

Competing Memories: The Politics of Remembering Enslavement, Emancipation and Indentureship  
in the Caribbean

March 29-31, 2023

Organized by Sinah Kloß, Andrea Gremels and Ulrike Schmieder  
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## About the Conference

The Caribbean is a space of dynamic and ever-changing memories. Here, as elsewhere, socio-political disparities and power imbalances commonly impact the capacity and means to promote specific memories and historical narratives, through which the past is created, adapted and negotiated. These dynamics influence which processes and memories are included or excluded in specific histories and which versions of the past are reconstructed, selected and interpreted.

The international conference “Competing Memories” hence focuses on the politics of memory and the constructions and representations of plural and divergent memories in Caribbean contexts, especially but not exclusively in relation to enslavement, emancipation and indentureship. As understandings of ‘history’ and ‘memory’ may vary, contributors will look at the different and strategic ways these concepts are used within and in relation to the Caribbean.

The conference is going to take place on March 29–31, 2023 at the [Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies](#) (BCDSS), University of Bonn, Germany. It is co-hosted by the [Society for Caribbean Research](#) (Socare e.V.) and organized by [Sinah Kloß](#) (Bonn), [Andrea Gremels](#) (Frankfurt) and [Ulrike Schmieder](#) (Hannover). It is funded by the BCDSS and the DFG (German Research Foundation).

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Aiello, Francisco (Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata – CONICET, Argentina)

*Construcción de la Memoria en el Caribe Francófono: Tradiciones, Cultura y Lenguas en Patrick Chamoiseau y Camille Moutoussamy*

Las disputas por las versiones del pasado ocupan un lugar central en la cultura del Caribe, dado que la perspectiva histórica dominante ha privilegiado la visión europea, soslayando la mirada de los grupos oprimidos y largamente excluidos de la práctica de la escritura. Tanto *Texaco* de Patrick Chamoiseau (1992) como *Éclats d'Inde* de Camille Moutoussamy (2003) ambos escritores martiniqueños se vertebran sobre el relato oral mediante el cual se busca transmitir la memoria colectiva oyentes incorporados a la textura novelística. Nuestro propósito consiste en realizar una lectura comparativa contrastiva entre estos textos, dedicando mayor atención a la obra de Moutoussamy, puesto que la novela de Chamoiseau que, por cierto, le valió reconocimiento internacional en buena parte gracias al premio Goncourt ha merecido numerosas lecturas críticas, a diferencia de su colega, hasta la fecha escasamente estudiado. Cada uno de

estos proyectos procura visibilizar, mediante la construcción de la memoria sustentada en la transmisión oral, la participación de grupos sociales en la cultura de Martinica: en el caso de Chamoiseau, la informante comparte su memoria que incorpora los recuerdos transmitidos por su propio padre a un ajero ajeno a la cultura del barrio popular que da nombre a la novela; en cambio, Moutoussamy reconoce la amenaza de la pérdida de las tradiciones de la India en particular, la lengua tamil, por lo que su narrador se empeña en propagarlas entre sus descendientes.

Andrade, Marcela (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

*Los murales abakuá: coeficientes visuales de narrativas míticas*

La Sociedad Abakuá ubicada en La Habana, Cuba, es una fraternidad masculina que promueve características sociales, como la ayuda mutua entre sus miembros, y religiosas, través de sus específicas ceremonias; las funerarias. Llanto y las de iniciación, los Plantes, ejecutadas en una lengua específica, brícamo, mayoritariamente heredada de la legua Efik, de influencia

bantú-congolesas. La realización de los rituales caracteriza enormemente los vínculos comunales y el distinto conocimiento Abakuá.

En los últimos pasos de los rituales de iniciación o de entronización de un dignatario (los Barokos) es realizada una procesión donde se presenta públicamente los nuevos integrantes de la membresía. Acompañando ese conmemorativo circuito en las calles del barrio de Pocitos, en Marianao, La Habana, fue posible observar que en los patios de la parte externa de los templos visitados y saludados en ese circuito hay varios murales hechos en sus paredes, de diferentes tamaños, sintetizando momentos relacionados a la narrativa mítica fundacional de la Sociedad Abakuá.

Considerando la elaboración y el análisis de esas imágenes, así como sus positionalidades, investigamos los conceptos que esos murales movilizan al inscribir paisajes de memorias; señalando diferentes capturas, construyendo significados y descripciones de historicidades dinamizadas en el presente cuando, en paralelo, se utilizando su propio sistema gráfico, llamado

Erenyó, para los momentos privados de sus ceremonias rituales.

Bandau, Anja (Leibniz University Hannover, Germany)

*How Not to Talk about Slave Revolution: Early Accounts and Representations of the Revolutionary Events in Haiti*

The question of how to remember the events of the Haitian revolution are imbricated into its first representations only a few years after and also accompanying the events.

It becomes a pertinent question, then, how genre, and more mobile and flexible forms as literary modes (gothic, sentimental...) facilitate, and at the same time mold, channel and even foreclose speech about slavery and (radical) projects of its abolition.

I want to discuss the early representations of the events in Saint-Domingue and how the first tropes of speaking about the events are constituted. Amidst letters, first historical accounts and narratives, between 1792 and 1798, theatre has been one of the early genres that negotiated how the events came into discourse.

Due to its performative character, theater possesses a special potential to enact and thus make legible asymmetric dependencies in the context of slavery, its partial abolition (violent or through reform), and the forms of (future) conviviality to which it could give rise. In contrast to other modes, there exists an extensive body of accessible dramatic texts commenting on the events of slave revolution in Saint-Domingue and inscribing racialized subjects into a Republican canon.

Berndt, Marie (University of Bonn, Germany)

*"the powerful memory of ghosts": Haunting (and) Guilt in Maisy Card's These Ghosts Are Family*

Maisy Card's 2020-novel *These Ghosts Are Family* is preceded by a quote from American poet Lucille Clifton: "... they didn't understand the powerful memory of ghosts". Thus, right upon opening the book, curious readers are presented with a 'they' and an implied 'we', with 'power' and the question who holds and understands it, and with the haunting presence of the past. In short, they are thrown

in at the deep end of the politics of remembering before the ensuing family saga has even begun.

Card's non-chronological, multivocal and highly fragmentary debut novel spotlights distinct moments in a Jamaican family history over the course of seven generations. Haunting memories of slavery permeate almost each chapter, but I argue that they become most politically charged when the narration focuses on the diary of one family member's cruel, plantation-owning ancestor. Originating from the 1880s, this journal has been silently passed on from generation to generation until the 1990s, when its last recipient has to figure out what to do with it. Her moral dilemma opens up a number of crucial questions about the ethics and politics of remembering in the context of colonialism and slavery: who has access to whose memories? Whose memories are preserved and whose are erased? Who makes that decision? Is there a moral responsibility to keep certain memories alive, intact and accessible? Alongside a close reading of Card's fiction, I will draw on Kara Barnette's concepts of *haunting*

*guilt and atonement* as well as on scholarship in the field of postcolonial haunting to address these issues. In doing so, I hope to emphasise the political impetus of fictions like Card's to push society towards a path of productive remembering and atonement.

