore, instead of thinking in terms of distinctions between the various paradigms described, one should think in terms of a Derridean 'play of difference.' Indeed, as I hope to show, Ngugi's Manichaean view of decolonisation is clearly indebted to Fanon's dialectical view thereof in such classic works as *The Wretched of the Earth*, predicated as this certainly is upon the Hegelian Master/slave dialectic.[70]) Fanon offers in *The Wretched of the Earth* a striking rethinking of Marx's Base/superstructure model in which it is the facticity of skin colour which is pre-eminent rather than the economic. (In other words, racism is not reducible to economics.) He amends Cox's seminal re-interpretation of Marx's architectural metaphor in order to stress the primacy (and, thus, irreducibility) of race, rather than economics, within the colonial context. He argues that it is necessary to adapt Marx's model to the specifics of the colonial situation: it is 'neither the act of owning factories, nor estates, nor a bank balance which distinguishes the governing classes. The governing race is first and foremost those who come from elsewhere, those who are unlike the original inhabitants, the "others."'[71] Hence, he argues, the

> originality of the colonial context is that economic reality, inequality and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities . . . what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race. . . . In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem.[72]

For Fanon, it is thus on the basis of skin colour that the colonial world may be said to be a 'world

cut into two',[73] a 'Manichaean world.'[74]

Drawing upon the Hegelian Master/slave dialectic which informs Existentialist Phenomenology, Fanon's argument is that no human consciousness exists in a vacuum, least of all the negro's. He writes: 'not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man'[75] (in speaking solely of the male, Fanon attempts to speak for both male and female):

> I *subjected* myself to an *objective* examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism [*sic*], racial defects, slave-ships. . . . I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood?[76]

For the negro, living in the white world gives rise to a 'burden' of 'corporeal malediction' which has been placed upon him 'by the other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories.'[77] 'My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recoloured, clad in mourning in that white winter day,' he writes.[78]

Lamming speaks, like Fanon, of the Negro 'becoming conscious of his own presence as a result of the regard of the Other'[79] (which then 'becomes a *fact* of the man's existence as a Negro'[80]) and of the 'shame that touches every consciousness that feels it has been *seen*.'[81] He advises in a Sartrean/Fanonian vein that the 'Negro is a man whom the Other regards as a Negro.'[82] The result is a split psyche: this

> dichotomy, the split, as it were, which may exist at the very centre of this consciousness, shall have been created by that old, and it would seem eternal conflict between the naming of a thing and a knowledge of it. . . . Language is intentional, and the intention seems clearly part of the human will to power. A

name is an infinite source of control.[83]

Accordingly, it is by virtue of the ‘fundamental need to redefine himself for the comprehension of the Other’[84] that the Negro writer, Lamming argues, ‘joins hands, not so much with a Negro audience, as with every other writer whose work is a form of self-enquiry, a clarification of relations with other men, and a report of his own very highly subjective conception of the possible meaning of man’s life.’[85] The Negro writer joins all other ‘Others’ (females, other non-Europeans) in the quest for self-redefinition, that is, in an effort to redefine the categories and classifications imposed upon him or her.

Freudian Psychoanalysis / Jungian Analytical Psychology

It is precisely at this juncture that the Existentialist paradigm blurs into the fourth major paradigm, one shaped by Freudian Psychoanalysis and Jungian Analytical Psychology and again articulated primarily by Fanon. Assuming the primacy of skin colour over economic considerations, Fanon proceeds to proffer an essentially Freudian account of the colonial subject in which it is not the sexual drives but the sense of self-worth which has been repressed, a repression which has plagued the history of a whole people. It is the communal nature of this trauma which evidently makes Fanon look beyond Freud to Jung’s notion of the *collective* unconscious. He argues that what he views as the negro's ‘pathological condition’ is equatable with a form of neurosis. This, he contends, is the consequence of the fact of being black, non-European and subaltern in a racist, Eurocentric socio-cultural order dominated by white people. The inevitable product of the processes of acculturation inflicted upon the negro is a split psyche: the negro internalises, to the

detriment of his psychic equilibrium, the privileges accorded to whiteness as well as the denigrations of blackness that historically form such an undeniable part of European culture. This results in the formation of a curiously hybrid creature who, although endowed with black skin, nevertheless partakes of an undeniably Eurocentric collective unconscious. The negro, consequently, internalises and, importantly, regurgitates the racist and negrophobic archetypes produced thereby in what is, from an Existentialist viewpoint, the ultimate act of self-denial and *mauvaise foi*.

