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Pluriversal Performances

Faraclas | Severing | Echteld
Delgado | Rutgers

Pluriversal Performances

Inclusivity, Diversity and the Study of the Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the Dutch Caribbean and Beyond

Edited by
Nicholas Faraclas
Ronald Severing
Elisabeth Echteld
Sally Delgado
Wim Rutgers



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Volume 1

Edited by

Prof. Dr. Nicholas Faraclas
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Prof. Dr. Sally. Delgado
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Curaçao/Puerto Rico 2025

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The two publications: *Pluriversal Performances: Inclusivity, Diversity and the Study of the Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the Dutch Caribbean and Beyond* together with *Pluriversal Palimpsests: Inclusivity, Diversity and the Study of the Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean and Beyond,* contain a collection of articles that present a critical perspective on the languages, literatures, and cultures of the Greater Caribbean and the Caribbean diaspora. The contributing authors include a wide range of voices old and new from the Caribbean and beyond.

This book forms part of a two-volume set, with this volume focusing on the ABC-islands (Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao) and other parts of the (former) Dutch Caribbean, in particular, and the other volume focusing on the Greater Caribbean in general.

Together, these volumes provide a platform for researchers and other cultural workers whose work treats the islands, topics, and/or perspectives that traditionally receive less scholarly attention than others at professional conferences and in academic publications. Special emphasis is placed on ensuring that new voices with fresh points of view find a place in these volumes, alongside contributions by more well-established scholars.

The online versions of these volumes and the other 32 volumes, together a total of 34 volumes published in this series between 2009 and 2025, can be found on the Islands in Between website at https://islandsinbetween.com/ as well as on the Caribbean Languages and Culture Platform in the Partner Collections of the Dutch Caribbean Digital Platform of the Library of the University of Curaçao at http://dcdp.uoc.cw/icarplat.

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The Editors

INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE STUDY OF MEMORY AND CULTURE

DEEPENING THE ARCHIVES: SPIRITUAL AND AGENTIAL LAYERS IN CURAÇAOAN ORAL TRADITIONS [1]

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Abstract
This article explores how enslaved people, despite living under systems of legal and structural unfreedom, exercised forms of agency that allowed them to preserve and transform their cultural and spiritual lives. Approaching this inquiry through an anthropological lens, I examine not only historical events but also the symbolic and cultural meanings embedded in language, ritual, and performance as expressed in oral traditions transmitted across generations. These expressive and performative practices represent memory in motion, i.e., dynamic, embodied acts that have persisted across generations and at times, geography through processes of migration, shaping the social lives and identities of enslaved people and their descendants. Far from being static recollections, they function as living archives, repositories of memory and identity that have sustained humanity and resilience amid profound oppression, and their significance has lasted beyond the abolition of slavery.

Key terms: oral tradition, Curaçao, resistance, archival sources, memory, enslavement

1 Introduction

In societies shaped by transatlantic slavery and colonialism, the lives of the enslaved were often only partially represented in the historical archives. When the enslaved were visible, it was largely through fragmented, foreign, or distorted lenses, and they were documented as property, labor power, or legal subjects. Much of their inner world, everyday experiences, and cultural practices has remained undocumented or obscured in the formal records, contributing to the analysis that they were silenced. The archives

[1] This article is an adapted version of a lecture titled "De waarde van mondelinge overleveringen met betrekking tot het Nederlandse slavernijverleden en de impact ervan op het heden" [The Value of Oral Traditions Regarding the Dutch Slavery Past and Its Impact on the Present] delivered at Radboud Reflects, Nijmegen, on April 14, 2024.

reflect a prevailing worldview that renders invisible the systems of memory and knowledge developed by enslaved and colonized communities. Among Afro-descendant communities, oral traditions that include songs, proverbs, storytelling and rituals have served as living, immaterial "archives" that preserve not only historical memory but also spiritual insight and cultural identity. These non-written modes of transmission and the cultural archives in which they have persisted have sustained collective life under conditions of unfreedom, ensuring continuity even when written history failed to bear proper witness.

In recent years, a new wave of digital archival scholarship has emerged to recover aspects of the life of enslaved peoples through quantitative research. An example is SlaveVoyages.org (Eltis et al., 2021) a multinational compilation of slave-trade databases. Curaçao has joined this process through the Curaçao Memory of Slavery Database[2], a series of Curaçao slave registers and emancipation registers, published on the websites of the National Archives of Curaçao and of the Netherlands (see DutchCulture, 2020). which enables the reconstruction of individual biographies, kinship networks, and patterns of social life by aggregating digitized sources such as plantation records, slave registers, manumission papers, and baptismal registries. This initiative not only serves as a resource for researchers and educators but also empowers descendants and the wider community to engage with their heritage and to gain a deeper understanding of the lasting impact of slavery in Curaçao. Such efforts offer valuable insights into the demography and structure of colonial slavery and help to reshape the historiography of slavery by centering data-driven reconstructions of the social world of enslaved people. Alongside these quantitatively-focused databases, attention should be paid to the oral traditions of Afro-diasporic communities, because they offer vital, complementary sources of knowledge. They have the important potential of revealing meanings, intentions, and aspirations that guided people's behavior, reasoning behind actions, beliefs, and cultural resilience, which are elements usually invisible in the traditional administrative records. Songs, proverbs and sayings, as well as stories and life narratives encode communal responses to oppression, ethics of survival, and symbolic resistance. As such, they provide qualitative insight into how enslaved communities understood matters such as kinship, authority, spirituality, and justice—dimensions that can contextualize, humanize, and sometimes challenge interpretations drawn from written sources alone.

[2] A digital, searchable archive of slavery-era registers (1839-1863) from Curaçao, developed by Coen van Galen and collaborators. A similar project has also been conducted for Suriname. The database documents over 13,000 individuals and includes information on births, deaths, ownership, and emancipation. Built through crowdsourced transcription and academic partnerships, it serves as a tool for genealogical research, historical analysis, and public memory. Recognized by UNESCO's Memory of the World Register, the project supports efforts to reclaim Afro-Caribbean heritage and decolonize historical narratives.

Research based on oral traditions can complement and broaden the analytical scope of document-driven research and other scholarly studies. It may offer new perspectives on the social and cultural lives of the enslaved—insights that often extend beyond the limitations of the colonial archives. Oral traditions present challenges, such as gaps in transmission and varying interpretations, that reflect their dynamic, living nature and that demonstrate how these traditions evolve over time, adapt to changing contexts, and actively reshape collective memory and identity rather than simply preserve a fixed past. These challenges, if methodologically well approached, can be dealt with in an effective manner.

This article builds on a well-established scholarly tradition, including foundational work by George Rawick (1972-1979), John Blassingame (1972), Melville Herskovits (1941), Richard Price (1980), Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995), and my own publications (Allen, 2007, 2014, 2021). Focusing on Curaçao, it examines how Afro-Curaçaoan communities transmit traditional songs, moral stories, oral narratives, and proverbs as vital vessels of memory, belief, and identity. This study offers a new approach by reading these oral histories through a spiritual and affective lens, highlighting the intimate, emotional, and ethical aspects of life. This reveals oral traditions not only as forms of resistance but also as pathways to inner liberation and cultural continuity. By unpacking the layered symbolism, ethical reasoning, and agency embedded in these traditions, the paper demonstrates how they serve as expressions of spirituality and culture, as well as subtle tools for moral critique, resistance, and the preservation of historical consciousness during and after slavery. Through this broader lens, Afro-Curaçaoan oral culture emerges as a site where dominant power structures are challenged and alternative visions of justice and human dignity are asserted.

Drawing on original fieldwork (Allen Collection)[3] and the ethnographic archives of Paul Brenneker and Elis Juliana (including the Zikinzá Collection),[4] this research also situates Curaçao's oral traditions within the wider Afro-diasporic context. Employing a transnational and comparative framework, it argues that these narratives form a counter-archive of Afro-descendant memory that disrupts dominant colonial historiographies by centering subaltern voices, moral philosophy, and lived experience.

This rest of this article is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces agency as a key analytical tool and theoretical framework for understanding oral tradition. Section 3 discusses the oral traditions of Curaçao as repositories of archival knowledge and ethical

[3]Rose Mary Allen has conducted extensive oral history research on Afro-Curaçaoans, particularly focusing on the experiences of former enslaved people in the Dutch Caribbean. Her dissertation, *Di ki manera: A Social History of Afro-Curaçaoans, 1863-1917*, is largely based on collected oral histories.

[4] The Zikinzá Collection is a significant oral history archive documenting the cultural heritage of Curaçao and Bonaire. It was created by Father Paul Brenneker and Elis Juliana, who recorded songs, stories, music, and everyday life experiences from elderly residents between 1958 and the 1970s.The collection contains 1,400 songs, stories, and life histories, including anecdotes, childhood memories, rituals, and folklore from 267 informants, some of whom were born before the abolition of slavery.

reflection, with a focus on songs. Section 4 analyzes selected stories, songs and proverbs that illuminate Afro-Curaçaoan perspectives on life, power and morality. Section 5 functions as a conclusion which reflects on the broader implications of these findings for decolonial historiography and Afro-diasporic studies.

2 Agency through orality and performativity

This article explores how enslaved people, despite living under systems of legal and structural unfreedom, exercised forms of agency that allowed them to preserve and transform their cultural and spiritual lives. Approaching this inquiry through an anthropological lens, I examine not only historical events but also the symbolic and cultural meanings embedded in language, ritual, and performance as expressed in oral traditions transmitted across generations. These expressive and performative practices represent memory in motion, i.e., dynamic, embodied acts that have persisted across generations and at times, geography through processes of migration, shaping the social lives and identities of enslaved people and their descendants. Far from being static recollections, they function as living archives, repositories of memory and identity that have sustained humanity and resilience amid profound oppression, and their significance has lasted beyond the abolition of slavery.

In the context of slavery, agency is often associated with resistance ranging from overt acts such as revolts and escape attempts to covert forms such as accommodation and survival tactics. But agency also encompasses more subtle, everyday affirmations of humanity. Enslaved individuals exercised agency by caring for children, participating in religious rituals, forming relationships, and transmitting knowledge and traditions. These practices, though usually not overtly subversive, constituted powerful forms of self-affirmation and meaning-making under conditions of extreme unfreedom. By being continually practiced and passed down, these everyday acts sustained collective memory and shaped the cultural heritage of enslaved peoples across generations.

The role of language deserves special attention in this context. In *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* (1989), Tobagonian-Canadian poet Marlene NourbeSe Philip explores language as a site of both colonial oppression and creative resistance. Her poetry reveals how women challenged imposed silences and transformed colonial language through disruption and subversion. Philip uses the "tongue" as a powerful metaphor for voice, embodiment, and autonomy. Rather than merely recovering speech, she radically reimagines what it means to speak within a history marked by censorship and erasure. Her work, much like the oral traditions central to the present paper, affirms that language is not just communicative but can be a deeply cultural and spiritual act of resilience. Philip's poetic practice thus enriches our understanding of how oppressed communities preserved identity and agency through orality and linguistic resistance.

The emphasis on language as an instrument of agency also appears in the work of Curaçaoan scholar René Rosalia (19979). In his dissertation on *tambú*, a drum-led musical

and dance expression developed among enslaved Africans on the Dutch Leeward Islands of Curaçao and Bonaire as well as Aruba, he describes how language and music deeply intertwine as powerful tools of resistance. Unlike overt acts such as revolts and escapes, *tambú* represents a form of hidden or cultural resistance, a subtle yet potent assertion of identity and protest through the fusion of vocal expression and rhythmic music. The language in *tambú* songs carries layered meanings, in some cases exposing colonial injustices and conveying messages that were perceived as threats to the colonial order. Rosalia (1997) underscores that the attempt to suppress the orality of enslaved peoples was a deliberate strategy of subjection. Yet, through the creative use of language embedded in musical performance, the enslaved challenged this attempt at silencing, carving out vital spaces for resistance, self-expression, and communal recognition.

This creative integration of language and music closely resonates with the concept of play, introduced by Richard Burton (1997) as an analytical framework. Burton demonstrates how Afro-Caribbean people maintained autonomy by playfully navigating and reinterpreting the rules imposed upon them. This "agency through play" manifested prominently in the cultural domains of music, dance, food, religion and ritual, which were spaces where language and bodily expression converged as performative acts of self-affirmation. Both language and play provided enslaved individuals with means to assert their humanity and preserve a sense of self-worth under the oppressive weight of slavery. In this way, play or performativity becomes a critical lens through which to understand how cultural practices functioned not only as resistance but as dynamic sites of agency and identity formation.

Although slavery was designed to impose total domination and dehumanization, it is essential to recognize the myriad ways in which enslaved people preserved their dignity and humanity, often through small, subtle, and creative acts embedded in daily life, including cultural expressions that were sometimes prohibited by the systems seeking to erase them. This apparent paradox calls for a nuanced understanding of agency, which is one that acknowledges overwhelming structural violence and constraints on freedom, while honoring the playful, embodied practices through which individuals and communities carved out spaces of self-affirmation and resilience. These practices, whether in language, ritual, music, or dance, were not merely acts of survival but dynamic, living expressions of autonomy and identity.

Importantly, the abolition of slavery (in 1863 on the Dutch Caribbean islands) did not mark the end of oppression and exploitation. Post-Emancipation societies continue to be shaped by racialized hierarchies, economic inequality, and cultural marginalization (Allen, 2007). In this context, Afro-Curaçaoan oral expressive forms have persisted and evolved, finding renewed meaning and ground for expansion, albeit in a transformed legal landscape. By embracing this complexity, we can avoid simplistic narratives that either romanticize resistance or reduce enslaved people to passive victims. Instead, we open the way to appreciating the layered realities of their lived experience, where even

the smallest gestures of creativity and play become assertions of personhood amid persisting structures of inequality. Such an approach is crucial for producing a historiography that truly captures the multifaceted lives and complex legacies of enslaved and formerly enslaved people.

3 Oral traditions in Afro-Curaçaoan culture: Songs

Oral traditions in Curaçao do not simply reflect the past but have actively shaped the lived experiences of Afro-Curaçaoan communities. In general, oral traditions, particularly in the form of traditional songs, constitute a significant repository of historical knowledge. As American musicologist Mat Callahan and author of the book *Songs of Slavery and Emancipation* (2022) asserts in his blog "Music and Historical Memory" (2015) that "Music can remember what History forgets" (Callahan, 2015, p. 1) highlighting the unique capacity of song to preserve narratives and experiences often excluded from formal historiography. This is true not only of historical ballads and folk songs but also of more contemporary compositions. Within enslaved communities, songs served multiple functions. They were sources of spiritual strength and social cohesion, but also integral to labor, recreation, prayer, and worship. Early scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois (1903), Alain Locke (1936), Zora Neale Hurston (1950/2000) and Erskine Peters (1993), and more recently Daina Ramey Berry (2017) and Tina M. Campt (2017), have demonstrated the indispensable role of song in articulating the spirituality and lived experience of African-descended peoples in the Americas.

The eminent American folklorist and ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax (1968) emphasized the pivotal social function of song, identifying it as a core indicator of communal life. Songs help focus collective attention, build consensus, and structure social interaction. Their lyrics often encode emotions and values that may not be expressed in other forms, making them important ethnographic and historical sources.

In Curaçao, scholars have employed *tambú* songs as critical historical data for analyzing forms of resistance to enslavement. For scholars such as René Rosalia (1997), t*ambú* songs represent more than mere expressions of covert resistance to social injustice as they also embody spiritual convictions and cultural consciousness. In my own research, including *Di ki manera? A Social History of Afro-Curaçaoans, 1863-1917* (Allen, 2007), I have employed the term *tambú di bida*, commonly used by local informants, to capture the complex nature of Afro-Caribbean culture, where individuals navigate everyday concerns common to all people, while appearing resigned to fate yet simultaneously engaging in active agency to assert relative control within the constraints imposed by the dominant socio-economic hierarchies (Allen, 2007).

Song traditions on the Dutch Leeward Islands, specifically Curaçao, encompass more than *tambú* songs. Work songs in particular hold a significant place in Afro-Curaçaoan cultural life. These songs are distinctly gendered, with specific repertoires for men (*kantika di trabou di hende hòmber*) and women (*kantika di trabou di hende muhé*), both

falling under the broader genre of *kantika di trabou* [work songs] (all translations are by the author, unless specified otherwise), indicative of their functional role in daily labor activity. A characteristic structural feature of these songs, found across many Afro-diasporic communities, is the call-and-response format, involving a lead vocalist and a recurring refrain sung by a chorus. This structure not only enables communal participation but creates a ritualized performative space, a socially and emotionally charged setting in which song becomes an embodied act of collective expression, memory, and, at times, subtle resistance. The role of the lead singer is also often flexible, allowing for a dynamic negotiation of leadership and encouraging the inclusive engagement of the wider group.

A large number of the songs collected and archived in both the Zikinzá (Brenneker-Juliana) Collection[5] as well as those stored at the Public Library [6]and in the Allen Collection[7] date back to the period of slavery. This indicates that enslaved individuals and their descendants used these oral traditions to articulate, process, and transmit labor-related experiences across generations. These songs likely functioned as mechanisms of resistance and empowerment, enabling enslaved persons to preserve their dignity and affirm their humanity within the context of exploitative labor regimes. Through lyrical expression, rhythmic articulation, and communal performance, they conveyed affective states such as frustration, suffering, endurance, and hope, while simultaneously fostering solidarity and shaping a shared sense of identity.

4 Narratives of power, morality and agency

Building on the theoretical understanding of agency as not merely resistance but also the creative and symbolic expression of subjectivity, this section explores how enslaved Afro-Curaçaoans enacted agency through their oral traditions. Narratives, songs and proverbs were not simply expressive forms, but they functioned as vital tools for preserving cultural knowledge, critiquing power structures, and affirming dignity and humanity. This is particularly evident in a song such as *Di Ki Manera*, whose lyrical subtlety and emotional depth exemplify how Afro-Curaçaoan communities used oral performance to reflect critically on their lived realities. By contextualizing these oral forms within broader philosophical and ethical frameworks, especially those emerging from

[5] During six years from 1958 onward, Paul (Pader) Brenneker and Elis Juliana collected a large number of oral histories, songs, and music from elderly people of Curaçao. This collection consists of 1,400 songs, stories, and life histories. Anecdotes, memories of the past, rituals, and folk songs from 267 informants were recorded. In 1974, they transferred this cultural and anthropological archive to the Zikinzá Foundation. Since 2010, the Zikinzá collection has been managed by NAAM (National Archaeological Anthropological Memory Management).

[6] Tapes Brenneker/Juliana, interviews collected by Paul Brenneker and Elis Juliana, 1963-1989, until 2007 stored at the Public Library, Willemstad (Fundashon Biblioteka Públiko Kòrsou).

[7] Tapes Archeologisch-Antropologisch Instituut Nederlandse Antillen (AAINA), collected by Rose Mary Allen, 1980-1995, stored at the National Archives, Willemstad (NatAr). Tapes Rose Mary Allen, collected by Rose Mary Allen, 1999-2005, private collection.

Afro-diasporic, decolonial, and existential thought, this analysis shows how such traditions operated as vernacular modes of knowing. They posed fundamental questions about life, suffering, justice, and meaning, often in indirect or coded ways. In this sense, oral traditions constituted a form of everyday philosophy, rooted in embodied experience and collective memory. Through metaphor, inversion, irony, and spiritual reflection, enslaved and post-Emancipation communities carved out spaces to assert moral authority and ontological presence in a world structured to deny both.
I start with the song '*Mira kon nos a biba na mundu*' [Look How We Have Lived in This World]. The introduction of this song already offers a poignant glimpse into the collective experience and existential questions central to Afro-Curaçaoan oral traditions.

Mira kon nos a biba na mundu	Look how we have lived in this world
Ta nos mes ta malu na mundu	We ourselves are the bad people of this world
Pekadó di mundu, eeh	Sinners of the world, yes
Ta nos mes ta malu na mundu	We ourselves are the bad people of this world
Mi pekadó di mundu, eh	I am a sinner of the world, yes
Shon Dios tin tur kos pa nos	The Lord God gives us everything
Mira kon Shon Dios	Just look how the Lord God
Tin tur kos pa nos.[8]	Gives us everything.

Performed during the annual harvest ceremony known as *seú*, the song functions on one level as a hymn of praise to God for providing a bountiful harvest, offering sustenance for the year and seeds for future planting. God is acknowledged as the ultimate provider. While the song openly venerates God as a benevolent Creator, it simultaneously encodes a subtle message of equality, expressed through the word *pekadó* [sinner]. In this context, *pekadó* does not necessarily denote immoral or evil acts, but seems to signal the universal human condition, our common propensity to err, regardless of social status or identity. In this context, the term *pekadó* fosters a sense of collective humility and shared humanity. All people are equal in the eyes of God. Notably, God is referred to as *Shon*, a title meaning Lord or Master that is also used for earthly figures of authority and economic power, such as slaveholders, plantation owners etc. The dual meaning of the word *Shon* invites reflection on the tension between divine and earthly power as well as on the moral dimensions of justice and authority.
Another song in which the term *pekadó* appears, with even greater clarity and critical resonance, is '*Di ki manera*' [Tell Me How]. This song implicitly conveys the idea that the well-being of enslaved people is determined by forces beyond their control, i.e., the ruling powers. The enduring popularity of this song is evident from the many versions that have been collected from informants of various ages and in different regions of the

[8] Interview Gerardo Rosario (born 1877), Brenneker/Juliana, 1958 (Zikinzá-collection, T 45, NatAr).

island. Juliana and Brenneker documented six variants[9], while Rosalia (1997, p. 17) and I have collected additional versions from post-Emancipation generations. This wide and sustained transmission attests to the song's historical roots in the experience of slavery and highlights how its themes have continued to echo across generations, pointing to the long afterlife of slavery and colonialism in Curaçao's cultural memory.

Di ki manera	Tell me how
Di ki manera	Tell me how
nos ta biba n'e mundu aki,	we should live on this earth,
ora mi hasi bon,	when I do good,
pekadó di m'a hasi malu,	sinners say that I did wrong,
ora mi hasi malu,	when I do wrong,
pekadó ta marmorami. [10]	sinners speak ill of me.

The song conveys a particular worldview, as evident in the opening line: "Tell me how we should live on this earth." The subsequent verse, "when I do good, sinners say that I did wrong; when I do wrong, sinners speak ill of me," expresses a sense of hopelessness and injustice rooted in the experience of oppression and inequality: no matter how one behaves, one is always judged disapprovingly. This can be summarized by the phrase "Damned if you do, damned if you don't," as Paul Comenencia does in his article '*Katibu ta galiña*' (2017). This predicament also evokes what Bateson et al. (1956) have termed a "double bind": a paradoxical communicative situation in which an individual receives contradictory messages that negate one another, making any coherent or satisfactory response impossible. Bateson et al. argued that such structures could cause profound psychological distress and constitute a form of structural, psychological violence. However, beneath the expression of hopelessness lies a more profound commentary. While the song conveys exasperation, it simultaneously encodes resistance by naming the universal human condition of sin and asserts a moral parity between the enslaved and their oppressors. This quiet yet powerful inversion destabilizes dominant narratives that framed enslaved people as inherently inferior and deserving of suffering. Across its many variants, '*Di ki manera*' can be understood as a philosophical reflection on human existence under conditions of extreme inequality, such as enslavement. Moreover, the song's transmission across generations underscores its cultural and psychological significance even after the abolition of slavery. It therefore not only documents suffering but also serves as an expression of endurance and resilience.

[9] Sung by Martili Pieters (born 1900, Banda Bou, T 11 and T 13); Martili Pieters in Guene (T 14); Francisco Conquet (born 1882, Veeris, T 654); Janchi Doran (born 1886, Wacawa, T 813); Damasio Hooi (born 1887, Dokterstuin, T 1409). Zikinzá-collection, NatAr.

[10] Interview Nicolaas Petrona (born 1898), Allen, 20-5-1989 (NatAr).

The ethical stance embodied by the song resonates with the rhetoric of Tula, the leader of the 1795 slave revolt in Curaçao. During Tula's dialogue with Pastor Schink, Tula posed a fundamental question: "Do we not all come from Adam and Eve?" This theological assertion appealed to the principle of universal human equality, challenging the ideological justifications of slavery and exposing the contradictions of Christian morality in colonial times. Both Tula's discourse and '*Di ki manera*' reflect an ethical worldview that questions the legitimacy of racial and social hierarchies.

A similar idea surfaces in an interview by Brenneker and Juliana with their informant Erquiles Martes, aged 77 at the time (1976,).[11] Martes reflects on death as the ultimate equalizer: "*Lamuèrtè no konosé riku, e no konosé pober. Bo por ta kon riku ku bo ta, dia yega bo tempu bo mester bai*" [Death knows neither rich nor poor. You may be as rich as you like, but when your time comes, you must go]. In his words, death renders all human beings equal, stripping away the social hierarchies and privileges that structured life on the plantation. Through this lens, plantation owners, despite their wealth and power, were ultimately revealed to be ordinary mortals, subject to the same fate as those whom they oppressed.

A comparable idea can be distilled from an interview with Tokaai, born in Banda 'Bou in 1899, whom I interviewed in 1984. Tokaai reflected on the distorted self-perception the *shonnan*, i.e., the plantation owners and other figures of colonial power and authority. He observed that these men believed themselves to be immortal and placed themselves above the basic condition of human life:

E shonnan ta'a hasi manera hende ku no ta muri. Ku no ke muri i laga e mundu akí. Mi tin mala lenga. Pasó ora un hende bisami ku un shon a muri, mi ta bisa: "E no por a muri, pasó e ta goberná, e no por muri." Nan no ta kòrda ku tin un Dios ku por kastigá nan.[12]

The landowners acted as if they would not die, as if they did not want to leave this world. I have a sharp tongue, because when I hear that a landowner has passed away, I say: "He couldn't have died, because when you rule, you cannot die." They do not remember that there is a God who can punish them.

For Tokaai, it was not the enslaved who had been dehumanized, but rather the *shonnan* who had lost their humanity by denying their own mortality. To be human is to recognize one's finitude; to claim invincibility is to sever oneself from the shared human condition. In this way, Tokaai inverts the dominant discourse of dehumanization. It is the oppressors, not the oppressed, who become less than human through their refusal to

[11] Interview Erquiles Martes (born 1899), Brenneker/Juliana, 7-10-1976, Fundashon Biblioteka Públiko Kòrsou).

[12] Interview Eduardo Tokaai (born 1899), Allen, 12-9-1984 (NatAr).

acknowledge the inevitable limits of life. The idea of death as the great equalizer is also reflected in the following song:

Di mulena toto na uze	Di mulena toto na uze[14]
Ai pober	Oh, poor man
di mulena toto na uze	di mulena toto na uze
Pober mi ta anto	I am poor and
Mi mama a nengami	My mother has rejected me
Ai, pober ta muri, blanku tambe	Oh, poor people die, but whites also
Ai, di mulena pober na uze.[13]	Ai, di mulena pober na uze.[15]

This inversion is reinforced by various other orally transmitted stories that depict how those in positions of power abused their authority. Several informants recount how seemingly invincible plantation owners ultimately lost their wealth or experienced painful, humbling deaths. Such narratives resonate with a cultural philosophy that sees life events as meaningful rather than arbitrary, encapsulated in proverbs such as: *Nada ta pasa pornada* [Nothing happens without cause] and *Kada pakiko tin su pasombra* [Everything has a reason]. These expressions frame suffering and downfall not as random misfortunes, but as morally significant and cosmically just, offering a culturally grounded lens through which to view historical injustice and power. One illustrative example is provided by the Virginia Meulens, who recalls a story told by her father about a cruel former overseer:

Mi tata a kontami. Tabatin un hòmber ku yama Chado. Esei ta bomba sutadó. Muhénan na estado e ta pone e barika den buraku, anto suta nan. Ku e pidi pordon, e hòmber ta bisa: "Ainda bo mester di mas. Bo ta muchu vrijpostig." Pader sa ku mi a mira e hòmber ei su morto, dia mi tabata na San Juan. Mi a mira ku dia el a muri, tur su atras tabata dispidí, na bichi. E tabatin un kas ku tranké di piedra, tur e tranké ta na muska. Muska grandi, di e oló ku tabatin den kas. Esei ta pa pasombra el	My father told me about a man named Chado. He was a brutal overseer. He would place pregnant women with their bellies in a pit and then beat them. When they asked for mercy, the man said: "You need more, because you are too insolent." The priest knows that I saw how this man died, when I was in San Juan. I saw that on the day he died, his backside was completely rotted, full of worms. His house had a stone fence, and the fence was covered in flies—large flies, because of the stench coming from the

[13] Interview Joos Marta (born 1885, Wacawa), Brenneker/Juliana, 1959 (Zikinzá-collection, T 815, NatAr).
[14] Unable to translate.
[15] Unable to translate.

a suta e hendenan. Mal sutá. Su kastigu. [16]	house. This was his punishment for beating people severely.

As the above analysis makes clear, Afro-Curaçaoan oral traditions are crucial sites of cultural agency. Through songs like '*Di ki manera*' and moral narratives such as the story of Chado's death, enslaved people subtly redefined concepts of morality, power, and justice. They employed symbolic inversion and theological reasoning to challenge the moral authority of slaveholders, casting judgment back upon their oppressors, while reclaiming a moral voice. This form of agency extended beyond political resistance to encompass the creative construction of meaning, the transmission of memory, and the assertion of dignity within oppressive structures. Consequently, these oral traditions have served as archives of both suffering and powerful acts of self-definition and survival.

5 Conclusion

This article has explored the spirituality of Afro-Curaçaoans as expressed through oral traditions that reveal deeply authentic, traditionally silenced but essential dimensions of the personal lives of enslaved individuals and their descendants. Spirituality here is understood not only as symbolic imagination but also as a source of inner liberation, an avenue through which individuals transcended the constraints of their daily existence. Afro-Curaçaoan songs, narratives, and proverbs illuminate how people navigated and negotiated persistent structures of power and control, reflecting the diversity and complexity of their social realities as expressed in songs, stories, and other oral forms.

These orally transmitted narratives function not merely as repositories of suffering but as powerful vehicles for ethical reflection, social critique, and cultural survival. Oral traditions provide an alternative epistemological and methodological lens for understanding both the history of slavery and its afterlife, by foregrounding voices often excluded from the colonial, written archives. They call for a shift in historiography: one that recognizes oral transmission not only as complementing the written record, but also as an archive in its own right, rich with historical, ethical, and spiritual meaning. Embracing this perspective can deepen and nuance our understanding of Dutch colonial Caribbean history and offer critical insight into the lasting effects of slavery on contemporary Caribbean societies and intergroup relations. By paying attention to the lived experiences and emotional worlds of those directly impacted by slavery, we humanize the historical narrative, making it more immediate and impactful.

While this study has focused on Curaçao, it has implications for the wider Caribbean and the Afro-Atlantic world. Similar oral traditions found throughout the Caribbean—whether in Jamaican *mento*, Haitian *lakou* storytelling, or Surinamese *winti* songs and *odos*—reflect shared patterns of memory, resilience, and resistance rooted in the region's

[16] Story told by Virginia Meulens (born 1869; Zikinzá-collection, T 437, NatAr).

entangled histories of colonization and racialized capitalism. Situating Curaçao within this broader Caribbean and Afro-diasporic context opens space for comparative scholarship that can enrich our understanding of historical consciousness across the region and beyond.

A key question for further research is whether the spiritualities within these oral traditions continue to influence not only the personal identities and inner lives of individual Curaçaoans but also have expanded to shape the collective attitudes and cultural consciousness of the wider Curaçaoan population today. This inquiry extends beyond mere cultural retention as it speaks to the evolving significance of ancestral knowledge systems in shaping self-perception, communal bonds, and modes of resistance in a post-colonial /neo-colonial society. Exploring the enduring presence of these spiritualities invites a deeper understanding of how individuals and communities navigate the legacies of slavery, not only through external socio-political structures but also within the psychological and affective dimensions of daily life. Central to this exploration is the subtleness of language, the ways in which nuanced expressions, metaphors, and oral storytelling embed layers of spiritual and cultural meaning that might be overlooked or misunderstood by outsiders.

How do Curaçaoans today interpret and internalize these inherited forms of knowledge? Are they consciously invoked in moments of crisis, celebration, or intergenerational teaching? Do these subtle linguistic cues and symbolic uses of language still provide a sense of spiritual grounding or collective identity in the face of ongoing racial, economic, and cultural inequalities? Such questions highlight the importance of oral traditions not merely as historical artifacts but as dynamic, evolving practices that continue to shape the contours of Curaçaoan life. These considerations compel a deeper examination of how historical trauma and cultural resilience are actively negotiated in the present, and how these Afro-diasporic spiritualities continue to function as vital instruments of healing, resistance, and community cohesion. In engaging with these dynamics, we not only enhance our understanding of the colonial past but also obtain critical insight into its enduring influence on the social structures, cultural sensibilities, and psychological landscapes of contemporary life in Curaçao and the broader Caribbean.

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REVERSE MIGRATION AND THE QUEST FOR HOME

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Abstract
In *Home Again: Stories of Migration and Return* (2009), Celia Sorhaindo and Polly Pattullo have compiled the narratives of twenty-one women and men from Dominica who are what once were called "Been-to Heroes," that is they had migrated to Europe, the United States or Canada and returned as celebrated wayfarers. However, in this post-colonial moment, the been-to-hero has transformed into just a been-to figure. In the twenty-first century, migration has lost its glamor. Today global migration is an explosive topic with countries attempting to close borders and expel migrants. In Africa and in the Caribbean, places of mass colonialization by European nations, it is ludicrous to think that the former colonized would not arrive at the door of the colonizer to take part in the wealth their ancestors helped to create. The Russian Alexander Radishchev's (1790/2020) critique of America applies equally to all colonial powers. He observed that Europeans laid waste to America having watered her cornfields with the blood of her native inhabitants, the malicious preachers of meekness and love of mankind added to their murder the purchase of slaves, moving people from their homes and families to toil and to work. How different is postcolonial migration when one considers the aftereffects of colonialism. This article questions whereabouts or exactly where or what is home. The answers vary but should encourage further exploration, especially into the phenomenon of reverse migration.

Key terms: migration, returnees, cosmopolitan, global identity, rootedness

"Every day is a journey, and the journey itself is home."
(Basho, 1694/2000, p. 3)

In *Home Again: Stories of Migration and Return* Celia Sorhaindo and Polly Pattullo (2009) have compiled the narratives of twenty-one men and women from Dominica who are what once were called, been-to heroes, that is they had been to Europe, the United States or to Canada and returned as celebrated wayfarers. At one point in history the

been-to was a motif in African literature (Nwankwo, 2005). However, in the twenty-first century, migration has lost its glamor. In postcolonial rhetoric the been-to hero has transformed into just a been-to figure. No longer considered a hero, this figure is sometimes viewed in a negative light.

Today global migration is an explosive topic with countries attempting to close borders and expel migrants. In Africa and in the Caribbean, places of mass colonialization by European nations, it is preposterous to think that the former colonized would not arrive at the colonizers door to partake of the wealth their ancestors helped to create. The story of migrations is better known than the story of returning home. The late Nobel Laurate, Toni Morrison (2019), asked "what do we mean when we say home?" (Morrison, 2019, p. 17, see also Dowling, 1979) and concluded that it is memory. Still others define home as just being Here On Mother Earth (H.O.M.E.). For some contributors to *Home Again* (Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009) home is a particular place, the island of their birth. Yet, others claim England as the mother country because of its colonial relationship to Dominica and do not see leaving Dominica as the rejection of home that some were accused of when they chose to return.

It was Thomas Wolfe who said: "You can't go back home to your family, ... back home to your childhood ... to places in the country. Back home to old forms and systems of things which once seemed everlasting, but which are changing all the time" (1940/2011, p. 40). The home we remember is not static and in fact might be only an illusion. Fiction writer Flannery O'Connor (1952/2007) captures the irony of seeking home when she writes: "Where you come from is gone, where you thought, you were going to never was there, and where you are is no good unless you can get away from it .... In yourself right now is the only place [home] you've got" (2007, p. 165).

Yet going home is precisely what the sojourners in *Home Again* (Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009) attempt to do. Called returnees, some are disappointed when they return to the island while others adjust. Many returnees are met with rejection and called Englishmen, particularly when they have been to London and acquired a British accent. Yet, scholars often suggest that the benefits of leaving home are greater than the disadvantages.

Florencia V. Cornet (2017) identifies the positive aspects of migration as cosmopolitan multiplicity. Her analysis pertains specifically to women. Interestingly, the contributors to *Home Again* (Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009) are mostly men, of the twenty-two narratives only seven are by women who have returned. It is possible that the experiences of migration and return may differ based on gender. Cornet (2017) posits that cosmopolitanism and linguistic multiplicity are transformative tools for women, producing collective agency and activism for autonomy (Cornet, 2017, p. 175). If it is self-actualizing to venture forth in migration, what is it when one returns? What is global identity? Hybrid culture? How in fact does cosmopolitanism square with rootedness? Two writers in *Home Again* support Cornet's conclusion, "You find the attitude of people who haven't travelled or gained experiences is so different" Eustace Maxim says (in Sorhaindo &

Pattullo, 2009, p. 83). Kenneth Burney states, “if you haven’t left Dominica, you don’t know what the other side of the world looks like” (p. 155). There are those who might reply that they do not care what the other side of the world looks like.