Blake, Chrisan (University of Zurich, Switzerland)

*Miroir de mémoire? Analyse des récits de Maryse Condé comme réflexion d'une mémoire collective de l'esclavage, de l'engagisme et de l'émancipation dans les Caraïbes*

Dans le cadre de mon travail en tant que professeure de français, j'ai découvert la nouvelle *Pays mêlé* écrite par Maryse Condé, figure majeure de la littérature antillaise dont l'œuvre romanesque fait écho à la réalité complexe des Caraïbes. Depuis des années, cette question ne cesse d'être posée. Qui a le droit de reconstruire l'histoire de peuples exploités ? Les peuples eux-mêmes ou bien leurs maîtres ? Et dans les deux cas, n'y a-t-il pas de biais subjectif à l'œuvre ? Qui alors est la per-

sonne ou bien les personnes idéales habilitées à nous raconter une histoire aussi amère que celle de l'esclavage dans les Caraïbes ?

Et pendant combien de temps après un fait avons-nous le droit d'écrire à propos d'un tel sujet ? Le temps écoulé ne décrédibilise-t-il pas celui qui cherche à construire ce récit ? La véracité des faits s'étiolle-t-elle au fil des années ? Dans le cadre de ce colloque, j'aimerais aborder quelques-unes de ces questions. J'utiliserai comme point de départ la nouvelle *Pays mêlé* ainsi que le roman *Moi, Tituba sorcière... Noire de Salem* écrits par Maryse Condé. Ces deux récits sont des fictions qui donnent à voir des traces de mémoires collectives liées à la colonisation et nous montrent plusieurs exemples de son effet sur la société caribéenne. Ses œuvres nous font comprendre la réflexion des peuples qui habitent dans les Caraïbes pendant et après l'abolition de l'esclavage et de l'engagisme. Mais pouvons-nous considérer ces récits comme une source crédible pour les faits historiques ? Quel crédit pouvons-nous leur accorder ?

À travers cette recherche, je voudrais explorer le cheminement de l'auteure

Maryse Condé dans l'écriture de ces deux œuvres qui peuvent servir de miroir de l'histoire caribéenne. Il est important de connaître l'intention de l'auteure ainsi que sa préparation pour l'écriture de ces deux œuvres qui reflètent presque parfaitement l'histoire coloniale et post-coloniale des Caraïbes. Par le biais d'une approche comparative, je ferai une comparaison des éléments clés de l'histoire tels qu'ils sont présentés par les historiens avec ceux qui sont cités dans ces récits.

Cain, Artwell (University of Aruba, Aruba)

*Some Memories Are Not Negotiable: The Coloniality of Anti-Black Racism*

My central thesis remonstrates that anti-black racism was central to Transatlantic slavery and chattel slavery. I illustrate that the refusal to address reparatory justice for the descendants of those who were enslaved is a representation and continuation of the same disrespect and lack of value for black lives. During the administration of chattel slavery in the Caribbean human beings were transformed into commodities, this means that they did not just only lose

their rights, but they also lost their humanity (Mignolo, 2009). My point of departure is to illustrate that the coloniality of imperial racism was at the root of slave traders, profiteers, authorities, and others behaviour and actions. The same goes for their resisting and rejecting the cessation of this practice due to direct and indirect economic and financial gains. It has been noted that enslaved Africans and others resisted and struggled to regain their freedom and their sense of being. However systemic and structural obstacles were built into the structures of coloniality to pervert and derail their efforts. Transformed to the present the structures of coloniality and anti-black racism are evident and glaring and are still impeding calls for reparations. Memories of the slavery past and its present-day consequences are not parallel and evenly experienced, this paper illustrates that these are non-negotiable.

Castro Maldonado, Juan Felipe (Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany)

*La literatura como espacio intersticial de la cultura: Tradición y contra-memoria en las letras latinoamericanas*

Las memorias de la esclavitud y la emancipación en América Latina se han transmitido por diferentes medios a lo largo de su historia, desde la tradición oral de las prácticas rituales de los africanos esclavizados y sus descendientes en las plantaciones donde fueron sometidos al trabajo racializado, hasta la literatura que algunos de ellos escribieron en las lenguas del colonizador (Juan Francisco Manzano, Maria Firmina dos Reis, Candelario Obeso), y, así mismo, varios escritores canónicos latinoamericanos (Lydia Cabrera, Alejo Carpentier, Rómulo Gallegos). Dentro de una larga tradición entre oralidad y escritura, que comprende un variado registro medial, que incluye tanto la música (canciones, bailes e instrumentos), como amplias colecciones etnográficas, mi ponencia se propone hacer, por una parte, un recorrido histórico por estas memorias a través de la literatura y los géneros predilectos para transmitir las (autobiografía, poesía, cuento, novela), por considerarla uno de los medios históricamente privilegiados para este registro, sin desconocer el conflicto que la atraviesa como parte de un proceso de profundas contradicciones de las que ha surgido el entramado cultural

de la sociedad latinoamericana. Por otra parte, con mi ponencia también me propongo aportar algunas ideas sobre una posible historia alternativa de los africanos y sus descendientes en América Latina a través de algunas obras literarias que han recogido su memoria y han sugerido algunas cronologías, apoyado en autores teóricos sobre la historia y la diáspora africana en las Américas como René Depestre, Jerome Branche, Quince Duncan, Lawrence Prescott.

Carini, Sara (Universidad Católica de Milán, Italy)

*La narración de la esclavitud en el Expediente de reclamación de libertad para una negra natural de Bahamas del Ministerio de Ultramar (siglo XIX). Avance de investigación.*

El presente trabajo nace del interés hacia la posibilidad de recuperar informaciones acerca de cómo se narró la esclavitud en la colonia a partir de las informaciones recopiladas en los documentos de archivo de esa época. La idea es comprender cómo se organizaron las narraciones sobre el su-



jeto esclavizado y cómo lograron mantenerse vigentes a lo largo de varios siglos. Tomando como punto de partida el 'Expediente de reclamación de libertad para una negra natural de Bahamas' disponible en los archivos del Ministerio de Ultramar, mi objetivo será compartir los resultados del análisis del caso que vio Plácida Laurencia enfrentarse a la justicia colonial. De ahí me propongo razonar sobre la estructura de las narraciones propuestas en este documento por medio de la identificación de las instancias (funciones, acciones y discurso) (Barthes) que conforman la narración de la esclavitud propuesta por las instituciones coloniales de la época.

Craveri, Michela (Universidad Católica de Milán, Italy)

*Esclavos mayas para la Isla. Resistencia y cosmovisión de los mayas yucatecos en Cuba*

Con base en un trabajo de campo realizado en Cuba entre las comunidades mayas, descendientes de los esclavos yucatecos llevados a la isla como prisioneros de guerra en el siglo XIX, me propongo reflexionar sobre la memoria de la esclavitud en

estas comunidades, los procesos de transculturación y la adaptación de su cosmovisión dentro del contexto cultural cubano prerevolucionario y posrevolucionario. Se intentará también estudiar las formas de resistencia cultural de los mayas yucatecos a lo largo del siglo XIX, en sus denuncias a las autoridades coloniales de la isla y en sus actos de rebelión y cimarronaje.