Arguing strikingly that the collective unconscious is at least as much culturally acquired as it is physiologically inherited, Fanon contends that the individual unconscious of the West Indian in particular and the negro in general is necessarily shaped by the Eurocentric world in which he grows up and is educated and where he subsequently lives, moves and has his being. Self-division is the consequence of 'the unreflected imposition of culture'[86]: 'I read white books and I take into myself little by little all the prejudices, the myths, the folklore which come to us from Europe.'[87] It is in this manner that the West Indian 'has taken over all the archetypes of the European', a necessarily psychologically-harmful process for the negro precisely because in '*Europe, the black man is the symbol of evil.*'[88] Fanon stresses that

> the West Indian has recognised himself as black, but, via a shift in the moral meaning, he has perceived (the collective unconscious) that one is negro to the extent that one is bad, blind, wicked, instinctual. . . . In the collective unconscious, black = ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality. In other words, he is Negro who is immoral.[89]

'Moral consciousness implies,'[90] for the negro, a

> kind of scission, a fracture of consciousness into a bright part and an opposing

> black part. In order to achieve morality, it is essential that the black, the dark, the Negro vanish from consciousness.[91]

The result is a decentered subjectivity in which the negro is alienated from his own body.

Much philosophical and creative energy has evidently been devoted to revalorising precisely that traumatically repressed and denigrated African element within the collective unconscious of the region. Brathwaite, for example, repeatedly writes of the repressed but not eradicated presence of African elements within 'New World and African folk cultures.'[92] African culture, he argues, contributed famously to the process of creolization which is the hallmark of Caribbean culture: it 'not only crossed the Atlantic, it crossed, survived, and creatively adapted itself to its new environment. Caribbean culture was therefore not pure African, but an adaptation.'[93] Lamming, too, writes along implicitly Freudian lines: 'Africa has remained a blank', the 'concept of Africa . . . has not percolated through the vital layers of the West Indian consciousness.'[94] This has resulted in the 'fracture of personality' and 'fear of the "Africa thing,"' a lacuna that is rooted in both the colonial and the neocolonial education system (which has remained essentially no different from its predecessor): 'Where African horizons appeared, then negation became a principle.'[95] It is this 'dilemma that has fertilized the West Indian imagination in the writing of poetry and prose fiction,'[96] Lamming contends.

For Wilson Harris, by contrast, what he calls 'Arts of wholeness are less easily defined than politics of repression and sublimation.'[97] Where others emphasise the trauma of repression, Harris advances the possibility of individuation. The curious claim is often made that Harris is something

of prototypical deconstructionist, a claim for which I have been able to see little evidence (if deconstruction is used in the precise Derridean sense of this term) given that his philosophical allegiance, consciously or unconsciously, is largely to Analytical Psychology. Drawing upon Jung's therapeutic concept of Art, to wit, its capacity to discover what it is that would meet the unconscious needs of an age, Harris's thesis is that there is a 'philosophy of history'[98] in the form of a 'profound art of compensation'[99] that lies 'buried in the arts of the imagination'[100] of the Caribbean basin. His concern is with what he describes as the 'epic stratagems available to Caribbean man in the dilemmas of history which surround him,'[101] that is, with those compensatory cultural measures to which the inhabitants of the so-called 'New World' have recourse in the wake of the ravages historically wrought by European imperialism, slavery and racism. In a nutshell, Harris is of the view that healing archetypes inherent in certain mythical patterns found in the cross-cultural folk arts of the region (the region benefits from four important legacies in this regard--the African, the native American, the Asian and the European, he argues) provide the means by which the psychic self-division consequent upon the region's brutal history, so aptly described by Fanon and which so many critics read into the career of writers like Walcott, can be healed.

The motif of the phantom limb, for example, which Harris glimpses in many cultural practices in the region gestures towards the 're-assembly of dismembered man or god'[102] betokened by those myths of re-memberment which are found throughout human culture and not just in the so-called New World. Myths like the limbo myth look towards a future of reintegration, rather than the past of disintegration, connoting the 'renascence of a new corpus of sensibility'[103] that can 'translate

and accommodate African and other legacies within a new architecture of cultures.'[104] What he describes as 'this ground of accommodation, this art of creative coexistence' possessed of the 'strangest capacity of renewal,' albeit one 'born of great peril,' is one of the 'utmost importance and native to the Caribbean, perhaps to the Americas as a whole' precisely because it points the Caribbean away from what he terms 'apartheid and ghetto fixation.'[105]

Harris's attitude in all this does not seem far different from Walcott's well-known contention that

> servitude to the muse of history has produced a literature of recrimination and despair, a literature of revenge written by the descendants of slaves or a literature of remorse written by the descendants of masters. Because this literature serves historical truth, it yellows into polemic or evaporates in pathos.[106]

Similar, too, is Walcott's emphasis on putting the past behind (without necessarily forgetting it) by laying to one side that 'fitful muse, memory'[107] and turning our attention to the future: 'arrival must be seen as the beginning, not the end of our history.'[108]

Emerging Paradigms

There are other interpretive paradigms that have been struggling to come to the fore in the region in recent times but which have not as yet attained predominance. One such model which, although still in its relative infancy, seems destined to become a dominant model is what, in deference to contemporary usage, I would characterise as the Post-colonial (as opposed to *anti-colonial*), although it may be more accurate to think in terms of the existence of several different but inter-related Post-colonialism*s*. Influenced by the sustained engagement of theorists such as Said,