While some people see the value of migration, others, like scholar-writer Ama Ata Aidoo, call into question the pressure to migrate. In one poem, she asks, “When did home stop being a place to be?/ when did being at home become/ proof of failure? /a life gone wrong? / should we fly away? / wander?/ get lost?” (Aidoo, cited in Behrent, 1997, lines 9-16). Her fellow Ghanaian author and scholar, Abena Busia, adds, “We have lived that moment of the scattering of the people-- /Immigrant, Migrant, Emigrant, Exile, /Where do the birds gather?” (Busia, cited in Behrent, 1997, lines 2-5). Both writers adhere to Morrison’s (2019) concept of rootedness, that ancestral presence needed for guidance and moral development that produces a cultural identity. While Morrison’s idea applies to fictional characters and narratives it also is applicable to people’s lived experiences. On the other hand, Cornet’s (2017) reading of Dutch Caribbean women’s writings suggests a different idea: “that one’s identity is shaped across multiple national borders allowing thus for a nuanced understanding of the self in the world” (p. 181). Still for others, migration has its contradictions. Morrison’s statement, “if Black people are going to succeed in this culture, they must always leave” (2019, p. 52), speaks to the illogicalities of the Black experience. She suggests that once you leave home those things that grounded you are no longer available.

People migrate for a variety of reasons, including economic issues, political turmoil including war, natural disasters, hurricanes, educational opportunities. They return for equally numerous reasons. Jean Popeau upon returning to Dominica declared that the materialism of European culture leads to rootlessness (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009, p. 7). While in the UK he made efforts to not lose contact with the island. He wrote of his determination “to root [him]self in the black world” (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009, p. 7). Popeau spent thirty years living and working in England, but he was “constantly aware that [he] was not born into that culture” (p. 7). He felt his soul never belonged in Europe. For many people, the meaning of home is the sense of belonging. Popeau’s return was spiritually uplifting. But to be accepted he had to speak creole or risk being called English. He faced resentment from his fellow Dominicans for having gone to England. Others who return experience a strange alienation, not having felt at home abroad and unwelcomed once they have returned.

Reverse migration and how one adjusts depends heavily on the age at which one migrates. Those who left the island as small children seem more inclined to exhibit a hybrid identity. Janet Heath (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009) who migrated with her family to the UK when she was six clearly articulates the drawing power of memory and family. In her narrative she recalls time spent with her aunts before her move. She writes to them from the UK and when she is older, she sends them money. She also epitomizes

the cosmopolitan aspects of living abroad and travelling that Cornet (2017) outlines regarding women writers in the Dutch Caribbean. Heath is a citizen of two worlds with the autonomy and confidence produced by her cosmopolitan experience. She worked as a secretary and as a case worker for racial equality. Her first return to Dominica occurred when she was eighteen. She experienced culture shock at the lack of conveniences on the island and suffered psychological disorientation when she overheard "an English accent" and felt like she was at home. She writes, "and then I get a little confused because I don't know which home" (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009, p. 59). In fact, she has two homes, one in the UK and one on the island of her birth where she eventually returned to in 2003 and opened a business. She and her husband planned to return before they were too old to make a meaningful contribution, which may suggest that those who wait to return after they retire do not make meaningful contributions. She writes that unfortunately they are valued more for their money than for their skills and ideas. Other returnees echo her complaint saying that people on the island think those who go to England "pick up money on the ground!" (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009, p. 90) never acknowledging how hard the returnees have labored. Those returnees who have retired bring their money back to the island. They establish island homes for their children and grandchildren born abroad to inherit.

Carol Boyce Davies states that "re-negotiation of identities is fundamental to migration" (1994, p. 3, see also Boyce Davies, 1990) and that "home is often a site of contradictions—a place of belonging but also a place of alienation" (1994, p. 19). For Franklyn Georges (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009) who migrated to England in 1960, the main contradiction in Dominica was classism while he was obliged to negotiate his identity in England through experiences with racism. He became a trade unionist, the first "African-Caribbean" elected a counselor for the London borough of Walthamstow. (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009, p. 63). He returned to Dominica in 2008 because while he felt comfortable in the UK, "he knew it wasn't home" (p. 70). And yet, he wanted to bring home that which was not home. He writes:

> I lived in England for 40 years, and got used to a particular standard of life. . . I had a beautiful home, garden, everything. . .. my dream was to take that same home back here [Dominica]. When you come home, they tell you that you will be able to bring your things down duty free, but it's not like that. (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009, p. 72)

Instead of the government enabling reverse migration the returnees think the process is cumbersome and difficult. Helena Durand says that it is also difficult to get things done in Dominica because she comes from abroad and feels like she does not belong anywhere (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009, p. 49). One consequence of cosmopolitanism is a personal sense of alienation. In *At home in the world: Cosmopolitanism now,* Timothy Brenan (1997) characterizes cosmopolitanism as self-indulgence, too facile and homogenizing, which recalls the old melting pot metaphor for inclusion. History demonstrates

that far too many do not melt, especially African descended peoples. Sociologist M. Ossewaarde (2007) suggests that cosmopolitanism produces a society of strangers.

Several returnees in *Home Again* find themselves confronted with their fellow citizens who accuse them of being "sell outs" because they "lived in the slave master's home" (Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009, p. 60). The same resentment is not directed towards those who return from the United States or Canada. Bernadette Alexander (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009) says, "If you come from England, they sideline you" (p. 92). Other returnees complain of social isolation and say the local people are envious and resentful, with locals saying that returnees have a superior attitude. Unfortunately, the feeling of rejection causes some people to go back to England (Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009, p. 73).

One fear that returnees leaving to go back to the UK produces is that if they share their experience with their children who have not been born in Dominica it is unlikely that their children will consider the island as home. Once their parents die, they will sell their property and take the money back to the UK. Franklyn Georges worries that if returnees feel unwanted, their children will not make the connection with the island and a generation will be lost (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009, p. 73).

Alexandra Sorhaindo's message to her fellow returnees admonishes them to return with an open mind and not to come back with the attitude that cosmopolitism makes them superior. She says,

> A lot of the people who we left in Dominica have come up in society much better than some of us living and struggling in England. Sometimes moving to England has not made us better … some of us would have been better off if we had stayed in Dominica. (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009, p. 25)

She admits that for those who were away for a long time the adjustment can be difficult. Most of those who migrated planned only to be gone for five years. Those plans turned into twenty, thirty and in some cases forty years. Sorhaindo suggests that it is unrealistic to expect to be welcomed back with open arms. Being away for many years and not keeping close contact, "it's like going back to a foreign country and you get treated like a foreigner" (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009, p. 24).

Negotiating multiple identities is not without challenges. The sense of transnationalism, of the Caribbean as a crossroads of cultures and migrations, and the connection to multiple places often produces a rejection of fixed identities, rigid national and ethnic personas and embraces a fluid interconnectedness. But not always. Sometimes the fluidity results in feelings Helena Durand (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009) expressed as not belonging anywhere.

The issue of return migration is being addressed throughout the Caribbean, in fiction as well as in fact (see, for example, Olwig 1993, 2007; Potter et al., 2005; Henry & Plaza, 2006; Mata, 2008). In Edwidge Danticat's novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) her central character, Sophie Caco's story of migration resonates with the non-fiction narrative of Patricia Bobb in *Home Again* (Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009) who was forced to join

her mother in London when she was thirteen. Both the fictional character and Bobb were unhappy to be torn away from extended family and especially from their grandmothers. After years abroad both women returned to the islands of their birth. Fortunately for the real person, Patricia Bobb, reverse migration was satisfying. For Danticat's fictional character, Sophie, reverse migration is fraught with disappointment. For her home/Haiti is no longer her home. She realizes that "the past is always the past" (Danticat, 1994, p. 173) but acknowledges "you carry your past like the hair on your head" (p. 234). On the other hand, Cobb found fulfillment upon her return she says because "Coming back here is about finding me" (in Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009, p. 173). She does point out however that people in Dominica can make it difficult for those who return, like the people working in duties and customs who could be helpful but instead are unhelpful. She suggested "There should be a committee for people who want to return" (2009, p. 174). Finding home often is about finding oneself. Home is both physical and metaphysical in terms of elements that nourish the spirit. For the contributors to *Home Again* (Sorhaindo & Pattullo, 2009) the majority of whom migrated in the 1950s and 60s and returned between 1980 to 2008, it was their memory that brought them back and their desire to feel wanted and appreciated. They found acceptance with their family members and relatives but not so much from their wider communities. As the world expands (in terms of AI technology) and contracts (in terms of feeling disconnected) it remains to be seen how the concept of home will be affected and what the search for home might entail.

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NYAMMING AND NAMING VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIVE RECIPES

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Abstract
Novelist Tiphanie Yanique and Virgin Islands cookbook writers keep Glissantian creolization fresh and vibrant through their uses of Virgin Islands Creole language and taste. Yanique's (2014) *Land of Love and Drowning* and cookbooks first printed in 1954 Women's League of Saint Thomas's *Virgin Islands Native Recipes* (1954/1965) to Amy Mackay's (1980) *"Let Us Cook" = Le Awe Cook: A Collection of Authentic Cruzan Recipes* navigate between resisting and accepting neocolonial "development," elevating and exoticizing "native" practice, extending and redirecting touristic exploitation. Through close readings of their food language, this essay details the risks and opportunities of a creolization that remains open in relation (Glissant, 1997/2020).

Key terms: native, creolization, food, cookbook, Virgin Islands, Tiphanie Yanique, Édouard Glissant

Introduction: Native, creole

The title of the first Virgin Islands cookbook, the Women's League of St. Thomas's (1954/1965) *Virgin Islands Native Recipes* underlines the importance, and the complication, of claims to being "native" in the Caribbean generally and the Virgin Islands specifically. "Native" establishes a belonging, a local heritage and authority with which those "from here" and can counter colonialist convictions that things like culture and history never come *from* the Caribbean. "Native" also suggests not just born in a place but tracing a lineage of born-in-the-place back to at least before the most recent "newcomers" and often to a mythical moment of origin: the first people, the founders. The difficulty of establishing when that "first" moment was and how we can claim a living breathing "native" anything while also tying it to that mythic origin point is exacerbated in the Caribbean by the colonial destruction of Indigenous peoples, plants, animals, and

cultures and also by the importance of claiming as native that which emerges from the combination and crossing of Indigenous, African, European, and Asian peoples brought together, often by force, in various distinct ways across the Caribbean during the colonial period.

Édouard Glissant, among others, offers creolization to convey "one of the ways of forming a complex mix" (Glissant, 1990/1997, p. 90) in which "those who meet up here always come from an 'over there'" (Glissant, 1997/2020, p. 9). While Glissant moves away from terms like native, which are difficult to separate from the "idea of identity as a single root" tied to colonial monothinking even when articulating national independence (1997/2020, p. 11), Virgin Islands writers like those in the Women's League of St. Thomas configure the native as the creole and vice versa. This certainly runs the risk of "single root" identity that instills a new divide between the native creole and everything else, as if once mixed the creole is no longer open and evolving but itself becomes the static point of origin, a risk easily exploited in neocolonial development discourses and tourism that freeze the native creole into a decaying—even if revered—past. But taking that risk allows these writers to take up Glissant's challenge: "could we not propose, against the single root that kills everything around it, an extension of the root into a rhizome, which opens up Relation?" (1997/2020, p. 11), an imagination of "identity as rhizome, going to meet other roots [which] is how the territory once again becomes a land" (p. 120). Deploying the term native and exploring the ways that Virgin Islands people, food, and food language are grounded in the islands and linked to all those that originate and come and go and stay, Virgin Islands (food) writers inscribe the tastes of the land.

With territorial status and tourism firmly established as the extensions of colonialism in the Virgin Islands, the struggle to maintain a rhizomatic native creole culture and cuisine contends with old and new challenges. U.S. purchase and territorialization of the former Danish Virgin Islands—St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix—establish the United States as the colonial center with whose push and pull those islands contend. Tiphanie Yanique's 2014 novel *Land of Love and Drowning* outlines the new poles of U.S. neocolonial "development" and "native" creole resistance as well as their Glissantian Relation in the Virgin Islands in a family chronicle spanning the first century of U.S. ownership and territorialization. I read *Land of Love and Drowning* alongside Virgin Islands cookbooks that span the same time period in order to posit their formulations of native creole tastes as manifestation of how culinary creolization persists in the language of food and taste precisely as it continues to contend with the messy combinations of seemingly opposing elements.

Relation

Land of Love and Drowning is narrated in two main voices. The third person narration, often focused on or through Eeona Bradshaw, uses standard American English. The

main first-person narrator, Eeona's sister Anette, uses a Virgin Islands English that incorporates Virgin Islands Creole, especially in relation to food. In her first section in the novel, Anette describes how, on Transfer Day 1917, "in the Barracks everybody nyamming down some pick-up saltfish. The place smelling like ocean. The talk keep talking: 'Our family is moving to Atlanta, Georgia. My husband has taken a position…'" (Yanique, 2014, p. 13). The contrast between local food and language—the sensory pleasure, sufficiency, and community of the known, local, domestic—and the sense-less Standard American English dream of more, further better, that appear here extend throughout the novel. Like the family planning to move to Georgia, Eeona and Anette's mother, Antoinette, longs for the foods, manners, and language that she associates with "America," "a ladies' tea party" and her richer friends' teatime tales of the "classy fashions" they saw on their trips to New York (p. 29). After their parents' death, Eeona insists that Anette learn "how to sip tea" (p. 76) while Anette finds local nourishment from the neighbors who "feed me a little dumpling if I hungry" (p. 95). Eeona and Anette's divergent language and food preferences mirror their divergent cultural and political orientations: Euro-American and tourist-oriented Eeona goes to Mass and requests that Annette "fetch an oldwife. No other fish will do" while anticolonial, anti-tourist Anette enjoys her local friends and "when the food cook, all a we eat" (pp. 104-105). Eona's colonial language of orders and demands attest to her separation from the community of friends and neighbors who share cooking and eating.

However, Yanique tells a story not only of difference but also of relationship—or Glissantian Relation—in which we see "the position of each part within th[e] whole" (Glissant, 1990/1997, p. 131). Eeona and Anette are most obviously related by their sisterhood, sharing, in Glissantian terms, both "the chaotic network of Relation" and "the hidden violence of filiation" (1990/1997, p. 144). Their shared parentage and early years set up their linked attachment to the Virgin Islands and interactions with the American tourist economy. They ground in interpersonal familial dynamics the larger forces of Glissantian Relation which function "in this internal relationship (that of each culture to its components) and, at the same time, in an external relationship (that of this culture to the others that affect it)" (p. 169). Even the old wife that Anette and her friends eat is made with not only indigenous sweet peppers but also European-originated lime. And even when their parents are both alive and the Bradshaw family could have "mutton with mint jelly," that same meal included "fungi with avocado pear" (Yanique, 2014, p. 34). Virgin Islands food and language, Eeona and Anette show, can be more or less Creole, more or less oriented toward the islands or the states, more or less involved in accepting or resisting tourism, but it is always all of the above. For all the dishes and tables of the Virgin Islands draw culinarily and linguistically European, Indigenous, and African elements to into a delicious, eloquent, and ever-evolving creole (p. 34).

Virgin Islands cookbooks, including and after *Virgin Islands Native Recipes*, offer a parallel imbrication of what might seem to be poles of "native" and nonnative, Virgin

Islands-and U.S.-oriented foodviews. These cookbooks, like *Land of Love and Drowning*, show Virgin Islanders putting into Relation the many culinary, linguistic, and political histories and attachments that make up Virgin Islands "native creole" foodways. Reading the cookbooks alongside the novel, I insist on the literary nature of the cookbooks—the ways that they operate as sites of the imaginary formulation of taste, word, and action—and I consider the material culture of cooking and eating that they inscribe. *Virgin Islands Native Recipes* reveals how claims to being "native" are often made about things native by persons who actually distance themselves from that "native." Indeed, the section introductions in *Virgin Islands Native Recipes* refer to Virgin Islanders as a people with "their native vegetables" and tastes that are not those of "the average person" (Women's League of St. Thomas, (1954/1965, p. 4), as if the authors and audience of the cookbook were clearly distinct from "the native" (p. 17). At the same time, the recipes themselves, primarily composed by Mildred V. Anduze whose ancestors have been in the Virgin Islands since at least the 1870s, are addressed from and to people who know how to determine such things as how to make Red Bean Soup with "sugar to taste" (p. 5) and can follow a recipe for Souse that calls for:

> Pig's head, Pig's feet, Salt, parsley, thyme, celery, hot pepper, 1 large onion" and instructs simply to "clean head and feet thoroughly. Cover with water and boil until tender. Transfer head and feet into fresh boiling water. Add salt, parsley, thyme, celery, and hot pepper. Steam on a slow fire for one hour. Let stand in water until cool. Remove souse from stock, remove the larger bones. Make a sauce from strained stock with limes and hot pepper. Garnish with parsley and sliced limes. (Women's League of St. Thomas, 1954/1965, p. 14)

The first editions (1954, 1955, 1965) of *Virgin Islands Native Recipes* list by the Women's League of St. Thomas and Anduze as a principal contributor; a later edition (1982) lists Anduze as the author. "Native" also features in the titles of the College of the Virgin Islands and Virgin Islands' Agricultural Extension 1985 *Native Recipes*, and in Dea Murray's 1970 *Famous Native Recipes of the Virgin Islands*. Early editions of *Virgin Islands Native Recipes* name Mrs. Nudie Maas, Mrs. Elsa Lindqvist, and Mrs. Edith Bornn as the members of the committee of the Women's League who "selected, compiled, and edited" the recipes.

The divergence between the headers and some recipes that distance from "the native" and the majority of recipes that, like this one, rely on local knowledge remind that Virgin Islands cookbooks have multiple audiences and functions: they address women who employ cooks and perhaps are not, or do not want to be, counted among the natives; they address women who cook and enjoy cookbooks as reminders or markers of community rather than for basic instruction; they address tourists and "newcomers"; they are fundraisers and marketing tools for the activities and businesses of their authors. The ways that they address these multiple audiences—*Virgin Islands Native Recipes* for example details that Tannia is "root of the so called Purple Elephant Ear" (Women's

League of St. Thomas, 1954/1965, p. 4) and names the kinds of fish "favored by the native" (p. 17) but gives no special explanation about what soursop, guavaberries, or maubi bark might be—demonstrate the multiplicity and unevenness of creole Relation on which Glissant insists: creolization is not "a reassuring juxtaposition" but "unpredictable (and dangerous)" (Glissant, 1997/2020, p. 24). By showcasing the messy ways that women affiliated with the Women's League of St. Thomas identify themselves, their tastes, and their foods, *Virgin Islands Native Recipes* represents "the meeting, the interference, the shock, the harmonies and disharmonies between cultures" that Glissant calls creolization (p. 119).

With authors who more neatly, and explicitly, situate themselves as native Virgin Islanders, cookbooks like Marva Sprauve Browne and Vernon McDonald Browne's 1973 *A Catta Full of West Indian Dishes*, Laura Moorhead's 1977 *Krusan Nynyam from Mampoo Kitchen*, and Amy Mackay's 1980 *Le Awe Cook "Let us Cook"* write their creoleness into their titles. These cookbooks feature significant uses of Virgin Islands English and Creole, center local ingredients and dishes and also use plenty of Standard American English, imported ingredients, and European- and Stateside-originated dishes as they detail "our native foods" (Browne & Browne, 1973, p. 3). At the same time, Doris Jadan's 1972 *The Virgin Islands Cook House Cook Book*, Carol Bareuther's 1994 *Virgin Islands Cooking,* and Angela Spenceley's cookbooks, written by "nonnative" longtime residents of the Virgin Islands also draw on and honor the authors' love of the Virgin Islands, often detailing information that is rarely written elsewhere. Similar to Eeona and Anette in *Land of Love and Drowning*, these cookbooks can be divided into "native" and "nonnative" groups, and their framing language, ingredient names, and instructions can be picked apart for traces of Indigenous, African, European, and Asian foodways. At the same time, also similar to Eeona and Anette, individually and grouped all together these cookbooks clearly embrace "native" Virgin Islands language and taste with a history and future of creolization. They enact what Glissant describes as "the Poetics of Relation [that] enables us to approach the difference between a land, which we relate to elsewhere, and a territory, whose doors we close to the wind blowing outside" (Glissant, 1997/2020, p. 119). The openness to relation they show is not a capitulation to territorialization; it is creolization in process.

Naymming

Anette's description, in *Land of Love and Drowning*, of the celebratory "nyamming down some pick-up saltfish" (Yanique, 2014, p. 13) employs a Virgin Islands Creole word for eating which also appears as part of the title of Moorhead's *Krusan Nynyam from Mampoo Kitchen*. Nyam (or nynyam) derives from Senegambian variations on nyama, "to eat," and was common in the West Indies by the early 19th century (Oxford UP, 2024). In the forward to *Krusan Nynyam from Mampoo Kitchen*, Moorhead explains that her cookbook inscribes the recipes and reminiscences of her own childhood in St.

Croix shortly after Transfer—she was born in 1915—in her words, before "Americanization occurred, family life shifted, a girl grew up" (Moorhead, 1977, p. xi). Moorehead grew up only cooking "pretend" or on the sly with "the tail of the saltfish and any rejected food discarded from our father's grocery" (p. x) because "cooking was something that the lower classed women in the V.I. did" (p. x). However, after a career as a nurse in New York and St. Croix, Moorhead, having learned from local cooks, opened the eatery Mampoo Kitchen and then wrote *Krusan Nynyam from Mampoo Kitchen* "to encourage among the natives an interest in learning the art of our cookery to the extent that they will use it, teach it to their children, and in so doing, pass on a heritage" (back cover). Mampoo has been claimed as both an "Amerindian" and an "African" word, and is the local name of two different trees native to the Virgin Islands and much of the rest of the Caribbean (*Guapira fragrans* and *Pisonia subcordata,* for more on the mampoo, see Karlsson, 2023).

Although as a child her class status put Moorhead on the side of those who might enjoy but not produce creole foods, as an adult she is able redraw her membership in the "native" community to gain—and pass on—the heritage that she was not given by her parents. Moorhead's trajectory follows what Glissant describes as "the path that leads from our place in the world and back again, again and again, [which] indicates the only permanence" of a land in relation to a totality that does not become diluted, universalized, or totalitarian (Glissant, 1997/2020, p. 118). Moorhead is able to publish *Kruzan Nynam from Mampoo Kitchen* precisely because of her long journey from relying on "cookie" to transmitting "the interest, the know-how, [and] the knowledge of native cooking" (Moorhead, 1977, p. xi) to "those who are Virgin Islanders by adoption," "the newcomers who adopt living among us," and "more mothers [who can] help their daughters to grow up cooking the foods of their childhood" (p. ii).

Anette and Eeona are born into a family that, like Moorhead's employed a cook. Although even after the death of their parents sends them into poverty neither girl learns to cook much, their very different reasons and culinary paths show again how they represent poles of focus away from and towards the Virgin Islands that are also intertwined with multiple vectors of here and there, all nourished in the end by local foods. Eeona's drive to regain her lost class status both distances her from and shows her reliance on local foods while Anette's love of local foods, cooks, and histories leads her to understand the ways that native VI foods are also "from over there."

Eeona uses local food made by others to help her secure her first job in hospitality when "she carried a tiny coconut tart to the Jost Vany Dyke lady restaurateur" (Yanique, 2014, p. 153).

Eventually, Eeona herself makes "guavaberry rum" but it is also part of a commercial venture, "for selling during the season" (Yanique, 2014, p. 263). When she opens her own inn on St. John, Eeona hires a cook. Nonetheless, Eeona does know how to name and use guavaberry and she calls an old wife an old wife rather than Queen Triggerfish

or *Balistes vetula*. Guavaberry and old wife may not "sound" creole, but they are local words for local foods, that like creole draw from the multiple linguistic histories that have crossed the islands. Native to the Caribbean and particularly to the Virgin Islands, Guavaberry is not botanically related to the guava, but the flavors are similar. The first recorded use of the term seems to be in Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp's 1777 *History of the Mission of the Evangelical Bretheren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. John*. (For more on the history of guavaberry, see James, 2021). To sell local foods for tourist dollars, Eeona shows, requires and sustains local food knowledge. And while Eeona often reacts negatively when she is served local foods—as when she "critiqued the intensity of the pepper, the color of the broth, and the texture of the taña" (Yanique, 2014, p. 122) of Anette's mother-in-law's "stew"—her remarks convey her knowledge and also mask her enjoyment (p. 122).

Anette, for her part, links her loves of the place, food, language, history, and men of the Virgin Islands by loving men who either cook Virgin Islands foods for her or who are, like her, nourished by the Virgin Islands food of their mothers. She is so well taken care of by them that she barely learns to cook herself. Anette accepts Ronald's proposal of marriage because "the smell of his mother's cooking more than once had me sitting beneath his window dreaming" (Yanique, 2014, p. 101) and "woy, the boy could cook" (p. 105). Ronald cooks not only "fish and dumplings" but "johnnycake and paté, red pea soup with dumplings … fish and fungi" (p. 105). And he continues to be a conduit for his mother's delicacies such as "coconut tart—she had grated the coconut herself" (p. 130). At one point Anette does "start watching Ronnie mother so I could see how to make the read pea soup" (p. 146) but both of her husbands, well versed in cooking local foods, are happy to do most of the cooking. Anette eventually cooks things like saltfish for her family, but even that relies on her second husband Franky's pepper sauce (pp. 287, 308) and comes out tough (p. 291). And yet, as much as Anette and her husbands represent an attachment to Virgin Islands foods that is both evolving—as the men do most of the cooking—and "native"—focused almost entirely on foods whose names and tastes are deeply linked to the place, history, and language of the Virgin Islands—they also rely, indirectly, on the U.S. for their food. Both of Anette's husbands are employed by the U.S. military and as Anette's daughter Ronalda later points out, saltfish is one of those foods that reveals the reliance of native Virgin Islands cuisine and tradition on the long history of North American involvement in the Caribbean, from the triangle trade that among other things brought New England salt cod to the Caribbean, to the contemporary food industry that does the same.

Fish and fungi

The cookbook representations of the "fish and fungi" that Anette mentions demonstrate how in dish names, ingredient lists, and instructions we can see the workings of a Glissantian creolization that "requires each component to persist, even while it is already

changing" (Glissant, 1997/2020, p. 130). A close look at the "fish and fungi" recipes shows how they carry and transform the complex history and presence of colonial and neocolonial, Indigenous, African, and what has become native Virgin Islands creole food and food language. Jeannette Allsopp in *The Caribbean Multilingual Dictionary of Flora Fauna and Foods* (2003) explains that fungi is used in the U.S. Virgin Islands and many other islands for a dish that is called *funchi* in Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao and *cou-cou* in Barbados and elsewhere. Fungi's etymology seems to be entirely African, tracing back to one, several or all of the following: the Twi adjective *fugyee* (soft or mealy); the Kimbundu noun *funzi* (cassava mash), the Congo noun *fundi* (flour, porridge), and the Yourba modifier *funje* (something given to eat). Its first appearance in writing, as far as I can find, is in S.K.'s 1789 *Account of the Treatment of Slaves in the Island of Antigua* (S.K., 1789, p.19). The central ingredient in fungi is cornmeal, a food indigenous to the Caribbean, with evidence of corn grinding in St. John going back to about 6,000 BC (Pagán-Jiménez et al., 2015). The link to Kimbundu *funzi* suggests that the an early form of the dish may have been made in Africa from a variety of starches, with the word moving back and forth between Africa and the Caribbean from the sixteenth century onward.

The ingredients for a classic fungi—water, salt, corn meal, and shortening—are the same, with slight variation in amounts, in The Women's League, Browne and Browne, Moorhead, and Mackay's cookbooks. Shortening is the only ingredient not indigenous to the Virgin Islands, and it is one of the most basic Euro-American additions to the Caribbean diet. Bringing in an African-originated ingredient*, Virgin Islands Native Recipes* notes that "young okras may be added. Cut into small pieces and allow to boil for a few minutes before adding meal" (Women's League of St. Thomas, 1954/1965, p. 27). Browne and Browne (1973), Moorhead (1977), Mackay (1980), Jadan (1972), Spenceley (2000), and Bareuther (1994) all have explanations or recipes for okra fungi. Mackay notes the skill required to turn these simple ingredients into a smooth and delicious dish: "Not everyone can make authentic fungi without getting lumps in it, especially if okra is added" (1980, p. 63), offering instructions similar to Browne and Browne's to "stir briskly (a wooden spoon is especially helpful) to prevent lumping" (1973, p. 20). Fungi is clearly, it seems, a "native creole" dish, one whose origins can be traced to the colonial era culinary interactions of Indigenous, African, and European ingredients and cooks and one that requires a skill that has been transmitted via demonstration and practice for generations before making its way into cookbooks.

Mackay prefaces her fungi recipe with the explanation that "Fungi is a popular cereal side dish made with cornmeal. It is always served with kallaloo and very frequently with cooked fish. 'Fish n fungi' is almost always on the menu of Cruzan restaurants" (Mackay, 1980, p. 63). This note, along with the inclusion of fungi in Jan Morash's *Cooks of the British Virgin Islands* whose recipes are all tied to "fine restaurants," complicates any strict division between local and tourist food. Unlike other crossover favorites like

paté, fish and fungi does not rely primarily on European-derived ingredients and methods or have a counterpart in an American staple that make it recognizable, nor is it, like Mesple, Soursop, Sugar Apples, or Guava that while distinctly local, easily fit into the stereotypical touristic tropical paradise tropes. Indeed, the history of fish and fungi that Bareuther includes links it thoroughly to not only the histories of indigenous people and Columbian exchange but also to plantation enslavement:

> Fish and fungi's roots lead back to the days of slavery. Danish Law allowed each slave six quarts of Indian meal and six salt herring per week. Occasionally, there were other foods thrown into the ration like yams. But the mainstay of cornmeal and fish led the African women to the creative result and fish and fungi. (Bareuther, 1994, p. 62)

Bridging all the supposed divides that criss-cross a territorialized Virgin Islands, fish n fungi is food from and for the land.

Of course, it is possible to, like Spenceley, include a recipe for fungi with no mention of its belonging with things like fish or kallalloo and to Europeanize it with a comparison to polenta (Spenceley, 2000, p. 35) or to, like Morash, offer an entirely incorrect history that gives the ingredients and techniques an Italian lineage: "This is the West Indian version of Polenta and some West Indian cooks claim it came over with Columbus" (Morash, 2005, p. 71). Creolization emerged under the threat of absolute colonial domination and it is always at risk of any number of takeovers or calcifications.

Recovery, return, reclamation

Spenceley and Morash's cookbooks evoke the lurking presence of American neocolonialists, transplants, and tourists who in *The Land of Love and Drowning* appear briefly out of Herman Wouk's *Don't Stop the Carnival*, the soft-island-porn film *Girls Are for Loving,* and on beaches where they try to block local access. Nonetheless, Bareuther's history reminds us that as much as some tourist-oriented transplants and visitors may appropriate and expropriate things Virgin Islands, others document and perhaps offer new paths to recovery. Even Morash links the semi-recipe for "fungi" - "simply boil some okra and add corn meal, salt, and a bit of oil until it thickens" (Morash, 2005, p. 71) to a restaurant that is locally owned and operated and serves a mixed clientele of locals and tourists (p. 70). "Native" Virgin Islanders are not necessarily or singularly oriented toward the local, while settlers and tourists do not solely ignore or usurp it. As settlers, tourists, and stateside "investors" have and continue to write cookbooks and own hotels, Virgin Islands Creole food and language does become increasingly sparse, but its traces remain, for the next generation of Anettes and Moorheads to recover.

Culinary and linguistic recovery, return, and reclamation mark the end of *Land of Love and Drowning* and of *Kruzan Nynyam from Mampoo Kitchen*. Eeona's disconnection and refusal of home eventually render her crazy and wandering, but talking about the lobster associated with her mother's home island of Anegada. After her "episode," she

returns, not to her hotel on St. John or even to her sister on St. Thomas, but to Anegada. And though she continues to speak in standard American English, she explains to Anette that Anegada is not the "land of drowning because of all the ships that crash into it" as Anette thought but rather "it is the land that is over the water and that is how it has survived" (Yanique, 2014, p. 388). With this explanation, Eeona not only reveals her knowledge of local language she also renders the "land of drowning" as a land of survival.

Moorhead's *Krusan Nynyam* marks a similar recovery and return with a concluding section in Cruzan Creole:

> Well so de wheel ben an de stori en.
>
> I give yu plenti ting, an eben big neppa bout wine, an soap, pickling throw in fo good measure.
>
> So res yu self a minute an hav sum se se wid mi, dat way de stori a dose Ilun won nebbah don tal! tal!
>
> Mi fren, ah waan yu tu try fixin sum a dese ting ah gat ya, becausin it will taste moh betta dan wha sum bady else gat.
>
> If yo aint had enuf, sen tel me bout it and I'l see if I gat more yet.
>
> Mampoo se, 'keep de pat bi'lin, till Gabrial reach. (Moorhead, 1977, p. 112)

Moorhead's narrative shifts between the opening reminiscences, the central recipes, and this Creole call for response resemble Yanique's polyvocal narrative in which Eeona and Anette speak against, to, and with one another as they elaborate the histories, foods, and stories of their family in the *Land of Love and Drowning*. In the interactive space of these books, Virgin Islands Creole, Virgin Islands English, and Standard American English come together to share, preserve, and produce Virgin Islands foods not only against or in spite of "Americanization" and tourism, but intertwined with them.

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THE RHETORICS OF CREATIVE PERFORMANCE: AURALITY OF DAGAABA FUNERAL XYLOPHONES[1]

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Abstract
In any given community, if two or more individuals desire to effect meaningful communication, there must be a common object, event, act, or sign to which mutually acceptable meanings are attached. This applies not only to speech or the written word, but also to other modes of communication. Over the centuries, Africans have developed musical modes of communication to supplement both oral and written modes, one of the most well-known of these being the talking drums of Ghana. However, another important mode of non-oral communication is through the xylophone, found among the Dagaaba. This article focuses on the aurality of Dagaaba funeral xylophones.

Key terms: Dagaaba, xylophone, aurality, ethnomusicology, funeral dirge, performance

Introduction and contextualization

The Dagaaba belong to the Mabia language group in West Africa. The Dagaaba are found predominantly in Northwestern Ghana, Southeastern Burkina Faso, and a sliver of land in Northeastern Côte D' Ivoire. They are numerically the largest group among several others in the area such as the Sisaala, Birifor, Lobi, etc. Located in a geographic zone watered by several rivers, including the Black Volta, the Kulkpong River, the Sisili River and their tributaries, their main economic activities revolve around agriculture and animal husbandry. Their current location places them within the xylophone (*gyìlí* in Dagaare, or *balafon* in Mande) (all translations are by the authors, unless specified otherwise) playing continuum in West Africa, comprising the Mande speaking peoples of Mali, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Côte D' Ivoire, the Sisaala, the Lobi, the Birifor. Aside from the development of the xylophone (sg. *gyìlí*; pl. *gyìlé*) as one of

[1] Some elements of this article appeared in Dannabang (1990).

their instruments for non-verbal communication, the Dagaaba also use the talking drums (*tùmpāāní*), the *lóŋò* (hourglass drum); the *lòtó* (doble metal gong), the *eelee* (cow or ram horn), the *kòríŋ-jõŋ* or *kòní* (two string banjo), *pɛnāā* (hand "xylophone" made of bamboo or seasoned millet stalks), *gômbìlè* (*mbira*), etc. Both forms of non-verbal communication are coded in poetry and thus can be studied as a form of non-written literature.

> Non written literature may be portrayed, essentially, as an acoustic phenomenon, the channel for whose transmission may or may not be the oral medium. Aural literature encompasses oral forms of lore but is also a reminder that the world of sound in which predominantly illiterate cultures live is not that of the spoken word only, but also one in which word-bound sound is traced to "talking" instruments. These include drums and idiophonic instruments that do not merely speak but are also media through which literature is expressed. (Yankah, 1985, pp. 114-115)

Yankah's brief literature review provides a frame for our discussion of how Dagaaba use xylophones to communicate and perform the aural expression of grief. Earlier scholars had labelled instrumental literature as spoken art, verbal art, literature among the primitives, folk literature, oral literature, etc. However, Yankah's label of aural literature is the closest to the theme of our paper. Indeed, the Dagaare word used to describe those who understand the language of instruments and can express it orally is *tòòwónó* (the ear that hears), implying the necessity of the ear in the examination of this style of communication. Ong (1997), in an exhaustive examination of the dilemmas presented in the contradictions exposed in non-scripted texts as literature, (oral literature, often shortened to orature), explains the power attached to "the interiority of sound" in oral cultures:

> sound also determine or influence oral psychodynamics. The principal one of these other characteristics is the unique relationship of sound to interiority when sound is compared to the rest of the senses. This relationship is important because of the interiority of human consciousness and of human communication itself .... To test the physical interior of an object as interior, no sense works so directly as sound. (Ong, 1997, p. 69)

As a central instrument at all Dagaaba traditional funeral performances, the xylophone is set to the tonal modes of spoken Dagaare, and the sound conveys in space and time a cultural memory, philosophy, sacredness, and psychoemotional expression of collective and individual grief. Locke (2009) discusses African musical performance traditions, deploys qualities of "simultaneous multidimensionality" (p. 8). Locke proceeds to show how through simultaneity and multidimensionality during performance, African musicians create cyclical melodies through cyclical procedures. Cyclic procedures as well as sequential techniques produce what might be termed sonic sculptures or musical mobiles. Composers fix multideterminant components into their musical designs; perform-

ers bring this multi-faceted time-space condition into being and listeners actively participate in hearing the multivalent potential of a familiar item of repertoire. (Locke, 2009, p. 8).