Genschow, Karen (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany)

*"Pour moi, c'était hier" – Memoria de la esclavitud en el Caribe y (docu)ficción en Passage du milieu (2001)*

La película *Passage du milieu* (2001) del director martiniqueño Guy Deslauriers (con guión de Patrick Chamoiseau) es una de las pocas producciones audiovisuales que aborda de forma protagónica aquella trayectoria de la trata de esclavos que da nombre al filme – por eso mismo resulta asombroso el silencio académico en torno a él. En la película se narran las diversas estancias de los deportados desde las costas africanas hasta el llamado "nuevo mundo" desde una perspectiva colectiva,

sobre todo a nivel visual; la voz que en una primera instancia pareciera pertenecer a un personaje individual se integra gradualmente en esta visión colectiva, como estrategia de suplir la ausencia de las voces de las víctimas, que no se pueden restablecer como testimonios particulares.

Mi ponencia propone una lectura de la película – de manera tentativa – desde los conceptos de posmemoria y trauma colectivo (Spiller/Mahlke/Reinstädler 2020), que pueden dar cuenta de las estrategias narrativas desplegadas ((ficción de) oralidad, establecimiento de un relato marco anclado en el presente, ausencia de diálogos diegéticos, etc.) y sus efectos para la construcción de la memoria de la esclavitud en el Caribe. Asimismo, indago en el cine como medio de la memoria para abordar, por un lado, *Passage du milieu* como *memory film* (Erl/ Wodianka 2008) en tanto productor de memoria, y, por otro lado, la brecha que se abre entre el cine como medio de difusión de memoria y la escasa recepción y circulación del filme martiniqueño.

Gomes da Cunha, Olívia (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil):

*The Earth is Sweet*

Creating and decomposing are non-exclusive forms of participation that involve nurturing, caring, and transforming. Processes such as creating, undoing, decomposing, and perishing, once the earth as soil takes part in the “politics of life,” render possible the existence of diverse creatures. Humans and other-than-humans not only act as both geological and biological elements. Like hummus and humans, they both belong to the elementals. They activate the transformative cycles through which they interact as elementals, composing and recomposing bodies and earth through metamorphic relations. The gardens of the enslaved and their descendants could be seen as a kind of rupture in various human and environmental exploitation models. They are other ecologies, as they are situated around the different scales and limits of the Plantation. These heterotopic sites create earthly perspectives for the politics of life. They are places

where one escapes (“routing”) and one is rooted, in which rhizomes move forward, where visible and invisible creatures become intertwined. By exploring images of earth-body refraction among the Maroon Cottica Ndyuka who live nearby bauxite extractives areas in Suriname, I seek to make humans, and more-than-humans participants of Maria Puig de La Bellacasa (2021) has called “soil communities.”

Göttl, Teresa (University of Heidelberg, Germany)

*Judiciary Testimonies of Enslaved Persons in Trials against Enslavers - An Underestimated (Re)source of Remembering Slavery?*

In 2008, Philippe Lebrune and Caroline Oudin-Bastide published *Espoir, vertu d'Esclave*, a documentary on the *Affaire Spoutourne* (1831–1834) during which several enslaved persons made use of Article 26 of the *Code Noir* (1685) authorising them to file a complaint with the royal prosecutor. With the help of testimonies at court as well as letters by the colonial officials, the

documentary reconstructs the trial against the overseer Vermeil, accused of mistreating enslaved persons. A similar approach was followed by Gilda Gonfrier who used the report of the *Affaire Vallentin* (1842) published in the *Gazette Officielle de la Guadeloupe* to create a radio drama. Both artistic interpretations make use of historical sources documenting trials against enslavers in the French Caribbean. This ‘practice of unsilencing’ enables a particular approach for understanding lived realities of the enslaved and shows how historical sources and art are interwoven to commemorate slavery. Dominique Rogers even attributes testimonies of enslaved persons a “quasi-therapeutic role” for all those who still struggle with the legacy of slavery.<sup>1</sup> Based on several trials against enslavers and their contemporary reinterpretation, such as the *Affaire Spoutourne* (1831–1842), the *Affaire Douillard-Mahaudière* (1840) and the *Affaire Vallentin* (1842) this paper seeks to analyse in which ways testimonies against enslavers are and can more intensively be used to remember slavery in the French Caribbean,

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<sup>1</sup> Rogers, Dominique, *Slave Judiciary Testimonies in the French Caribbean: What to Do With Them*, in: *Hearing Enslaved Voices. African and*

*Indian Slave Testimony in British and French America, 1700–1848*, ed. by Sophie White / Trevor Burnard, New York 2020, p. 58–78.

as they prove the ability of some enslaved to fight back but without violence, rather with words.

Gremels, Andrea (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany)

*Remembering Slavery through Maryse Condé's Moi, Tituba, sorcière...: Female Protagonism and the Poetics of Witchcraft*

In her historical novel about the witch trials of Salem in 17<sup>th</sup> century Massachusetts, Maryse Condé recalls the story of the female slave Tituba originative from Barbados. With her fictionalized slave protagonist, the writer from Guadeloupe brings the female voice to the fore by recalling the Salem prosecutions through an intersectional approach of race, gender, and a South Atlantic perspective: My paper argues that Condé negotiates competing memories of slavery by moving the poetics and politics of witchcraft into the center of her novel. With Tituba, she does not only unsilence the voices of the demonized women accused of being witches in the course of colonial history but also explicitly reflects on Tituba's shamanism as a

particular Afro-Caribbean spiritual practice in the tradition of hoodoo, a legacy transmitted within a female genealogy, as the novel argues. Against the superstitious denouncement by the Protestant community of Salem that accuses Tituba of being possessed by the devil, Condé delineates her protagonist's supernatural capacities as a form of female empowerment and resistance against colonial violence and oppression. Condé thus inscribes female protagonism into the literary tradition of the *real maravilloso*, a concept that stresses and expresses the power of the marvelous in the history of slave upheavals in the Caribbean, proclaimed by Alejo Carpentier in his 1949 novel on the Haitian revolution, *The Kingdom of this World*. Moreover, her historic novel claims a specific South Atlantic female memory and, at the same time, discusses the limits and possibilities of constituting a shared memory of female oppression in the colonial history of the Americas.

Gyssels, Kathleen (University of Antwerp, Belgium)

*André Schwarz-Bart et Léon Damas et le monument décolonial*

Dans ma communication, je réfléchis sur la vague iconoclaste dans le domaine de statues et de socles relatifs à l'esclavage dans la Caraïbe pour ensuite aborder les nouveaux projets muséaux dans la Caraïbe et dans la Diaspora. Le projet cadre dans un plus large projet de muséographie et de muséologie dans l'archipel caribéen et ses extensions au Nouveau Monde.