Bhabha, and Spivak with indispensable critical developments that have occurred in Europe and North America in the wake of Saussure's critique of the sign, some critics of West Indian culture have begun somewhat tentatively to operate, consciously or unconsciously, within problematics derived from one or more of the following schools of criticism in particular: Derridean Deconstruction, Bakhtinian Dialogic criticism, and Foucauldian Discursive criticism. I will mention only briefly here what they all have in common: a tendency to reject dialectical and antagonistic models of cultural identity in favour of 'differential' (in Derrida's sense of the term 'différance'[109]) models thereof. (See, for example, Bhabha and Stuart Hall.[110]) Precisely because these various models are still in the process of consolidating themselves, I defer intensive discussion of them to another time.[111]

Another important but still emerging paradigm is the Feminist, epitomised by such anthologies as *Out of the Kumbla* edited by Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido.[112] An important influence upon the point of view of the editors is that of African American Feminism, particularly the Womanism evolved by Alice Walker as an alternative to white Feminism.[113] The volume represents an important starting point for the application to Caribbean literature of gender-based modes of interpretation and the essays included encompass a variety of theoretical positions (e.g. Nancy Chodorow's rethinking of Freudian analysis).[114] Another, perhaps more important study is O'Callaghan's *Woman Version*[115] the main strength of which lies in its unabashed engagement with unavoidable issues raised by contemporary Post-Structuralist thought.[116] Again, however, I defer detailled consideration of this developing school of criticism to another time and place.

Conclusion

In conclusion, what hostility to 'Theory' there is in the Caribbean is to a large extent informed, in my view, by a belief in the 'purity' of cultures. It is motivated by the nostalgic dream of someday, somehow reverting to a forever lost but Romantically idealised precolonial era and (re)establishing a paradigm of cultural discourse that has been cleansed of its Europeanity. It is ironically informed, too, by nineteenth century historicist and organicist modes of European thinking, pervaded as these are by the 'roots' metaphor and its variants, that has informed and continues to inform so much scholarship in the region.[117] (This inculcated tendency to think diachronically may very well explain some of the hostility towards 'Theory' which has had the effect of reorienting much contemporary philosophical and theoretical thinking along synchronic lines.)

As Stuart Hall and others have shown, however, the hope of ever recapturing and, indeed, 'expressing' one's cultural 'origins' is ultimately a vain, albeit vital, one.[118] Firstly, such a quest is doomed to end in failure because at the most obvious level, it either disingenuously fails to take into account the inevitability of historical change or simply refuses to acknowledge the 'imaginary',[119] albeit salutary, nature of such an enterprise. Secondly, the quest for 'origins' is predicated upon a belief in cultural 'purity' that conveniently ignores the 'play of difference' upon which, in the view of much recent scholarship, the functioning of all cultures is predicated. In other words, such a view overlooks the 're-vision' and 'misreading' (terms popularised by Bloom), the 'abrogation and appropriation' and 'writing back' (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin) or

'Signifyin(g)' (Gates) which is unavoidable both between cultures and within cultures, that is, between the particular 'texts', literary and non-literary, which constitute specific cultures.[120] Equally importantly, thirdly, such a quest is predicated upon a rather questionable understanding of the nature of 'self-expression' which few linguists familiar with the work of Émile Benveniste on the nature of enunciation would accept today. As Benveniste has shown, subjectivity is less the origin than the product of personal utterances.[121]

ENDNOTES

1. I use “Theory” in this essay as a synonym for contemporary modes of criticism which have emerged in the shadow of Saussure’s radical critique of the sign and which have engaged in a sustained way with continental European philosophy. (See Ferdinand de Saussure ‘From *Course in General Linguistics*,’ in *Critical Theory Since 1965*, ed. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle [Tallahassee: UP of Florida, 1986], pp. 646-657.) The most important of these which I have in mind are Structuralism, Semiotics, Deconstruction, Dialogic criticism, Discursive criticism, Lacanian Psychoanalytic criticism, Post-Structuralist Marxism.

2. A version of this essay entitled ‘Notes Towards a Taxonomy of Critical Approaches to the Study of Caribbean Culture’ was first read at the Seventeenth Annual Conference on West Indian Literature, the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica, April 6-8, 1998.

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5. Ibid., p. 111.

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7. Ibid., p. 113; For more on the notion of globalization see: Albrow, M., *Globalization: Myths and Realities* (London: Roehampton Institute, 1994); Albrow, M., and E. King (eds.), *Globalization, Knowledge and Society* (London: Sage, 1990); King, A. D., *Culture Globalization and the World-System* (London: Macmillan, 1991).

8. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Key Concepts*, p. 113.

9. I use ‘anti-colonial’ and ‘post-colonial’ here in order to differentiate between successive phases of the ongoing process of cultural decolonisation, phases distinguished by their differing theoretical problematics (a difference I discuss briefly towards the end of this essay). I prefer these two terms to the ones ‘Postcolonial criticism’ and ‘Postcolonial Theory’ suggested by Bart Moore-Gilbert (*Postcolonial Theory* [London: Verso, 1998]) and to which they are roughly analogous. My focus in this essay is, evidently, on the anti-colonial phase.

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19. Brathwaite, p. 37.

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