Yabang (1981) states that to understand a language is not only to know the spoken or written word, but also to be reasonably proficient in the language of the musical instruments of that language. This is particularly necessary in the case of highly "non (print) literate" societies: "Ka neɛng ba waa too-wono, o naa mang deɛ e la muu bee kpalaa kpalaa lɛ ne gyilbie ... wommung ... A nang waa ka yeltegrɛ ne yelbulo la ka a gyilbie ... mang yele kora toowoni mo" (Yabang, 1981, p. ii). [If one does not understand, one would just be ignorant about xylophone texts and their language. It is because they are heavy statements and germinal words that they are xylophone language ... and speak to those who understand]. What Yabang articulates is captured in any of the various musical instruments among the Dagaaba.

Relatedly, we can argue that a musical instrument such as the xylophone among the Dagaaba, is "richly symbolic of [the Dagaaba people's] potential to externalize physically and socially [their] needs, aspirations, allegiances and creative energies" (Dawe, 2005, p. 59). This is manifested perhaps in contemporary sacral situations, especially in the Roman Catholic Church, where sacred song writers and composers compose Christian music that ensure the centrality of the xylophone in an ensemble of various drums with different pitches and rhythmic beats, cymbals, maracas, handclapping, etc. This is the Dagaaba people's response and endorsement of Vatican II policy of enculturation, inculturation, and acculturation of the Catholic liturgy. This emphasis on the necessity of enculturation to comprehend aural literature even for those within the Dagaaba culture coincides with the ethnopoetic style of analysis used in this paper, a style which encourages studying aural literature within the cultural traditions of both the performer and the audience, including close participatory observation (Alembi, 2002, p. 23; Anyidoho, 1989, p. 64).

Dagaare, being a tonal language, can be mapped onto different notes of the xylophone in a style of speech surrogacy. Even the style in which the xylophone is played resembles the spoken language. For example, notes representing syllables are struck quickly to match the pace and cadence at which they would be spoken or sung (Hogan, 2011, p. 237). The player also pauses at the end of each melodic group (a sequence of notes that make grammatical sense when translated into syllabic units) so the listener can reinterpret each melodic group as a grammatical phrase (Dankwa, 2018, p. 191).

In the central, northern, and south-western parts of the Daagare speaking areas of the Upper West region of Ghana, the xylophone is used to announce funerals, festivals such as the *Kakube*, *Kobine*, *Bob-Ngo*, *Bagri*, *Bonbiu*, recreational dances, or even to warn of danger. In contrast, among the southern Dagaare speakers, (Waala, Manlaala, and Monyaala), the *tùmpāāní* are the instruments used to announce funerals, festivals such as *Damba* (*Eid al-Fitr*), *Zumbenti*, *Kpini-Kyiu*, *Wilaa*, *Tenghana Kalibi* festivals, and to

announce recreational dances such as *dugu*, *kambamwaa*, etc. In the past the war drum, *dundun* (hourglass drum) or war/hunters' horn, *eelee,* was used to announce danger.

Dagaaba funerals

In a funeral situation, the tune played informs the general public about the age, sex, and clan of the deceased. This ties in with the notion of the gendered nature of music played on musical instruments (Doubleday, 2008). The appellations of the deceased are added to these general details and enable their friends, age mates, and others in nearby villages who recognize the xylophone poetry to start moving towards the funeral area. In the southern half of the region, however, including the southern part of the Nadowli district and the north-western and north-eastern sections of the Wa District, the xylophone is basically limited only to funerals and to a select few dances that are particular to some clans such as the *kpegruu* of the Ekoɔla clan and the *bɛndaari* of the Emoɔlo clan. The south-western area of the Wa District has a large population of Wiile (a subgroup of the Dagaaba) who also use the xylophone for all occasions.

At the funeral grounds of the Dagaaba, the placement of the dead body is gendered. A male corpse must be positioned facing east while a female corpse must face west. As predominantly an agricultural community, the gendered positioning of dead bodies is associated with gender roles in Dagaaba society and their association with the rising and setting of the sun. Men rise with the sun to start work on the farm or go hunting, or check traps, while women stay back at home to go to the pond to fetch water, prepare and send lunch to the men at the farm, return home early to get dinner ready before sunset when the men return from the farm at sunset (Bagah, 1995, p. 211). Unlike the gendered position of the corpse, xylophonists at the funeral have no specific geographical direction to face while performing and therefore this varies across the Dagaaba, though among the Manlaala and Waala groups, the xylophonists tend to face the body. They are normally positioned in such a way that their sound permeates the whole funeral ground. The dirge singers normally position themselves between the xylophone ensemble, the circling group of mourners and the corpse.

The musical ensemble typically includes two xylophones and a gourd drum (*koɔre*). The xylophonists are positioned near one another; however, they may not sit back-to-back. For example, the xylophones and xylophonists may face each other, with the low keys of one xylophone facing the high keys of the other, unless they are both left-handed players. In xylophone playing the main text is referred to as *gyil dao* (male xylophone) while the xylophone playing the supporting melody is referred to as *gyil pɔga* [female xylophone] (Hien, 2019, p. 73). This is in reference to the stereotypic differences between the voices of men and women, with the *gyil dao* player making greater use of the longer and larger keys to produce a deeper sound while the player of the *gyil pɔga* hits the shorter wooden keys to produce a higher-pitched tone. Figure 1 depicts a Dagaaba funeral scene.

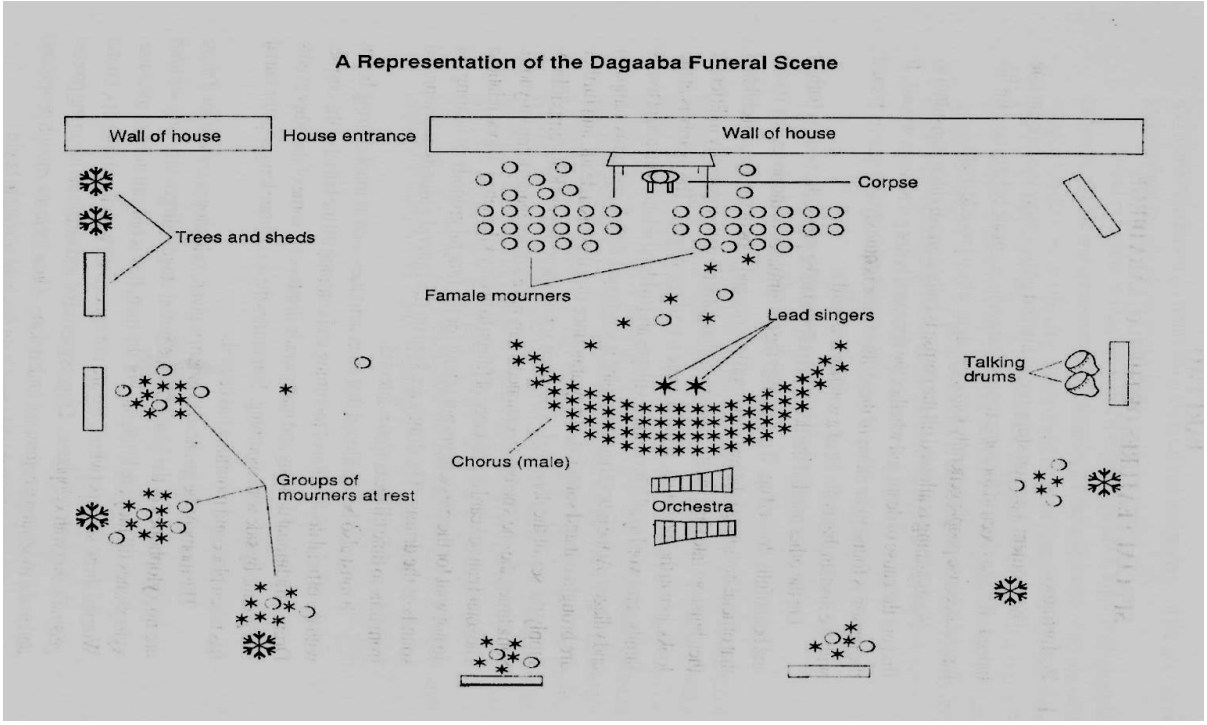


Figure 1 Representation of the Dagaaba funeral scene. Source: Yemeh, 2002, p. 18. Reprinted with permission of the author.

The performance cycle

As with any musical performance, there is a time when the artists "tune" their instruments; for a xylophone performance, this is called *piira*. During the *piira*, the xylophonists check their xylophones, adjust the keys if need be to suit the tone and tune they will be playing, and to ensure both xylophones harmonize. This may also be done as the xylophonist may be playing on an unfamiliar xylophone and must familiarize himself with it. Each xylophonist's *piira* is unique to them, making those familiar with it able to identify who is playing from a distance (Dankwa, 2018, pp. 161-162).

Once they are ready to play, they end the piira with the *tígbɛ*, or *kyèɛbó*. The kyèɛbó is a repetitive short melodic pattern played by both *gɔɔre* and that indicates they are ready to begin. The other xylophonist replies in turn. The question-answer pattern of the *tígbɛ* is repeated twice or three times and rounded up in a complex set of rhythms with the "female" xylophone setting a wailing tone with a repetitive rhythmic pattern that also sets the tone for the theme of the set to be played. During this, the xylophonists and dirge chanters (*kòŋkónó*), who also have their own vocal "tuning," establish a tonal center that is comfortable for the performers (Dankwa, 2018, p. 162). The main lines for the mentally set time, say thirty minutes, are then played out by the "male" xylophone, with the "female" xylophone simultaneously providing melodic accompaniment through related dirges.

For example, the lead *gɔbaa* (playing the *gyil dao* or male xylophone) could begin with this statement dealing with the death of a child:

Bibil ba taa soba, Ba taa soba, Onang wa leɛ sunkpuli zalla; O nang ba taa saa Ba taa ma, Lɛ la k'o leɛ sunkpuli zalla (Yabang, 1981, p. 26)	The child who has nobody Who has nobody He/She has become a dangling locust bean flower As he/she has no father Has no mother That is why she/he becomes the dangling locust bean flower. .

From the first verse, the female xylophone could go on expressing other texts related to children such as:

Vɛng kang seere woi Kang meng seere nyɛ Yɛ nang de bie nga Zegle ngmenaa ngang K'o saang da be be. A kong waa lɛ (Yabang, 1981, p. 27)	Oh! Let-me-also-touch Let me also touch and understand As you have taken this child And raised him high this noon If his father had been there It would not have been so

A notable element is that the rhythmic patterns of the texts to be played at any one particular performance time must be uniform and harmonize with the dirge singing.

Those unfamiliar with the power of the sound in xylophone aural poetry may at first think that the xylophones perform merely instrumental transformations of the vocalized dirges chanted by male dirgers, because the dirge chanted by the men run concurrently and rhythmically with the xylophones, both terminating synchronically with every stanza, and immediately repeating the same pattern until both groups decide to timeout the particular performance. Thus, every performance is spatiotemporally recognized through experience within Dagaaba cultural performance norms. Nketia (2002), in discussing the concept of phraseology in African music, explains that the span of time or beat this way:

> [M]usical phrases are what serves as a measure within which motives and combinations of motives are organized. This span or measure is delimited by a regulatory beat carried mentally by the song maker. This beat, which may or may not be sounded, serves as a point of reference for the song maker, a phrase may begin before the beat, on the beat, or after the beat for stylistic or phonological reasons. It is customary in many traditions to represent the fixed time span by a standard rhythm pattern or time line, which [in the case of the xylophonists is played by the one playing the female xylophone]. (Nketia, 2002, p. 150)

As Nketia (2002) explains, "phraseology relates to the stylistic feet the units of structure within which differentials of tone, duration stress are correlated, as well as the interrelations" (p. 147). Xylophone phraseology at recreational dances is similar to that at funerals. However, during recreational performances, the xylophones are tuned to capture in sound the vocalized words of the song lyrics at the dance. Although the sound patterns of the xylophones at a funeral may appear rhythmically and aurally similar to the oral dirge, they do not represent nor reproduce in sound the chanted dirges. Overlap in this nature is an extremely rare occurrence. It is when the xylophone poetry is verbalized that one is most struck by the differences. The only time that the xylophone captures the verbalized chanted dirge, is when the xylophonist stops and verbalizes what he/she played on the xylophone.

How are these simultaneous performances synchronized? After all, each artist is independent, yet they are harmoniously dependent on one another. The Dagaaba musical culture, like other African musical traditions, make use of what is theorized as simultaneously synchronic multidimensionality, a performance style noted for its use of cyclical symphony between xylophonists and male dirge chanteurs. This performance aesthetic enables the xylophonists and dirge chanters to achieve polyvalent contrapuntal harmonies that denote climactic points within a complete verse of both xylophone and chanted dirge. Nketia (2002) articulates this phenomenon in these words:

> in African traditions ... song makers or composers often create their texts and tunes together, drawing on the verbal style and stock expressions such as epithets and proverbs in their language as well as the musical material and creative practices established in that tradition. (Nketia, 2002, p. 145)

The chanted dirge is usually performed by two men, one being the lead caller that we identify as the stimulator/prop, and the other the creative voice that responds and expands on the initial poetic line. The chanters are accompanied by a chorus of men who

Prop: Pase Nyɛntaa Kariba Ong koɔng ko samba **Singer**: Daama aning Babenhe Kang maahi zaala lɛ **Chorus**: Humm **Singer**: Mantina Dɔng-yuoaning Kangmininyɛ Kong maahi zaala lɛ **Chorus**: Humm humm humm humm (Yemeh, 2002, p. 44)	**Prop**: Pase's Co-wife who takes care of visitors / fetch water for visitors **Singer**: Dama and Babenhe / just cold water **Chorus**: Humm **Singer**: Mantina's Dɔng-yuo and Kangmininyɛ / Just cold water **Chorus**: Hmmm, Hmmm, hmmm, hummm

also stand around the xylophone ensemble and hum in agreement and supporting encouragement depicting untranslatable non-verbalizable intensity of their grief. In order to explain, here is an example of the chanted dirge: This oral dirge deals with a woman

who has died, leaving her husband a widower. This chanted dirge is structurally different from the following xylophone text with the same theme:

Laabili gbeleng ngmarɛɛ	A well-baked pot is broken
O kong nyɛ meɛrɛ k'o mɛ	It cannot find a potter to mend
Laabili gbeleng-gbeleng ngmarɛɛ	A well-baked pot is broken
Ye kong bo meɛrɛ k'o mɛ	Look for a potter to mend.
(Yemeh, 2002, p. 81)	

The points of harmony between chanted dirges and xylophone dirges occur during the untranslatable collective expression of sorrow beyond verbal language; it can only be conveyed in the choric voice—humm—, first after the second and third lines of the chanted dirge. At this point, the *gɔbaa* on the male xylophone too ends with a line on the deeper keys of the xylophone. It is not necessary that he repeat the whole line or text again to coincide with the dirge rhythmically; he can just time the chorus and when the second humm is just about to end, he hits the lower keys of the xylophone.

At this point, it appears that the xylophonist is both ending his own line while also providing instrumental backing to the chorus in one motion. So at the point where there is to be a pause, both dirgers and xylophonists harmonize. The diagram in Figure 2 helps to explain a bit of this phenomenon.

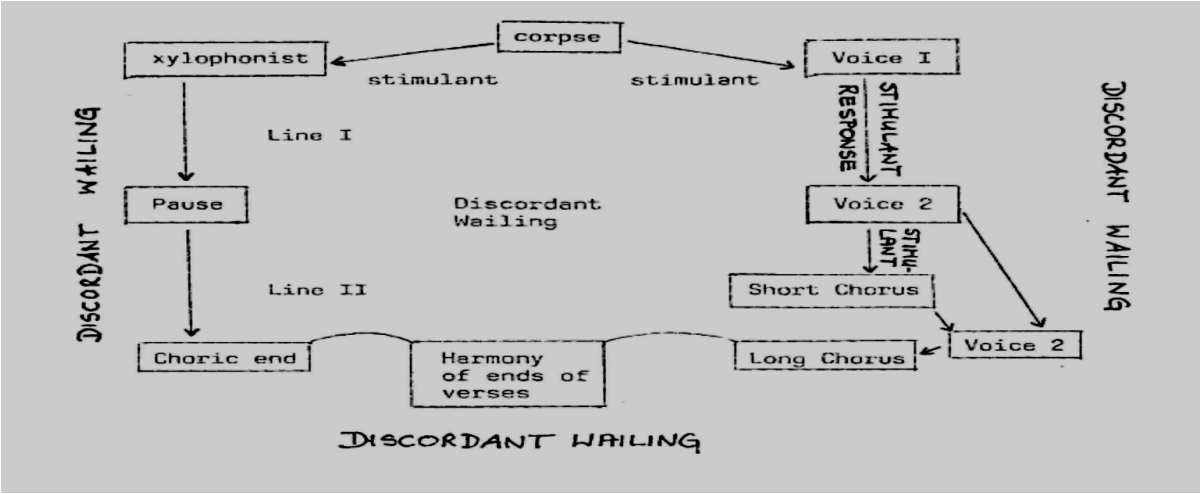


Figure 2 Concurrent Connection Diagram Source: Dannabang Kuwabong, 1990, p. 14.

Like the talking drums, the xylophones go beyond punctuating rhythm, defining stanzas, regulating syllabic flows or providing cathartic interludes in a performance. As mentioned previously, each sound emanating from the xylophone has meaning that can be translated into the spoken word by a *tòòwono*, someone deeply entrenched in Dagaaba funeral tradition. Here are a few examples witnessed by one of the writers.

Statements of praise or abuse are played in order to either uplift or criticize the surviving relatives, making them either mourn more deeply or pay them to stop. At the funeral old a man who died without a wife, the xylophonist played this dirge:

Yɛ be bieri bieri to! Yɛ be bieri bieri to! Dakyere nang kono yɛ yiring Yɛ be laama laama to! (Yabang, 1981, p. 31)	You are very evil, very evil You are very evil, very evil That weaver-birds are singing in your home You are just very evil

Weaver birds are very loud birds known for their intricate nest building skills. They are known to take over entire trees with their numerous nests. The implication of weaver birds crying in one's home is that it has fallen to ruin; there are no more descendants, and the house is empty as he died without a wife or children. The fact that the lineage has ended has led to loud wailing from other relatives, like that of the weaver bird. The man, having not been married or having produced offspring, is seen as not having fulfilled his purpose in life. Traditionally, without having done this, the deceased cannot become an ancestor. An old relation of the deceased shouted that the dead man had not gone to waste and loudly but indirectly told the xylophonist not to play nonsense.

In another case, a woman who had been maltreated by her husband and had died in childbirth had the xylophonist playing this dirge until the husband paid him to stop:

A nembaboɔraa Naayiree nembaboɔraa Bang de lɔɔ (Kuwabong [Dannabang], 1990, p.7)	It is the unwanted person Its Naayiree's unwanted person That they have thrown away

Here, the xylophonist lays the blame on the husband and his family, accusing them of "throwing away" the deceased woman. This highlights the husband's maltreatment of the wife in a public setting.

In the introductory notes to an excellent collection of xylophone and talking drum pieces titled "*Gyilbie ne Tumpaambie*" (Dagaaba Drum Language) C. K. Yabang, (1981) himself an excellent *gɔbaa*, makes the following observation:

> Ba nang mang wa ngmeɛrɛ gyile, be deɛ ba mang bonne kpulkpulo weɛ lɛ, yɛlɛ la ka a gɔɔre mang yele kora a noba nang be be bee kyɛllɛ, ka kuori yegeng la bee, ka deɛne zie la, ka ba na bang bee e yelkang. Lɛnso gyilbie la a gyile ngmeɛbo voonoo na wulibu bee yɛlny graa nang mang kpeɛrɛ sagra neɛ yam poɔ, a waa ka yelgbulo/sekpɔga, lɔba, lugo, yelsenkpegɛ bee yelkpagla/la ka a gɔbaa bee gɔɔre lɔɔra bee pɛllɛ kora toowonibo (Yabang, 1981, p. 1).
>
> [When they are playing xylophones texts, they do not just play them anyhow, it is language that the xylophonists speak to those listening whether it is at a funeral

ground, or playground, so that the listeners will hear or do something. That is why xylophone pieces are the method of playing to teach or expose a problem in one's emotions or mind, it is clouded language (such as riddles, proverbs, riddle-proverbs, words of wisdom or metaphors) that the *gɔbaa* or *gɔɔre* throws to or carve for those who can understand.]

Performance elements

Musical patterns

The phonemic patterns that seem to appeal more to the musical ear are what the *gɔbaa* in creating his verses, makes use of. These include well known ones such as alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, anaphora, repetition, rhyme. The *gɔbaa* achieves musical quality through the choice of sound and tone arrangement. Most non print literate societies employ a lot of alliteration in their poetry and the Dagaaba are no exception. An example is found in this song sung when poisoning is suspected as the cause of death.

Kɔɔ deɛ daangmane	That you should get a calabash of pito
Kɔɔ deɛ daangmane	That you should get a calabash of pito
Ka dɔndɔmang wa boɔra for bɛrebo	When an enemy wants to poison you
Kɔɔ deɛ daangmane	That you should get a calabash of pito
Ka dɔndɔmang wa boɔra for beɛbeɛ/eebo	When an enemy wants to harm you That you should get a calabash of pito.
Kɔɔ deɛ daangmane	
(Yabang, 1981, p. 5)	

The alliterative device not only stresses the persistent nature of the enemy but acts as a warning to all to beware of anyone who persists in offering one a drink or gift even when one has turned down the offer. It also shows the perennial problem of poisoning among the Dagaaba. This example is also notable for its use of the vowels [ɔ], [a] and [ɛ] which are also the dominant vowel sounds in dirges sung at funerals. The main response to the sung dirges are in long [ɔ:], [a:] or [ɛ:] and thus there seems to be a correspondence of sound patterns between the xylophones and vocals.

K'o yeli kɔɔ kɔng, kɔɔ kɔng	He says be leprous, and you are leprous
K'o yeli kɔɔ kpi, kɔɔ kpi	He says be dead, and you die
K'o yeli kɔɔ wong, kɔɔ wong	He says be deaf, and you are deaf
K'o yeli kɔɔ gbɛre, kɔɔ gbɛre	He says be lame, and you are lame
(Yabang, 1981, p. 34)	

The *gɔbaa* uses sound anaphora, through sound repetition to represent the unspoken words, or phrases, specifically at the beginning of successive phrases. This may be defined as anaphoric usage.
Apart from its musical beauty, this example dramatizes the power of the gods who can decree anything against man. It also shows the limitless nature of that power and man's own limitations.

Language and creativity
It is a general notion that language is one of the most powerful instruments of creation. Through language, we gain knowledge. Language is made up of sounds and symbols and these give words the power which enables us to grasp the spatial and causal relationships existing within and outside our being. Consciousness is manifested in word creation. The words of the xylophone are powerful because they combine the spoken word and the auditory word in sound and symbol. The messages understood and the poetic way in which they are distributed can induce strong emotional reactions in the listeners. The dirges sung by xylophones communicate with the audience through an array of metaphors, myths, and symbols including rhetorical devices coupled with the use of symbol and image, effecting a complex pattern of meaning despite the apparently simple structural forms. The language employed by xylophonists re-emphasizes and fills the emptiness and sense of hopelessness and helplessness created by death. Yet by doing this they also aid in the processing of grief and, therefore, the healing process of the bereaved. They help to both energize the dull atmosphere of doom with aesthetic beauty and to heighten the sense of loss.
The *gɔbaa*, using both figures of speech and sound, seeks to expand the temporality and spatiality in oral symbols of given images. This means that the *gɔbaa* must be capable of creating his own verbal metaphors on the xylophone to add to the repertoire handed down from antiquity.

> [D]akoreng deme la dang kpa bee nare a gyilbie ... na parɛɛ bar, ka noba ngmeɛrɛ lɛɛ ka a wa pag zenɛ. Kyɛ ... a gɔbaa meng mang taa la a iiko, a nare muni wuo o meng menga sɛb deme, ka a lɔnne la a gɔɔ-taaba, ... (Yabang, 1981, p. 1)
> [It is the people of old who first beat out or played the xylophone pieces (seeds) … and left them, and people have been playing them since then until today. But. … the *gɔbaa* also has his own efforts, and endeavours to create his own pieces and they spread among other *gɔrbi* …]

Xylophone pieces at funerals are not just stored-up pieces pulled out occasionally from memory for use and returned, unchanging and constant; they form a living language. Death is a constant reality and the language used to bemoan man's lot in relation to death is also a constant reality. In this, the *gɔbaa* is forever raising up series of old images and myths and adding new ones in a startling and fresh way to transcend death. Since the *gɔbaa*'s creativity and memory play a central role in his art, a *gɔbaa* who is not creative

enough or has an extremely limited repertoire of received verses, hardly gets the chance to play at funerals, unless during the night or at a child's funeral when the master *gɔrbi* (xylophonists) may be absent. This is not to claim that at every funeral, it is crucial to every *gɔbaa* performing to create new images, symbols or ideophones.
Creativity, in the sense suggested above, could also mean the effective use of new material borrowed from a different village, clan or *gɔbaa*. It also means taking into account new socio-cultural developments such as the presence of new religious, educational, economic systems, etc. In this case, the *gɔbaa* like his complimentary counterpart, shows that he is also abreast with these new developments and incorporates the new concepts and words into the repertoire. There is the story of how the *gɔrbi* from Nanvilli got a peculiar style of playing at funerals which is different from their neighbors. One Sunnikuu Sabie, a *gɔbaa*, went across to stay in Burkina Faso for about three months. He observed the methods and repertoire of playing of the *Daga-Wiile (Wule)* there. When he returned, he taught his age group and now, the *gɔrbi* of Nanvilli play differently from neighboring villages.

Rhetorical and stylistic devices: Ideophones, imagery, myth, paradox, irony, metaphor, allegory, hyperbole, sarcasm, satire, eulogies, proverbs and riddles

Aural literature blends the written, visual, and oral forms of performance, allowing various poetic devices used in both written and oral literature to be used simultaneously. Poetic metaphor becomes absolutely imperative in a funeral situation among the Dagaaba, where the metaphor or symbol, when transcribed and spoken, becomes a connecting link between the sound of the ideophone in a particular time, space, and occasion. The most discernable rhetoric patterns in xylophone dirges play mnemonic roles. These include spatial, temporal, and tonal repetitions, contrapuntal rhythms, metaphors, symbols, paradoxes, ironies, parallelism, hyperboles, anaphora, overlaps, etc.

Ideophones

It is not possible to discuss xylophone or aural performance at Dagaaba funerals without discussing the ideophones and pararhymes.

Kuu yong tengtengteng	Only death alone
Kuu yong la gandaa	Only death alone is hero
Kuu yong tengtengteng tengtengteng	
(Yabang, 1981, p. 8)	Only death alone alone.

Here, the ideophone *tengtengteng* depicts the deep silence expressed by death and the everlasting and undeniable nature and surety of death. In xylophone texts ideophones portray only sorrow, ugliness and evil. For example, ideophones could be descriptive of physical situations of dead bodies to express their ugliness.

Imagery and myth

The poetic and mythical creativity enhanced by the sound and rhythm of the xylophone, become the embodiment of the cultural, religious and philosophical concepts of the Dagaaba. The imaginative virility and the literariness of the language used by the *gɔbaa* separate that type of communication from ordinary parlance of condolence. The language here seems to incorporate the *gɔbaa*'s desire to touch the emotions, to induce shock and to persuade the mourners into sympathetic action. The situations suggested and represented by the imagery are made paradoxically more real through the conversion power of the imagination and supported by their mythological signification. For example:

A gandaa tandɛre kɔɔɛ la A gandaa tandɛre kɔɔɛ la Ka a pɔgeba ngmaa gyili kono Ka a biiri ngmaa gyili deɛnɛ. (Yabang, 1981, p. 35)	The hero's bow is broken The hero's bow is broken And the women surround him and mourn And the children surround him and mourn

Traditionally, if a man dies a bachelor, his bow is broken as it will not be used to make an ancestral shrine (Goody, 1967, p. 84). The hero is dead; his bow is broken; he is defenseless; his enemy, death, then has power over him. The paradox of conflicting reactions to what has happened to the hero's bow touches our emotions very powerfully. The women understand this, thus their gathering to mourn. As Kuukure (1985) writes, "only a child does not know that death is like a kite flying over the heads of the living human brood" (Kukure, 1985, p.112). The children mourn though they do not yet understand the significance of death in this situation, but they see the women crying and they also join. Somehow, they too can guess that all is not well.

Transitional paradoxes and ironies

Another point worth noting is the xylophonist's use of transitional paradoxes or ironies to enhance the mourners' sense of loss or hopelessness in the face of death. In the following example, the xylophonist makes a statement, and the next statement within the same verse inverts the meaning of the first statement. In this way the listener is shocked into the realization that what has happened to the deceased can also happen to him, forcing the listener to reflect on the universal nature of death.

Koɔraa bie ngmaa saabo K'o na di K'o dɔndɔma tanne K'o de loo (Yabang, 1981, p. 24)	The farmer's child cuts *saabo* To eat Then his enemy shouts And he drops it

In the above text, the paradox and irony are in the situation of an orphan, whose father was a great farmer, but now that he is dead, his child has died of hunger. This phrase, punctuated by structural pauses, forms a general critique of the dead orphan's relatives, and of the society as well. This image evokes sympathy in mourners and onlookers for the difficulties that orphans may face in Dagaaba society. The message may also be seen as guilt-tripping to prompt the relatives to take better care of their orphans. The orphan too is vulnerable to evil people in their society and family, whose wickedness marginalizes and retraumatizes the orphan.

Metaphor and allegory

Metaphors and allegories abound in xylophone funeral language. The aural artiste cannot do without these devices. Most of the examples cited in this article, reveal how metaphors shade into symbols and symbols shade into allegory through the processes of suppressions, condensations and denials of comparisons to create possible new worlds and perceptions that elevate everyday imagery to mythical proportions. In funeral performance, the *gɔbaa* becomes a master of the symbol and allusion because of the unlimited interpretive potential they have, including their infinite continuity in application over the years.

One is struck by the images that melt into metaphors, symbols and allegories. The cow, for example, an animal owned by every household among the Dagaaba, and indeed by almost everyone, is symbolic of man. Position, power and influence are determined by the number of cows in an individual's kraal. It is also true that the larger the household of people one rules over, the more respected one is. If all of one's relations die and leave one alone, one is often regarded as a witch or wizard. It is believed that one is the cause of the deaths and thus one is publicly denounced and exiled or, in the olden days, executed. Such a dirge is, therefore, directed at a house which had many people but at the time of the funeral, a lot of them had died. One should not find it difficult to understand the terrible emotional state into which such a poem would put an elder or survivor of a large family. It is a muffled way of accusing the individual of witchcraft in public.

Neng-yaga waa nga	Many people are just like
Kpankyaa meɛlong	Autumnal dew drops
Ngmena na wa la	The sun will come
Ka a zaa zuori kari	And they will all drop unripened.
(Yabang 1981, p. 29)	

This dirge uses familiar environmental imagery to create the simile of the orphan as a *sunkpuli zalla* (the dangling locust bean flower). Those growing up in Dagao will be familiar with the seasonal bloom of *sunkpullo (*sg. *Sunkpuli)*. The flowers are reddish,

mallet-shaped and attached to the branch by a long thin stem, leaving the flower dangling. Because these *sunkpullo* are quite delicate and are easily dislodged by any strong wind, rainstorm, and birds or bees attempting to extract nectar, many of them drop and do not mature into locust beans, a major food and cash item. The use of the word *zalla*, which means "hanging, or swinging" (Ali et al., 2021, p. 324), depicts the precarious nature of an orphan's existence. The orphan, like the *sunkpuli*, has no protection and is left vulnerable. This image of precarity of the orphan, evokes greater empathy and sympathy in the mourners.

The projection of the orphan as a homeless, parentless child-at-risk, intensifies the emotions of mourners and sympathizers, and surreptitiously challenges the community to consider helping protect and raise the luckless child. Mourners, who themselves may have grown up as orphans, will relate strongly to the dirge, causing them to recall their own orphanhood. This re-memory undoubtedly incites them to mourn more bitterly, not for the deceased, but for the orphan left behind, and perhaps as a way of completing their uncompleted grieving when they lost their parents, now reflected through this younger version of themselves. This also acts as a reminder of the extended family's responsibility to care for orphans, particularly the orphan's paternal and maternal families, namely their father's brothers, or mother's sisters, or aunts, who are considered to be their fathers or mothers as well. This dirge may also be performed at an orphan's funeral, reminding the community of their failure to ensure that the orphan was cared for. Because of this lack of care, their life was cut short, like the *sunkpuli* that falls from the tree, not having the opportunity to grow to adulthood. This dirge serves as a social commentary on the plight of orphans in society, and the type of suffering they undergo (Kuwabong, 2024).

Sarcasm and satire

Xylophone dirges, just like the vocal dirges, abound in the use of irony, hyperbole, paradox, litotes and other such supporting devices loved by *gɔɔre*. In most of the cases the distinctions between irony, satire and sarcasm are blurred. In the two following examples, it is difficult to say whether that are ironic, satiric or sarcastic:

Dakoɔre kyeene zɛ doglee K'o kyeene lɛɛŋ k'o ngmaarɛ O na yɔɔ o kɔɔ ne pie (Yabang, 1981, p. 20)	The bachelor cleans the soup-pot He cleans it till it breaks He will pay for it with a hundred and ten (Hyperbole, sarcasm)

Kɔngkɔnga la nyɛ sinkaa A kyellɛ Yɛ nang paa iri tere K'o pere nyɛ (Yabang, 1981, p. 30)	It is the leper who has seen groundnuts And is waiting You just give him some For him to shell and see (irony/sarcasm)

The units of structure found in all dirges, xylophone or vocalized, establish an interrelationship between time, space, tune, sound, concepts and meaning. In the first example above, the bachelor is mocked because he only gets to clean the leftovers in the soup pot after all the married men and children have eaten their fill. The action of the finger scouring the pot and licking what clings to the finger is a mockery of the poverty of life of a bachelor. The idea is to goad him to get a wife, who will cook for him. Since the pot he is scouring with his bare fingers does not belong to him or his wife, he is charged with property destruction. The phrase in the second example, is cruel satire that exposes the society's cruelty toward the physically challenged leper. The phrase evokes sympathy for the leper even as it admonishes the people who deliberately mock the leper for cheap thrills to see him struggle to crack the groundnuts without fingers. Both phrases show suffering and by extension, imply eventual starvation of both the bachelor and leper in a society that lacks compassion for the marginalized.

Proverbs and riddles

Proverbs, riddles and allusions are used philosophically to encapsulate Dagaaba cultural and traditional worldviews, and to provide systemic paradigms of imitation for younger generations of *gɔɔre* to use later. The *gɔbaa* in performance at funerals might also eulogize the dead in order to make the living feel the loss of their relation much more. The eulogies are general in their application and are not restricted to particular individuals. In the demonstration of grief over a dead young man, the *gɔbaa* uses stock appellations such as *gandaa* (hero), *bidɔɔ koɔraa* (manly farmer or first-rate farmer), *Dɔɔ-teɛraa* (the man who shoots), *Kong-laana-enga* (will-not-be-lazy), *Dɔɔbil-zɛlong-kong-mɔge-tɛne* (Man-of-power-that-will-not-eat dust), *Zi-kuongaa-ko raa* (Dry-season-farmer), *Kong-wong-yɛlɛ* (He-that-will-not-listen), *Nankpãa kyilenkɔɔ* (Great hunter), etc. These appellations define the concept of the ideal male and his social roles. The ideal male must be a good farmer, a hunter, a warrior and a husband. The images of the hoe, bow, quiver of arrows, and kraal, help to define the image of the male among the Dagaaba.

Dɔɔbil zɛlong	Mighty-child-of-man
Kong moge tɛne	That never licks the dust
Fo kaarɛɛ yeng	Where are you looking
Ka walaa yi	And the antelope escapes?
(Yabang, 1981, p. 6)	

Zi kuongaa koɔraa bie	Farmer of the dry season
Zie nyaaɛ la	Day has dawned
Kong kyɛlle saa maarong bie	Will never wait for rain-wetness
Zie nyaaɛ la	Day has dawned.
(Yabang, 1981, p. 6)	

These stanzas above reflect the traditional concepts of Dagaaba masculinity and maleness. The real man is also defined through his prowess at hunting, which is tied to warriorhood. In Dagaaba society, the bravest and best warriors were often hunters. Here the antelope is a metaphor for the young person who has left the family through death, and the hunter/warrior has not been able to stop death from snatching the relative. Thus, in xylophone dirge performances, eulogies become lamentations in praise, praises that somehow suggest that the men in the family or village community have become lazy, and unable to feed and protect their people. The real man in this predominantly agricultural society, is measured by his ability to rise early to go to the farm, as indicated in the way the positioning of corpses are gendered. A good man does not just rise early, but also never ceases in trying to provide sustenance for his family. Only lazy farmers wait for the rains to soften the ground before they go to till the ground. A real man tills the dry soil and waits for the rain. There are several such eulogies that draw attention to Dagaaba philosophical constructs of masculinity.

The use of proverbs and riddles in xylophone funeral texts are a way of condensing meaning. The *gɔbaa* makes use of proverbs and riddles in order to achieve a multi-dimensional interpretation of his message. Proverbs and riddles also enable him to perform similarly at different places at different times without losing their relevancy and immediacy of appeal.

Iri ka bad aa lɔɔ Seɛ la do Dɔɔ ka ba kpongno (Yabang, 1981, p. 3)	Rise and be pushed down Is better Than to squat and be perpetually knocked on the head.