Je pars du roman d'André Schwarz-Bart, *La Mulâtresse Solitude*, publié en 1972, qui a donné lieu à plusieurs statues dans l'île de la Guadeloupe et en France. Elle fait pendant à la statue en marbre blanc à la Savane, à la Martinique. Au-delà des antagonismes de « race » et de « classe », je veux réfléchir sur la Créole Joséphine de Beauharnais dont le nom est si bien inscrit dans l'Histoire avec majuscule, alors que la mulâtresse Solitude peine à devenir une partie du matrimoine aux Antilles, vu que sa trace est nulle part présente dans le « prestigieux » Musée Mémorial Act. E. à Pointe-à-Pitre.

Nous explorerons également la position de Léon Damas, poète de la négritude et activiste, en ajoutant la Guyane française comme un autre "vide" dans la muséographie.

Hassankhan, Maurits (Anton de Kom University of Suriname, Suriname)

*Ethnic Relations in a Plural Society: A Legacy of Slavery and Indentured Labour in Suriname*

Suriname experienced a history of European colonisation, characterised by the subjugation of the indigenous people, the introduction of slavery from Africa and indentured labour from Asian countries. This was accompanied by the introduction of several cultures and religions. During the colonial period people from Europe, Africa and Asia were brought to work on the plantations where tropical staple goods were produced, such as cotton, coffee, sugar and rubber. In the twentieth century the mining sector became important with the production of gold, bauxite (alumina) and a smaller amount of oil. Suriname has one of the most plural societies with many ethnic groups with their own cultures and

religions. Several ethnic groups with their own specific history, religions, languages and cultures are living in one territorial state and are confronted with the challenges of a multi-ethnic society.

In this paper I will deal with the challenges, experiences and memories of different groups in the process of building a peaceful society and the development of one nation

I will argue that although the process of nation building has been a challenge for the people in general, and for the different community leaders and the central government authorities in particular, the Surinamese have been able to create an image of a peaceful society, although there are sometimes tensions between members of different groups. These are mainly the result of perceived conflicts of interest and especially in the field of religious tolerance Suriname can be used as an example for the rest of the world, where Christians of several denominations, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and professors of Indigenous religions, Afro Surinamese religions (Winti), Confucianism and Javanisme live together with respect for each other and a total freedom of religion.

Hussein Asma (Georg August University Göttingen, Germany)

*The Politics and Poetics of Remembering*

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said avers: "history is made by men and women, just as it can also be unmade and unwritten" (xviii). In his statement essay "The Muse of History", Nobel Prize laureate Derek Walcott chimes: "history is fiction, subject to a fitful muse, memory. ... history is written ... is a kind of literature without morality" (*Twilight* 37). Said's made-unmade dyad informs Walcott's two-pronged fitfulness. Using the Caribbean as case history this corollary translates: On the one hand, the accidental discovery, and subsequent barrage of vicissitudes that the archipelago witnessed made its inroads into chronicling its history. On the other hand, the foresighted (fitful) ends of individual historians ("men and women") interfere.

The present two-part paper examines the manifestations of 'fitful' approaches in constructing Caribbean post-colonial history, criticism, and literature. The first part compares two contemporaneous history books on the Caribbean: B. W. Higman's *A*

*Concise History of the Caribbean* (2011) and Carrie Gibson's *Empire's Crossroads: A History of the Caribbean from Columbus to the Present Day* (2014) to isolate the contrasting dynamics at work in Higman's "systematic comparative history" (xi) and Gibson's "mosaic approach to history" (xxvi). The second part extends the application of the "systematic" vs. "mosaic" paradigms to post-colonial Caribbean literary criticism using Derek Walcott's "Nearin Forty"<sup>2</sup> and John Lennard's reading<sup>3</sup> thereof as a case study.

Kaladeen, María del Pilar (University of London, UK)

*'Overlooked, Miscategorized, Misunderstood': Moving towards 'an-other' Windrush in the UK*

In the United Kingdom, the occlusion of the history of the system of indenture from school curriculums and public cultural institutions has had a dramatic effect on the lives of the Indian-Caribbean indentured

labour diaspora. As the titular quote from Steve Vertovec's 1993 essay on the experiences of the Indian-Caribbean community in the UK demonstrates, this group are rarely seen or represented and the history of the indenture system and its transportation of close to two million Indian labourers across the British Empire and beyond (1834-1917) is largely unknown in the country that both created and administered the system<sup>4</sup>.

Focusing specifically on the descendants of indenture in the Caribbean, I will show how a deliberate colonial 'forgetting' of the system has helped to foster the narrative of the UK as a benevolent Empire whose relationship with brutal forms of coerced labour ended with the abolition of slavery. Further I would like to explore how the institutional adoption of this 'amnesia' has affected the Indian-Caribbean members of the Windrush Generation (1948-1971) and their descendants, resulting in their lack of visibility in public commemorations of the

contribution this group has made to British society.

In this paper I will use literary sources and oral history to show how we might benefit from a more inclusive account of British Caribbean history in the UK arguing that a nuanced telling of the story of the Windrush generation, can offer an opportunity to explore the country's complex colonial past, in particular relation to its labour history, and trouble the binaries and jingoistic rhetoric that have prevented wider knowledge of the system of indenture and its legacies in the UK.

Laarmann, Mario (Saarland University, Germany)

*Literature, Reparation, and Competing Memories: Chamoiseau's Critique of Colonial Modernity at the Example of his Photography Books*

Postcolonial present is the term anthropologist and Small Axe editor David Scott has coined in an attempt to describe the

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2 From the Gulf and Other Poems (1969)

3 Lennard, John. *The Poetry Handbook*. 1996. 2nd edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005.

4 Steven Vertovec, 'Indo-Caribbean Experience in Britain: Overlooked, Miscategorized, Misunderstood', in *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain*, ed by Winston James and Clive Harris (London: Verso, 1993), pp. 165-78.

anti-colonial struggle since roughly 1989. After a period of largely text- and language-based postcolonial criticism, he argues, the postcolonial present requires again a more materialist critique, able to go to the core of our social systems; or in his words: “a critical interrogation of the practices, modalities, and projects through which modernity inserted itself into and altered the lives of the colonized” (Scott 1999, 17). These academic or theoretical post-postcolonial premises (cf. e.g. Hallward 2001, Bongie 2008) are equally present in anti-colonial activism: The call for material and symbolic reparation of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism has gained renewed momentum over the past roughly two decades (one might think of the *Mouvement International pour les Réparations* in Martinique, to name but one Caribbean example) and struggles over representation in commemorative culture have taken center stage (for example through the #MustFall movement; for a case from Martinique cf. Solbiac 2020).

These material investigations of social systems have also found their way into contemporary literature and form what I will call literature’s reparatory potential.

Literature, in its neo-realist expression (cf. Asholt 2013), as a form of enquête (Demanze 2019), or vested with a fonction remédiatrice (Gefen 2017; cf. also Gefen 2023), often speaks to Scott’s exigencies in its ability to analyze social structures, lay bare their histories, and “invent possible futures” (Gefen 2017, 10). This is clearly the case for Patrick Chamoiseau whose œuvre captures the working of what he calls colonial modernity throughout the years up to the present moment (1997, 17). If “modernity is an imperial crime,” as Ariella Azoulay (2021) polemically phrases it, Chamoiseau’s *Créolité* is an attempt at – not conserving or folklorizing, but: – translating traditional Martiniquan culture and imaginaire into the present and the future. In how far this cause can be called one of ‘reparation’ will be a central question dealt with in this talk.

The second central question deals with the sociological scope of Chamoiseau’s conception of Creole culture. He has always incorporated the different memories ‘competing’ in the Caribbean context in his multi-layered, polyphonic, and thereby potentially “multidirectional” (Rothberg 2009) writing. But to what extent can his writing

do justice to the individual groups ‘competing’ for recognition? Does the idea of *Créolité* really permit negotiating contemporary societal tensions; naming and combating anti-black racism, for example, as some scholars are wondering (cf. e.g. Vété-Congolo 2014)?

To approach these questions I propose to analyze an overlooked part of Chamoiseau’s oeuvre: The photography books he has published in cooperation with photographer Jean-Luc de Laguarigue thematize historical ruins (2011), vanishing crafts (2001 [1999]), and nostalgic aesthetics (2001 [2000]), rooting his critique of modernity in material realities and lived experiences of the people and places portrayed.

Lay Brander, Miriam (Catholic University Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany)

*From Atlantic Slave Trade to Modern Slavery: Politics of Memory and Education in L’esclavage raconté à ma fille* by *Christiane Taubira*

Rapporteur de la Loi tendant à la reconnaissance de la traite et de l’esclavage en tant que crime contre l’humanité (2001),

Christiane Taubira, alors députée de Guyane, est une des figures clé des politiques de mémoire de l'esclavage en France. Dans *L'esclavage raconté à ma fille* (2015), l'écrivaine d'origine guyanaise crée une mémoire multidirectionnelle (Rothberg) en pensant ensemble la traite atlantique, la colonisation et les formes contemporaines de l'esclavage. Conçu comme conversation fictive avec sa fille, ce texte ranime le genre du dialogue philosophique, utilisé depuis l'Antiquité dans des contextes pédagogiques. En cela, Taubira suit le modèle que l'écrivain marocain Tahar Ben Jelloun a exploré dans *Le racisme expliqué à ma fille* (1998), livre qui a connu un vif succès à l'échelle mondiale. À partir de ces deux exemples nous nous interrogerons, d'abord, sur la relation entre politique de mémoire et littérature, notamment la manière dont l'engagement politique de Taubira se conjugue avec sa création littéraire. Ensuite, nous examinerons le rôle de l'éducation tant que l'autrice le montre dans le dialogue avec sa fille pour la transmission d'une mémoire longtemps exclue des récits historiques dominants.

Leetsch, Jennifer (University of Bonn, Germany)

*"oh mary don't you weep don't you moan": Re-imagining Mary Prince in Contemporary Literature and Art*

*The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (1831) was the first life narrative by a black woman published in Britain, at a time of immense social rupture and change. As many critics have pointed out, the autobiography was orally narrated by Prince, transcribed by an amanuensis, the Quaker Susanna Strickland Moodie, and edited by the secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, Thomas Pringle. In fact, this is a slippery and multi-layered text which speaks with many voices and is embedded in a network of other slave narratives utilised in the fight for abolition. While this talk will take into account the complex nineteenth-century publication and reception contexts of Prince's story, it will also move towards a consideration of how the complicated textual communities of *Mary Prince's History* have been taken up by other writers and how they have imagined her slave narrative into the future.

Considering various literary and creative projects, such as Gale Jackson's poem "mary prince bermuda. turks island. antigua. 1787" (1992), the video and sound installation *Black Mary; or Molly, "Princess of Wales"* (2016) by the artist Jocelyn Gardner, and the touring theatre show *SOLD: The Mary Prince Story* (2021) by Amantha Edmead and Kuumba Nia Arts, my talk will show how these stories, powerful in their insistence on rebellion and survival, pull together historical fact and the inventiveness, capacity and necessity of fiction to imagine other worlds. While the historical Mary Prince had been ensnared within storytelling conventions that inadvertently formed her into a perfect foil for the fight against abolition (and rendered her invisible in the process), there are also other trajectories of imaginative tradition available to re-imagine and re-articulate individual and collective memories of slavery.

Léobal, Clémence (CNRS-Lavue, France)

*Mining to Escape the Plantation? The Case of Small Scale Gold Mining in French Guiana*

The mines have long been at the heart of the colonial conquest project of the American « El Dorado ». They are places where the extractivist ideology was forged, which structured the colonial dwelling of the plantation (Ferdinand) that goes with the expansion of European capitalism. In this sense, mining activity is fully part of the establishment of the plantacionocene era. However, in the French Caribbean colonies, gold mining coincided with the end of slavery. Gold was 'discovered' in 1857 on the Approuague river, less than a decade after the abolition of slavery in 1848 in the French colonies. For many formerly enslaved people in the West Indies, the move to French Guiana in search of gold, and personal enrichment, was a hope to escape the oppression of the plantation and a quest for freedom. After the failure of the mining industry based on engagement, Guianese gold mines multiplied in an artisanal way: the people who got rich were not the small miners, but the traders who sold the extracted gold. This is still the

case in the 21st century with the now illegal gold mining that produces most of the gold mined in Guyana today, as well as most of the environmental damage. Yet mining development continues to be seen by many local elected officials as the promise of the territory's autonomy from what is still called the metropolis. This synthesis will allow us to reflect on the contrasting links between plantations and mines and on the historical evolution of a conception according to which mining activity would make people free. This presentation will be based on a synthesis of existing works on the history of mining in French Guiana, as well as on data collected by the author at the time of the public debate on the Montagne d'Or in 2018 in French Guiana, from illegal gold miners.

Liano, Dante (Universidad Católica de Milán, Italy)

*Teoría de la narración*

La hegemonía del pensamiento post-moderno a finales del siglo XX y principios del XXI ha tenido vastas consecuencias en el análisis académico de la literatura. Podríamos resumir sus postulados en los

siguientes puntos: a) la estetización de la vida; b) la fragmentación del sujeto centrado; c) las críticas de la relación entre razón y sujeto. Tales postulados han tenido una detenida elaboración en los "nuevos" filósofos franceses: Derrida, Baudrillard, Foucault, Deleuze-Guattari, Lyotard, y, en Italia, Vattimo y Agamben. Acogidos con entusiasmo por la academia norteamericana, han sido adoptados también por la crítica académica latinoamericana. Sin embargo, el deconstruccionismo, la revaloración del cuerpo y el deseo, la focalización de lo freak y lo queer, tienden a oscurecer aspectos básicos de la sociedad latinoamericana, inexistentes en las sociedades industrializadas. Aparece en el horizonte del siglo XXI la teoría de la narración. Se trata de observar el fenómeno literario aparejado a los últimos descubrimientos de la neurociencia: cómo la literatura activa determinadas zonas cerebrales y estimula respuestas positivas en la percepción de la realidad. De allí que se hayan activado estudios sobre las ciencias históricas, la economía, la medicina y la política relativos a la narración. Se abren nuevos campos de estudios para las ciencias literarias.