Here, the philosophy of not allowing oneself to be oppressed through a cowardly acceptance of oppression is expressed. One must resist even if one is destroyed in the process. Probably the stoical nature of the Dagaaba derives from this philosophy. It also explains the constant search of the Dagaaba for a better mode of existence.

Regarding the use of riddles, the *gɔbaa* tends to answer each riddle he poses.

Ba bɛlɛ zɔng lee K'o daara (riddle) O kong da kpɛ moɔ Ka ba dɔgre o (answer) (Yabang, 1981, p.28)	They have deceived a blind child And he is wandering He will surely wander into the bush And they will punish him

This kind of proverb-riddle is used to caution young people not to live recklessly for they would be putting their lives at risk. It also implies a warning to children who put themselves in danger because they refuse to accept the guidance and wisdom of elders.

Such a child is blind to the wickedness of the world, represented in the image of the bush or wilderness where no one will be there to save him or her. The riddle-proverb here is a shortened parable that is meant to enlighten the youth.

Conclusion

This brief study of the dirges played by *gɔrbi* on the xylophone, unlike at a dance, play an independent role and are indispensable at Dagaaba funerals. The language and tonal rhythms of the xylophone are different from that of the vocal dirgers. even though at times the *gɔbaa* and the *konkono* may use the same imagery. The *gɔbaa* deploys all of the literary devices available to him to persuade the mourners to mourn, sympathize, pay, etc., even when they do not understand the poetry performed. The xylophones convey tonal imagery through the evocative power of their sounds which are known to the Dagao. The persuasive power of the xylophone dirge as discussed above lies in the ability of the audience to either understand their language, or more probably, to emotionally tune into and connect with what they mean through their cultural knowledge of the implications of what the *gɔbaa* plays on the instrument. These songs warn, sympathize, blame or praise but are never neutral. Xylophone pieces help the living to examine and re-order themselves.

We want to suggest that the effectiveness of xylophone dirges cannot be genuinely appreciated on paper unless one has actually witnessed and participated in a funeral among the Dagaaba. Failing that, one can use video recordings that cover all aspects of Dagaaba funerals. In the references section below, we have provided three links to video clips (Kpiebaya 2023a, 2023b; Dakura Bie, 2022) as samples which may allow the reader to visualize what a traditional funeral in Dagao looks like. It is also necessary that one should know what is being played at any particular time both through tutoring in the texts and constancy of attendance at performance.

The language of the xylophone at a funeral triggers an active creative process in which the souls of the *gɔɔre*, the mourners, the dirgers, and the deceased exchange their most treasured images that portray and construct the secrets of their existence. The imagery, the sound and the occasion set the imagination of the *tòòwono* (one who understands the language of drums or xylophones) alight. The language of the xylophone at the funeral ground is poetic. Finally, it must be reiterated that the ensemble of two xylophones and two *gɔɔre* with a *koɔr* form a totally separate and independent unit at Dagaaba funerals and can operate without the dirge singers, even though among the northern Dagaaba, the xylophone performances can be carried out by one *gɔbaa* who plays the parts of two xylophones alternately on one xylophone.

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THE RIVER AND THE BOY[1]

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Abstract
As a little boy, I, Wilhelm Teebaum (one of the authors and the main narrator of this text) lived in a house in front of which the Nickerie River flowed about fifty meters away. I was fascinated by its dark-brown water and the thousands of *dyombi krabu* (fiddler crabs, literally "ghost crabs") living on its muddy banks, the *kutais* (a four eyed fish) and the *bosrokomans* (parrot puffer fish). But I imagined that there was more than just fish and crabs. I shared the common belief that a magical entity would live in its waters, but although I often played with a friend on its banks, I never spotted such a creature. Nevertheless, in my fantasy I travelled with it to the very source of its water, far away from where I lived.

Key terms: memories, Sranan Tongo, Winti, figurative language, Magic Realism

Introduction

Suriname is a small country on the northeastern coast of South America. It is a former Dutch colony and maintains close links with the Netherlands. Colonial Suriname consisted of Paramaribo and all of the plantations along the Suriname, the Commewijne and the Saramacca Rivers. Under British rule, English and Scottish planters began to settle in Suriname and stayed even when Suriname came under Dutch rule. The most prominent sugar plantations were built in Nickerie.

The belief in 'River Gods' refers to the ancient mythological concept where rivers were personified as deities, often with human-like characteristics, representing the power and spirit of the flowing waterways, and were often celebrated as guardians of the river and its ecosystem (Reid, 2022).

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[1] The German version of *The River and the Boy* was presented in a writer's forum and may yet be published.

River Gods, Lake Monsters etc. are how ancient cultures (and even modern ones) have thought about water deities. The folklores of many cultures have some link with water spirits, deities or nymphs who require respect for those waterways by keeping them fresh and uncontaminated. Who has not heard about the Loch Ness monster? Where Hélène Garrett (the other author of this article) resides, there lives in Lake Okanagan a monster called Ogopogo. The Ganges in India and Bangladesh bears the name of the Hindu goddess Ganga. A river is powerful and a source of life, and is in turn a nurturing source of life, and at other times a vicious one, but still a vital and powerful source of life. Who can forget Neptune with his trident, the ruler of the sea realms? As a youth Hélène remembers having to learn by heart the famous poem by Heinrich Heine, called "Die Lorelei" (1824/1827). The poem tells of a beautiful siren sitting on a rock in the river, where she combs her long hair while singing a bewitching song to lure the hapless captain to wreck his ship.

Any writing in Creole or transcribed from a Creole can be looked at as a conscious act in which the author deliberately takes on the role of a cultural spokesperson, especially when he treats his audience to some of the Creole words and sentences. In the rest of this article, Wilhelm Teebaum evokes for the reader a personification of water in its various moods from gentle to an angry, raging spectacle, and through the use of Sranan English lexifier Creole makes his writing more descriptive and engaging so that it may stimulate an emotional reaction (all translations in this work are by the authors, unless specified otherwise). Animistic belief systems often found in Indigenous cultures, posit that all natural entities, including animals, plants, rocks and even abstract concepts, possess a spirit or soul, and are therefore animated and alive.

The river and the boy

I'm a river. Certainly not a big one! I cannot compete with the mighty streams of the earth. Even for this country I am one of the smaller ones. Nevertheless, I'm proud of myself. Here, where I have already travelled a great distance downstream, and it is only about an hour before my water reaches the sea, I am not unattractive with my width of more than a hundred metres. I'm a quiet river on this last part of my journey: *Me kon owru nanga pî, baya* [I became old and tame]. Where I originate, at a height of about 400 metres in the foothills of the *Bakhuys* mountains, there I'm still young and lively. And before I get down here, I let off some steam. In addition to many small rapids, I also pass through three larger waterfalls. First the *Blanche Marie* [White Marie], then the *Drie Gezusters* [Three Sisters] and last but not least, the *Stondansi-sula* [Dancing Stone Rapids]. Especially in the rainy season, am I a raging river in these places.

Oh, I haven't mentioned my name yet. I am the River Nickerie. And actually I'm not just a river. I, who am speaking to you, am also the *watramama*, the river spirit. There are rivers so big and powerful that their *watramama* thinks she is a queen just because she is called a river goddess. I'm not as conceited as they are. I am a simple river spirit.

The water that flows in me until it reaches the Atlantic, comes from the many tributaries that together form my river basin. Yes, we are one connected river basin. And I, the *watramama* of this river, am the boss of all the *watramamas* of the tributaries of my river basin that are below me. Before I talk about this last part of me, just before I flow into the Atlantic, I would like to briefly mention one special feature. Not far from the *Stondansi* Falls I'm connected to my sister, the *Arawara*. And that is strange, because it belongs to a different river basin: that of the River Coppename. It is this connection that enables people to travel *across the rivers* by boat from Nieuw Nickerie to Paramaribo, and not across the sea.

Nieuw Nickerie is a small town that bears my name. The town is not that old, *baya* [you know]. It is about one hundred and fifty years since the sea swallowed up an old town called *De Punt* [The Point] with all the plantations in the area. The people then rebuilt their houses on the other side of the river, hoping they would be safe from the wild waves of the ocean.

Some time ago a jetty was built here, where all kinds of ships moor. The new boat called *Perica* comes twice a week, and in addition to cargo, she also carries passengers from Paramaribo. The old one was usually called the *across the rivers*. And up to the fifties it was the only way to travel between Nieuw Nickerie and Paramaribo. This boat is still in service, and its journey takes between two to three days. The *Perica*, however, travels across the sea and arrives after about twelve hours. But, I tell you, *baya*, travelling across the rivers is much nicer! And you won't get seasick on board either. The people who travel with it have to make do with hard wooden benches, but at dusk you can see yellow, red, blue and green flashes passing by when the macaws go back to their sleeping places. And in the morning, before the sun rises and it is still wonderfully cool, you can be woken up by the chorus of *babun* [red howler monkeys]. You hardly see them during the day, but their noise can be heard for miles.

It has become very quiet here recently. In the past, you could sometimes hear the roar of a jaguar, but a few years ago a terrible fate befell my friend *Ba Tigri* [Mr. Jaguar]. I couldn't save him. And I was very sorry about that. I liked him. He was a very nice guy. To save him, I would have had to kill the people who shot him, and I didn't want to do that. I'm not even allowed to do that, kill people. Only under very special circumstances are we allowed to do something like that without fear of being punished for it. And even then, I can only kill a person if he doesn't have a protector who is more powerful than me. But I don't like killing living creatures at all.

I didn't even get to warn *Ba Tigri*, it happened so quickly. It wasn't until they took him to the other bank in a rowboat that I realized what had happened. I know, everyone has to look after himself, and he had been very careless lately. So it's his own fault. But it's still a shame. I've already saved him once, you know. I was on my way to check whether the water spirits under my command were doing their job properly. Because there are some pretty lazy guys among them, *baya*! Yes, spirits aren't much different from

humans. On a check-up trip like this, I pass through the entire river, with all its tributaries and their tributaries. I pay a visit to even the smallest streamlets. And there I found him. He was almost dead. Across a small runlet laid a half-rotten tree. *Ba Tigri* had slipped from this tree into the water, which is normally no problem for him. Jaguars are not only good swimmers, they even enjoy being in the water from time to time. Moreover, the water in this rivulet was so shallow that he could wade through it. But he was unlucky that right where he entered the water there were a few *naki fisi* [electric eels] and he stepped on them with his hind legs. Paralyzed by their electric shocks, he could no longer move. If I hadn't found him by chance, he would have drowned in the shallow water. I calmed the electric eels and stayed with *Ba Tigri* until he could crawl back onto land. We have been close friends ever since. But I vigorously read the riot act to the little *watramama*, who is in charge of this streamlet. Things like that must not happen. Not while I'm in charge here.

Every now and then his spirit comes to see me and we chat a bit. It's almost as if our friendship has grown even stronger since they shot him.

Other than that, I don't talk to anyone. People are afraid of water spirits like me. They have no idea who we are. Nevertheless, they tell all kinds of stories about us. Everything they say is untrue, yet they are afraid of us. As long as we are treated with respect by humans and animals, they have nothing to fear from us. Yes, it is true. Sometimes we have to act. Then we get orders from above. Like the time when this dog didn't want to get into the boat when the people were leaving for the common pasture. They called him, but he didn't come. He barked at them and insulted them in a really nasty way. *Ay baya, a ben de wan takru dagu, fu trutru* [Yes, he really was a terrible dog]. And when they left without him, he insulted me too. That wasn't sensible of him. A Surinamese proverb says: *Solanga yu no koti liba abra, yu no musu kosi kaiman mama!* [As long as you are not yet across the river, you should not insult the caiman's mother!].

He was possessed by an evil spirit. We spirits tried to bring him to his senses, but he didn't care about us. When it became increasingly clear that he was going to cause great trouble for the people and animals around him, I had to get involved. While he was swimming after the boat, I pulled him underwater by his hind leg. He whimpered for a moment, then it was over. Later, people said that a shark had caught him. Others claimed that it was not a shark, but a sawfish. All nonsense, it was his fate! His time to go had come, and I had to do it. To be honest, it was all a little different. Of course I didn't pull him underwater by one leg! That was just a saying. Don't take that so literally, *baya*. I am a ghost and I cannot do physical things. It is possible that *something* pulled him by his leg, but even that is not certain. What is certain, however, is that he *thought* or *believed* that someone was pulling him by his leg. And that he thought so, *that* came from me. It may even have been the case that a shark –or a sawfish– was actually pulling on his leg at that moment. But if that were the case, it was not a coincidence. The shark was there at exactly the moment it was needed. I don't want to say anything more about

it. The only one I have a little contact with is the dog I once helped at the point when he was in trouble. He swam across the river, but he was so weak that it was not certain whether he would make it. My friend, the tree spirit, who could not intervene himself, called me for help. This is how the dog managed to reach the opposite bank. Since then, he has lived there as a guard dog, although he doesn't have to do much work for it. I sometimes talk to him. He has been through an incredible amount of bad luck in his life. Now he lives a quiet and happy life.

For a few years now, larger ships have been coming to the jetty more and more often to fetch rice and bananas. I don't think that's a good thing. Please don't get me wrong. I have nothing against trade. The people here have to earn money to live. *Ma den boto bigi tumsi, baya* [But the ships are too big]. They mess up my whole river. When they turn, they stick their bows deep into the trees that grow right into the water here. Then they damage many birds' sleeping places and sometimes birds fall out of their nests into the water. And with their powerful motor and large propeller those ships make my water even muddier than it already is. It's such a shame that humans almost never think about what they're doing. Because a ship like that is actually quite nice, isn't it?

Sometimes they sail on to Wageningen and every now and then I sneak on board to go with them. I look for a quiet spot, usually on the bridge or on the bow. That's where you get the best view. And then I enjoy how the landscape seems to flow past. Behind us, a stern wave moves through the water and shakes up everything lying on the bank. I have to say that these large ships are very careful on such trips. As soon as a small dugout canoe or something similar comes into view, they travel at half speed so that the dugout doesn't capsize. When I've enjoyed myself enough, I get off the boat and let the current carry me back.

I used to travel the whole river, from the source in the mountains to the mouth at the Atlantic. Then I passed small villages where you could see people drawing water from me. I also found it very nice to travel slowly on a raft. Usually, a few people live on a raft like this. Sometimes they even build a small hut on it to protect themselves from the hot sun and rain. And while the raft slowly drifts with the current, they cook their food and wash their clothes in my water. Sometimes one of the tree trunks they are carrying comes loose and then they have to go into the water to tie it back up with lianas. *Ma ala ten nanga respeki fu mi*! [But always with respect for me!] Sometimes they leave me a small sacrifice or a saying before jumping into the water. *Iya baya, den businengre hab' bun maniri*. [Yes, the bush people have good manners] (in Sranan, the word *nengre* means both negro and human. Some Creoles, especially those who live in the city, find it an insult when you say *negro* or *nengre*. But those who live in the jungle are proud to be *nengre*.)

I'm very happy with them. Sometimes I accompany them for weeks on their journeys because I find their company so pleasant and calm. They deliver the logs to one of the many sawmills that are in the Nieuw Nickerie area on my bank. Yes, yes, I think it's

good, a raft like that. No motors with propellers and lots of noise. And yet they transport just as much wood as a big ship.

My permanent place is in the area of the jetty, opposite the common pasture. Sometimes, when it is dark, a tall white man comes and throws a small white offering for me into the water. It is made of paper and sometimes there is something written on it. But of course I don't know what. The water dissolves the ink so quickly. Besides, I can't read. But I don't think that's so bad, *baya*. I'm glad that at least he knows that you have to treat a river with respect. And it makes me happy that my water has at least absorbed the words that were written on the paper. So that the words have become a part of me, so to speak. His little boy often plays by the river. Mostly with his friend. They then try to catch a *kutai* [four-eyed fish] but they do not succeed. These fish have two pairs of eyes, one pair for below the water's surface and the other pair for above. They mostly swim on the water's surface. I think they are quite a sociable fish, always moving in schools. And they always talk about things they see above the water: "Watch out! A biped!"

The whole group and others nearby are immediately on alert. If something moves above the water that they consider dangerous, they even jump a meter through the air. This is how they escape from potential enemies. I've been told that there are fish in the open sea that can jump much further. No, that's not jumping. They can really fly, *baya*! Dozens of meters, I've heard. These four-eyed ones aren't that good after all.

Sometimes the two boys catch a *bosrokoman* [parrot puffer fish]. They aren't as fast as the four-eyed and are easy to catch. I watched very closely what the two did with it. *Bosrokomans* can inflate themselves into a green and black striped ball. Evil boys then step on them to hear the fat belly burst with a bang. It always makes me angry when I see it, but unfortunately there's little I can do about it. These two aren't like that. I'm convinced they're animal lovers. But sometimes they are careless. Then I keep an eye on them. One day they did something dangerous. They jumped back and forth between the dugout canoes tied up in the water. I sent a small wave. This caused the dugout canoes to suddenly move, so that the little boy stepped on a small board that was lying on the ground. In this way I ensured that he got a small splinter in his bare foot. He ran home screaming to get it treated. And the danger was averted. But if he knew it was me, *baya* …

One day, as I was dozing a little, I was woken up by a loud buzzing, as if a large mosquito was flying around me. When something tickled me, I got up to see what it was. A beautiful silver boat with wings was floating on my water! I looked over and saw a few people being brought to it in a small rowboat. Carefully, so as not to fall into the water, they got in. Then the engines started and the thing drove away very quickly. So fast that I could hardly keep up. And then it suddenly rose into the air. Yes, really: into the air! I'd like to do that too, *baya*. Fly! Hover between the clouds like an *Opete* [god of the airspace, in the form of a vulture]. And look down how the river, me in fact, flows

beneath me. I thought about just climbing on board and flying. As I often do on these big ships. But I don't dare. I can jump back into the water from a ship at any time. But not from a flying thing like that. And if it doesn't bring me back, what will happen to my river? Oh no, I'd rather keep both feet on the ground! Or should I rather say in the water?

The little *bakra* boy [Dutch boy], the one with the splinter in his foot, grew up and left us. I saw him leave with the *Perica*. Many people came to the jetty to wave goodbye to him, because nobody knew if he would ever return. I felt how it broke his heart, because he loved the people and the environment here very much. But he acted bravely. *Tye pôti, baya* [expression of compassion]. Nobody but me saw him weep when his birthplace disappeared from view. I went alongside the *Perica* as far as I dared. As far as the mouth, because the open sea is dangerous for me. But I caught the one big tear that he shook from his hand. I still carry it with me.

Eventually, many years later, he came back.

One dark night, he was suddenly sitting on the jetty.

It was a cloudless new moon and the few street lamps that Nickerie possesses were already off.

But the myriad of stars shed a little light. For a moment I had difficulty in recognizing him because he had grown very tall. He also had a beard. Then I saw the look in his eyes and I knew it was him. He sat there for a long time, motionless. My water flowed quietly beneath him. He was reflecting on the past, on the time when he was still a child. When his father showed him the two Bears and the Polaris in the sky in the north on nights like this. And in the other direction the Southern Cross. His father had been a sea captain and knew the stars very well. And then he wrote words on a piece of paper. For a moment I thought he was going to fold it up and offer it to me as a sacrifice, like his father often used to do. But he did something else. He read to me what was written on the paper and that was a much better sacrifice. His words spoke of deep respect for me. When I heard his words, I was sure that he knew that I had always protected him. And that he had now come to thank me for it.

These are the words he said:

Dark is the night, and the river
flows whisperingly by,
under the old jetty.
There, where my father used to
throw a paper ball
into the water
to measure the current.

From a cabin in the distance
a light shines through the door,

a voice is heard over the water.
Then again it is lonely and quiet.

Dark is the night, and time
flows whisperingly by,
on the old jetty.
When I, hours later,
get up cold and stiff,
and go home,
I know what you meant to me.

I was very pleased with those words, and I know that he will write many more words on paper later.
I once talked about him with the star apple tree behind his house. He often sat high up in that tree, and I could see him from the river. I could see that the spirit of this tree was also watching over him.
So I was not alone in this task.
So both this tree and I are his guardian spirits.
And when he went far away from us, I wanted to know what else we could do for him.
The tree spirit was unmistakable: "We can't do anything anymore for him. We can only hope that he will find new guardian spirits in the distant land who are just as good as us."
"But I accepted the sacrifice that the wise, black woman who worked in his house made for him on the day he left."
"I know," answered the tree spirit, "so what?"
"I can't accept something like that without something in return, can I? Maybe I can settle down in a river in his new country. *Kande me kan go drape nanga a isrifowru.* [Maybe I can get there with that flying machine].
The tree spirit had to laugh heartily: "Don't be so stupid! It's much too far away. Besides, it's your job to take care of *this* river. If you suddenly run away, you'll get into big trouble."
He made a gesture with his crown towards the clouds.
"And I've heard that there's ice in the water in that faraway country, that's much too cold for you."
I knew the tree spirit was right. But it still bothered me. I'll keep thinking about it.

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INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE STUDY OF DISCOURSE

SEXUAL "FREEDOM," FREED SEX: MISSIONARIES ATTEMPT TO RESHAPE SEX AND FAMILY IN POST-EMANCIPATION JAMAICA

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Abstract
This article explores the nature of sexual unfreedom during slavery, with a particular focus on its effects on women. The profound damage caused by this lack of autonomy made sexual restraint and moral propriety central to the vision of freedom promoted by non-conformist missionaries. These missionaries supported the formerly enslaved in reconstructing their lives following Emancipation. In Jamaica, during the early Eighteenth Century, they made some of the most sustained efforts in the British Caribbean to influence plantation society, not only through religious conversion but also by attempting to reshape the economic, social, and cultural lives of the freed population. Despite differing visions held by the British Crown, plantation owners, and missionaries regarding how emancipated individuals should live, there was often a shared belief that freedom needed to be guided and moulded according to a particular ideal.

Key terms: post-Emancipation; missionaries; freedom; sexual behaviours; family; Jamaica

Introduction

> Relationships between Africans and missionaries, male and female, were not made easier by the critical evangelical view of ex-slaves as pagans whose sexual irregularities were particularly undesirable. Blacks had, as a result, to be reshaped with great difficulty into the desired mould of English morality.
>
> Lucille Mathurin Mair (2006, p. 303)

Unsurprisingly, at Emancipation, on August 1, 1838, freedom was the foremost desire of the finally freed people. Indeed, freedom was to be the central notion around which the new Jamaican society, born from the ashes of Britain's most prosperous slave and sugar colony (Burnard, 2020), was to be crafted. For, under Enslavement, freedom in all its facets had been brutally denied: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, freedom of movement, freedom to trade and sell one's labour, freedom to choose sexual partners and engage in eroticism, freedom to form bonds of affection and build families. Enslaved men and women yearned for and struggled toward "full free"- the legal status that was expected to change the oppressive social relationships in which they were embedded. Many freed men and women, such as Samuel Clarke, knew that:

> freedom was more than the absence of slavery. Rather, post-slavery society, to live up to its name, had to be one in which the Africans received impartial justice and their interests were considered as important and legitimate, even when they conflicted with the demands of the plantations. (Wilmot, 1998, p. 143)

Sadly, while Emancipation was a revolutionary event, the core of those oppressive social relationships "changed hardly at all" (Smith, 1992, p. 257; see also Bryan, 1998; Mair, 2006). Such social relationships were built on race inequality, coercion (Stinchcombe, 1994), and gender and sexual inequality (Davis, 2002; Burnard, 2007). White superiority and White male patriarchy were left virtually untouched (Mair, 2006; Burnard, 2007). Furthermore, social and economic inferiority continued to dog the newly freed "agricultural labourers" (Huzzey, 2014).

This article explores the nature of the sexual unfreedom experienced during enslavement, especially by women. The deforming impact of this unfreedom was such that sexual restraint and propriety featured strongly in the idea of freedom espoused by the nonconformist missionaries, who assisted the freed people in shaping their lives after Emancipation. The missionaries in Jamaica, in the first half of the Eighteenth Century, undertook the most sustained and extensive efforts of any missionaries in the British Caribbean "to play a significant role in the reshaping of plantation society, particularly in terms of attempts to transform the lives of former slaves in not only religious but economic, social and cultural terms" (Zacek & Brown, 2014, p. 494). In addition, while the British Crown, the planters and the missionaries had differing ideas about how freed people should live and be, they may well have agreed that "freed people should be *forced* to be free in the proper way" (Huzzey, 2014, p. 151, emphasis added).

Freedom never lost

Jamaican historian Dave Dunkley (2013) rubbishes any notion that the enslaved people were not free. For Dunkley, freedom is an ontological state, which, therefore, remained despite slavery; it was not socially constructed but rather inherent. Their inherent freedom was visible in various forms of resistance, which were but assertions of the freedom the enslaved "knew they still had" (Dunkley, 2013, p. 8). As a result, Dunkley asserts

the need to move away from treating such resistance in a narrow sense to view its influence on the decision-making of the enslavers. Resistance was the central narrative that shaped "the age of slavery" (Dunkley, 2013, p. 8) and demonstrated crucially that freedom was present, permanent, and powerful.

Dunkley's assertions about the inherent freedom and agency of the enslaved are acknowledged. There is no question, however, that the enslaved's ability to fully express this ontological freedom was greatly circumscribed by Enslavement. Thus, at Emancipation, "full free" and the notion of "the proper way to be free" may have conflicted. The freed people's expectations were largely shaped by what they lacked during chattel slavery; such experience surely made them, like Earl MacKenzie's (2013) "philosophizing slave," "an authority on freedom":

> As thirst discourses best on water,
> and night is the expert on day,
> so is the slave an authority on freedom. (lines 1-3)

The religious ideas of Protestant and nonconformist Christian missionaries, many of whom were part of the movement for the abolition of slavery, concerned "propriety and order" and were another important current in the notion of freedom. For Emancipation also freed the missionaries, especially the Baptists, to finally enter "productive partnerships of faith and enterprise" with the former slaves (Mair, 2006, p. 312); this made the authorities nervous as they also were determined to control the lives of the freed people on their terms (Zacek & Brown, 2014).

Freedom for the missionaries was related to ideas of being free from the yoke of sin and guilt through salvation in Jesus Christ, which was seen as the fundamental freedom of the Christian person. This freedom entailed a moral and religious vision that was to be embodied in a social environment; this freedom was first to be embodied in the character of a certain kind of Christian ex-slave (Austin-Broos, 1992) or "Christian African" (Russell, 1979). The emancipated were expected to live in ways that expressed such notions of freedom, especially by abjuring sexual profligacy, working hard in cultivating and trading, and being answerable to God only (and, by extension, to his servants - the White missionaries, who were models to be emulated). They were called upon to reject their "heathen" nature and all the "vices" that Enslavement had created and solidified in them. The oft-rejected sexual "freedom" (licence) of enslavement, which was seen by the missionaries as a form of unfreedom, was to be replaced by forms of sexual restraint and Christian propriety, such as monogamy, marriage, and respectable family life – "freed" sex. This could only happen among a truly independent peasantry removed from the tainting influence of the plantation and urban centres, in the new society of free villages centred around the missionaries.

"Justifying" slavery

It is difficult to capture in mere words what Slavery entailed. Under Slavery, Africans were targeted as a racial group for lifelong property status, branded and treated as chattel

(Kellerman, 2022). Kidnapped Africans, mainly fertile and sexually active men and women (Brodber, 2004), endured the horrors of the Middle Passage before coming to Jamaica (and other parts of the New World) to be sold in markets, seasoned before being put to backbreaking work on plantations or in urban centres as tradesmen, prostitutes, seamstresses, domestics, etc. "[Slavery] was a moral and legal break from any African or European tradition of labour. It constituted, furthermore, the most dehumanizing, violent, socially regressive form of human exploitation known to humankind" (Beckles, 2013, p. 19). Considering this, Barbadian historian, reparations scholar, and activist, Hilary Beckles, names slavery as a crime occasioned by the greed of the European powers.

Beckles (2013) maintains, however, "of all the European slavers, the English presented the most detailed and sustained literary and ideological effort to deny the African people their right to be recognized as human beings" (2013, p. 39). The English globalised the slave trade and produced the most abundant body of writing to establish that African people were non-human or sub-human and, therefore, should and could be subject to slavery for the benefit of the English nation. The arguments of philosopher John Locke in this regard, for example, are well known (Glausser, 1990). Caribbean philosopher Earl MacKenzie makes clear that many of the major European philosophers of that era considered Africans subhuman and so played a significant role in Africans being subjected to the ardours of "the cane piece" (MacKenzie, 2011, p. 21). Ironically, Locke, the best-known British philosopher of the seventeenth century, and well-known proponent of a theory of liberty and human freedom, had no problem investing in slavery and the slave trade since for him African slavery did not constitute a denial of liberty. Furthermore, he endorsed a form of religious liberty for slaves but not redemption from the civic dominion of their master (Glausser, 1990). Philosophical paradoxes of humanistic ideals at home (liberty, equality, fraternity) contradicted the colonial policies abroad (MacKenzie, 2011).

Similarly, theological support was required to deny Africans their humanity, and the Church of England readily provided this. Unbeknownst to many, the Church of England was among the largest slaveholding groups of the period (Beckles, 2013; Percy, 2025). Slavery was indeed the "triumph of the soldier, the scholar, monarch and merchant, priest and philosopher, investor and industrialist – all banded together and cloaked in nationalism" (Beckles, 2013, p. 40). Morrison (1980, p. 16) argues that the foundation upon which "the slaveholding ethic and the proslavery argument was built was the scriptural defence of slavery." He maintained that every proslavery pamphlet, or article, or speaker made at least some reference to a biblical sanction for enslaving African people. The widely accepted religious falsehood was that Africans were children of Ham, who was cursed by God, and so were destined by the deity to "be hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Brodber, 2004). Slaveholding was not only morally permissible but was recognised as such by the Scriptures (See, for example, Locke's paraphrase of I Cor. 7.20-

24 in Glausser, 1990; Kellerman, 2022). Of course, the arguments against the slave trade and slavery were also based on scripture and morality. Interestingly, the erstwhile founder of the Methodist Church, John Wesley, did not employ the Bible in his argument against Slavery. His tract, *Thoughts on Slavery* (1774), which outlines reasons given for slavery, followed by his counterarguments, does not use the Bible at all. Instead of relying on the Bible, he makes a case considering natural justice. Wesley's refusal to use biblical justifications for his position secured him from having to explain away the very passages of Scripture used by his opponents to justify their unethical practice (Painter, 2001).

Mini kingdoms

The English, like other colonial powers, created laws that gave them complete power over the enslaved Africans. They were able to dispose of these people as chattel property that could be acquired by purchase or inheritance. Although Slavery was not recognised under English law, there was little opposition to it or to the Transatlantic Trade in Africans before the 1780s. Local laws were passed for the protection of the enslavers who were given wide discretion in controlling the enslaved in all dimensions of their lives, including through unlimited punishment, even up to death. White Jamaicans were notorious for the ill-treatment of their slaves (Burnard, 2020). Family ties, protection from overwork, physical, emotional or sexual abuse were not recognised as pertinent to slaves. The working conditions, brutal treatment, exposure to disease, and poor nutrition all culminated in making the life of a typical slave "poor, nasty, brutish and short". Burnard explains:

> Not surprisingly, the ubiquity of slavery also made white Jamaicans intensely conscious of how disastrous it was to lose one's liberty. Few people evinced as much desire to uphold their independence .... Their insistence on freedom was apparent in all areas of their lives. They were free from restraints of almost all kinds – legal, social, and religious. (2004, p. 20)

Plantations were like mini kingdoms in which masters were sovereigns, living free-wheeling lives of ostentation. They took little heed of the Church, especially the non-conformist missionaries, who, before the Act of Abolition, interacted with the slaves on a plantation at the enslaver's pleasure. Indeed, Burnard claims White Jamaicans were notoriously irreligious: "Religion was 'greatly neglected and disregarded,' and 'Church Doors are seldom opened'" (Burnard, 2004, p. 20). Non-conformist missionaries worked very hard to gain the respect of Jamaican planters and their slaves (later the freed people). This led them to be profoundly concerned with the possession of certain material goods and maintaining a certain lifestyle, including having domestic servants, wearing particular clothing, and having respectable transport, lest they be dismissed as "*waak fut bakra*" [lit. "walk foot Whiteman," that is, "poor people of European descent"] (all

translations in this work are by the author, unless specified otherwise). They were the first white men on the island, who had no interest in making their fortune (Hall, 2002).

Sexual labour extraction

These mini-Kingdoms were a new kind of society created in the Caribbean. Barbados was the model of a fully formed slave society, relying entirely on the labour of thousands of enslaved Africans for the enrichment of investors in the Motherland, including members of the Royal family and other prominent citizens (Beckles, 2021, 2013). Slavery coerced the labour of African men and women with backbreaking work on plantations through variously legally prescribed and customary punishments for insubordination, including dismemberment, flogging, castration and hanging. One other form of horrific labour extraction during enslavement was specific to women; enslaved women were forced to reproduce the slave workforce and provide sexual services to White men. Indeed, the political economy of slavery systematically expropriated the sexual and reproductive capacities of African women for White pleasure and profit (Turner, 2017; Morgan, 2021, 2004; Davis, 2002). The raw brutality of this sexploitation is captured by Jamaican United Church pastor Nicole Ashwood (2018, no,page):

> Is a hatwud ting Marsa [It is a very hurtful thing, Massa]
> For as 'piece o' yore proppity [for as a piece of your property]
> Mean I fling dung, tun up, briefs dung, feel up-feel up, till shortly after yuh man parts rise up, [I am thrown down, undergarments pulled asunder, groped until you become erect]
> no matter if my virgin parts get buss up! [It matters not if my virginal body is torn to pieces]
> ….
> A hear di cry in di night [I hear the cry in the night]
> No badda draw fi torch so mek no light [I don't bother to light the torch]
> Bed space empty, she cum back full a fright [Bed empty, she comes back deeply frightened]
> An di dry up blood betwix her legs mek a ole slave ready fi fight [The sight of the dried blood between her legs is enough to make an ole slave ready to fight]

Trevor Burnard has written extensively on enslavement based on the exploits of Thomas Thistlewood, a former overseer-turned-enslaver, who kept an extraordinary diary of his life among enslaved people in rural Jamaica in the eighteenth century (1998; 2004). Eighteenth century Jamaica was a mature slave society, and Thistlewood's diary illuminates "a host of matters of central importance in the history of plantation societies and of slavery" (Burnard, 1994 p. 163). Of particular interest in this discussion is the nature of sexual interactions in plantation life (These interactions met with the opprobrium of the Christian missionaries while being generally accepted). Thistlewood's catalogue of his extensive sexual activities shows the meanings of interracial intercourse in a slave

society. In his diary, Thistlewood recorded his sexual exploits with enslaved women, the brutal methods he used to subdue enslaved people, as well as other more mundane matters like letters written and money spent. The sexploitation of enslaved women was quotidian. Burnard describes Thistlewood as "a brutal slave owner, an occasional rapist and torturer, and a believer in the inherent inferiority of Africans" (2004, p. 7).

During his time in Jamaica, Thistlewood took full advantage of the opportunity available to white men to possess African women's bodies. In his first year, he had sex with thirteen women on fifty-nine occasions. Many more sexual exploits were undertaken. In the thirty-seven years he resided in Jamaica, Thistlewood had sexual relations with numerous enslaved women, for example, Abba, with whom he had sex 155 times between 1770 and 1776. The voice of the enslaved women is never heard in these interactions, but it takes little imagination to "hear" it, as Nicole Ashwood (2018) demonstrates so poignantly above. The coercion and extraction of the sexual, productive, and reproductive capacities of enslaved women is similarly captured by Guyanese-born Grace Nichols in her ironically titled poem, "Love Act":

> She enter into his Great House/Her see-far looking eyes/Unassuming
> He fix her with his glassy stare/and feel the thin fire in his blood awakening (Nichols, 1983, p. 48)

Female slaves were always at greater danger from white men because of their role as domestics in the Great House. Prepubescent girls were not spared.

> Soon she is the fuel/that keep them all going/He/his mistresswife/and his children who take to her breasts/Like leeches (Nichols, 1983, p. 48)

The African woman is effectively a thing consumed in pieces by a white family. She is the incredulous wet nurse of Nichol's poem. She is the drink that slakes the thirst of the white man, who revelled in a milieu in which his power to satisfy his lust was unquestioned and unbounded (Burnard, 2007). She is the maidservant abused and overworked by the jealous wife.

> He want to tower above her/want her to raise her ebony/Haunches and when she does/He thinks she can be trusted/And drinks her in. (Nichols, 1983, p. 48)

In this poem ("Love Act"), as in Thistlewood's exploits, the sexual culture of Jamaican slave society, which normalised "the sociosexual exploitation of women" (Beckles, 2003, p. 200), is evident. The sexual culture of plantation Jamaica rested on pervasive assumptions about the sexual character of white men, African women, African men, and white women. White women were largely desexualised with their roles focused on reproduction in the minority white group that functioned as a caste (Bryan, 1998). This was not the same experience and expectation of the wives and sisters of missionaries, who were hardworking, often unpaid companions in the vineyard (Hall, 2002). (There were also white women slave owners and entrepreneurs in the urban centres.) Sexual relations between white women and African men were strictly prohibited. Such a woman would be disgraced beyond redemption, and the male would have been put to death

(Burnard, 2002). Nonetheless, Sharpe (2003, p. 144) notes the outing of the interracial relationship that could not be named – that of white women with African men – in the slave song recorded in 1790, "What Care I for Mam or Dad." African men and white men were united in their patriarchy even as white men projected their "venery" onto African men, as especially sexual creatures intent on "acquiring, seducing and abandoning African women" (Burnard, 2007, p. 84). "A tie that linked white men to African men was that they shared the same women, the same predatory view of sexual opportunity" (Burnard 2007, p. 84). And, as demonstrated, there were multiple asymmetries at play in the sexual interactions between white men and African women, which call into question the suggestion that any sexual interaction could exist outside of a framework of coercion in a context of slavery where white men had complete control over the lives and bodies of African women (and men).