Mateos, Ana (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany)

*Deconstructing Memories of the Nineteenth-Century Cuban Poet, Plácido*

My talk focuses on the historical construction of the memory of one of the most celebrated nineteenth-century Cuban poets and activists, Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés, known as "Plácido," who was tortured and executed by the Spanish forces in Havana in 1844, having been accused of participating in the so-called conspiracy of *La escalera* (the ladder). In 1843, Spanish authorities on the island claimed that they had uncovered plans for a major anti-slavery revolt across Cuba, allegedly organized and led by some of the most important free Afro-Cuban figures, including Plácido. To this day, the very existence of the conspiracy, its main debated goals, and Plácido's role in it remain unclear, mainly due to conflicting historical reports and the secrecy that surrounded the suspected revolt. In the absence of reliable and univocal historical references, the figure of Plácido has been constructed very differently by a variety of actors from several countries

and with different agendas. This presentation aims to bring together legal documents, political essays, and historical and literary works from Spain, Cuba, Great Britain, and the United States to shed light on the supra-national dimension of the politics of remembrance of slavery in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century transatlantic world. The historical malleability of the figure of Plácido, together with the international echo of his tragic death, offers a privileged and almost unique opportunity to discuss and address international dimensions of the dynamic memory of slavery and politics.

Mühlschlegel, Ulrike (Ibero-American Institute, Berlin, Germany)

*The Role of Archives in Historical Research and the Construction of Memory*

Archives and the documents, images and other materials they hold and preserve lay the foundation for the writing of history and the construction of memory. However, it is essential who builds and preserves these archives, how the selection of materials for these archives is done and how researchers, but also the interested public

may access these archives and the archival materials.

The presentation focuses on digital archives on the Caribbean, introduces them, explores the issues raised and shows where a change in archival policy is needed to make participatory, inclusive and non-hegemonic research and construction of memory possible.

Nitz, Julia (Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany)

*Remembering Enslavement in 21st Century French Seaport Museums*

The *Mémorial de l'abolition de l'esclavage* in Nantes, France, that opened in 2012, was constructed to commemorate France's heavy investment in the transatlantic slave trade. Overall, the exhibition space tells a linear historical narrative of evil overcome. Visitors are led underground into an imagined ship's hold of the middle passage and then ascent into the daylight, linked to the notion of liberation. The memorial creates a variety of micro-narratives along the way, though, that are worth examining.

Particular object-arrangements and spatial designs create atmospheres and emotional responses in visitors; enslaved and “liberators” are given a voice in a multi-modal set-up. This paper explores the construction of these micro-narratives and how they feed into a grander narrative of France’s role as a major agent and beneficiary of enslavement. I am especially interested in who is given a voice and from where people speak or enunciate (Stuart Hall). The discussion will include the *Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery* in Nantes as well as the permanent exhibitions, dealing with the slave trade at the *Musée d’Aquitaine* in Bordeaux, both port cities that were second only to Liverpool and Bristol as transport centers for the enslaved in mid-eighteenth-century Europe.

The (post-)postcolonial museum is a recent phenomenon that emerged in the wake of wide-spread criticism of museums as neo-colonial forces and restitution debates in the last two decades. Consequently, many European museums responded by reshaping their exhibitions to acknowledge the colonial past and to create more participatory and transparent museum displays that focus on the way

colonial artefacts were collected and used to create historical narratives. Often such “re-formation” of museums heavily depends on meta-commentary and extensive paratextual design. However, it remains to be explored in how far actual exhibition practices present revised memories of the colonial past and give the subaltern a voice indeed.

[Ohlraun, Vanessa \(Leibniz University Hannover, Germany\)](#)

#### *(Re)collecting Africa in Republican Cuba*

This paper analyzes memory-making as it is reflected in the literature of early Cuban anthropology in the first half of the 20th century. A central figure is the anthropologist Fernando Ortiz who never visited the African continent, yet has authored a pioneering work about slavery and has become the foremost authority on African-descendant culture in Cuba. His work relied heavily on archival sources as well as statements made by his informants, many of which cannot be reconstructed. Thus, claims to truthfulness and authenticity made by the anthropologist have been viewed with some caution.

In other parts of the world too, scholars were “discovering” the history and culture of peoples of African descent in the Americas. Among these were the African American anthropologist Ellen Irene Diggs, one of W.E.B. Du Bois’ closest collaborators and a student of Fernando Ortiz. Diggs was at the forefront of Black critical thought and reflected the methods of her time, engaging in a positive reevaluation of the traditions, religious practices, dance and music of people of African descent in post-slavery Cuba and the Americas.

This paper will look at accounts on “La Africanía Cubana” (Diggs) in the larger framework of the politics of cultural recollection in Republican Cuba (1902-1959). An overarching aim of my research is to deconstruct Eurocentric epistemologies in historical and anthropological constructions of Black culture in the Caribbean.

Phaf-Rheinberger, Ineke (University of Gießen, Germany)

*Practices of Memory-Making in the Novelistic Oeuvre of Frank Martinus Arion*

Curaçao is a country in which enslavement, the Tula-slave revolt in 1795, and emancipation in 1863 constitute important parts of its contemporary cultural heritage. It responds to the need for grief, protest, and healing, by touching upon traumas imposed in a former plantation society. The hypothesis of this paper is that Frank Martinus Arion (1936-2015), the premier novelist and linguist of Curaçao, bears witness to this memory-making in a double way.

In the first place, Arion expresses his view on those traumas in five novels, published from 1973 to 2006. By way of organizing a “translation” of “performances of creole noise”, he surpasses thresholds, boundaries, and silence regarding this appalling violence in the past, which still has consequences in the present. Creole noise is a cultural and ideological term, which points to the intervention of the Creole languages in the public space in the Caribbean, taking a stand on its specific cultural history.

Arion elaborates its narrative performances on the basis of key events, little by little expanding the local island’s perspective towards a broader, global view. It is important to trace this transnational and (g)local horizon in Arion’s work. Curaçao never had a minister of international affairs who acted independently from The Netherlands and, instead, it is possible to consider Arion’s novelistic oeuvre taking that place. It proposes a unique model for intercontinental relations departing from the island’s needs as being part of the Caribbean region.

In the second place and, as an exclusive Caribbean mark, these novels prepare the bottom for making the Creole language one of the three national languages (with English and Dutch in 2009). This goal was “translated” through the organization of schools, in which the island’s Creole language is a basic tool. Arion had an important role in the foundation and development of those schools since 1986, starting with a kindergarten, then with primary and, later, secondary education as well as vocational training. By doing so, he automatically points to the transatlantic relationship with Africa and slavery, by which

means this Creole language came into being and is still spoken everywhere on Curaçao today.

Pierre-Louis, Jessica (Independent Researcher, Martinique)

*De l’impératrice Joséphine à l’esclavisée Émilie : les pratiques mémorielles au Domaine de La Pagerie, à la Martinique, 1944-2022*

Situé dans la commune des Trois-Îlets, le domaine de la Pagerie est une ancienne habitation-sucrerie témoin de l’histoire coloniale et esclavagiste de la Martinique. Le site a aussi la particularité d’être le lieu où vécu enfant celle qui fut ensuite épouse de Napoléon et impératrice des Français : Marie Joséphe Rose Tascher de La Pagerie, dite Joséphine de Beauharnais.