Understandably, the sexual interactions between white men and African women caused much disruption within the enslaved community. Slave women were in demand as sexual partners for both white and African men, who were united by patriarchal assumptions about "the natural dominance of men over women" (Burnard, 2007, p. 100). While some enslaved women and their offspring may have "benefited" from liaisons with white men, both African men and women were the losers in this exploitative sexual climate. However, African men were particularly affected as their African patriarchy was diluted in the Jamaican slave society, as enslavers like Thistlewood interfered in their domestic affairs and rendered the African male's attempts to control the sexuality of African women difficult, if not impossible. The enslaver's insistence on his right to have sex with enslaved women, as Thistlewood demonstrates time and again, undermined the African male's control over his women and the offspring they produced. Ashwood's (2018) female protagonist laments the destructive impact of these coercive actions on her man and the relationship between them, which continues to have echoes till today:

> An ef I have a man - he best not use him parts pon me [If I have a man, he better not have sex with me]
> For likkl most Dey would heng him pon a tree [He barely missed being hung]
> If him dares to touch or sleep wid what Massa no set before he! [For daring to touch or sleep with what Master didn't give him]
> Cause procreation fi recreation was not our reality [Because sexual pleasure for its own sake is not our reality]. (Ashwood, 2018)

What Ashwood gives voice to through fictionalising historical poetry, Cecily Jones (2007) traces in the wretched experience of Jimmy, Thistlewood's personal slave, who continually contested their master-slave relationship despite brutal punishment. Jimmy embarks on a relationship with Abba, one of Thistlewood's favourite "sexual conquests," and both suffered dearly for it. An asymmetrical rivalry ensued in which Thistlewood determined that he "had the first rights over Abba's body" and continued to

exercise it, even up to two days before she gave birth to a child whose paternity remained in question (Jones, 2007, p. 100). Thistlewood behaved in the same fashion with Phoebe, Jimmy's shipmate, with whom he later started an affair, after giving up on his liaison with Abba. Phoebe was one of the last sexual partners Thistlewood went with before he died. Amid all the exercise of power over their bodies, African women in slave society claimed newfound "freedoms" such as playing the field, playing off "suitors" against each other, and acting in ways to stop their men from cheating (Burnard, 2004, 2007). In so doing, enslaved women, who were doubly compromised, attempted to break out of traditional African gender roles and resisted the strictures of Slavery, claiming their agency and inherent freedom (Dunkley, 2013), but in ways that were not pleasing to the missionaries.

Sexual culture

Interestingly, this sexual culture is said to most closely resemble that of 18th-century Britain – a time of sexual licence, sexual permissiveness and hedonistic eroticism (Burnard, 1994; Mair, 2006). In 18th-century London, no social opprobrium was levelled at British men engaging in multiple and numerous partnerships. LaFont (2001) and others would argue differently. LaFont maintains that British men who lived in Jamaica during slavery entered a sexual environment very different than that in their homeland. She argues that they had a broader range of sexual options without suffering the kind of public disapproval they would have in their homeland. "British sexual ideologies were no longer meaningful, so they forged new sexual morés in their New World" (LaFont, 2001, n.p.). What is clear is that Jamaican slave society was highly tolerant of the promiscuous behaviour of white males, who did as they pleased without any social consequences. White males contributed to the illegitimacy and immorality of the society, siring numerous progeny, often living without shame with African mistresses and housekeepers (Bryan, 1998).

Burnard (1994) posited that white male sexual access to African women was a principal reason white men moved to Jamaica and remained there. White men "explained" their behaviour as a response to the lasciviousness of African women and not in their lack of self-control. (Ironically, even after Emancipation, the African Jamaican woman was still being described as "a female population devoid of any notions of chastity or restraint of inclination" (Olivier to Chamberlain, July 7, 1900, cited in Brodber, 2004, p. 11). In fact, discussions of the low natality of Jamaican enslaved women blamed it on their "animal-like sexual promiscuity … [their] alleged incapacity for self-regulation justified [their] sexual and economic abuse in the name of responsible discipline. The nakedness in which masters left their female slaves also encouraged this inaccurate image of wanton lust" (Morgan, 2006, p. 240). Other cultural practices such as "casual mating practices and polygyny" were also criticised as being the cause of low birth rates (Morgan, 2006, p. 241). Yet the plantation system did not make the birth of children a function

that justified the development of families; indeed, marriage was not encouraged and was bestowed as a privilege by the enslaver. "Marriage for the slaves, like civil rights for the free colored and African population, implied a humanity the whites were unwilling to concede as a right and preferred to retain as a privilege to confer" (Turner, 1998, p. 44). "From the missionaries' point of view, the slaves' established relationship patterns, and the sexual mores that accompanied them, presented difficult problems" (Turner, 1998, p. 45). M. Mack, Moravian minister sent to Jamaica by the Directing Board in 1779, spent a year in the island and is reported by John Clarke to have said:

> It is beyond the power of the missionary to remove the chief obstacles to the free course of God's Word in a slave country. No system could be invented more effectually to hinder and oppose the spread of the Gospel than slavery. The slaves have no time to hear the Word except when worn out in body and mind by their cruel bondage, and their souls injured by a system which overthrows all morality, and sets at defiance the plainest commands of Scripture. How can there be morality where marriage is illegal; where overseers, book-keepers, and drivers, know no bounds, no obstacles to their evil lusts? How is the debased ignorant heathen to be taught the fear of God, and the heinousness of sin, when he finds himself the victim of evil passions, and beholds the most unblushing immorality in those who profess to be his superiors; and when he sees his equals treated as the beasts of the field? (Clarke, 1869, pp. 7-8)

In some cases, this distorted vision of the African slave did not diminish at Emancipation, as was demonstrated by the journal entries of Jesuit priest James Splaine in 1871-72. Splaine, who served in various rural communities in the parish of St Mary, Jamaica, realised that the people refused to accept "a pure Christian doctrine with its attendant morality" (Stewart, 1992, p. 63). Resistance to the Jesuit's preaching on sexual morality was particularly strong and overt. He noted the counter-arguments readily provided by his parishioners, who appeared shameless and clear about their involvement in the sin of concubinage. Stewart (1992) remarks that Splaine's experience was not unique, as Protestant missionaries had similar experiences in trying to instil a sense of guilt and sin among the Afro-Jamaican population:

> The slave that had to be freed, then, was not only an enslaved body over which the master had absolute control but also an African body bound to "heathenism" and savagery. The antislavery position, like its proslavery counterpart, articulated a racial hierarchy but one that was culturally rather than biologically determined. By acceding to the abolitionist preference for the enlightened individual, we risk equating slave agency with a movement toward Christian emancipation. (Sharpe, 2003, p. 124)

A Christian vision of freedom for the enslaved

Christianity has a central place in Emancipation and its legacy (Austin-Broos, 1992). Austin-Broos (1992, p. 222) argues that part of Emancipation's legacy in Jamaica was

"to insert Christianity as an integral component into that society's culture." The integration of Christianity into Jamaican life was by no means a straightforward, complete or permanent process, however. Christianity has been both a tool for domination both within and beyond the Jamaican society, beginning with the sanctioning of the enslavement of Africans and native peoples (Beckles, 2013). During slavery, the Church of England, the state church, evinced little interest in the slave population, whom they considered "savages without a soul" (Benjamin, 2021, p. 24) and beasts of burden to work on plantations and other properties. Many of the clergymen sent to the Caribbean tended to be from the upper classes and closely aligned with the Jamaican elites, with some, like Anglican cleric John Lindsay, even marrying into the planter class (Higman, 2011). At the same time, Christianity functioned to challenge the very forces of oppression and domination that existed during Enslavement and after Emancipation. Christians were prominent among the abolitionists who worked to end, first, the Transatlantic Trade in Africans and then Slavery itself. Christian slaves were prominent among the leaders of rebellions, as the Baptist War (1831-32) led by Deacon Sam Sharpe demonstrated. Furthermore, with the coming of the nonconformist missionaries, attempts were made to Christianize the slaves and, in the process, exposed them to skills such as reading and leadership that served to recognize their humanity while providing tools to challenge the system on its terms.

This dual face was evident in the interface between Christianity, education, and the state in post-Emancipation society. The British government later subsidised Christian bodies and missionaries in providing education, thereby establishing the foundation of primary education in Jamaica. The Anglican and Methodist clergy (Anglican Bishop Enos Nuttal was the most famous of these), who built those schools, "intended to foster among the ex-slaves a deference for authority, an acceptance of their own subordinate social position, and industrious, disciplined work habits" (Bolland, 1992, p. 136). The recipients of such education learned habits of passivity and obedience, not critical intellectual pursuit and a sense of self-worth and autonomy. Yet such education, paradoxically, may have also been the source of a challenge to that very system. Christianity has maintained this ambiguous role even in contemporary Jamaican society, acting as both constraint and medium of critique (Austin-Broos, 1992).

The vision of freedom supported by the nonconformist missionaries was one wherein a new Christian ex-slave would emerge, freed from the impact of plantation life and the un-Christian habits acquired therein. A post-slavery society built on the ruins of Slavery, rooted in British middle-class notions of respectability and prestige, was the dream of these missionaries (Hall, 1993). To bring about this new "Christian African" in a new society, many habits and attitudes would need to be changed. From the very outset, the goal was to eradicate the "debased" African culture that was the result of heathen Africa and the depravity of the slave system (Moore & Johnson, 2004). "The 'sexual looseness'

of plantation life became a primary target of their efforts as they promoted monogamous marriage" (Moore & Johnson, 2004, p. 170).

> The potential for that new society lay, both for [Quaker Joseph] Sturge and the missionaries, in the linked moments of emancipation and conversion. Emancipation gave men and women their political, social and economic freedom. But only conversion gave them a new life in Christ, the possibility to be born anew, to be washed clean of old ways, to be a new man or a new woman. (Hall, 1993, p. 110)

Emancipation, the Baptists believed, could only be given expression if the freed slaves had access to land, which was a symbol of freedom (Dick, 2002) and a means of independence. The formation of the free village system, started by the Baptists, was a means of developing this independence from the plantation, while developing the Christian character of industriousness, robbed from the slaves under brutal slavery. On the opening of the first free village, Sligoville, in St Catherine, in 1840, well-known Baptist preacher and abolitionist James Mursell Phillippo addressed the people concerning:

> [t]he several duties of honesty, industry, economy in domestic expenditure, prudent provision for the exigencies of sickness and old age, together with exhortations to a faithful and conscientious discharge of the mutual obligations of masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children; illustrating particularly the impolicy, as well as sin, of dishonesty in every form; the evils of idleness, and the advantages of industrious habits; the guilt of intemperance, and folly of extravagance in dress; the benefits afforded by the institution of savings banks; and the disgrace and misery almost inseparable from depending, in sickness and infirmity, on public or private charity. (Hall, 1993, p. 105)

"The Free Village system was a deliberate policy by the Church to create a community, provide shelter, alternative employment, food production, self-sufficiency, security of tenure or family stability and political rights for the oppressed Africans" (Dick, 2002, p. 10). There, a new peasantry flourished and developed agricultural produce for the domestic market. At the same time, it encouraged family life and monogamous practices as the couples settled there were all married, many with families (Mair, 2006). Newlyweds were celebrated by the entire village (Hall, 1993). Generally, the missionaries greatly encouraged marriages, after Emancipation. Baptist missionary Phillippo, for example, married three hundred apprentices within a year of the Abolition Act and many more afterwards; similarly, Moravians, Methodists, and other Baptists conducted numerous such unions.

The freedom and independence encouraged by the missionaries entailed withdrawal by women and children from plantation labour. This was in keeping with the proper gender order that the missionaries espoused. Men were to be the breadwinners and women were to remain at home, taking care of the household and the children. Ironically, the independence of the man with his ability to look after his dependents without charity meant a new kind of dependence for women, who were now to be dependent on their husbands.

Reporting on the free villages to their British supporters, the missionaries presented them as "utopias where there was no quarrelling, liquor, revelling or immorality" (Hall, 1993, p. 123).

Catherine Hall (2002) is critical of the free village project, as she argues, "the free villages represented the ultimate moment in this missionary fantasy [of new communities centred on the mission and the missionary]. Jamaica thus became a site for acting out white visions of how African people *should* live" (p. 136, emphasis added). Hall maintains that this dream of a new kind of community, initially led by white men, was built upon "the refusal to recognise an existing African culture" (2002, p. 137) and this culture reasserted itself as the influence of the missionaries waned. Ultimately, the missionaries believed that they could redeem the African man from the injustices perpetrated against him by other white men. However, contradictions were inherent in their vision of the new society. It promised equality as a future attainment, while maintaining social distance between missionaries and their congregations based on an implicit racial hierarchy. Zacek and Brown (2014) even comment on the similarities between the layout of the free villages and the plantations.

Some concluding thoughts

Susan LaFont (2001) argues cogently that the development of Jamaica's sexual morés must be understood within the context of history. In her estimation, slavery, colonialism, the introduction of Christianity, and the importance of respectability have converged to shape Jamaican sexualities. Slavery was a psychologically damaging experience that both scarred the community and created individual devastation (Burnard, 2004). The freed people tried in several ways to deal with this individual and social trauma, including fleeing from the plantations and the very island itself. Erna Brodber (2004), in her important study of the second generation of freeborn African Jamaicans, describes them as a community that became unstable due to high migration rates. She argues, at the same time, that this cohort had also been angry even before it became "pathologically unstable" due to excessive migration (Brodber, 2004, p. 151). Such unresolved anger and migration were a recipe for alienation in an already psychically damaged society, and so the African Jamaican community, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, "has left little energy for focussing on cultural discrepancies" that arose during enslavement (2004, p. 151).

Brodber identifies one such cultural discrepancy as the belief that sex and childbearing are God-ordained events, which exists in tension with the desire for these to take place within "a controlled setting" (2004, p. 151). She denotes this as the "nature-versus-order dilemma," (p. 151) which is evident in the inner-city yards of today as it was in the rural communities of yesteryear. Jamaican culture has not found a way of integrating these two beliefs through the evolution of courtship norms. Consequently, a low degree of parental authority over the child-production activities of their children continues, and so

"a cultural fault" continues unaddressed (p. 151). Brodber (2004) argues that new perspectives are necessary to change these behaviours and their embedded function within the Jamaican psyche:

> Whatever the design, it has to be based on an acceptance of Jamaica as a social system fashioned by the interplay of acts of God and acts of men, the latter defined by the Jamaican experience of capture, transportation, the auction block, enslavement, racism, and colorism laced with anger and distrust. This is where the creation begins. (Brodber, 2004, p. 151)

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EL RETO EDUCATIVO EN LA SOCIEDAD DEL CAOS MEDIÁTICO: UNA PROPUESTA HACIA LA ALFABETIZACIÓN MEDIÁTICA

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Resumen
Este artículo analiza el impacto de las tecnologías de la información en la educación contemporánea, explorando cómo la proliferación de información digital se relaciona con habilidades cognitivas fundamentales como la atención y la memoria. Se discute la transformación histórica desde la invención de la imprenta hasta el caos mediático actual, resaltando desafíos educativos derivados del consumo superficial de información. Finalmente, propone la integración de la alfabetización mediática en los currículos educativos como estrategia clave para enfrentar estos retos y fomentar un uso crítico y reflexivo de las tecnologías digitales.

Términos clave: tecnologías de información; caos mediático; alfabetización mediática; educación digital; habilidades cognitivas

Introducción

En la sociedad occidental del siglo XXI, la ausencia de información instantánea resulta difícil de concebir. Un entorno en el que la transmisión del conocimiento dependa exclusivamente del diálogo oral parecería una construcción hipotética. Sin embargo, esta fue la norma hasta el siglo XV, cuando los avances en la reproducción escrita transformaron radicalmente la difusión del saber. Hasta la invención de la imprenta por Johannes Gutenberg en la década de 1440, la transmisión del conocimiento dependía principalmente de la reproducción manuscrita de los textos, un proceso arduo y lento, accesible solo para una élite alfabetizada. El acceso a la reproducción de textos estaba restringido a grupos específicos que contaban con el derecho o la autorización para transcribir obras existentes de manera literal. Como consecuencia, la producción de libros era un proceso sumamente lento y laborioso. Antes del año 1400, en Europa se estimaba “una

producción anual de aproximadamente 1,000 libros" (Toffler, 1970, p. 30) (todas las traducciones por el autor, a menos que se especifique). Sin embargo, la invención de la imprenta en 1440 transformó por completo el acceso al conocimiento. En solo 50 años, la cantidad de libros disponibles aumentó significativamente, permitiendo una mayor difusión de la información y contribuyendo a la expansión del conocimiento en diversos ámbitos.

Con la expansión de la imprenta, comenzaron a circular textos que respaldaban y justificaban creencias, ideologías y tradiciones que habían constituido, hasta cierto punto, la base del orden social. No obstante, de manera simultánea, también surgieron publicaciones que contenían ideas consideradas subversivas o heréticas, lo que impulsó una explosión literaria. De acuerdo con Lukianoff y Scholtt (2023), "la invención de la imprenta provocó cambios catastróficos en Europa: conflictos religiosos, expansión de los juicios por brujería y luchas civiles revolucionarias" (Lukianoff & Scholtt, 2023, p. 6). Ante este nuevo panorama, resultó fundamental la creación de una institución social con el fin de regular y legitimar la información disponible. En este contexto, surgió la Escuela Común como un organismo educativo concebido para regular el acceso al conocimiento, con el fin de reducir la incertidumbre derivada de la creciente difusión de información a gran escala.

Antes de la invención de la imprenta, en Inglaterra se registraban aproximadamente 34 escuelas. No obstante, 120 años después de la aparición de esta tecnología, el número de instituciones educativas se había incrementado a 444 (Postman, 1993, p. 52). Para Postman (1993), "hubo varias razones para el rápido crecimiento de la escuela común, pero ninguna era más obvia que el hecho de que era una respuesta necesaria a las ansiedades y la confusión despertadas por la información suelta" (p. 62). A lo largo de la historia moderna, el flujo de la información ha generado dilemas sociales significativos. Un caso emblemático es el de Nicolás Copérnico, quien retrasó la publicación de su obra *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* durante aproximadamente 30 años. En su contexto histórico, la hipótesis heliocéntrica —según la cual la Tierra se mueve alrededor del Sol— contradecía las doctrinas religiosas predominantes, lo que pudo haber influido en su decisión de posponer la difusión de sus hallazgos.

Por consiguiente, por aproximadamente cuatro siglos, la educación formal ha funcionado como un mecanismo de poder y control destinado a regular y legitimar el conocimiento disponible. En este sentido, los educadores y las instituciones educativas desempeñaron un papel central en la regulación del saber mediante el currículo académico, un término cuya etimología remite a la idea de "camino" o "trayectoria," (Ortiz, 2017) reflejando su función estructuradora en la formación de los individuos. No obstante, en la actualidad, tanto los docentes como la sociedad en general han sido testigos del colapso de lo que alguna vez fue el monopolio del conocimiento. Con la llegada del internet, la escuela y el Estado han dejado de ser los únicos actores que determinan qué información es relevante para el individuo. En la actualidad, cada ciudadano tiene la capacidad de

seleccionar, priorizar y reforzar su perspectiva a través del sesgo de confirmación [confirmation bias] en la información que consume. Esto se debe, en parte, a la expectativa errónea de que el internet poseería la capacidad de autorregularse mediante un proceso comunitario de revisión y corrección. Por ejemplo, para el año 2007, Yochai Benkler publicó un libro titulado: *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom.* Benkler (2007) expuso que, a partir de las primeras investigaciones sobre la dinámica de los hipervínculos entre los usuarios y el flujo de tráfico en portales web, surgió un sistema colaborativo destinado a la revisión, validación y filtrado de contenido, lo que, en cierta medida, priorizaba la información considerada "legítima." Sin embargo, como se analizará en el siguiente apartado, esta expectativa ha servido como una lección para entender cómo el funcionamiento de una tecnología puede evolucionar de manera significativa desde su fase de desarrollo hasta su madurez.

La era del caos mediático

En *Technopoly*, Neil Postman (1993) analiza las repercusiones sociales que emergen cuando instituciones como la religión y el sistema educativo pierden la capacidad de regular y legitimar la información disponible. Aunque esta obra fue publicada en 1993, sus planteamientos continúan siendo relevantes en el contexto del sistema educativo contemporáneo en Puerto Rico. Según Postman:

> La razón por la que muchos niños no pueden aprender a leer, o no quieren aprender, o no pueden organizar su pensamiento en una estructura lógica, ni prestar atención en el salón de clase por más de unos minutos… no es porque no tengan la capacidad de hacerlo. La razón es porque viven en una guerra mediática. (1993, pp. 16-17)

Esta "guerra mediática" es lo que en este artículo se conceptualiza como la era del caos mediático. De acuerdo con el autor citado, los seres humanos construyen el sentido de su existencia a partir de los valores transmitidos por instituciones sociales como la religión y la educación tradicional. Estas entidades no solo regulan el acceso a la información, sino que también le otorgan significado, ya sea a través de principios religiosos o mediante la transmisión de valores fundamentales en el ámbito educativo. De este modo, proporcionan un marco interpretativo que permite a las personas comprender su vida y su entorno.

Postman (1993) ausculta que, en una sociedad sin un sistema de regulación de la información, esta puede volverse peligrosa cuando carece de un marco interpretativo. Sin una teoría que la contextualice o un propósito superior al que contribuir, su impacto puede resultar caótico y desorientador. Por tanto, la Escuela Común emergió como una respuesta a la invención de la imprenta, una tecnología revolucionaria que redefinió diversos aspectos de la sociedad. Como producto de esta innovación, la escuela estableció un conjunto de habilidades consideradas esenciales para la formación de individuos so-

cialmente funcionales en este nuevo contexto tecnológico. Entre estas destrezas se encontraban la memorización de datos, el desarrollo de la lectura crítica y la capacidad de sintetizar información, competencias fundamentales para interactuar eficazmente con el libro, el artefacto informativo central de la época. Por consiguiente, quien demostraba estas habilidades era considerado una persona inteligente, ya que era diestro ante esta nueva tecnología informática. No obstante, estas habilidades, que socialmente se consideran esenciales o fundamentales para ser percibido como una persona inteligente o funcional, no son estáticas ni permanentes a lo largo del tiempo. Con la aparición de nuevas tecnologías de la información, también emergen nuevas expectativas sobre las destrezas necesarias para utilizarlas de manera eficaz. En otras palabras, tanto el concepto de inteligencia como las habilidades valoradas en la sociedad evolucionan con el tiempo, especialmente en respuesta a los avances tecnológicos. Eventualmente, esto exige que los individuos adquieran o adapten nuevas competencias según las innovaciones emergentes.

Por ende, es razonable suponer que el sistema educativo no siempre priorizará las habilidades que fueron fundamentales durante la explosión literaria, como la memorización, la lectura crítica y la síntesis. "Con el tiempo, el tipo de estudiante que actualmente es un fracaso," señala Neil Postman, "el que no le interesa memorizar, comprender lo que lee, podría ser considerado un éxito en el futuro" (Postman, 1993, p. 17). En la modernidad, las tecnologías de información continúan estableciendo las habilidades o hábitos que se conciben como esenciales socialmente. Cal Newport señala que, en la actualidad, se comete el error de asumir que la productividad y la calidad del trabajo dependen de mantenerse constantemente ocupado, respondiendo correos electrónicos con mayor rapidez y participando en el mayor número posible de reuniones virtuales (Newport, 2024, p. 7). Si un infante aprende a utilizar un teléfono inteligente, es común que se le perciba como un individuo potencialmente "inteligente," dado que demuestra habilidad para interactuar con un artefacto tecnológico relativamente reciente.

El objetivo principal del presente artículo reside, en que toda tecnología cambia—*inconscientemente*—nuestra forma de pensar y de concebir la realidad. Cuando la imprenta era la tecnología del momento para el 1440, la educación demandaba las destrezas necesarias para aprovechar esta innovación. Del mismo modo, con la llegada del internet, como una tecnología accesible para las masas, surgieron destrezas específicas, pero radicalmente diferentes a las que demandaba la imprenta. Por dicha razón, es irrelevante debatir si se debe o no usar la tecnología en el aula de clases. Postman (1993) asevera que "Lo que hay que tener en cuenta sobre el internet o la computadora no tiene nada que ver con su eficacia como herramienta de enseñanza. Necesitamos saber de qué manera [estas tecnologías], están alterando nuestra concepción del aprendizaje" (Postman, 1993, p. 19). Por ende, un dilema más significativo es comprender cómo las tecnologías de información transforman la concepción o noción de lo que implica o significa ser una persona educada.

Desescolarizando la sociedad

En 1970, Ivan Illich publicó *Deschooling Society*, una obra en la que critica el sistema educativo tradicional y aboga por la desescolarización de la sociedad. Uno de sus principales argumentos sostiene que, al comercializarse la educación, el sistema dejó de fomentar los hábitos necesarios para el aprendizaje continuo y pasó a centrarse en la escolarización. Esta última se reduce a la obtención de credenciales académicos que certifican conocimientos y habilidades, dejando en un segundo plano la educación permanente. Es decir, una vez que la escolarización se establece como norma, cualquier forma de aprendizaje que ocurra fuera de sus límites tiende a ser vista con escepticismo, lo que desvaloriza el aprendizaje autodidacta. Illich (1970) señala que:

> en la escuela se nos enseña que el aprendizaje valioso es el resultado de la asistencia, que el valor del aprendizaje aumenta con la cantidad de aportaciones plasmadas en un examen y, por último, que el aprendizaje puede medirse y documentarse mediante grados y certificados. (p. 39)

No obstante, es meritorio señalar que esto no implica que aspirar a un grado académico sea perjudicial; sin embargo, resulta incoherente cuando la búsqueda de un título responde exclusivamente a la necesidad de cumplir una expectativa social o se limita a ser un medio para acceder al mercado laboral.

Por esa línea de pensamiento, Mortimer Adler (1982) aboga que "la escolarización de una persona no completa su *educación*. El simple hecho es que las instituciones educativas, incluso en su mejor momento, no pueden formar hombres y mujeres completamente educados" (Adler, 1982, p. 9). Si una persona obtiene un credencial académico pero luego de graduarse no insta a seguir el proceso continuo de aprendizaje, técnicamente fue escolarizado pero no educado. "La educación es un proceso de toda la vida, mientras que la escolarización es solo una parte reducida, pero necesaria. Las distintas etapas de la escolarización alcanzan puntos finales" (Adler, 1982, p. 10). La escolarización constituye una etapa preparatoria en la que, idealmente, el individuo desarrolla los hábitos necesarios para continuar aprendiendo de manera autónoma, más allá del sistema educativo formal. Por tanto, si dicho proceso no capacita a la persona para seguir ampliando su conocimiento de forma independiente, habrá fallado en su propósito fundamental de formar a un individuo verdaderamente educado.

No obstante, la falla principal en la tesis de Ivan Illich reside, en que él confiaba en que un proceso educativo autónomo e individual—en donde el propio individuo tuviera control sobre el proceso de aprendizaje—sería un método eficiente. Illich sugirió un sistema de conexiones que llamó "Learning Webs," una plataforma donde las personas podrían interactuar entre ellas y compartir conocimientos en común. Dicho de otra manera, en 1970, Illich imaginaba que una red de conexiones, similar a lo que hoy conocemos como el internet, sería de gran beneficio para que las personas pudieran dirigir la educación permanente. Resulta pertinente destacar que el internet ha funcionado como una herramienta de aprendizaje para cientos de personas, ofreciendo plataformas diseñadas para

la adquisición de conocimientos y el desarrollo de diversas habilidades. No obstante, los datos disponibles sugieren que la atención del público se orienta mayoritariamente hacia el entretenimiento (Fernández-de-Arroyabe-Olaortua et al., 2018). Ante esta aseveración es imperativo reconocer a figuras como Charles Horton Cooley y Marshall McLuhan, (ambos pertenecientes a la rama de la ecología de los medios) los cuales argumentaban que un medio de comunicación no solamente funciona como un canal para transmitir una información, sino que cada vez que surge un nuevo medio de comunicación, el mismo modifica el entorno. Consecuentemente, a medida que la sociedad se adapta a dicho entorno, este moldea la percepción, pensamientos y relaciones interpersonales (Horton Cooley, citado en Carr, 2025, p. 9).

En su libro *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked*, Adam Alter (2017) explora cómo las tecnologías de información moderna, a través de su diseño deliberado para capturar y retener nuestra atención, ha generado una cultura de dependencia y adicción. Durante décadas, el campo de la neurociencia consideraba que únicamente las sustancias, como las drogas y el alcohol, podían inducir la adicción. Sin embargo, con la publicación de la quinta edición del Manual Diagnóstico y Estadístico de los Trastornos Mentales (DSM-5) en 2013, la Asociación Americana de Psicología (APA) incluyó las adicciones de comportamiento en su lista de diagnósticos oficiales. Esto sugiere que la adicción no se restringe únicamente al consumo de sustancias como el alcohol o la nicotina, sino que también puede manifestarse en patrones de comportamiento, como el uso compulsivo de videojuegos o la necesidad constante de validación a través de sistemas de recompensa, como los "likes" en las redes sociales. Como bien estipula Alter:

> Las drogas y los comportamientos adictivos activan el mismo centro de recompensa en el cerebro. En ambos casos, varias regiones profundas dentro del cerebro liberan una sustancia llamada dopamina que se adhiere a receptores en todo el cerebro, generando a su vez una intensa sensación de placer. (2017, p. 71)

Por tal razón, presumir que las personas dirijan su propio proceso de aprendizaje por medio de artefactos que predisponen comportamientos adictivos, es una idea utópica en un entorno dominado por la gratificación instantánea. Como se describiría en el próximo apartado, la gratificación instantánea se ha vuelto la norma incluso en el aula de clases. En la actualidad contamos con literatura que señala los efectos adversos del tiempo frente a la pantalla, tanto en el cerebro como en el desarrollo social y emocional (Dong & Potenza, 2015). "Para eso del 2000, antes de que los teléfonos portátiles y las aplicaciones de las computadoras fueran tan populares, el lapso de atención promedio de una persona era doce segundos" (Chapman & Pellicane, 2014, p. 30), sin embargo, en la actualidad este lapso ha bajado un 40% (Schiller, 2024, #11).

Por consiguiente, se ha sostenido que la visión de Ivan Illich, quien imaginaba un futuro en el que las personas pudieran dirigir su propio proceso de aprendizaje a través de una red de comunicaciones, como lo es el internet en la actualidad, ha tenido un impacto

inesperado en la modernidad. En el presente, se observa que la atención de la mayoría se orienta principalmente hacia contenidos de entretenimiento en lugar de centrarse en actividades educativas, lo que contraviene la intención original de empoderar o democratizar, a las personas en la búsqueda del conocimiento.

Esta afirmación, en cierta medida, refleja la tendencia observada en el sistema educativo tradicional de Puerto Rico y en algunas regiones de los Estados Unidos, donde se promueve un modelo de enseñanza diseñado para percibirse como entretenido, rápido y de fácil ejecución por parte de los estudiantes. En el siguiente apartado se analiza el origen de esta tendencia social, la cual ejerce una influencia creciente en el entorno escolar.

La ilusión del aprendizaje entretenido

En los Estados Unidos, el 95% de los adolescentes tiene acceso a un teléfono inteligente, y un 45 % reporta estar conectado constantemente (Wolf, 2016). Un estudio cualitativo realizado en Puerto Rico (Rolón Sanfeliz, 2020) revela que la mayoría de los participantes utilizan su teléfono inteligente entre 8 y 10 horas al día. Los autores citados señalan que la atención de los usuarios se centra principalmente en aplicaciones diseñadas para el consumo de contenidos no-académicos, creados por otros usuarios, como las redes sociales. El uso intensivo de estos productos digitales está orientado, en gran medida, hacia estímulos visuales y auditivos llamativos, más que hacia el significado del mensaje en sí. Esta tendencia refleja una de las ideas centrales de Jean Baudrillard, en su crítica a la comunicación y los medios. De acuerdo con Baudrillard, la tecnología aplicada a los medios de comunicación ha incrementado exponencialmente la velocidad de circulación de los mensajes, superando la capacidad humana para reflexionar y comprender plenamente su significado (Baudrillard, citado en Carr, 2025). Como consecuencia, las palabras y la información pierden profundidad, reduciéndose a meros símbolos superficiales en lugar de servir como medios para una comprensión matizada.

Esta predisposición impuesta por los medios de comunicación ha influido progresivamente en la forma en que se desarrollan los procesos educativos, orientándolos hacia un modelo similar. Para explorar este fenómeno con mayor profundidad, a continuación, se analiza el modelo de estilos de aprendizaje VARK. VARK es un acrónimo que representa los cuatro estilos de aprendizaje principales: Visual (V), Auditivo (A), Lectura/Escritura (R) y Kinestésico (K). Este modelo fue desarrollado por Neil Fleming y Colleen Mills en la década de 1990 (Fleming & Mills, 1992, como una manera de entender y clasificar las preferencias individuales de aprendizaje. No obstante, el problema reside en que los estudios señalan que la preferencia por ver un vídeo en lugar de leer un libro no necesariamente garantiza un aprendizaje más eficiente. Incluso, cómo se presenta a continuación, la inclinación por favorecer exclusivamente los materiales educativos en formatos de audiovisuales parece estar teniendo un impacto adverso en el proceso de aprendizaje.

Neil Fleming era un educador en Nueva Zelanda y observó que algunos educadores lograban captar la atención de los alumnos de manera más efectiva que otros. Esta observación le llevó a especular que dicha eficacia estaba relacionada con las estrategias de enseñanza empleadas en el salón de clase. Mediante un cuestionario, el método VARK determina cuál es el enfoque o la estrategia de enseñanza que se ajusta a las preferencias de aprendizaje del estudiante. Como se menciona en el artículo *The Myth of Learning Styles* (Riener & Willingham, 2010), aún no está claro por qué este método se popularizó y se adoptó sin primero ser estudiado empíricamente. No obstante, es seguro inferir que se relacione "con el movimiento de la autoestima a finales de los 1980 y principios de los 1990. Este movimiento aseguraba que todo el mundo era especial, así que todo el mundo debía tener también un estilo de aprendizaje especial" (Khazan, 2018, párr. 5). Desde entonces, la comunidad educativa ha estado difundiendo la idea de que algunas personas aprenden mejor de manera visual mientras que otros lo hacen auditivamente. Sin embargo, en muchas instancias, los educadores no han tenido en cuenta los estudios realizados para evaluar la eficacia del modelo VARK.

En un estudio publicado en la revista *Anatomical Sciences Education* (Husmann & O'Loughlin, 2019) los autores administraron el cuestionario VARK a 426 estudiantes, para determinar qué método de aprendizaje era el "adecuado" (o, más precisamente, el preferido) para cada uno de ellos. Después de completar el cuestionario, se les proporcionaban estrategias de estudio específicas, según los resultados, adaptadas al estilo de aprendizaje de cada estudiante. No obstante, los autores encontraron que aquellos que estudiaban de acuerdo con su estilo de aprendizaje preferido no obtenían mejores resultados en los exámenes en comparación a los no estudiaban de acuerdo con el método VARK.

Por otro lado, un estudio publicado en el *British Journal of Psychology* (Knoll, et al., 2017) reveló que los estudiantes que optaban por el aprendizaje visual, mediante el uso de imágenes o videos, tenían la impresión de que recordarían mejor las imágenes, y aquellos que mostraron preferencia por el aprendizaje verbal asumieron que recordarían mejor las palabras. Sin embargo, estas preferencias no mostraron correlación con lo que los participantes recordaron después del experimento. Esto indicaba simplemente que algunas personas tenían una inclinación hacia las palabras, mientras que otras preferían las imágenes, sin que esto influyera necesariamente en su capacidad para recordar de manera más efectiva las palabras o la información transmitida por medio de imágenes. El hecho de que un estudiante prefiera escuchar un audiolibro, porque requiere menos esfuerzo al que requiere leer un libro impreso, no garantiza que recordará o comprenderá el contenido con mayor eficacia.

En muchas instancias, se presume con frecuencia que las clases deben ser breves e incorporar elementos visuales, videos y sonidos para resultar atractivas y dinámicas para los estudiantes. Sin embargo, las investigaciones citadas cuestionan el mito social-educativo de que la generación contemporánea sea intrínsecamente "visual" o "auditiva," y

que prefiera el multitasking sobre la realización de tareas de manera secuencial. Estos planteamientos invitan a una reflexión más profunda sobre la validez de estos supuestos en el ámbito educativo. Asimismo, permiten observar cómo los medios de comunicación y las tecnologías de la información, al integrarse en la vida cotidiana, transforman de manera no intencional o subliminal la percepción de lo que se considera efectivo en la dirección del proceso educativo. Dado este panorama, resulta fundamental replantear los enfoques educativos y considerar estrategias que fortalezcan la capacidad crítica de los estudiantes frente a los medios y la información digital. En este sentido, la alfabetización mediática [media literacy] se presenta como una alternativa clave para desarrollar en los estudiantes habilidades de análisis, evaluación y comprensión del entorno informativo.