En 1944, le Dr Rose-Rosette, homme érudit et passionné d’histoire, maire de la commune entre 1953 et 1971, convaincu que le tourisme était une clé de développement des Antilles suite au déclin de l’industrie sucrière, achète cette habitation pour en faire l’un des plus anciens sites patrimoniaux de la Martinique. 40 ans plus tard,

alors que le site reçoit environ 42 000 visiteurs par an, le Dr Rose-Rosette vend le domaine de La Pagerie au Conseil général, qui en assure la gestion via une association jusqu'en 2015. Cette année-là, le site passe aux mains de la Collectivité territoriale de Martinique du fait des évolutions statutaires et institutionnelles de l'île. Depuis lors, ce site, longtemps perçu comme le «musée de Joséphine», est l'objet d'un travail de réflexion sur ce qu'il donne à voir de son histoire. La muséographie a notamment été refaite en 2020, incluant désormais des parcours d'esclavisés telle Émilie, et le programme de médiation actuel poursuit cette dynamique.

À partir de l'étude des archives du Dr Robert Rose-Rosette et de ma participation aux projets actuels, je souhaite questionner les politiques et les pratiques mémorielles qui ont été menées sur ce site entre 1944 et 2022, où les concurrences mémorielles sont fortement mobilisées et cristallisées autour du personnage de Joséphine et de son rôle présumé dans le rétablissement de l'esclavage par Napoléon en France en 1802.

[Robanus, Adrian \(Kleist-Museum, Frankfurt \(Oder\), Germany\)](#)

*Heinrich von Kleist: The Betrothal in St. Domingo (1811) – a Prussian View on Haiti around 1800*

Heinrich von Kleist's "The Betrothal in St. Domingo" (1811) is set in Haiti at the time of the Haitian Revolution. Comparing Kleist's narrative with the findings of historical scholarship, however, reveals that stereotypical and racializing images of Haiti can be found in Kleist's text. The reading will deconstruct the Eurocentric narrative in "The Betrothal in St. Domingo" and discuss, to what extent European responsibility for colonial violence is dismissed in this piece of literature. In contrast, Haitian texts from around 1800 will be presented that offer empowering counter-narratives, revealing the full extent of colonial violence.

[Romay Guerra, Zuleica \(Casa de las Américas, Cuba\)](#)

*La esclavitud en Cuba: Memoria y reparación vs olvido histórico*

En la Cuba del siglo XIX, la lucha anticolonial estuvo ligada a la exigencia de abolición de la esclavitud. Así, los africanos y sus descendientes tuvieron una presencia numerosa en el Ejército Libertador que libró la Guerra de los Diez Años (1868-1878), participación que se tornó decisiva en la segunda contienda independentista (1895-1898).

Esta circunstancia forjó la opinión social de que las guerras de independencia, en las que combatieron juntos blancos y negros, borrarían la jerarquización social impuesta por el esclavismo y fundaron una república caracterizada por la "fraternidad racial". Esta utopía fue reforzada por el testimonio de la mayoría de los combatientes blancos, el ejercicio historiográfico, muchas realizaciones del arte y la literatura y, sobre todo, el discurso político.

Durante todo el siglo XX, incluido el periodo revolucionario (1959-1999), se consideró que el proceso de radical transformación liderado por Fidel Castro funcionaba como reparación frente al pasado esclavista de Cuba. En consecuencia, se asumió la erradicación del racismo y la discriminación racial como un proceso evolutivo que se completaría a lo largo del tiempo y no se

diseñaron ni implementaron políticas de memoria que actualizaran a las nuevas generaciones sobre la infamia del esclavismo y sus efectos de larga duración.

Esta ponencia argumenta la necesidad de comprensión por parte de la sociedad cubana del perdurable legado de la esclavitud e insiste en la pertinencia de diseñar políticas públicas que, al restaurar la memoria sobre el pasado colonial cubano, confronten la ignorancia y el conformismo, tanto de la sociedad política como de la sociedad civil.

[Schmieder, Ulrike \(Leibniz University Hannover, Germany\)](#)

*Remembrance and Silence: Enslavement at Plantation Sites in Martinique and Cuba*

This contribution will explore the material vestiges of plantations on the Caribbean islands Martinique and Cuba and their current uses. The heritage enslavers, the enslaved and agricultural production left may lay in ruins today, may be converted in museums, may house distilleries and rum stores, may be serve other tourist purposes. The presentation will particularly

look at the current visibility and functions of enslavers residences, sugar and coffee mills, facilities and machinery, housing and cemeteries of the enslaved workers. The investigation follows the criteria of Eichstedt/ Small (2002) for the evaluation of plantation sites. The author asks if enslavement is remembered on site, and if that is the case, how, by whom and for whom. Where memories of enslavement have been effaced the study inquires the proprietorship as well as political and socio-economic power relations which might be responsible for that silence.

The comparison will show the commonalities and differences of the uses of plantation remains in a capitalist semi-colony where the descendants of enslavers still own many sites and play an important role as employers, and in an independent, socialist state where the inheritors of enslavers have been expropriated and have left the country by the majority. The author will show the material vestiges, decipher the narratives about the enslavement past, the visualizations of enslavers and enslaved given on site. She will also present her interviews made with museum's staff,

guides of heritage tourism, citizens engaged in the politics of memory and local inhabitants. Their family memories related to the plantation and their enslaved ancestors might differ clearly from the narratives propagated in museums or on tourist circuits. The oral history method reveals which stance different groups of the surrounding society take up on the localised enslavement past.

[Schneider, Nina \(University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany\)](#)

*Remembering the Haitian Revolution Otherwise: Rediscovering Joseph Antenor Firmin's The Equality of Races (1885)*

This paper focuses on a very distinct form of memory-making of the Haitian revolution – on Joseph A. Firmin's *The Equality of Races* (1885). Only since the new millennium – when the French original was translated into English – has the 662 pages long study been rediscovered by scholars, intellectuals and activists. Today, it is regarded as a pioneering work in critical race studies and anthropology; one that first rejected European racialist and racist thought and affirmed the opposite: “All men

are endowed with the same qualities and the same faults, without distinction of color or anatomical form. The races are equal” (Firmin translated by Fluehr-Lobban, 2000, p. 450). Firmin has also been rediscovered as a founding father of Pan-Africanism; as he attended the first Pan African Conference in London in 1900 alongside W.E.B. Du Bois (US) and Henry Sylvester Williams (Trinidad). Firmin’s memory of the Haitian revolution plays a key part in Firmin’s race theory and his late rediscovery: It symbolised the regeneration of the enslaved African people; the vigor and achievements of the Afro-descendant, mixed populations in the New World. It countered European racist ideas of Black inferiority and degeneration such as those of the Frenchmen Joseph A. de Gobineau prevalent in the 19<sup>th</sup> and even early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This paper addresses the late rediscovery of Firmin in the human and social sciences, as a recent practice of “unsilencing”. It analyses both the work’s direct references to the Haitian revolution but also its mediated influence on Firmin’s racial thought and activism. The example helps to show the dialogical nature of politics of remembering (invoking Haiti to counter racialist

craniometry and racist hierarchies), the multidirectional and transcultural dynamics of memory, and to disentangle its long-durée evolvment (its twists-and-turns through the cause of history).

[Soukai, Sandrine \(Gustave Eiffel University, France\)](#)

*“Mémoire en nasse”: Entangled, Multidirectional and Creolised Memories of Indenture and Slavery in Guadeloupe*

In his 2001 poem “Les Antilles” Indo-Guadeloupean politician, cultural activist and writer Ernest Moutoussamy asserts “Aux Antilles la mémoire est en nasse”. While the French “nasse” refers to a fish trap, “être dans la nasse” metaphorically means to be “in a bind” or “be entangled”. This polysemy highlights the complex connections between indenture and slavery in Guadeloupean memorial practices. Though being “entangled” and seemingly “multidirectional,” histories and memories of these two traumatic pasts also run the risk of being entrapped and enshrined along competitive lines.

In the wake of the Antillanité and the Créolité movements, Guadeloupe showcased its plurilingual, pluricultural and creole matrix. Yet Indo-Guadeloupean culture and identity, and the history of indenture only gained more public visibility decades after memories and histories of slavery had been rehabilitated (particularly thanks to 1930s Négritude movement).

In the 1970s, Indian cultural components started to be revalued through the work of cultural activists. But Indianité only significantly entered public debate, memorial practices and scholarly research with the first Festival of Indianité held in Guadeloupe in 1990. Today, indenture history and memories still occupy a marginal position in public space, while slavery central position has been reinforced with the 2015 inauguration of the Memorial ACTe. Some Indo-Guadeloupeans are striving for greater recognition, including through the erection of memorial sites to preserve and share the legacies of indenture. I draw on interviews of cultural producers and promoters as well as archival research to demonstrate how competitiveness, owing to social, economic and political constraints, looms over memory politics on

the island. I then turn to micro-readings of Indo-Guadeloupean cultural and literary productions to offer an archipelagic reading of slavery and indenture memories. I analyze in particular a selection of Moutoussamy's writings to show how affective and private vectors of these memories are mobile and creolized, a process which I believe could inspire more inclusive collective memorial practices in the Caribbean and in other places marked by these two traumas.

Viana, Rogério (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

*Guyanese Expectations in the Age of Oil: Ethnographic Notes from Demerara*

In the territorial waters of Guyana, the recent arrival of massive offshore oil and gas extraction machines (FPSOs) has opened a new extractive frontier in the region. On the national public debate front, it has also set the promise of a different future for a country that, since its time as a Dutch and a British colony, has had its lands occupied with subsequent but temporally intertwined intensive forms of "natural resources" exploration: coffee, cotton and

sugar plantations on the coast, and mining in the hinterland. So far, the promising effects oil brings with it have been produced and analyzed by economic indexes, corporations and governmental agencies and published on foreign and local newspapers. Nevertheless, inspired by Benítez-Rojo's plantation-machine idea—a machine with gears that spread indefinitely and which repeats at the same time as it differentiates itself—, this exploratory paper seeks to evidence the impact of this booming oil's presence in the everyday life of Guyanese people living on the coast. Relying on ethnographic fieldwork in the East Coast Demerara region, it focuses, on the one hand, on the impressions and expectations of Guyanese locals when talking about oil, and, on the other hand, on the actions taken by a group of local women who are currently questioning the ways that both government and companies have been carrying their business. By dealing with this data, the article seeks to highlight how past and future temporal dimensions can interact and shape the shared expectations and actions taken in the present.

Wegner, Jarula (Zhejiang University, China)

*One, Two, Many: Stuart Hall's Reflections on Hybridity in the Caribbean*

Stuart Hall is known for his advocacy of cultural hybridity and his emphasis on the Caribbean's diverse cultural influences. Yet while he criticised the overt presence of European and celebrated the increasing remembrance of African influences in the Caribbean, Indian and indigenous influences are hardly acknowledged and if then often in problematic ways.

The cultural critic Hall is often considered as an outstanding advocate of cultural diversity. His lasting impact is evidenced, for instance, in the influential, inter-disciplinary essay collection *Debating Cultural Hybridity* in which the editors, the anthropologist Pnina Werbner and the sociologist Tariq Modood, refer to Hall as "the great prophet of cultural hybridity" (Werbner and Modood 2015, xiv). In the Caribbean, too, Hall became an important advocate of the archipelago's cultural diversity. Not only was he commissioned by BBC2 to produce a documentary on the

Caribbean's diverse cultural heritage, but he also dedicated central lectures in the Caribbean to push back against essentialist tendencies in order to acknowledge the islands' dynamic, heterogeneous, and open cultural heritage (Hall 1999). Yet surprisingly these reflections tend to be focussed on the omnipresence of a European colonial heritage and the increasing remembrance of African influences, while they tend to forget Indian-Caribbean influences and indigenous presences. The representations of plural and divergent memories consequently become themselves exclusive.

In this talk, I will on the one hand highlight Stuart Hall's important contribution in acknowledging the Caribbean's diverse cultural influences and on the other hand criticise his negligence of cultural influences apart from Europe and Africa. The talk will first discuss Hall's usage of the term hybridity. Then it will sketch his application of the concept to the Caribbean, before it will take a closer look at his discussion of Indian-Caribbean and indigenous influences. I will argue that Hall's memories of hybridity tend to focus on two cultural influences while neglecting the many others.

Zeuske, Michael (University of Bonn, Germany)

*Memories of the Haitian Revolution and the Plantation Regimes in the Caribbean: The Non-History of Ex-Slaves*

The paper deals with the major political events in the Caribbean from 1790-1840, especially the slave revolt (since 1791), the war on Saint-Domingue, self-liberation and abolition of slavery (1791-1704), the founding of Haiti and the dominance of the "black republic" on the whole island of Santo Domingo (La Hispaniola) from the point of view of the continued existence of the plantation economy (also under Toussaint and up to the 1840s in the North, with a tendency also in the eastern part of the island, the former Spanish colony) and the micro-perspective of life histories of former slaves.

Vété-Congolo-Leibnitz, Hanétha (Bowdoin College, USA)

*Sonjé sé Mabouya: A View on Memory and Remembrance in and from the Caribbean*

In the context of Caribbean history and contemporary reality, *sonjé* – "remembrance" in French-African Creole – may present itself as *mabouya*, this sticky, domestic, and endemic Caribbean lizard that, in the Caribbean belief system, passes for a dreaded spirit. For, since the intrusion of European colonial powers into the affairs of its original people, the Caribbean as we acknowledge it today, has been a space confronted with the act and fact of erasure. Whether for those who endured that specific history as a calamity or those who perpetrated it as such, memory and remembering bring about critical questions, very often, related to existential considerations. How then do Caribbeans approach memory and remembrance today, and how is their way reshaping their place in and relation to the(ir) world? Who must remember, what must be remembered, how and for what purpose?