Conclusión: La alfabetización mediática

A lo largo de este artículo, se han señalado diversos aspectos clave en los que las tecnologías de la información pueden impactar negativamente los procesos cognitivos, particularmente la atención y la memoria. En un entorno donde la información está constantemente disponible, se fomenta la tendencia a depender de su acceso inmediato en lugar de ejercitar la retención y el procesamiento profundo de los datos, lo que puede debilitar la capacidad de recordar y analizar la información de manera autónoma. Sin embargo, este acceso constante a la información, lejos de enriquecer y fortalecer las capacidades cognitivas, podría generar una dependencia que limite la reflexión profunda y el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico. El presente artículo sostiene que la solución no reside en rechazar o prescindir de la tecnología, sino en adoptar estrategias y hábitos que permitan un uso consciente y equilibrado de esta. La memoria y la atención, lejos de ser meros instrumentos pasivos, constituyen procesos dinámicos y fundamentales para el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico y el crecimiento intelectual.

Por ende, frente al panorama complejo delineado en este análisis, caracterizado por la proliferación indiscriminada de información, y la emergencia de un entorno mediático, resulta esencial implementar medidas estratégicas dentro del sistema educativo puertorriqueño. En primer lugar, se recomienda integrar de manera sistemática la alfabetización mediática en el currículo académico, desde la educación primaria hasta el nivel universitario. Esta incorporación mantiene el potencial para desarrollar en los estudiantes habilidades críticas necesarias para evaluar, interpretar y discernir la validez y confiabilidad de la información digital disponible a través de los medios de comunicación. De manera general, la enseñanza de la alfabetización mediática pretende aumentar la comprensión de los estudiantes sobre cómo funcionan los medios de comunicación, cómo producen significado, y cómo se organizan y construyen la realidad. Además, lo que es aún más crucial, contribuye a que los estudiantes sean capaces de evaluar con mayor precisión la credibilidad de la información.

Según la “National Association for Media Literacy Education:”

> La alfabetización mediática se ocupa de ayudar a los estudiantes a desarrollar una comprensión informada y crítica de la naturaleza de los medios de comunicación de masas, las técnicas utilizadas por ellos y el impacto de estas técnicas. Más concretamente, es una educación que pretende aumentar la comprensión de los estudiantes sobre cómo funcionan los medios de comunicación, cómo producen significado, cómo se organizan y cómo construyen la realidad. (citado en Baker, 2010, p. 141)

La literatura centrada en la alfabetización mediática ha investigado cómo estos programas contribuyen a que los estudiantes mejoren el análisis e interpretación de mensajes transmitidos por los medios de comunicación, además del desarrollo de destrezas y aptitudes como la escritura y lectura crítica. Un estudio longitudinal realizado en San Francisco "demostró que las habilidades de pensamiento crítico y creativo de los estudiantes aumentaron de forma significativa tras su participación en un plan de estudios de alfabetización mediática" (Baker, 2010, p. 143). Luego de ser expuestos a programas de alfabetización mediática, los estudiantes suelen salir del aula con otra mentalidad sobre cómo interpretar el contenido que se difunde por medio de la televisión y las redes sociales.

Por ende, es fundamental que las instituciones educativas adopten un enfoque crítico respecto al uso pedagógico de las tecnologías emergentes. Es decir, en vez de limitar o censurar su utilización, las escuelas podrían asumir un rol activo en la enseñanza de un uso reflexivo y significativo de dichas tecnologías (lo cual es el fin esencial de la alfabetización mediática). Esto implica diseñar programas académicos específicos orientados hacia la gestión efectiva del tiempo dedicado a las plataformas digitales, así como hacia una comprensión profunda sobre el consumo de información en por medio de distintas plataformas digitales, incluyendo las redes sociales.

Por otro lado, considerando la prevalencia actual de prácticas de consumo superficial y acelerado de información discutido en este artículo, se sugiere la implementación de metodologías pedagógicas que fortalezcan capacidades cognitivas esenciales como la concentración prolongada, y el análisis crítico. Esto implica rescatar prácticas educativas tradicionales como la lectura extensiva, la escritura analítica, lo cual incluye la síntesis, y la discusión argumentativa, empleando la tecnología como una herramienta complementaria.

Finalmente, resulta crucial promover una formación constante tanto del profesorado como del estudiantado en ámbitos como la neuroeducación y el análisis crítico del impacto cognitivo generado por las tecnologías digitales. Este enfoque permitirá configurar entornos educativos resilientes frente al caos mediático actual, propiciando no solo la adquisición de competencias técnicas, sino también una conciencia crítica profunda sobre la influencia de la tecnología en la construcción de significados, la percepción de la realidad y el desarrollo integral de los individuos.

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BREAKING THE SILENCE: AUDRE LORDE ON RACE, GENDER, AND ILLNESS

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Abstract
Audre Lorde draws deeply from personal experience to shape her artistic expression. For her, choosing to speak rather than remain silent is essential to living an life with integrity. This paper explores how Lorde boldly challenges silence through "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," (1985/2016) "A Litany for Survival," (1978) and *The Cancer Journals* (1980). The analysis illustrates how she confronts the fear of difference, resists pressure to hide pain, and affirms the right to self-definition after illness. Her work ultimately reframes survival not as a return to normal, but as a radical act of transformation.

Key terms: Audre Lorde; illness narratives; feminism; embodiment; survival

> Grief, terror, courage, the passion for survival and far more than survival, are here in the personal and political searchings of a great poet. Lorde is the Amazon warrior who also knows how to tell the tale of battle: what happened, and why, what are the weapons, and who are the comrades she found. More than this, her book offers women a new and deeply feminist challenge.
>
> Adrienne Rich (no date)

Audre Lorde proudly identified as a black, lesbian, mother, warrior poet. She did so because:

> there was usually some part of me guaranteed to offend everybody's comfortable prejudices of who I should be. That is how I learned that if I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive. My poetry, my life, my work, my energies for struggle were not acceptable

> unless I pretended to match somebody else's norm (Lorde, cited in BlackPast, 2012, para. 12)

Given that she named "poet" as part of her identity, it is no surprise that poetry was Lorde's preferred medium, her main tool for political resistance. In fact, in her essay "Poetry Is Not a Luxury" (1985/2016) Lorde argues that poetry is "a vital necessity for women" because:

> [i]t forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. (Lorde, 1985/2016, p. 218)

In this quote, Lorde is clearly emphasizing that poetry is not just artistic expression, but rather a tool for survival that can galvanize people to demand change. This is precisely what she does in her 1978 poetry collection *The Black Unicorn*. In one of the poems in that collection, titled "A Litany for Survival," (Lorde, 1978, pp. 31-32) for instance, she reflects on the isolation she feels as a Black lesbian, caught between two communities that do not fully embrace her. Still, she refuses to be silenced:

> and when we speak we are afraid
> our words will not be heard
> nor welcomed
> but when we are silent
> we are still afraid
> So it is better to speak
> remembering
> we were never meant to survive.
> (Lorde, 1978, p. 31)

It must be noted that in 1978, the same year that Lorde published this acclaimed poetry collection addressing racism, sexism, and homophobia, she also faced a new challenge that would profoundly reshape her identity: breast cancer. This time, however, she turned to prose to process and communicate her experience. In *Warrior Poet: A Biography of Audre Lorde*, Alexis De Veaux draws from her research to reveals that Lorde struggled to articulate how cancer was affecting her life as a Black lesbian woman, admitting that she "could not even write about the outside threats to vision and action because the inside pieces were frightening" (De Veaux, 2004, p. 230). Yet, just as she refused to be silenced by racism or homophobia, she was determined not to be silenced by illness.

This refusal to remain silent in the face of fear was not new for Lorde. In fact, at the 1977 Modern Language Association (MLA) convention, just a year before her diagnosis, she warned that, "we have been socialized to respect fear more than our own needs for language and definition, and while we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us" (Lorde, cited in Popova, 2016, para.

18). She concluded her speech by stressing that "it is necessary to teach by living and speaking those truths which we believe and know beyond understanding. Because in this way alone we can survive" (Lorde, cited in Popova, 2016, para. 16).

True to her word, Lorde did not give in to the fear that came with her illness, for in 1980 she published *The Cancer Journals*, just two years after her diagnosis. According to De Veaux, the book had a profound impact on its readers and marked a turning point in illness narratives because of its political and intersectional approach (De Veaux, 2004, p. 269). In fact, many women who had experienced mastectomies, or knew others who had, wrote to Lorde describing how the book gave voice to experiences they had gone through but never seen reflected in media (De Veaux, 2004, p. 270).

One of the passages that women found the most relatable was the one where Lorde visits the doctor to have her mastectomy stitches removed. In it, she describes how, for her first outing after the surgery, she washes her hair, dresses in fine clothes, and wears jewelry because she wants to feel and look good: "When I walked into the doctor's office, I was really rather pleased with myself, all things considered, pleased with the way I felt, with my own flair, with my own style" (Lorde, 1980, p. 51). But that moment of confidence quickly disappears when the female nurse looks at Lorde and says, "You're not wearing a prosthesis" (Lorde, 1980, p. 52). When Lorde explains that she chooses not to wear a prosthesis because it feels like wearing a costume, the nurse insists that she should wear one because "You will feel so much better with it on …. And besides, we really like you to wear something, at least when you come in. Otherwise, it's bad for the morale of the office" (Lorde, 1980, p. 52). Understandably, Lorde is caught off guard by the comment.

In a journal entry reflecting on the incident, she goes on to explain how men are not shamed by society for having visible wounds. To prove her point, she brings up as an example the Prime Minister of Israel, Moishe Dayan, who would publicly wear an eyepatch. No one would dare suggest that he wear a glass eye for the sake of appearances. In fact, his injury would be seen as a mark of courage and resilience. Lorde rightly asks why women who have undergone mastectomies are often expected to hide their scars and return to a version of femininity that centers on physical wholeness. She challenges this double standard and insists that women with breast cancer are also warriors who deserve to be seen and respected, not hidden or altered for the comfort of others. "I realized," she continues in her journal entry, "that the attitude towards prosthesis after breast cancer is an index of this society's attitudes towards women in general as decoration and externally defined sex object" (Lorde, 1980, p. 53).

It is important to recognize that Lorde's decision not to wear a prosthesis or undergo breast reconstruction surgery is not intended to shame women who do. "There is nothing wrong, per se," she clarifies, "with the use of prostheses, if they can be chosen freely, for whatever reason, after a woman has had a chance to accept her new body" (Lorde, 1980, p. 54). What Lorde critiques is the social pressure to be obsessed over appearance.

To prove her point, she makes a comparison between breast prostheses and artificial limbs. The latter serve practical, bodily purposes- i.e., they help with movement. "Only false breasts are designed for appearance only," she writes, "as if the only real function of women's breasts were to appear in a certain shape and size and symmetry to onlookers" (Lorde, 1980, p. 56).

As she continues to unpack the meaning behind the nurse's comment, Lorde's work becomes more intersectional. She begins to examine how race, gender and poverty shape experiences of illness and survival. This is seen, for example, when she explains how, while 50% of women diagnosed with breast cancer survive after three years, that number drops to 30% for those who are poor or Black. She stresses that:

> We cannot ignore these facts, nor their implications nor their effect upon our lives, individually and collectively. Early detection and early treatment is [sic] crucial in the management of breast cancer if those sorry statistics of survival are to improve. (Lorde, 1980, p. 55)

Here Lorde clearly demonstrates how survival is not just a medical issue, but one deeply influenced by structural inequality.

In the final pages of *The Cancer Journals,* Lorde (1980) shifts from a political and intersectional critique to a more intimate, self-reflective tone. She grapples with the thought of "carrying death inside of her" and writes that "[t]he real truth is that certain other people feel better with that lump stuck into my bra, because they do not have to deal with me nor themselves in terms of mortality" (Lorde, 1980, p. 57). In this line, she reveals that people's discomfort often has more to do with their own fear of death rather than with her body.

While she writes that it is indeed human to fear death, Lorde also recognizes that living in constant proximity to death has brought a kind of clarity. Illness, rather than silencing her, becomes a source of focus and strength: "even the advent of a life-threatening cancer and the trauma of a mastectomy can be integrated into the life-force as knowledge and eventual strength, fuel for a more dynamic and focused existence" (Lorde, 1980, p. 56). She admits that reaching this clarity and setting her priorities straight was not immediate; it came through struggling with what she calls the "devil of despair" (Lorde, 1980, p.56). Over time, however, Lorde learns not to ignore death, but to accept it as part of living. For example, before her surgery, she recoiled at images of women with mastectomy scars. But after her own experience, those images no longer seemed strange or frightening. "At times," she writes:

> I miss my right breast, the actuality of it, its presence, with a great and poignant sense of loss. But in the same way, and just as infrequently, as I sometimes miss being 32, at the same time knowing that I have gained from the very loss I mourn. (Lorde, 1980, p. 69)

This reflection illustrates how Lorde confronts loss without romanticizing it. She acknowledges what has changed in carrying death inside of her but also recognizes what she has gained. By accepting death as part of life, she believes she has gained a kind of power, because, for her, "power comes from moving into whatever I fear most that cannot be avoided" (Lorde, 1980, p. 69).

The Cancer Journals (Lorde, 1980) is the byproduct of that newly acquired sense of power. Though writing prose was difficult for Lorde because of the "linear thinking it required" (De Veaux, 2004, p. 230), she chose it so that others facing cancer would not feel as alone as she did. Prose, unlike poetry, allowed her to speak plainly and directly without relying on figurative language that might obscure her message. In this way, the book became not just a personal narrative, but a survival guide.

And she ended this guide not in despair, but in affirmation. In the aftermath of her surgery, Lorde feared she had lost the sexual pleasure that she had associated with her right breast. But over time, she came to understand that pleasure and feeling do not depend on any one part of the body. They belonged to her, and no surgery could take them away. She expressed this realization in the final words of her book:

> I can never lose that feeling because I own it, because it comes out of myself. I can attach it anywhere I want to, because my feelings are a part of me, my sorrow and my joy. I would never have chosen this path, but I am very glad to be who I am, here. (Lorde, 1980, p. 69)

This closing statement is not just reflective. It is a call to action to never stay silent and to resist giving in to the devils of despair. For Lorde, confronting illness is not about returning to some supposed sense of "normal"—whatever that may mean. It is about learning to live with your new self and refusing to be defined by anyone else's expectations.

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TIKTOK TRANSFORMED AS A LIMINAL SPACE FOR REFLEXIVITY AND COUNTERHEGEMONIC DISCOURSE AND PERFORMANCE

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Abstract
This article is part of a larger project that examines how processes by which language users 'race language' or 'language race' (Alim et al, 2020) —which can also be applied to how people construct other social categories, such as gender, class or nationality— extends into the digital world and can be analyzed within one of the most influential and popular social media platforms today, TikTok. Through this app's For You Page (FYP)—a curated feed of videos adapted to each user based on an opaque, undisclosed algorithm—TikTok displays to its users content created by other users of the same app. This includes diverse content in the form of entertainment, social critique, and even educational videos. Content such as this makes the TikTok app appear to function as a liminal or "queer" space, where contestatory performances and narratives that in one way or another question, disrupt, challenge or render irrelevant racializing, gendering, plundering and other colonizing discourses of domination take on an additional layered function as forms of counterhegemonic discourse. Its structure allows for momentary ruptures in dominant racial, gendered, classed, and other colonial logics, enabling the circulation—although not without a multitude of limitations—of content that challenges established power structures.
A closer look reveals that it is not the platform itself that inherently fosters this resistance, but rather the users—particularly creators attuned to the realities of oppression—who adapt to the limitations of constantly changing digital and political contexts. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising and more variegated forms of state violence, and increasing digital surveillance, users have appropriated TikTok as a tool for physically-distanced organizing, storytelling, and collective care. Through strategic and organic use of language, aesthetics, and performance, these individuals and communities have transformed the platform into a digital microcosm of resistance, forging spaces

for subversion, solidarity, and critique within and of a hyper-racialized, hyper-gendered, hyper-classed, and hyper-contestatory society. This project focuses on three key communities whose digital resistance exemplifies these dynamics: African descended women, creators advocating for Palestinian liberation and Palestinians themselves, and—more briefly—activists or everyday people engaging with Puerto Rican issues of colonialism and resistance, including responses to recent cultural productions that have sparked widespread conversations on these issues. In sum, this platform can be analyzed within the context of processes and performances which subvert dominant discourses on identity-based hegemonies, which have given rise to a digital microcosm of resistance to the violent mechanisms of domination that pervade contemporary society.

Key terms: #TikTok, #Reflexivity, #Intersectionality, #Language, #Race, #Gender, #CriticalDiscourseStudy, #CounterhegemonicDiscourse, #CounterhegemonicPerformance, #Colonialism, #Resistance, #Blackwomen, #AfricanAmericanWomen, #AfricanDescendedWomen, #Palestine, #PuertoRico

All that you touch, you change. All that you change, changes you. The only lasting truth is change. —Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (1993, p. 13)

1 Introduction

In *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Race*, Alim et al. (2020) argue:

> for the importance of a reflexive approach that entails looking at racialized language as an ideological construct and situating processes of racialization across multiple scales of space and time and within structures of power. … [These] processes of racialization … take place in both scholarly and everyday contexts. (p. 25)

This article is part of a larger project that considers how this reflexivity, which can also be applied to how people construct or counter other social categories, such as gender, class and nationality—can be found in virtual spaces, including social media platforms. Therefore, an app like TikTok can be viewed as a liminal or "queer" space, where contestatory performances and narratives that in one way or another question, disrupt, challenge or render irrelevant racializing, gendering, plundering and other colonizing discourses of domination take on an additional layered function as forms of counterhegemonic discourse. Its structure therefore allows for momentary ruptures in dominant racial, gendered, classed and other colonial logics, enabling the circulation—although not without a multitude of limitations—of content that challenges established power structures.

TikTok is an app and social networking service where people can share short videos that they have created. The types of videos vary; with creators uploading content such as

recordings of dances, commentary, point-of-view clips, or skits, which may be of a political, educational, satirical, or other nature. As with other social media platforms, TikTok operates under its own set of community guidelines, which have been widely criticized, as some of these established rules are open to interpretation or are often arbitrarily enforced. For example, a video may be "taken down" under the broad claim that it allegedly contained "nudity" or "violence," even when these claims appear unfounded, i.e., when the video in question does not include any nude bodies or anything which could be interpreted as nudity or any form of what would generally be understood to be violence. In addition, when these instances of content suppression occur, users can appeal to have their videos made visible again, but these appeals are often rejected without explanation. Therefore, although TikTok does not openly or overtly discriminate against specific communities, the enforcement of these guidelines, especially given how they have disproportionately impacted creators from marginalized communities, have given rise to accusations of covert discrimination.

For someone to be an avid TikTok user, it is not necessary for them to create videos. Instead, they can opt to engage by liking, commenting, saving, or sharing videos presented on the For You Page (FYP)—a curated, algorithmically generated feed personalized according to each user's behavior and interactions. This means that each user may have an entirely different content feed depending in some way on how, when, and for how long they engage with certain content. This algorithm, in addition to influencing the kind of content a user sees, can in turn, also affect the visibility of creators. The more a user interacts with the app, the more it "learns" and adapts its content to the topics it "thinks" the user will prefer. Then, this will also affect the so-called communities a user will "land" on, such as #GayTikTok, #ArtTok, or #BookTok. Herein lies an additional concern of certain creators when it comes to content suppression, namely that of being "shadow banned"—where their content becomes nearly invisible on the app despite no official violation or unfounded violations. In this case, the user does not explicitly know their content is not being presented to users, but they can speculate that their videos are excluded from the FYP of most of the platform's users based on diminishing or nonexistent views and/or likes. This phenomenon has further consequences for creators attempting to gain visibility, build community, or monetize their content.

The resulting lack of visibility of users racialized as non-White or [-white], gendered as non-male [or -male] or who do not have an algorithmically-favored identity on FYPs can be seen as a digital extension of silencing and exclusion—yet another way to limit communities from free expression—even when those users comply with explicitly-stated community standards. And yet, despite these multiple barriers, many creators and users have transformed the TikTok platform into a space of resistance. It is thus not the platform itself that inherently allows for radical discourse, but the people—especially those impacted by racial, gendered, classed and colonial violence—who adapt to shifting political climates and digital constraints to carve out space for critique, connection,

and creativity. These include African descended women, creators advocating for Palestinian liberation, (including Palestinians themselves), and Puerto Rican users whose content addresses themes of resistance and colonialism, sometimes through recent cultural productions (such as the Bad Bunny Album: *Debí Tirar Más Fotos*) or urgent updates on ongoing events (like the continued bombings in Palestine or the wildfires in California).

In general, through humor, parody, education, and storytelling, these creators have managed to strategically and organically mobilize language and aesthetics to subvert dominant narratives regarding issues of language and the construction of identity-related hegemonic concepts. Their often-humorous content illustrates a form of digital praxis that not only challenges hegemony, but also makes space for collective care, learning, and solidarity. As the specific examples of content considered in this project will demonstrate, these practices have played a vital role in cultivating counter-narratives in a time marked by intensified surveillance, oppressive violence, and global crisis.

2 Preliminary literature review and theoretical framework

In order to engage fully with the intersecting dimensions of technology, race, gender, class, resistance, and narrative (re)imaginings of and beyond digital spaces, the larger project of which this article is a part draws on a wide range of interdisciplinary texts and materials that span media studies, critical race theory, gender studies, and digital activism. The videos selected for analysis have been sourced from TikTok through both organic discovery and intentional searches. Many of these videos surfaced on my For You Page, while others were intentionally sought out to illustrate specific themes or dynamics.

I have also centered my focus on the creators themselves, rather than the platform. I have done this in order to emphasize the serendipitous but critical conditions that have enabled such instances of the subversive transformation of TikTok, which was not originally designed to support activist discourse or community care, by users who have reimagined and reconfigured TikTok to serve those purposes. Although I had originally formulated my research questions in ways that suggested that TikTok inherently enabled these dynamics, I have now shifted my focus to the users who have enacted that change. Therefore, in some cases, my approach reflects this shift from a focus on the platform to a focus on its users. This shift has been essential for centering user agency and the creative, resistant ways that communities navigate, adapt to, and push against platform constraints. I believe this approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of how users have repurposed, resisted, and reimagined digital tools, transforming even algorithmically restricted platforms into spaces of visibility, critique, and care.

The technological aspects of my investigation are grounded in works that critically examine bias, surveillance, and behavior within digital systems, including Shalini

Kantayya's documentary *Coded Bias* (2020) and scholarly texts such as Ruha Benjamin's *Viral Justice* (2022) and her (2019) *Race After Technology*, Meredith Broussard's (2023) *More Than a Glitch*, Safiya Noble's (2018) *Algorithms of Oppression*, and Zeynep Tufekci's (2017) *Twitter and Tear Gas*. While these works are not specifically about TikTok, they provide essential context for understanding the broader digital landscape users have been navigating. Many of the challenges discussed in these sources—such as algorithmic bias, surveillance, and platform-driven constraints—also manifest themselves on TikTok. These sources also help position TikTok within the broader ecosystem of tech giants, while highlighting how users have been able to leverage its unique features and relative distance from U.S.-based mega-tech corporations like Meta to carry out acts of effective organizing and resistance and to create possibilities for mobilization and visibility that have often been more constrained elsewhere.

Though far from frictionless, these efforts mark a shift in what has become possible under a new and different set of algorithmic and geopolitical conditions. The transformation of TikTok has been something that has occurred somewhat organically. As people found themselves at home during the height of the COVID pandemic—suddenly given time to reflect on their own conditions under capitalism and to witness, in real time, how little the ruling classes and the government who does the bidding of those ruling classes care about them—they began posting about these realizations online in a more or less spontaneous way that steadily gained momentum. TikTok has thus become a platform for resistance not by design, but through collective adaptation, experimentation, and the urgent need to connect, process, and act.

I also utilize a broader theoretical lens on media power and discourse analysis (examined both outside and within digital culture) first by considering foundational work by scholars such as Van Dijk (2004), then by incorporating insights from researchers such as Kristina Wirtz (2020), which define and contextualize "performances" as they relate to expressions of resistance and meaning-making across mediated spaces, and finally by integrating the general theoretical and methodological frameworks recently established by Abdelhay, Makoni, and Severo (forthcoming) in relation to the sociolinguistics of protest.

To contextualize the politics of state violence and resistance to it in Palestine, this project draws on a set of texts that offer both historical depth and theoretical insight into the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian struggle against it. These include non-fictional works, such as Norman Finkelstein's (2018) *Gaza: An Inquest into Its Martyrdom*, Ilan Pappé's (2017) *Ten Myths About Israel*, Antony Loewenstein's (2023) *The Palestine Laboratory*, Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism* and Omar El Akkad's (2025) *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This*—a powerful narrative by a Palestinian journalist that examines the moral complexities surrounding global reactions to Palestinian resistance, amplifying the emotional and ethical weight of their struggle in the face of global indifference. Fictional and semi-fictional works are also considered, such

as Wisam Rafeedie's (2024) *Trinity of Fundamentals*—a novel rooted in Rafeedie's own life experiences, told through the semi-autobiographical character Kan'an, and the Netflix series *Mo* (2022), created by Mo Amer and Ramy Youssef, with Amer starring as Mo, a Palestinian refugee in Houston. The series explores Palestinian identity, displacement, and survival in the U.S., blending humor and trauma to foreground the everyday and legal negotiations of statelessness, and day-to-day forms of resistance beyond the geographic borders of Palestine. While the primary focus of this project is on digital interactions and social media content, in the case of my investigation of TikTok videos from and about Palestinians, I found it necessary to ground my analysis in a deeper understanding of the histories, frameworks, and lived realities that have shaped the content being shared. Rather than present decontextualized clips, I aim to approach these digital artifacts with a sense of responsibility—to ensure that I am not only amplifying moments of online resistance but doing so with a meaningful grasp of the conditions from which they emerge.

In examining the role of race, particularly in regard to African descended women, the project will make use of texts that provide critical insights into both historical issues and contemporary understandings of these issues. Key sources include H. Samy Alim, Angela Reyes, and Paul V. Kroskrity's (2020) *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Race,* which explores how language interacts with racial dynamics and how racial dynamics impact language, Msia Kibona Clark and Wunpini Fatimata Mohammed's (2023) *African Women in Digital Spaces*—which examines the role of technology in shaping the lives and resistance of African women, Kellie Carter Jackson's (2024) *We Refuse: A Forceful History of Black Resistance*, which examines how Black and Indigenous people resist erasure and construct meaning, and Mikki Kendall's (2021) *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women that a Movement Forgot*, which will provide perspectives for understanding the overlooked struggles and experiences of marginalized women. Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) "*Mapping the Margins*" and her (2016) TEDTalk "The Urgency of Intersectionality" will serve as foundational sources for examining the ways in which race, gender, class and other axes of identity intersect in digital spaces. For more context on gender, I may also select chapters from *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Gender*, which offers essential insights into how gender is constructed, performed, and challenged through language. These texts are crucial for situating the online resistance and narratives that I plan to explore within broader frameworks of race, gender, and power.

To engage with the storytelling practices and speculative frameworks often employed by TikTok creators and users engaging in anti-colonial discourse, I will also draw on literary texts that echo themes of dystopia, survival, and resistance. Key sources include Octavia Butler's (1993) *Parable of the Sower* and (1998) *Parable of the Talents*, Suzanne Collins' (2018-2025) *The Hunger Games* series (with a focus on *Sunrise on the Reaping*, possibly as the sole text from the series), Director Jon M. Chu's (2024) *Wicked*

(Part I), episodes from Charlie Brooker's (2011-2025) series *Black Mirror*, and other popular culture references that resonate with the user-generated content explored in this research. While these texts are not central to the study, they provide important context for understanding many of the videos included in the analysis, and they reflect similar themes of resistance and survival in the face of oppressive systems. This project will situate its findings within broader conversations about hope, action, and radical (re)imagination, using works such as Octavia Butler's (2024) *A Few Rules for Predicting the Future*, Angela Davis's (2015) *Freedom is a Constant Struggle*, Ta-Nehisi Coates's (2024) *The Message*, Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba's (2023) *Let This Radicalize You: Organizing and the Revolution of Reciprocal Care*, and Ruha Benjamin's (2025) *Imagination: A Manifesto*.

In addition to published texts, this project makes extensive use of TikTok videos as primary material for analysis, with over 8,000 videos saved for review, not with the intention of using all of them, but instead in order to collect a large volume of content just before the TikTok pause/ ban went into effect, because I wanted to avoid losing access to that material. These include skits, educational content, activist responses, and narrative practices related to and produced by African descended women, Palestinians, and Puerto Ricans, intersecting with digital resistance, mutual support, and speculative imagination. Notable creators such as @crutches_and_spice, @jazmynjw, @clarecwb (African-American women); @littleyeg (for updates on Palestine), @biancagraulau (for content and analyses about Puerto Rican colonial reality) are central to my research. The project also examines videos documenting the viral emergence of an "invented" HBCU, sparked by Dr. Barlow's real college course being inadvertently opened to all of TikTok—leading to creators who are raced as Black to collectively imagine and embody a digital university. In addition, the project will draw from news articles and scholarship on TikTok in relation to censorship and potential platform bans, particularly as they affect marginalized communities' voices.

3 Some preliminary findings and analysis

The following are transcriptions of a short, curated feed of videos from a TikTok For You Page with some preliminary analysis. The body of the research conducted as part of the project will consist of such transcriptions and analyses:

Example 1: Day in the life of a PWC (Person Without Color) Part 2 🧂💕💕🥰

By @peoplewithoutcolor (Madan & Sirosh, 2021)

Speaker A: So, this is part two of a day in the life of a person without color, which, you know we both are. So, for lunch we'll usually have, like, a piece of dried chicken breast, like, usually wrapped in lettuce. We've noticed that our POC friends have, like, more, like, colorful foods or, like, have, like, good smells and things, but ….

Speaker B: Yeah, there's just a lot of colors and a lot of smells, and you know we love all cultures and everything, but … we just don't know why they have to put it in your face like that?

Speaker A: Yeah ….

Speaker B: And on that same sort of subject, you know, in a lot of the Zoom calls that we're in we always make sure to be really professional. Like, we'll put on our blazers and straighten our hair … and, you know, just like adhere to these, like, standards. But the POC in the meetings they just come as they are and it's, like, I know that these meetings are about systemic oppression against them, but why do they have to be so, like, aggressive about [it]?

Speaker A: Yeah, like, we're all united, like, we should all be trying to, like, fit into the [standards of] professionalism.

Jahnvi Madan and Tara Sirosh use the acronym PWC and their username, @Peoplewithoutcolor, to refer to people raced as [-white] (i.e., minorities or people of color) in a manner typically reserved for people raced as [+white]. In this video, they vent their frustrations about criticisms they often receive for simply existing as people of color in the U.S. They pretend to not be racialized themselves and make comments about food and standards of professionalism. For example, Madan mentions putting on a blazer and straightening their hair and, by doing so, adhering to [+white] standards of "professionalism." Madan also comments, "and you know, we love all cultures and everything, but we just don't know why they have to put it in your face like that?" (Madan & Sirosh, 2021). All of this illustrates how "racialized populations bear an unequal burden in accommodating to a monolingual [and in this case also monocultural] order" (Flores & Rosa, 2015 as cited in Lo & Chun, 2020; p. 35, Reynolds & Orellana, 2009 as cited in Lo & Chun, 2020, p. 35; and Urciuoli 1996 as cited in Lo & Chun 2020, p. 35). This "People Without Color" moniker is a recurring joke. In other videos, Madan and Sirosh refer to their characters' White features such as their corpse-like skin and strawberry blonde and ginger hair and extend the acronym to BRPWC (Brunettes/Blondes/Redheads People Without Color).

Example 2: Reply to @khiemnms She should really be more grateful.

By @clarabellecwb (Brown, 2021, November 30)

Manager (raced as [-white] addressing an employee raced as [+white]): Margin! It's been so long since you've come scuttling into my office. That hair, goodness. It's just so distracting. Have you ever considered perming your hair? Yeah, just … I wonder what it would look like … you know? If it was different. So, what's the problem? We don't have any days off for Christmas? Does anyone in the office celebrate Christmas? Oh, you do. Adorable. Umm, we have half days for all of Hanukkah and then this year we were able to

provide all of Kwanzaa off, so I would celebrate Christmas then. We can't accommodate any additional time off.

This video is by Clare Brown (@clarabellecwb). She creates skits that show (flipped) microaggressions against people racialized as White, who she refers to as "European Americans." For example, she will show discomfort with the word "white," mispronounce names commonly associated with White people, reference straight or "flat" hair as unprofessional, or describe stereotypical actions or foods associated with people racialized as white, as exotic.

In this video, as in many other of her diverse skits, @Clarabellecwb, whose perspective is that of a person racialized as Black, presents these (flipped) microaggressions where [-white] status becomes the norm and [+white] is now the "other." She therefore switches the power dynamic by establishing Blackness as the neutral position within society, and in so doing, challenging and critiquing established racialized social norms. She begins the video portraying someone raced as [-white] in a management role by calling out "Margin," (whose name is probably Margaret) the imagined employee who is raced as [+white]. This is a joke she often uses in her videos to reference how [+white] speakers will often mispronounce names they consider to be "exotic." She also feigns being surprised by Margin celebrating Christmas, using this as an example of how expectations, even of holidays, can be racialized. Something else that may be noticed is her reference to "Margin" as having "distracting hair" and asking, "Have you ever considered perming your hair?" This comment is also a flipped microaggression which relates to how Spears (2020) indicates that "*race* refers to categories in a racial system, ... based ... on visible corporeal features, real or imagined. Highly salient features of race categories are skin-color, facial features, and hair texture." (p. 52).

Example 3: If white people were the cultural other in real estate sales / This neighborhood is ready to be gentrified.

By @clarabellecwb (Brown, 2021, June 4)

Real estate agent (raced as [-white] addressing a family raced as [+white]): This is your house? Alright, yeah. This is fine. It's outside the city, but it's not the outer city. Let's go inside. Is this your family? Cute. Listen, if you want to sell this house, you need to remove all these photos and replace them with an All-American family. OK? This will need to come down. [points to a Live Laugh Love sign]. Everything gang related needs to come down.

In this video, Clare Brown plays the character of a real estate agent who is raced as [-white] who tells the family that is raced as [+white] who she is working with to sell the house to "[r]emove all of these photos and replace them with an 'All-American family'." Here she uses the "All-American" description from a flipped perspective, referencing a [-white] family as the All-American or real American family, rather than the usually assumed [+white] family. This is a flipped example of the metonymy illustrated by

Lieberson (1985), as cited in Morgan (2020, p. 264) that explains how America serves as a metonym for White Americans, but not so for Black Americans. Brown also says, pointing to the "Live, Laugh, Love" sign, that "anything gang related needs to come down," (2021, June 4) referring to this as a marked symbol of race and culture. Many of the videos by @clarabellecwb illustrate the point made by Morgan (2020) that "we must recognize that there may be embedded harmful meanings regarding race, gender, sexuality, during what is thought to be general American communication" (p. 264). So, while a speaker may not appear to be saying anything insulting in isolation, in context their words may be charged with racializing and demeaning implications.

Example 4: This actually happened to me except she just called me her own nickname anyway.

By @jazmynjw (Jazmyn, 2020, Jul 7)

Speaker A (raced as [+white]): Hey, there! Jaz, Jazmyn?

Speaker B (raced as [-white]): Yes, come in!

Speaker A: OK, awesome. Your last name, I'm sorry, I couldn't pronounce it. Where is it from?

Speaker B: Oh, yeah, it's Nigerian, yeah.

Speaker A: So beautiful, Oh my God. Maybe I'll just call you by a shorter name.

Speaker B: Huh?

Speaker A: Do you have a nickname maybe I can call you?

Speaker B: No. People usually just pronounce it! Haha.

Speaker A: Are you kidding? I could never pronounce it, ever! I could never.

Speaker B: Right. Let me finish this email. You sit down. Keep practicing.

Speaker A: I – da … I – da – gue … what?

Speaker B: Spell it out.

Speaker A: I tried! ... I promise.

Speaker B: I have faith in you. I think you can do it. You can do it, yeah, If you can pronounce all those beers, you can pronounce that. Haha. OK?

Speaker A: Well, that's not really the same, haha. I – da … just let me call you J.I.! Mrs. J.I.

Speaker B: No, keep going though, keep trying; I have faith.

Speaker A: Are you seriously gonna make this a big deal? Like, I can't just call you J.?

Speaker B: No. [smiles to viewer]

Speaker A: Are you kidding me?

This video by @jazmynjw illustrates how Speaker A's failure to seriously attempt to pronounce Speaker B's name is not merely an everyday occurrence but is also a racially charged microaggression which forces Speaker B into navigating a social situation in which she finds herself obliged to establish a boundary while still projecting calmness

and avoiding the "angry Black woman" trope. This is what Morgan refers to as *coolness*, a counterlanguage signifier which along with:

> a positive social face, is valued because it makes the person appear inscrutable and in complete control of [her] emotions and body. Because [her] stance and social face are unreadable, [she] appear[s] immune to racist [and sexist] taunts and threats and verbal insults. (2020, p. 274)

Example 5: This has happened to my husband at least 8 times. (He flies first everywhere) 😂

By @jazmynjw (Jazmyn, 2020, November 28)

Passenger A (raced as [+white]): Hi!

Passenger B (raced as [-white]): Hey.

Passenger A (raced as [+white]): Sorry, I don't know if you really heard but this is, like, the line for first class right now. That's who's boarding right now, so ….

Passenger B (raced as [-white]): [Looks towards the viewer and rolls eyes] I'm in first class. Thank you.

Passenger A (raced as [+white]): Oh, OK! Do you mind if I see your ticket really quick? I just wanna take a quick look at your ticket.

Passenger B (raced as [-white]): [rolls eyes] No.

Passenger A (raced as [+white]): Well, I'm sorry. I just don't know if I believe ….

Passenger B (raced as [-white]): You're gonna believe these hands!

Passenger A (raced as [+white]): Excuse me?

Passenger B (raced as [-white]): You're gonna believe these hands though when they come at you. You're gonna believe them then.

Passenger A (raced as [+white]): What do you mean? I don't know what you mean by that.

Passenger B (raced as [-white]): Will you believe these hands?

Passenger A (raced as [+white]): Your hands? Are you threatening me?

Passenger B (raced as [-white]): You don't wanna know what I mean either. Turn around!

Passenger A (raced as [+white]): Are you threatening me? Excuse me [cries in White Woman tears]. This is not even that serious!

Announcer: Boarding first class.

In this second video by @jazmynjw we see an example of the:

> African American women's 'I don't play' counterlanguage ideology, philosophy and critique of racism and sexism [that] directly expose[s] and disrupt[s] society's dependence on the marginalization of African Americans in general and

> Black women in particular in the construction of white privilege. (Morgan, 2020, p. 263)

The passenger who is raced as Black ([-white]), is claiming her place and space by preventing the passenger who is raced as White ([+white]), from deploying a poorly disguised verbal attack designed to deter her from getting on the plane un-harassed as a first-class passenger without the humiliation of being forced to show her ticket. With this same act, she is challenging the:

> unwritten—but enforced—policy meant that in order to participate in the average Black/white interaction, a Black person minimally [has] to abide by language and communicative rules which function ... to mark a presumed belief in the superiority of a white audience/hearer. (Morgan, 2020, p. 272)

4 Conclusion

At least in part in response to the limitations and socio-political climate imposed since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, some TikTok users have confronted established power structures and systems of discursive domination, forging a digital microcosm of resistance that mirrors, and intervenes in, a hyper-racialized, hyper-gendered, hyper-classed, hyper-colonial, and hyper-contestatory society. In the larger project of which this article is a part, I consider content created by African descended women, by Palestinians and other creators advocating for Palestinian liberation, and by Puerto Rican users reclaiming cultural identity through musical and political expression, to be interventions that are not simply reactive but transformative. They challenge erasure, resist dehumanization, and generate new (re)imagined forms of relational knowledge, care and solidarity.

Overall, these FYPs have become spaces for questioning, unsettling, upending, and disrupting reified binaries such as "Black vs. White," often through subversive acts of trans-performance. The performances analyzed in this research exemplify Wirtz's (2020) definition of performance as "highly reflexive, recognizable, and repeatable 'chunks' of social action, [that] can produce complex configurations of participation and time-space indexicality" (p. 207). In this and other ways, these performances illustrate how collective improvisation and adaptability can turn even tightly and multiply constrained spaces into powerful platforms for social intervention. Such acts of adaptation reflect what Octavia Butler (1993) calls "the only lasting truth": change. *"All that you touch, you change. All that you change, changes you."* (p. 13). This recursive relationship between people and their tools—both between platform and user, as well as between platform and community—anchors these performances as resistance, as well as instances of the collective and actionable hope, grief, and care explored through this project.

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INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

PAINTABLE NAMES: PETER DOIG AND DEREK WALCOTT'S *MORNING, PARAMIN*

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Abstract
Morning, Paramin (2016) is a collaboration between the Scottish figurative painter, Peter Doig and the St. Lucian poet and Nobel Laureate, Derek Walcott. The format of the book with a painting and a poem facing each other gives the appearance of call-and-response. This, however, is deceptive since both Doig and Walcott have their own view of what the Caribbean means. While there are instances of (in)direct response by the poet to a painting; other reactions seem at odds with what is seen and what is read leaving readers open to their own response. *Morning, Paramin* is also an elegy not only for someone lost but also for somewhere found.

Key terms: painting, poetry, collaboration, elegy, Caribbean

I

T.S. Eliot dedicated *The Waste Land* to Ezra Pound. Quoting Dante, he refers to his fellow poet as "*il miglior fabbro*" (1988, p. 51). Pound, *the better smith*, helped forge Eliot's masterwork into one of the twentieth century's great poems. The St. Lucian poet, Derek Walcott was similarly, but differently, indebted to his mentor, the painter Dunstan St. Omer, whose greater talent persuaded the poet to choose poetry over painting as his lifework.

In *Another Life* (1973), Walcott reveals the anxieties of influence he survived as a result of the artistic rivalry between him and St. Omer. Admitting that he is no Vincent van Gogh, Walcott realizes that a landscape he has just been describing in the long autobiographical poem is one brush-stroked in *words* and not *paint*:

> Where did I fail? I could draw,
> I was disciplined, humble, I rendered
> the visible world that I saw

exactly, yet it hindered me, for
in every surface I sought
the paradoxical flash of an instant
in which every facet was caught
in a crystal of ambiguities,
I hoped that both disciplines might
by painful accretion cohere
and finally ignite
but I lived in a different gift,
its element metaphor ... (Walcott, 2007, p. 75)

St. Omer could "draw/with the linear elation of an eel/ one muscle in one thought" (Walcott, 2007, p. 75). Walcott's own "hand was crabbed by that style, this epoch, that school/ or the next" (2007, p. 75). Acknowledging that he was St. Omer's "runner", Walcott concedes that his mentor "possessed/aboriginal force" (2007, p. 76). Like the Ancient Mariner recognizing the beauty of the water-snakes in Coleridge's eponymous poem, Walcott concludes his *künstlerroman* affirmatively: "I can walk calm, a renewed, exhausted man" (2007, p. 93).

In an interview published in the *Paris Review*, Walcott explains:

> What I tried to say in *Another life* (1973) is that the act of painting is not an intellectual act dictated by reason. It is an art that is swept very physically by the sensuality of the brushstroke. I've always felt that some kind of intellect, some kind of pre-ordering, some kind of criticism of the thing before it is done, has always interfered with my ability to do a painting. The sensuality of painting, I know how it feels, but for me there is just no completion. I'm content to be a moderately good watercolorist. But I'm not content to be a moderately good poet. That's a very different thing. (Walcott, cited in Wright, 2023, p. 32)

Walcott's "different gift" is not only evident in *Omeros* (1992), but also in *Tiepolo's hound* (2000) where he and his *doppelgänger*, the painter Camille Pissarro, are portrayed as street mutts in their native Caribbean and pedigree hounds in Europe: while the latter is leashed, the former carries all manner of colonial fleas. Unlike the poet and St. Omer in *Another Life*, Walcott and his 'brother' islander, Pissarro, develop an equal and spiritual kinship - a century apart - in which a "special artistry" is imagined as both men stroll joyously through the streets of Charlotte Amalie sharing a Caribbean-ness that underpins their respective art.

After years of wandering in Europe and North America, Walcott settled in the Santa Cruz Valley of Trinidad and wrote *White Egrets* (2010). The book is a meditation on homecoming in which the birds seem to have charted a symbolic flight-plan for the poet's return to a Caribbean that he now *sees* again as if for the first time. When Walcott

first met Peter Doig in Trinidad, he invited the Scottish figurative painter to visit him in St. Lucia. Doig, who had spent his childhood in Trinidad, and who was building a house on the island, agreed to the idea of an artistic collaboration. The result is *Morning, Paramin* (2016), an ekphrastic dialogue between Doig's paintings and poems by Walcott.

II

Ekphrastic poetry means poems written about art. The term is applied to depictions of things in striking detail. For example, W. H. Auden's "The Shield of Achilles" (1952) is based on Homer's (800 B.C.E) description in *The Iliad* or Auden's own "Musée des Beaux Arts" (1938) which describes Pieter Breughel the Elder's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* (1560). Certain paintings liberate a poet's art: for instance, Rainer Maria Rilke's responses to the impressionism of Paul Cézanne. Other paintings infuriate like Jean-François Millet's provocative *Man with a Hoe* (1861) which became a *cause célèbre* for the socially-minded.

As an ekphrastic endeavor, *Morning, Paramin* (Walcott, 2016) consists of fifty paintings by Doig and fifty poems by Walcott which either respond (in)directly to the paintings which date from before they met in 2014 or not at all. Their joint enterprise avoids both elaborate depiction and social debate in that the paintings and the poems are loosely held together by a theme, hinted at by the pun in the title of the book, While *mourning* is central to the "Margaret poems" there is also a sense of the Caribbean in distress. This is discernable in both the paintings and the poems throughout the book.

Margaret first appears in Walcott's reaction to Doig's "The Heart of Old San Juan", which depicts an empty basketball court that could be anywhere in the Caribbean:

> To me, the waking day is Margaret
> down every street, every street corner,
> the boulevards brilliant, with one regret;
> every memory is now a mourner.
> On the day of the reception for her death
> Peter came to her house; there was the usual
> chaos of friends, faces against the bright earth
> of Santa Cruz; daughters, granddaughters.
> Margaret was gone but all the streets were hers,
> sunlight down White Street down by the Little Carib or
> the talkative reflections in the harbor –
> all these are her monuments, not paint or verse. (2016, p. 33)

Walcott's second Margaret poem changes the title of Doig's "Untitled (Jungle Painting)" to "Paramin". The painting portrays a naked man with a noticeable penis in a prospect of tropical foliage. The setting of the poem is a village in Trinidad's northern mountains, where the poet and Margaret once shared a home:

She loved to say it and I loved to hear it,
"Paramin," it had the scent of cocoa in it,
the criss-crossing trunks of leafy gommier's straight
out of Cézanne and Sisley, the road rose then fell fast
into the lush valley where my daughters live.
The name itself could make us laugh
as if some deep, deep secret was hidden there.
I see it through crossing tree trunks framed with love
and she is gone but the hill is still there
and when I join her it will be Paramin
for both of us and the children, the mountain air
and music with no hint of what the name could mean,
rocking gently by itself, "Paramin," "Paramin." (2016, p. 35)

The third poem of Walcott's "tetraptych" responds to Doig's enigmatic "Lapeyrouse Wall". The painting is of and unknown a man holding a woman's pink parasol as he walks by a cemetery. Doig, who often works from photographs, took a snapshot of the man with the parasol as he slowly passed by in his car. After numerous studies and the addition of a fire hydrant, this painting is arguably the masterpiece of Doig's Caribbean experience. While Margaret is not mentioned, the absence/presence of Walcott's wraith-like muse is strangely palpable:

... Both urgent and casual,
The painting is in dialect, with its big shoes
And heavy eyeglasses almost a cartoon, but
In the perspective of the wall there
Is both infinity and patience,
The qualities that are praised in a Protestant hymn.
The parasol, I'd say, belongs to his dead wife;
It floats him determined, ruminant in the hot sun,
Above the street and roofs; he passes the same street
Every day, repetitive as the painting of himself. (2016, p. 29)

Doig's companion painting "Lapeyrouse Umbrella" (2004) details the slightly smudged parasol the man is holding as he stares out through thick-rimmed glasses at a barren horizon in the distance. Walcott's fourth response is the beautiful apotheosis of the Margaret sequence:

Her merciless absence multiplies my thoughts,
While three pouis are blooming on Pigeon Island
Above the triangular sails of the regatta yachts.
Another glittering day without you; take my hand

And bring me to wherever we were: the empty house
In Petit Valley or the city of Lapeyrouse
Where headstones multiply like sails on a Sunday,
Where a widower tacks under a pink parasol,
Where people think pain or pan is good for the soul.
You go down Tragarete Road to enter Saint James.
Where she has forgotten you learn every day, Peter.
It is a country full of paintable names:
Paramin, Fyzabad, Couva, where the trees rhyme.
She sleeps in that country where there is no time,
As my pen and your brushstroke blend in the one metre. (2016, p. 79)

III

The motif of sorrow is continued by Walcott as many of Doig's paintings seem emblems of both men's dissatisfaction with the post-colonial Caribbean. This displeasure has been festering elsewhere in Walcott's poetry as he has vented his concerns about over-tourism - "yet another hotel" - as the Caribbean's "doomed acres" (2010, p. 11) are gobbled up by multi-national greed. While he had warned huffily that if there were "No birds", there would be "No Poems" (2010, p. 48), the white egrets that once "speckle[ed] the islands" (2010, p. 8) mysteriously return, in a clever reversal of W.B. Yeats' "The Wild Swans at Coole" (1919), without explanation:

The egrets are the colour of waterfalls.
And of clouds. Some friends, the few I have left,
Are dying, but the egrets stalk through the rain
As if nothing mortal can affect them, or they lift
Like abrupt angels, sail, then settle again.
Sometimes the hills themselves disappear
Like friends, slowly, but I am happier
That they have come back now, like memory, like prayer. (Walcott, 2010, p. 9)

Doig's brooding paintings act as new departures for a poet whose homecoming has been saddened by the environmental damage that occurred when he was abroad. The elegiac tone of the Margaret poems is continued as Walcott engages with both the insidious legacy of colonialism and the Caribbean's perceived disregard for its environmental wellbeing. While European colonialism, in Aimé Césaire's words, was "the machine for crushing, for grinding, for degrading peoples", the environmental crisis, a result of "the gigantic rape of everything intimate" (1972, p. 60) forced many of the nations of the Greater Caribbean to overlook their surroundings simply because they did not have the necessary capital to do otherwise.

IV

While *Morning, Paramin* is framed by paintings and poems involving a shared experience of Canada and conclude with Walcott's personal memories of Venice, particularly the deaths of his friends, Joseph Brodsky and Seamus Heaney, the geographical center of Doig and Walcott's book is the Caribbean. Despite a happy childhood in Port of Spain and his real affection for Trinidad, many of Doig's paintings cohere uneasily with Walcott's poems as both men hint at paradise lost rather than Eden regained. The elegiac stroke of the brush is the wording of the poems as each strike a tone of disquiet as paint and word become one. Three collaborations – "Moruga", "Pelican Island", and "Pelican Man" - stand out as the European painter and the Caribbean poet tackle the thorny legacy of colonialism and the immediate crisis of neglected surroundings.

In Doig's painting of "Moruga" (2006) **-** the imagined landing place of Columbus' third Atlantic crossing - the land is a lightning streak of fire set in a turbulent sea and a stormy sky. One of figures, perhaps the admiral himself, points to the caravel's white sail with its red cross as he towers ominously over all that he surveys. Walcott responds accordingly:

> Here's history's opposite, its origin.
> The myth of discovery, the calendar begins
> With a fishing boat, a crude sail and a few men
> To represent the conquest. Everything all
> In homage to the admiral's acumen –
> The sword that slew us and the cross that cursed
> Starts at Moruga on Discovery Day.
> Everything has been thoroughly rehearsed.
> Doig paints it for what it is: a fable.
> Columbus never set foot here, but what is
> Important is the fact that the cross-tree took root
> And spread from here its vile or virtuous practice. (2016, p. 19)

The painting is symbolic in that it evokes the much-derided notion that a "discovery" took place in 1498, giving the "discoverers" *droit du seigneur* rights to both land and life in perpetuity. Walcott's poem mocks the absurd view of "discovery" as if the Caribbean were *tabula rasa.*

In Doig's "Pelican Island" (2003), everything is static: a fishing boat is anchored in a fiery sea. A diving pelican is petrified in flight. The vegetation is motionless. Everything is as frozen as the figures on John Keats' Greek urn in the British Museum. Walcott's response is a dark metaphor for a way of life that is being disappeared:

> Looking for anchor in a Rothko sky
> and a bay below like a basin of blood –
> "We used to here at dusk to watch them

to roost by the score, here, there's only one?
Where did they all go? I asked Robert Devaux.
"The pelicans?" he asked. "I'll tell you."
He was a lovely man who loved the island
"Insecticides," he said. He's gone too. (2016, p. 25)

In "Pelican Man" (Doig, 2003) a shirtless figure, suspended in air and illuminated by a blaze of light, is caught dragging a dead pelican from its mangrove nest. Walcott, an imagined witness to the after-kill, writes:

Caught by an electric flash that startles a fence
of blue coconuts, the half-nude, bearded
poacher is startled by our presence
on the night beach without the beaded
weight of the pelican he has killed. You know those scenes
in a cop movie where during the bank heist
a flash like this reveals the bandit's face
and he half-audibly mutters "Jesus Christ"
as the far, faint sirens start. In Chekov's *The Seagull*
the girl, Nina, is compared to the broken bird. There is no gull
in one of the paintings, but it absence is beautiful.
We have done things to nature in our time.
The victim may be missing, but not the crime. (2016, p. 27)

The two Pelican poems point to man as the destroyer of his environment: the indiscriminate use of poisons to *control* populations of legally-protected migratory birds and the use of exfoliants like Agent Orange if vegetation, wildlife habitat, or anything else gets in the way of bauxite mining and drilling for oil. Man's smudge is on everything and is blamed for the ongoing environmental disturbance of the islands. One pictures a great throwing up of hands in horror and disbelief as both Doig and Walcott's react to Robert Devaux's answer.

V

Graham Greene's 1940 novel *The Power and the Glory* begins with an image of the "shabby indifference of vultures" (2015, p. 11). As such, "Nature's tyranny" (Walcott, 2016, p. 53) is everywhere in *Morning, Paramin*. It is evident in the image of the "man dressed as a bat" (2016, p. 41), the sinister girl in white who is "embedded in the forked limbs of a forest" (2016, p. 39), "the inescapable corbeaux", even the 'other' women - Sigrid or Roberta - *other* than Margaret as both Doig's magically real/*unreal* paintings

and Walcott's reimaginations cohere to isolate the menace that blurs the islands' potential where "Carib" and "Aruac" and "Taino" (2016, p. 51) were spoken long before the "discovery" of mute islands by loud Europeans.

Still reeling from the colonial boot, the real threat to the Caribbean is as visible as the ghost horse in "Untitled (Paramin)" or as playable as a googly in the "lovely vehemence" of a cricket match in "Paragon". (Walcott, 2016, p. 45) The "vague horror inside the unchristened bush" (2016, p. 49) is as tangible as the moths, bats, Blue Devils, and werewolves that flit in and out of the enclosing dark. The "circling hawks" in Walcott's "Dedication to S.H." (2018, p.11) have become indifferent vultures waiting "in the shifting sun" (Walcott, 2016, p. 11). But while two different cultures and traditions collide in *Morning*, *Paramin* both the paintings of Peter Doig and the poems of Derek Walcott articulate a call-to-arms, a shared voice that predicts in word and paint a Lazarus-like re-appearance of a Caribbean that both *caribeños* know and deeply love.

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EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS AND DISCONNECTIONS: AMPUTATION AND PROSTHESIS AS SYMBOLIC ELEMENTS IN EDWIDGE DANTICAT'S "THE GIFT"

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Abstract
This paper explores symbolic representations of amputation and prosthesis in Edwidge Danticat's short story titled "The Gift" (Danticat, 2019). It applies theories on trauma to examine negotiations of psychogenic pain, emotional paralysis and the concomitant coping methods and strategies employed by protagonists who have experienced traumatic events. In "The Gift," the male and female protagonists are both nursing emotional wounds, navigating an amputation or significant loss – loss of country, loss of family and loss of intimacy, and are both seeking therapeutic intervention, a kind of prosthesis, during a dinner date which marks the closure of their illicit affair. This paper evaluates the historical, national, familial and personal, it juxtaposes these constructs in the narrative with trauma theory, and also considers the possibilities for hope, healing and new beginnings.

Key terms: amputation, Danticat, trauma theory, prosthesis

Introduction

Analogous with Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* (Danticat, 2004) her collection of short stories (including "The Gift") titled *Everything Inside* (Danticat, 2019) portrays the subjectivities, complexities and perplexing circumstances which confront Haitians citizens at home, Haitian migrants in the United States and first generation Haitian-Americans. Accordingly, the physical setting of the short story "The Gift" (Danticat, 2019) alternates between Haiti and the United States, with an allusion to the earthquake which occurred in Haiti in 2010, symbolically being the epicenter of the fictional narra-

tive. In a literary discourse thematically centered on emotional disturbances and disruptions, Danticat adeptly evokes the deadly destruction of the powerful 7.0 earthquake which occurred in Haiti on January 12, 2010. Estimates provided by the Haitian government indicate that more than 300,00 people were killed, and over a million displaced as a consequence of this natural catastrophe (Blaise, 2025).

A 2010 *Newsweek* article (Miller, 2010), with an irreverent but intriguing title, "Why God Hates Haiti," underscores the severity of the collective, transgenerational calamities that citizens of Haiti have historically contended with. Diverse archival, postcolonial and contemporary discourses represent the unrelenting adversities which torment the nation of Haiti. Hence, in Danticat's "The Gift" (2019) the protagonists navigate persistent psychosomatic pain as a consequence of personal tragedy. As first generation Haiti-Americans, Thomas and Anika, the protagonists in "The Gift" are characterized by their commonalities. Their lives and experiences are intimately and inextricably interconnected not exclusively as a consequence of their extramarital affair, but their corresponding negotiations of personal misfortune and the attendant psychological pain. The magnitude of their isolated traumatic events is represented as so monumental that it has the potential to cause a seismic shift in their relationship.

Thomas' experience of a single traumatic event sends aftershocks throughout the story. Auditory and visual imagery amplify and transmit their cries for help as Thomas, his wife, and young daughter were all trapped under the rubble of a collapsed building during their vacation in Haiti, but only he escaped with his life, a fate that might be considered worse than death as he is now disabled – his leg was crushed and had to be amputated. This, together with the burden of not only survivor's guilt, but the surviving perception of adulterous culpability trigger his emotional paralysis. At the same time, the trauma negotiated by Anika – Thomas's now former lover – is activated by a miscarriage which occurred during Thomas's ill-fated vacation in Haiti, and this gives birth to her own emotional disconnection from Thomas. And for these reasons, the lovers' lone, public dinner date, seven months after the earthquake occurs, serves only to deepen the chasm of their ultimate separation.

Manifestations of trauma

In current theorizing on Caribbean literary discourse, there are several life-altering subjects which require investigation. These include the severe consequences of trauma, the relevance of trauma theory to conceptualizing the psychological state of a fictional character who has experienced a catastrophic event; and the intimate, often intricate spaces, which facilitate emotional restoration and renewal. The rationale behind the deployment of trauma theory to the Caribbean's literature is to aid in evaluating and mitigating the persistent effects of demoralizing and emotionally distressing occurrences on the mental condition of colonial and postcolonial subjects whose history is characterized by convulsive emotional events.

As a consequence, although not the purview of one gender, several women writers of trauma narratives, Danticat is a case in point, create characters who exhibit the manifestations of trauma. Sonya Andermahr (2013) in "Compulsively Readable and Deeply Moving: Women's Middlebrow Trauma Fiction" outlines the distinctive elements of traumatic plots and specifically offers insight into the themes and narrative strategies that authors who describe the impact of traumatic encounters might utilize:

> trauma fictions typically exhibit formal features of temporal dislocation, narrative rupture, compulsive retelling, and resistance to closure. Similarly, the characters of trauma narratives experience a range of symptoms which mimic those of trauma sufferers including dissociation, paralysis, nightmares and the sense of something missing. The concomitant post-traumatic effects represented in the trauma novel include failed relationships, frozen affect and mental breakdown. (Andermahr, 2013, p. 15)

The recollection of traumatic events engenders manifestations of trauma. Thus, in "The Gift" (Danticat, 2019) indicators of trauma are profoundly and publicly portrayed during the protagonists' dinner date as Thomas' physiological response to the fireworks display is explicitly illustrated as interrelated with his traumatic experience during the earthquake in Haiti:

> His body tensed up. He wrapped his arms around her waist, not to embrace her but to hold himself up. He was shaking. His quivering lips brushed against her ear ….
>
> "The ground is moving." He shouted in her ear...
>
> His face was sweating, his breath racing.... "I need to get out of here." (Danticat, 2019, pp. 99-100)

The male protagonist's synaptic and somatic responses demonstrate the deep-rooted effects of a traumatic event. The photographic imagery captured through his shaking body, quivering lips, sweating face and racing breath visually and viscerally depict the impact of the psychogenic on the physical body. At the same time, Thomas' symptoms are consistent with well-established, documented discourses on trauma. Trauma expert Judith Herman (1997) in *Trauma and Recovery* explains that hyperarousal is often the primary symptom of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: "After a traumatic experience, the human system of self-preservation seems to go onto permanent alert, as if the danger might return at any moment. Physiological arousal continues unabated" (Herman, 1997, p. 10).

With reference to Thomas' lover, Anika, her trauma is manifested in her "compulsive retelling and resistance to closure" (Andermahr, 2013, p. 15). Literary luminary Paula Morgan refers to this display of trauma symptoms in *The Terror and the Time* as "cycles of uncanny repetition" (Morgan, 2014, p. 9). Anika's miscarriage is rendered as a prominent and pervasive subject, although this experience is navigated entirely in her mind. Dramatic irony is employed, hence, while this secret miscarriage is concealed from

Thomas, the reader is witness to Anika's thoughts and memories of the doctor's words subsequent to the traumatic event. The female protagonist eventually commences a mental conversation with Thomas about the pregnancy so that words are actually uttered to him: "I wanted to give you a gift. I also wanted to tell you about our baby that never was, our spirit child" (Danticat, 2019, p. 98). The close proximity of the mental disclosure of the miscarriage to "the gift" legitimizes the value of the departed child and validates Anika's own negotiations of trauma due to the loss of a child conceived within an extramarital affair.

Amputation as emotional disconnection

Another important illustration of loss in "The Gift" (Danticat, 2019) is the amputation of Thomas' leg as a result of a life-threatening injury inflicted during the earthquake. In his book titled *A History of Limb Amputation*, Kirkup states that amputation means "to cut off or cut away" (Kirkup, 2007, p.1). Anika and Thomas' indicators of trauma coincide with their mutual intent to emotionally amputate themselves from each other, as well as to disconnect, "cut off or cut away" from themselves. Herman (1997) writes that "the core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others" (Herman, 1997, p. 10) and in the "Gift" the protagonists are clear in their desires to detach and disengage. Anika discloses that her request for the romantic dinner is for the sole purpose of terminating their relationship: "I wanted to see you because I thought we should end this face to face," she said. (Danticat, 2019, p. 98).

The "inevitable miscarriage" which is the term the doctor uses to describe the loss of Anika's baby foreshadows the complete collapse of her romantic relationship. Moreover, for Thomas, traumatic memories and the emotional suffering surrounding the death of his wife and daughter undermine the emotional connection once palpable within their relationship: "It ended when they died,' he said. 'You must know that. We didn't have to see each other for that." (Danticat, 2019, p. 98). Thomas' harsh words can be contrasted with his own utterances during moments of intimacy and dependency shared with Anika before the earthquake: "Five more minutes,' he'd say while slipping under the covers in her bed, five minutes that would sometimes turn into five hours." (p. 95) This current fissure shows the severity of his emotional distress. The death of Thomas' family signaled the demise of his affair with Anika.

Prosthesis as emotional reconnection

Nevertheless, the expressed desire for emotional disconnection in "The Gift" is complicated by the transition from public to private spaces – Anika and Thomas' move from the restaurant to the privacy of her apartment – where the emotional stages of recovery are negotiated. Herman (1997) mentions that "the recovery process may be conceptualized in three stages: establishing safety, retelling the story of the traumatic event for the purpose of remembering and mourning, and reconnecting with others" (Herman, 1997,

p. 110). These phases enable the transition from emotional amputation to emotional prosthesis in the short story. In the book *Prosthesis, Design, Types, Complications,* Colombo and Rossi define a prosthesis as a device or extension that substitutes for a missing body part (2012, p. 2). Attempts are made to replace missing parts in "The Gift" as public and private spaces take on symbolic significance and present paradoxes in the story. The public space is representative of danger (manifestations of trauma) and disconnection while the private represents safety and reconnection. Hence, the transition from the restaurant to Anika's apartment provides an opening for the replacement of missing parts in this story – care, concern, the desire to help and the desire to heal.

Thomas' navigation of this site of safety signals a transition from emotional disengagement to emotional accessibility and vulnerability. There is a palpable shift from amputation to prosthesis as he removes his clothes with the sole purpose of displaying his prosthetic leg:

> He unbuttoned his belt and let his pants fall to his ankles... his prosthetic looked identical to his other leg, the dark surface skinlike. He twisted what looked to her like a silicone mold, looping it back and forth, then pulled it off at the knee ... 'You wanted to see,' he said. 'I could tell'. (Danticat, 2019, p. 103)

The remembrance of the traumatic event in Haiti for the purposes of recovery and reconnection is facilitated by Anika's gift to Thomas at her apartment which was "A small framed color-pencil sketch of his wife and daughter as birds, birds in repose and not even in flight, birds with human faces and legs" (Danticat, 2019, p. 104). Anika's art is represented in the story as a method of therapy. In the book *Trauma and Expressive Arts Therapy,* (Malchiodi, 2020) explains that:

> Trauma's impact often requires approaches that address the sensory-based experiences many survivors report. Expressive arts therapy- the purposeful application of art, music, dance/ movement, dramatic enactment, creative writing, and imaginative play—is an action-oriented and sensory-based form of psychotherapy. (p.2)

Anika's drawing creates a pathway for healing and closure. Previously, repeated references to Anika's miscarriage were characterized by loss and resistance to closure, but at this juncture in the story, the attention shifts to her commemoration of her baby who is also embedded in the sketch. In a dramatic turn, Anika's healing is facilitated by the drawing of her lover's wife and daughter. Her request to Thomas' deceased wife and daughter to care for her baby in the afterlife, is possibly an indication of closure: "She wanted them to look after her child, too. Her child would also never age. Her child would never even be visible to the eye" (Danticat, 2019, p. 107).

The artistic piece also represents reconnection; it is the device which connects this missing part. Hence, through situational irony, the cause of the disconnection (the death of the wife and daughter) becomes the probable reason for Thomas and Anika's short-lived reconnection. Thomas is provided with the privilege of remembering and honoring his

wife and daughter. Initially, he rejects the sketch as a creative commemoration of his family: "He held out his hands and pulled her closer so that the two of them could see the drawing from the same angle. 'You know this is some crazy shit, right.'" (Danticat, 2019, p. 105). Nonetheless, Thomas ultimately accepts and acknowledges its significance for his eventual healing and reconnection and requests another drawing. "You don't have to do it now," he said, his eyes fixed on their bird face. "I will ask in a year or two. Or even later than that" (p. 106).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Edwidge Danticat's "The Gift" (2019) is a sensitively crafted trauma narrative which delineates the complexities and difficulties connected with personal trauma. Embedded in this emotionally disturbing story, is the knowledge that in spite of one's traumatic history, healing, recovery and reconnections are possible and permissible. While personal tragedy could inevitably lead to traumatic symptoms and disconnection, the location of a safe space to remember and memorialize could be a key to healing and emotional reconnection.

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CARIBBEAN PLANTATIONS ON THE MOVE: WEST INDIAN PULP FICTION, DECAPITALIZED WHITENESS, AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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Abstract
This article argues that lesser-known novels of East Caribbean fiction published in the mid-twentieth century reflect the transplantation of the Caribbean plantation model to other regions of the global South. More specifically, it posits that late-twentieth-century pulp plantation sagas narrate not only the replication of the Caribbean plantation system but also its accompanying effects. To substantiate this claim, I examine the works of Richard Tresillian, a writer from the British Virgin Islands and Dominica, whose pulp fiction plantation saga is set in South Asia. Studies of Caribbean literature would benefit from the insights these novels provide about the plantation system.

Key terms: Caribbean literature; plantationocene; archipelagic literature; Sri Lanka; specters of capital

"The spectre of Marcus Van Dort haunted him," states the narrator of *Bloodheart Royal* (1986, p. 28), the second installment of Richard Tresillian's Bloodheart saga. Comprising three novels—*Bloodheart* (1985), *Bloodheart Royal* (1986), and *Bloodheart Feud* (1987)—the Bloodheart saga is one of many Anglophone Caribbean plantation pulp fiction novels published in the Caribbean from the mid to late twentieth century. It belongs to an Anglophone Caribbean trash fiction boom that began in the mid-twentieth century with the success of Edgar Mittelholtzer's *Children of Kaywanna* (1951). Anglophone Caribbean writers such as Catherine Dillon, Christopher Nicole, Richard Tresillian, and Jeanne Wilson produced a significant amount of Caribbean pulp fiction during the long post-World War II period. Pulp fiction sagas constitute a distinct subgenre within Caribbean literary production (Soto-Crespo, 2020b, pp. 1-20). Considered lesser forms of

fiction, these novels excelled in portraying the downgrading of whiteness by depicting decapitalized white characters, such as the former members of the planter class who lost their wealth and standing in the postcolonial period, and white indentured servants from Ireland. Popular Anglophone Caribbean plantation sagas showcase an expanded repertoire of racialized class categories, including white trash. I label these pulp fictions as trash fiction because they not only craft salacious narratives but also draw upon the concept of white trash.

In "'White Trash' in the Antilles" (1934/1996), Afro-Caribbean sociologist Gordon H. Andrews alerts us to a conceptual space in Caribbean culture where historically impoverished whites and decapitalized white planters acquire the label of white trash. This claim has been corroborated by American sociologist Matt Wray, author of *Not Quite White* (2006), who states that,

> [i]n all the settler colonial societies around the world, there are the dregs of the settler class that lose out in the colonial race for land, money, and power. They represent a kind of wasted whiteness. White trash is everywhere. (M. Wray, personal communication, December 16, 2016)

In the Anglophone Caribbean, white trash includes decapitalized whites who squandered their whiteness, not-quite-white types, and characters who do not fully embody whiteness. These white trash types emerge as a racialized class category (Soto-Crespo, 2020a, pp. 84-85). However, alongside racialized class and risqué sex scenes, there is a noticeable trend in late twentieth-century West Indian fiction to broaden its settings beyond the Caribbean islands to other parts of the world. By tracing the theme of racialized class characters in Caribbean trash fiction, we begin to uncover another dimension of lesser-known West Indian literature that refuses to abandon the Caribbean while striving to globalize it. Whereas foundational literary works of mid-twentieth-century Caribbean literature focused on establishing postcolonial national identities, these lesser forms of Caribbean fiction have ventured to expand the region's presence transnationally and globally. This trend ensures that, regardless of the locales chosen to frame their narratives, Caribbean trash fictions consistently depict the defining characteristics of the Caribbean and its plantation economy around the world. Through late twentieth-century trash fiction, the Caribbean plantation model has evolved into a global motif in transit.

A global decapitalized Whiteness: The West Indies-East Indies connection

The Bloodheart saga tells the story of globalization, connecting the Caribbean plantation system to the South Asian plantation economy in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The Portuguese named today's Sri Lanka *Ceilão* when they arrived in 1505, which was transliterated into English as Ceylon. As a British crown colony, Ceylon exported cinnamon, dyes, and other minor products but was not a large exporter of sugar cane. Written by Richard Tresillian, a long-term resident of the British Virgin Islands and Dominica, the Bloodheart saga narrates the life of Bart Taylor, a white Caribbean settler in British Ceylon

during the early decades of the nineteenth century, before the British were obliged to replace their system of chattel enslavement with a system of wage enslavement in 1832. The saga is a tale of displacement, empire, and romance, featuring the male protagonist Bart, who is displaced from the Caribbean and England and is determined to build a plantation near Galle, Ceylon's premier port city. Consequently, Bart Taylor connects the Caribbean and Indian Oceans, the West and East Indies. The narrator expands on Bart's family heritage and landholdings in Barbados by telling readers that "Bart had lived most of his life in the West Indies, and his sister was born there. His father, Garth Taylor, was an American who sold the vast cotton plantation he inherited near Savannah to settle instead in Barbados" (Tresillian, 1985, p. 5). Bart's brief visit to England taught him that "there was freedom in the tropics, a love, a lust, a physical closeness to the land that did not exist in England" (p. 7).

In England, Bart's mother had discovered that "her relatives were impoverished" and that the family's "wealth … was dwindling" (Tresillian, 1985, p. 6). Bart rationalized that even when his family's Barbadian wealth was almost gone, the "profits from a West Indian type plantation system would help pay the cost of the colony" (p. 10). Bart's mother believed her son "was destined to be a planter, not a drawing-room dandy" (p. 10). Her friends corroborated her intuition, "'[y]ou have a strapping son, Mrs. Taylor. Let the boy have his head. He's wasting his talents in these salons. It's a planter's life he craves. He's got the shoulders.' He winked. 'And the thighs'" (p. 9). It is due to Bart's desire for a plantation that *Bloodheart* is not only a story of romance, but also a story of sugar cane plantation expansion. As Bart states, "[m]y father owned a plantation in the Caribbean. I knew what to do" (Tresillian, 1985, p. 78). In the Bloodheart saga, we find the Caribbean, more precisely, the Barbadian model of sugar cane production transplanted to a new geopolitical space. Tresillian narrates a South-South migration of a plantation sugar cane model from Barbados to Ceylon by narrating a white creole spreading the colonial plantation system back to the East.

Bloodheart (1985), the first installment, continues the trend that Tresillian had started with his previous Caribbean and African sagas, such as *The Bondmaster* (1977-1984) and *Fleshtraders* (1984-1987). There, readers were exposed to the connections of white trash characters and not-quite-white subjects (Soto-Crespo, 2020b, pp. 88-94). In *Bloodheart,* the themes of romance, the specter of the not-quite-white subject, and the birth of Ceylon's sugar cane plantation industry become intertwined in the character of Bart's first wife, Jessica, the presumed Burgher daughter of Bart's nemesis, Marcus Van Dort. As Tresillian explains, "Burgher was the term used in Ceylon to describe the Dutch and their descendants, whether they were white or of mixed blood" (Tresillian, 1985, p. 14). The not quite white characteristic of the Burghers is further elucidated by Tresillian when he introduces the perception of a "masquerading whiteness" as a hovering specter haunting Burgher whiteness: "[t]hose who masqueraded as white were really Burghers, descendants of the Dutch and their Singhalese concubines" (Tresillian, 1986, p. 14).

Racialized class categories are produced and intensified by imperialist practices of local upheaval and societal disruption.

As often happens in the story of imperialism, colonies changed hands after treaties signed in Europe or as a result of wars. This exchange of imperial powers ceded the colony from the Portuguese to the Dutch and then to the English, resulting in the establishment of a socio-economic hierarchy in Ceylon. In a selection of statements, Tresillian (1985) describes it as follows:

> Before the British, there were the Dutch and before the Dutch, the Portuguese. (p. 29)
>
> Thirteen years had passed since the Dutch surrendered Galle to the British but there were still more Dutch burghers than English men in the ninety acre fort. (p. 12)
>
> Since the advent of the British occupation of Ceylon, the official hierarchy was concentrated at Colombo which was the seat of colonial government. (p. 18)

Van Dort is described as "a Burgher whose claim to be white was besmirched by his antecedents" (Tresillian, 1985, p. 14). Tresillian is merciless in his descriptions of Van Dort for instance, he states:

> [Van Dort] was grotesque. The rolls of fat on his belly bulged over the waistband of his breeches. His sparse hair was lank, sticking to his skull with the sweat that oozed over his blotchy skin …. The tan colour he dismissed as the effects of a tropic sun on a fair complexion, owed its origins to at least one Ceylonese grandparent. (1985, pp. 14-15)

Additionally, Tresillian describes him as exuding a "sickly odour" (1985, p. 16). Van Dort's servant, Tissa, was constantly assaulted by his master's powerful "stench" (p. 15). Tresillian describes how Tissa would, "wrinkle his nose in disgust … and gripped the tray to prevent himself retching at the smell" (p. 15). In *Bloodheart Royal*, Tresillian (1986) elaborates on the Burgher's appearance by indicating that "his shape more closely resembled a round red Dutch cheese than a human being" (p. 195).

Van Dort knew that the Burghers were losing their clout under the British flag and their class privileges were slipping: "the Burgher community had shrunk from prospects and position under the British" (p. 48). His downward mobility found compensation in his behavior toward other members of Ceylonese society. Van Dort's "not quite white" complexion did not limit his disapproval of other mixed-race citizens, as he confirms when stating, "[d]at trash! … Bart ain't go'n love a girl 'less she white" (Tresillian, 1985, p. 102, see also Wray, p. 41). In addition, he always displayed his proficiency in English because it placed him in a superior position to other locals, "[h]e was proud of his fluency with English and spoke it to everyone, for English was the language of the élite" (Tresillian, 1985, p. 12).

The saga further explains the Burghers' decapitalization and decline. Not only did Western imperial powers capture each other's possessions in the colonial world, but once

they invaded, local classes were displaced and impoverished. For instance, in telling the history of Galle, Tresillian explains this transition as one where "[t]he Dutch transformed the fort to a town of gabled houses with *stoeps* or verandahs, lofty ceilings and massive pillars. Little had changed in the walled town with the ceding to the British, twenty years before" (Tresillian, 1987, p. 58). But if there was little change in the port town's architecture, it is because change took place elsewhere. Tresillian highlights that "the foliage embracing the villas disguised their decay. The Burgher …. owners were no longer prosperous. After the British conquest twenty years before, the cinnamon trade that was their source of trade declined. The Burghers became clerks" (Tresillian, 1986, p. 36). Again, Tresillian, points out that,

> [s]everal of the Dutch inhabitants and the descendants, known as Burghers, of the original Dutch populations remained in Galle after the British take-over. Some were driven by the loss of privilege and income into a life of genteel poverty. Others were absorbed into the bureaucracy, compounding British protocol with Dutch dourness. (1987, p. 59)

Yet Van Dort, in his position as Registrar of Galle, holds an important post that safeguards local property rights against newcomers and non-citizens of Ceylon. In the saga, Van Dort "was using his power vengefully to prohibit whites from owning land. It was the last vestige of self-respect and importance he had left under the British" (Tresillian, 1985, p. 84). Marcus Van Dort embodies the decapitalized, not-quite-white character and villain who uses his official position to obstruct Bart from transplanting the Caribbean plantation model to Ceylon.

Bart's family's economic decline mirrors that of the Burghers, linking them to a global decapitalized class. The convergence of East and West Indian plantations contributes to this process of decapitalization. In the Bloodheart saga, the Burghers' mixed heritage connects their downward mobility to the imperial realignment of Western powers. Meanwhile, Bart's family's impoverishment in Barbados places them at risk of being labeled as white trash, thus threatening his whiteness. This situation arises because, unlike in the US South, where a larger white population develops a complex social stratification of whiteness (such as full, poor, plain, and white trash), Caribbean sugar colonies developed two forms of whiteness: full whiteness and trashed whiteness. In the Caribbean, full whiteness involves maintaining wealth and breeding to secure elite status. Without wealth, a full white individual is seen as having debased their value.

In Barbados, these former full white subjects join the ranks of the former white indentured Irish men and women who, early in the colonization process, were brought to the Caribbean as a labor force. As Gordon Andrews points out, once the value of whiteness is squandered in a colonial society, no distinction exists between former planters and former indentured servants from the perspective of the majority of the black and brown population. For the latter, the former had wasted the status granted by their white skin. Even when writing in the early decades of the twentieth century, Andrews' insights on

Caribbean whiteness reverberate in the production of mid to late twentieth-century pulp fiction, where impoverished whites amount to "nothing more than 'White Trash'" (Andrews, 1934/1996, p. 492). He elaborates on this point by reminding readers,

> [t]he population of this group of poor whites is swiftly being absorbed by amalgamation with some of the lower classes of Africans. No mulatto or black who may consider himself of good class would intermarry with one of these whites, so great is the contempt in which these poor unfortunates are held. (Andrews, 1934/1996, p. 490)

Consequently, these novels present a transplantation of not only the Caribbean plantation model but also of decapitalized whiteness striving to regain its lost wealth. These two decapitalized character types within the realm of whiteness—the Burghers and the Caribbean decapitalized white planter—clash in the Bloodheart saga. Tresillian exploits these categories: a full white character on the brink of degrading his whiteness and a not-quite-white character trying to cling to the remnants of whiteness that imperialism offers him. The transplantation of a Caribbean sugar cane plantation model to South Asia intensifies these intersectional categories of racialized class.

Mercantilist specters and ecological costs of Sri Lanka's Caribbean plantation

In the Bloodheart saga, the histories of the Caribbean and Ceylon intertwine not only through imperialism but also through the legacy of mercantilism. The specters of a merchant class colluding with Western powers continue to haunt the history of the tropics. From that former mercantilist world, where merchants ruled as kings and tariffs were plentiful, we observe the replication of the high-profit Caribbean plantation model in other regions. In *Merchant Kings* (2009), historian Stephen R. Bowen explains the extent of profit that the Caribbean plantation model system of merchants and planters provided to their home countries, stating, "the English and Dutch companies reaped vast profits from their mercantile activities and paid huge dividends to their shareholders and taxes to their respective governments" (p. 109). Although the plantation system was not invented in the Caribbean, it was there that it was refined to enhance the efficiency of the distribution networks controlled by the merchant class. The circulation of the plantation model is celebrated throughout the saga, in statements such as, "[o]riginally, sugar cane came from Brazil to Barbados" (Tresillian, 1985, p. 235). Trash fiction illustrates that the world created by the plantation system was ever-expanding.

The plantation system established its own distinctive world, serving as a habitat for the planter-merchant classes. This world is repetitive and replicable, as Antonio Benítez-Rojo illustrates in *The Repeating Island* (1997). It is a world immediately recognizable to its inhabitants. Some of its most salient traits include the prevalence of monoculture and landscaped flora, the mirroring of labor practices, and the depletion of pre-plantation habitats. By the seventeenth century, political theorist Ellen Meiksins Wood explains, an agricultural, economic, and legalistic ideologeme had taken shape, where "making

land productive—that is, improving it—was becoming the basis of property rights; and more particularly, the failure to improve could mean forfeiting the right of property" (Wood, 1999, p. 157). Within this plantation world, the agriculturally "improved" and landscaped fields are perceived as the civilized norm, while the jungle, forest, and wildlife are perceived as savagely alien. The planter class travels with the idea of duplicating its habitat wherever it goes, as this translates to perpetuating the status and wealth it holds or seeks to maintain. The tropics, for instance, become a vast territory of similitude, thus of manufactured familiarity and conducive to perpetuating itself. This tendency to downplay differences and magnify similarities reinforces the drive to replicate its preferred habitat via the plantation model to secure survival. As a consequence, the planter's full whiteness is often projected onto the land where it discovers its perfect similarity, as is figured in the sentence, "[h]e smoothed his long wavy hair, the colour of a field of golden sugar cane" (Tresillian, 1989, p. 47). In the tropics, the newly created plantation landscape and the full white planter class are *one*.

As expected, comparisons to the Caribbean are plentiful in the saga, to the point that while in Ceylon, Bart "thought he was back in Barbados" (Tresillian, 1985, p. 35). In another instance, he recalls that even when "in Ceylon, a country house [which] is called *walauwa,"* is not so much different from the plantation great houses "from Barbados" (p. 204). In the novels, we encounter descriptions of Ceylon's impregnable forests, "trees were bestowed with orchids and creepers, their leaves so dense the harsh sun was transformed into a soft, shadowy glow" (Tresillian, 1987, p. 3).

These descriptions are often connected to the Caribbean. For instance, the narrator often points out that "the climate and vegetation were similar to the Caribbean, where sugar flourished" (Tresillian, 1985, p. 35). Often, the location and flora made Bart feel at home, especially when "[h]e recognized the tall, leafy breadfruit trees, the banana plants, the crotons, hibiscus and poinsettia from his days in Barbados" (p. 25). On another occasion, Tresillian reiterates this comparison by stating, "a breadfruit tree, said to be the first in the island and planted by the Dutch who introduced it to Ceylon, grew in the garden" (Tresillian, 1987, p. 57). Not only does the flora induce these East-West India similarities, but also local folk speech patterns. As Bart hears people talking, he remarks, "that's Caribbean talk" (Tresillian, 1985, p. 190). On other occasions, he observes, "[t]he similarity with the Caribbean islands was disturbing. It was almost like home, and yet he was aware of an underlying strangeness" (p. 25). That strangeness is the island's biodiversity, one of the highest in South Asia, and it is precisely what needs to be obliterated for the plantation model to be successfully implemented.

The Caribbean-Ceylon connection is also articulated in terms of labor. For instance, the saga explains:

> [i]n Barbados, on his father's plantation where he was raised, African slaves cut and milled the cane under threat of the lash …. The men and women who worked for him in Ceylon were different, conditioned by caste for a life of toil. There was

> no compulsion, beyond habit and their belief in the inevitability of their lot. (Tresillian, 1987, p. 119)

Furthermore, the narrator notes that when local workers were insufficient, Bart "imported slaves from Madagascar and Mozambique and ran the plantation as if he was back in Barbados" (Tresillian, 1986, p. 37). The plantation system's insatiable demand for labor leads Tresillian to write, "[t]hey say the plantation is cursed" (Tresillian, 1987, p. 98). Yet, the frontispiece of *Bloodheart Feud* (1987) also illustrates the effects of this transplantation: "[s]ugar cane is the thriving currency of 19th century Ceylon." In the Bloodheart saga, the plantation system is simultaneously cursed (by enslavement) and thriving (with profit). The complexity of a production model being both successful and haunted is represented in the saga's historical narrative. Tresillian's plantation saga is shaped by the historical context that informs it. As Jacques Derrida argues in *Specters of Marx* (1994, [1993]), Marx revealed that ideologemes, or ideological constructs such as mercantilism, plantation systems, and free market ideologies, are perpetually haunted by the historical context (practices, institutions) that shaped them. In other words, ideologemes are products that retain "all the practical and social structures, all the empirico-technical detours that had produced [them]" (Derrida, 1994/1993, p. 161). Ideologemes, such as plantation systems, mercantilist practices, and literary works, serve as conduits for the world that creates them. In the Bloodheart saga, we encounter all aspects of this plantation worldview, from how workers are treated to how the land is treated. As humans are treated like commodities, the curse of the plantation reveals itself in the depletion of natural resources caused by an economic model that prioritizes exporting raw products to Europe over serving the interests of a local economy.

The impact of ecological devastation is evident in the saga's account of the removal of tropical forests for sugar cane cultivation. Bart underscores this impact of the planter class on the environment when he states, "[h]e possessed that land; he had changed it from a wilderness into a plantation" (Tresillian, 1986, p.38). This transformation of tropical forest into plantation monoculture and its landscaped organization finds repetition, as Benítez-Rojo (1997) argues, in the Caribbean islands. The same pattern of agricultural "improvement" is transplanted beyond the Caribbean to other areas of the global South and to England. It is not just an "improvement" in the sense of making land efficiently productive for staples meant for human consumption; it is also an enhancement designed solely for human economic benefit. The impact on Ceylon is palpable from the start. As the narrator states, "now sugar-cane grew where wild animals roamed, and two thousand acres of jungle had become Bloodheart Plantation" (Tresillian, 1986, p. 37).

The plantation economy relocated flora and fauna across continents. The result of this process was the introduction of new species into various regions of the globe, which diminished the specific and unique biodiversity of insular locations. Although local diversity appears to increase with the transplantation of flora and fauna from abroad, the actual outcome is a decline in global diversity. Endemic species bear the brunt of a

"global homogenization" that eradicates them (Kolbert, 2014, p. 213). These unique species, such as the dodo in Madagascar and the parrot in Puerto Rico, lack the ability to adapt to the presence of newly transplanted species (Quammen, 1996, p. 32). In Ceylon, it is not the dodo that suffers but many other endemic species. The narrator notes, "Leopards no longer lurked in the trees because deer no longer grazed on the plain. Sugar-cane grew on the land now" (Tresillian, 1987, p. 4). Eliminating the strangeness from the place is the path to homogenizing the tropics. The process of counter-intuitive de-diversification is the first step towards what theorist Donna Haraway (2015) calls the plantationocene; that is, the "devastating transformations of diverse kinds," sparked by the homogenizing effect of "extractive and enclosed plantations" (Haraway, 2015, p. 162).

In *Tropical Pioneers* (2002), historian James L. A. Webb describes the historical developments that support Haraway's plantationocene assertion and clarify Tresillian's accounts of Sri Lanka's ecology before and after the transplantation of the Caribbean model. Webb states, "[t]he highlands of Sri Lanka, in particular, provided specialized ecological environments that allowed for the evolution of indigenous species … The indigenous flora numbers some 7,500 species, and a large percentage of these species are endemic" (Webb, 2002, p. 10). For decades prior the arrival of the plantation model, Ceylon had been lauded for having evolved the highest biodiversity of "any other country in Asia" (p. 10). The Bloodheart saga portrays the specter of the plantation model and what Webb refers to as "the ecological consequences of the opening up of the highlands following the British conquest of the Kandyan Kingdom in 1815" (2002, p. 3). The saga not only depicts this transplantation of the Caribbean model but also its devastating impact on the island. The global transplantation of the plantation model reveals how mercantilism trashed island ecologies in the spreading of a mode of production to all corners of the globe (Soto-Crespo, 2025, pp. 55-57). Once again, Webb corroborates this by stating:

> British transferred the model of the 'scientific' plantation from the Caribbean to … zones around the world …. Only in the 19th century did the British carve out permanent corridors through the dense belt of green rainforest that surrounded the kingdom of Kandy. (2002, p. 2)

Like Tresillian, Webb tells us that the "British planters put the highland forest mantle to the torch and accomplished the most extensive conversion of rainforest into tropical plantation agriculture to be seen anywhere in the British Empire in the nineteenth century" (2002, p. 2). Grimly, Webb asserts that "[b]y the end of the nineteenth century, the ecological conversion of the highlands was complete. The natural endowment had been burned over" (p. 2). Once on the move, Caribbean-perfected global economies of extraction trashed biodiversity elsewhere.

The trashy baggage of Anglophone Caribbean trash fiction

Many specters travel alongside the plantation model. Incidents of cruelty to the land reflect the worst practices of plantation culture in the Caribbean and the Americas. This essay would be incomplete if it did not address the cruel and licentious specters integral to trash fiction sagas. In *Bloodheart* we encounter the scene of oral castration when Tissa, Bart's servant, castrates an attacker with his teeth:

> [h]e bit hard into the man's penis, tearing at the flesh, shaking his head from side to side like a dog with a bone .... Tissa's jaws bit through the flesh, and a lump from the Caffre's penis filled his mouth .... He scrambled away, spitting it out. (Tresillian, 1985, p. 263)

Also, we find in this saga a unique scene combining an act of sodomy and gelding. In *Bloodheart Feud* Bart's second wife, Raven, is anally penetrated by Curt Van Dort, Marcus Van Dort's son, yet as he is in climactic ecstasy, she gelds him with a knife in revenge for her violation, "penetrating where not even Bart had entered …. He squealed with pleasure as he hammered into her …. She smiled and plunged the knife deep into his groin, twisting it and severing his manhood from his body" (Tresillian, 1987, p. 249). As is typical of this subgenre, the white trash villain dies. In this saga, Marcus Van Dort's not-quite-white body suffers one of the most gruesome deaths in Anglophone Caribbean literary history when the plantation's sugar cane crusher pulps him:

> Bart watched with horror as the stones heaved and drew Van Dort deeper between them … his whole body was digested by the giant cane crusher … the remains of Van Dort's body, crushed to a bloody pulp, were spewed out into the sugar troughs. (Tresillian, 1987 p. 307-308)

The symbolism of a local, not-quite-white character being spewed out as trash by the plantation's sugar cane machinery epitomizes the bulldozing forces of capital and empire. These forces lie at the heart of the plantationocene, where their mechanical and relentless depletion of natural resources is both devastating and haunting.

In the mid to late twentieth-century Caribbean plantation sagas, stark cruelty contrasts with scenes of sexual trashiness, a popular staple of Anglophone Caribbean trash fiction. Trashy elements abound in the Bloodheart saga, as is typical of the subgenre. The saga depicts a world where pleasure surpasses societal mores. In the novels, statements such as "[h]e took her with a white-hot heat" abound (Tresillian, 1987, p. 45). Numerous sexual scenes feature expressions such as, "[h]e was astonished when her mouth closed over him and she began to make love to him with all the fire of a whore" (Tresillian, 1986, p. 80). In the Bloodheart saga, the most outrageous moment comes from the description of Romulus, where his elongated penis is depicted in sheer shock, "[w]hen he crouched down to pull out weeds from the flower bed, his sex hung down between his legs, almost scraping the earth because of its prodigious size" (Tresillian, 1987, p. 207). In the second installment, *Bloodheart Royal*, we learn that Bart's first wife, Jessica, is

unfaithful to him with the Mozambican overseer, Royal, a fact only discovered when she gives birth to his son. Upon holding the newborn baby, Mammy Sobers, Bart's Barbadian housekeeper, reacts, "[s]he saw the baby in her arms, perfectly formed, his complexion the pinkish white of a pure breed, except for— 'Oh, my lor'!' she cried in despair. 'He got black balls! .... He is Bloodheart Royal'" (Tresillian, 1986, p. 140). The installment's title, *Bloodheart Royal,* reflects the significance of this narrative act. From long and prodigious-sized members to unexpected black balls, the Bloodheart saga continues the pattern of mixing decapitalization and sexual licentiousness that has made the subgenre the most prolific yet underexamined narrative form in late twentieth-century Caribbean literature.

Conclusion

Mid to late twentieth-century Anglophone Caribbean trash fiction did not carry the weight of becoming foundational texts for postcolonial nations. Consequently, it was more open to experimentation and transcended the strict limits of canonicity. Trash fiction is archipelagic (spanning from island to island) and transnational (stretching from Barbados to Ceylon) and seeks decontinental settings to inspire its narratives. Smaller islands, such as the Virgin Islands, and islands on the fringes of emerging powers in South Asia, like Sri Lanka, serve as catalysts for the post-war boom of Caribbean plantation sagas. It is in these spaces, away from full whiteness, literary canons, and continental shores, that non-canonical forms of Caribbean fiction achieve their global reach.

Anglophone Caribbean sagas of the Lesser Antilles depict a dynamic Caribbean plantation model that not only transplants a system of extraction but also evokes numerous associations linked to that model. Enslavement, bondage, deforestation, extraction economies, depletion of natural resources, loss of biodiversity, monoculture, new ethnicities, and rapid accumulation of capital are some of the specters accompanying the plantation model. In this global circulation, the East and the West are cursed, carved up, and exploited by a mercantilist system evolving into global capitalism. At the same time, processes of decapitalization create networks parallel to those of emerging capital. Anglophone Caribbean trash fiction highlights these specters and networks, thereby enhancing our understanding of their fundamental heterogeneity. The mercantilism leading to the emergence of transnational capital encompasses not only economic factors but also the contextual elements associated with its inception. Haunted yet thriving, Caribbean trash fiction sagas like Bloodheart illuminate the circulation of specters traveling with the Caribbean plantation model as it transplants its homogenizing forces across the globe.

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FINDING A NEW HOME AND A NEW MOTHER: QUEER IDENTITY IN *THE STARS AND THE BLACKNESS BETWEEN THEM*

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Abstract
This article considers themes of family relationships, religion, migration, and sexuality through the lens of the young adult novel *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them* by Junauda Petrus (2009). What does it mean, and what does it look like, for a child in Trinidad or elsewhere in the Caribbean to be rejected by their mother due to their sexuality? How does leaving home function as a form of decolonization and healing? And, as a motherless child, how is motherhood reimagined? When the novel suggests that Audre, its Queer protagonist, becomes her own mother, it simultaneously opens the possibility of a queer motherhood, a particularly powerful symbol for young adult readers who may be questioning their identities, their familial roles, and their connection to their Caribbean heritage.

Key terms: LGBTQ+ young adults; home; mothering; religion; migration; sexuality

In literature, the concept of home has long symbolized protection and safety. The space of the house is often portrayed as a refuge from the outside world, a protection frequently embodied by a motherly figure. These representations of the mother and the home as sources of growth and belonging, however, are increasingly questioned in Queer literature. This is especially true in narratives by Caribbean writers, where home is not always where the heart can be.

In the introduction to his book *Queer Ricans*, Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes (2009) affirms this idea from a Puerto Rican perspective. For Fountain-Stokes, sexuality is "a key factor shaping and defining Puerto Rican migration to the United States" (La Fountain-

Stokes, 2009, p. ix). He does not separate sexuality from the other forces that drive Queer Puerto Ricans to migrate; rather, he asserts its significance alongside economic, political, educational, and health-related factors. To overlook "the centrality of sexuality to migration," he argues, is to perpetuate prejudice and ignorance, similar to conservative, sexist, and homophobic ideologies (2009, p. ix). *Queer Ricans* not only highlights sexuality as a driving force of migration but also underscores the violent expulsions Queer individuals often suffer at the hands of their own families and communities (p. x).

While some Queer narratives depict home and the mother/family as entities to escape in order to survive, they do not necessarily render characters homeless or motherless. Instead, the rejection of these concepts becomes a catalyst for reinvention and decolonization. When characters are cast out by maternal figures, they are compelled to seek new forms of home and new maternal connections. Exploring the migrating Queer Caribbean body away from the mother opens a path to healing, often tied to the land and the ocean. This article considers these themes through the lens of the young adult novel *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them* by Junauda Petrus (2009). What does it mean, and what does it look like, for a child in the Caribbean to be rejected by their mother due to their sexuality? How does leaving home function as a form of decolonization and healing? And, as a motherless child, how is motherhood reimagined?

In *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them* (Petrus, 2009), themes of family relationships, religion, migration, and sexuality are explored through the life of Audre. Her life takes a dramatic turn when her mother catches her being intimate with another girl; an event that prompts her mother to send her from Trinidad to the United States to live with her father. From the beginning of the novel, it is clear that Audre shares a special bond with her maternal grandmother, Queenie, and that her mother's household is governed by strict, conservative rules. Her mother compels her to start attending church, and it is there that Audre meets Neri, the girl she eventually falls in love with.

Unmoved by the religious beliefs her mother tries to impose, Audre seeks refuge in other spaces. For her, the ocean becomes a site of comfort and spiritual connection. When she brings Neri to the ocean, she declares: "This is my real church" (Petrus, 2009, p. 23). By invoking spirituality, Petrus reimagines the ocean as a sacred space where Neri and Audre can express their love freely and authentically. This moment also represents a new Queer tradition: while Audre cannot bring Neri into her mother's home, she brings her to a space aligned with Queenie, who is aware of and accepting of Audre's Queer identity. For Audre, creating a new safe space is essential for exploring her identity without fear of punishment tied to the patriarchal values her mother upholds.

Audre's experience reflects Henri Lefebvre's theory, as described by Zoran Pecic: "rather than defining individuals through space, (Henri) Lefebvre examines how individuals/bodies create or produce space … to add the notions of gender and sexuality to the production of social space" (Pecic, 2013, p. 19). In Audre's case, the ocean becomes a

self-fashioned sanctuary, an act of Queer spatial production. Queenie, unlike Audre's mother, introduces her to the symbolic power of the ocean and to the spiritual figure Yemanja. While on the plane leaving the island, Audre reflects: "I thought of Yemanja and being rocked and held in her depths. I thought of Queenie's words, 'Spirit is everywhere,' and I saw it in the ocean and beach made from night and moon and sky and stars" (Petrus, 2009, p. 59). When Audre brings Neri to the ocean, the home she creates for herself, she is not only rejecting her mother's patriarchal religion but also embracing a spirituality that affirms her Queer identity. "And out beyond Queenieland was Yemaya, the ocean, the goddess of me and Neri's C.H.U.R.C.H." (p. 26). The image of Yemanja emerges as a protector of Queer female sexuality. Before Audre's mother arrives at the beach, Audre senses a spiritual warning: "And that last Sunday on the beach, I should have realized that the clouds was talking, Neri and I feeling sweet and full of love, yet I was feeling something in my spirit" (p. 31). This moment can be interpreted as nature, or Yemanja, expressing discomfort with the impending intrusion of patriarchal violence. Within the novel, Audre's mother personifies patriarchy. Her husband, largely absent from the narrative, leaves her to embody what Lois Tyson terms a patriarchal woman: "a woman who has internalized the norms and values of patriarchy" (2006, p. 85). When she finds Audre with Neri at the beach, she not only punishes her physically but weaponizes religion to justify her rage and shame. She calls Audre "nasty," "disgusting," and "sick" (Petrus, 2009, p. 32), framing her daughter's divergence from traditional gender roles as a disgrace to both the family and to God. This raises a critical question: had Audre been found with a boy instead, would the punishment have been the same?

The disciplining of the Queer body through violence is examined by Jocelyn Fenton Stitt in her 2014 essay on *The Other Side of Paradise* by Staceyann Chin. As in Chin's Jamaica, in Audre's Trinidad, Queer sexuality is framed as culturally incompatible (Fenton Stitt, 2014, p. 9). According to Fenton Stitt, who references the broader Caribbean, homophobia is deeply intertwined with religion, suggesting that "physical control and discipline influence contemporary beliefs about the 'threat' LGBT individuals present to the nation" (2014, p. 9). She claims that the use of violence against lesbian and gay bodies serves "to shore up an anxious and undermined sense of national authority and masculinity" (p. 8). In this context, Audre's expulsion by her religious and patriarchal mother is not only a form of punishment for the shame her queerness allegedly brings upon the family, but also an act of moral policing aligned with national and religious orthodoxy. Because Audre's identity threatens the heteronormative fabric of Trinidadian society, she is violently cast out.

Contrasting this violence, the figure of a nurturing and accepting maternal presence is embodied not by Audre's biological mother, but by her grandmother, Queenie. Queenie represents more than familial warmth; she embodies a spiritual and earthly connection to nature, particularly to the ocean, and encourages Audre to embrace this connection. The mother-daughter dynamic is a recurring theme in Caribbean women's literature,

where mothering is often linked to Mother Nature, a figure that encapsulates femininity in Caribbean cultural and literary traditions. As Ipolito (2000) notes, in Caribbean and African oral traditions, nature is imbued with magical connotations that sometimes merge into religious beliefs (Ipolito, 2000, p. 57).

The relationship between Queenie and Audre is significant because it is through Queenie, not her biological mother, that Audre inherits spiritual knowledge, identity, and ancestral healing. Queenie actively rejects the national religious patriarchy embodied by Audre's mother, and in doing so, becomes the safe space where Audre can begin constructing her Queer identity. Later in the novel, it is revealed that Queenie is herself Queer, through Mabel's dreams and Queenie's past encounters with Mahal. This revelation adds depth to Queenie's character, positioning her as a model for alternative forms of womanhood and identity. While Audre's mother upholds a patriarchal model of femininity incompatible with her daughter's self-perception, Queenie offers Audre a different path. This resistance to conventional womanhood recalls Simone de Beauvoir's foundational claim, popularized by Judith Butler: "one is not born a woman, but rather, becomes one" (de Beauvoir, cited in Butler, 1990, p. 8). By rejecting her mother's expectations, Audre affirms her capacity to craft her own womanhood: one that increasingly resembles Queenie's.

The rift between Audre and her mother intensifies when Audre is sent to the United States to live with her father. Unlike the Queer women discussed by La Fountain-Stokes (2009) in his study of Puerto Rican lesbians, who voluntarily leave the island in search of liberation (La Fountain-Stokes, 2009, p. 64), Audre is forcibly expelled. Her departure is not self-initiated but dictated by patriarchal control. Although she experiences sadness at first, Audre begins to find solace in thoughts of Yemanja during the flight. This moment marks the beginning of her journey toward liberation. Only outside Trinidad, and far from her mother's religious repression, can Audre openly embrace her Queerness.

Even as she integrates into a new space, Audre continues to carry aspects of her Caribbean identity with her. Over time, she begins to understand what Zoran Pecic describes regarding the Queer diasporic reimagining of home: "Queer diaspora does not imply a refusal of homeland- both queer and diaspora employ discourses and narratives of home as a site of familiarity. It does, however, reverse the traditional notion of home as origin into home as destination" (Pecic, 2013, p. 10). For Pecic, Queer diasporic individuals reconfigure the concept of home, not as a place of trauma, but as a space of possibility: "queering home not as a site of trauma but as a site of a queer possibility" (p. 10). For Audre, leaving Trinidad enables her to construct this new home, one where her identity can finally thrive.

Once she arrives at her father's home, Audre is received with warmth and acceptance, not only by him, but also by his friends. It is during what seems to be a welcome dinner that Audre meets Mabel, the daughter of one of her father's friends. From this point on,

food begins to appear more consistently in the narrative as a tool for healing. Her father, aware of her sadness after leaving Trinidad, tries to uplift her by preparing vegan meals, even letting his friends know in advance that she is vegan. Though she is figuratively and literally motherless after being expelled from the island, she is nurtured and cared for by her father, who uses food as an act of love and restoration.

Shortly after arriving and forging a friendship with Mabel, Audre learns that Mabel is ill. In response, she seeks guidance from her grandmother: "Queenie, this ain't about Neri this time. I need help to heal my friend who dying" (Petrus, 2009, p. 138). Queenie encourages her to consult her stones and trust her intuition, while Audre also reaches out to her cousin, Epi, for healing recipes. When she brings a green juice to Mabel, she explains its healing properties through the lens of cultural knowledge: "You see how all the Rasta women and men them get real old and never age? They look young and vibrant and strong? 'Cause they drinkin' things like this" (p. 148).

Audre's distrust of doctors and hospitals, echoed in her conversation with Queenie, reinforces her deep belief in the Earth as healer and in the ancestral knowledge passed down through her grandmother. By carrying these traditions to the United States, she embodies what Pecic (2103) describes as the queer body's desire to "bring past memories into the present and modify them as well as transform the very spaces created in the diasporic invocations of the imaginary homeland" (Pecic, 2013, p. 14). Although she cannot fully be herself in Trinidad, Audre does not idealize the United States either. Therefore, she must build her own sense of home: one rooted in ancestral knowledge and care, rather than geography.

These teachings from Queenie are not abstract; they are intimately tied to the Earth. Audre's respect for the healing properties of food is part of a broader belief system in which the land becomes the ultimate caregiver:

> As you lie in the dirt, imagine that the land can hold all of the feelings. All of the sickness and hurt. Confusion. The earth can take it all. Don't feel like you is too much. You are okay and loved by creation. (Petrus, 2009, p. 177)

Earth, in the novel, is not passive: it absorbs illness and transforms it into love and comfort. Ipolito's claim that nature "is the domain of women in a patriarchal society" (Ipolito, 2000, p. 57) affirms this reading. In *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them* (Petrus, 2009), the Earth becomes a sanctuary: an in-between space that resists patriarchal control and allows feminine, cultural, and spiritual energies to flourish through Audre's care.

While there is a subtle romantic tension between Mabel and Audre, Audre's motivation to heal her friend stems not from desire but from a profound sense of kinship. In Mabel, Audre finds a kind of chosen family, a home away from home. Her determination to help Mabel can also be seen as a form of self-healing. Through her care for Mabel, Audre begins to trust in her own powers and intuition, restoring parts of herself that had been wounded by her mother's rejection. In being forced to mother herself, Audre ends up

mothering Mabel too, therefore discovering her own capacity for love, strength, and restoration.

In Janauda Petrus's (2009) *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them*, translocation functions as a tool of what Pecic describes as "transformation of sexualities that are on the move," allowing for the reinvention of self in new contexts (Pecic, 2013, p. 8). Pecic argues that queer diaspora "emerges as a concept providing new methods of contesting traditional family and kinship structures: of reorganizing national and transnational communities based not on origin, filiation, and genetics but on destination, affiliation" (2013, p. 10). Audre's forced translocation is hence reimagined as a path toward healing and the construction of a chosen home. This healing, however, does not signify a rejection of her culture. Instead, she embraced ancestral teachings and her connection to the Earth as acts of decolonization, resisting the patriarchal religious doctrines imposed by colonial histories. The image of the mother is also decolonized in this text: redefined through figures such as Yemanjá and Mother Earth. When the novel suggests that Audre becomes her own mother, it simultaneously opens the possibility of a queer motherhood, a particularly powerful symbol for young adult readers who may be questioning their identities, their familial roles, and their connection to their Caribbean heritage.

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SOCIAL MOBILITY AND ASSIMILATION IN SHANI MOOTOO'S *CEREUS BLOOMS AT NIGHT* AND RAMABAI ESPINET'S *THE SWINGING BRIDGE*

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Abstract
Assimilation to European culture through religion and education played an important role in the upward economic and social mobility of East Indians in Trinidad. This led to an indentured person experiencing "practices, ideologies, and philosophies imposed upon him [sic] ... [that were] alien to his framework of reference and his own tradition" (Clignet, 1971, p. 303). This article explores the outcomes of cultural assimilation for East Indians in Trinidad as depicted in two novels by Indo-Trinidadian writers: Shani Mootoo's (1996) *Cereus Blooms at Night* and Ramabai Espinet's (2003) *The Swinging Bridge*.

Key terms: Trinidad, Missionary, religion, Christianity, indenture, assimilation

> The East Indians were brought by the government to labour on the sugar estates. A lady who entertained Mr. Morton at that time afterwards recalled how burdened he seemed to be with 20,000 heathen people, brought into a Christian country and none to care for their souls. 'To think,' he would say, 'of these people living in a Christian community for years, making money and returning to India without hearing the Gospel of Christ! What a stain on our Christianity!' He set himself at once to have that stain wiped out. (Sarah Morton, cited in Morton, 1916, p. 7)

Religion and education play important roles in the control of bodies and minds. Thus, it is not surprising that the hegemonic dynamics of colonial education crisscross the temporal and spatial landmarks that anchor the collective memories and post-memories of the protagonists in Indo-Caribbean women's writing, including Mona in Ramabai Espinet's (2003) *The Swinging Bridge,* and Mala, Tyler, and Nana in Shani Mootoo's

(1996) *Cereus Blooms at Night.* In *Cereus Blooms at Night* (Mootoo, 1996) Tyler narrates collective memories on the fictional island of Lantanacamara concerning indenture, a system that attempted to strip many East Indians of their ancestral cultures and religions and replace them with the cultural and religious norms of the West:

> Old Man Ramchandin, who was only ever known as Ramchandin, was an indentured field labouror from India. He was relaxing as he did every evening after work, rocking himself in the burlap hammock that hung from a cashew tree at the back of the estate barracks .... Old Man Ramchandin thought about life in the barracks and life in India before his recruitment to Latanacamara. There was no difference. But by making the long journey across two oceans, he hoped to leave behind, as promised by the recruiter, his inherited karmic destiny as a servant labourer—if not for himself, at least for his son who had been born just before they left India. In Latanacamara it was easier to slip out of caste. He planned to work hard, save money and educate Chandin out of the fields. (Mootoo, 1996, p. 52)

These memories of Old Man Ramchandin reveal that one of the principal inducements to enter into an indenture agreement was the possibility to shed a predestined caste status and reinvent oneself. The lure of earning money and owning land in a short period of time motivated many East Indians to sign indentureship agreements. Furthermore, once in Trinidad there were additional promises of opportunities for social advancement if indentured laborers converted to Christianity or at least attended Christian schools. In the British West Indies, religion and the colonial education system were fundamental in colonizing attempts at imposing a regime of cultural assimilation and the erasure of history and memory. These attempts did not go uncontested. Like many African maroon communities, many Indo-Caribbean communities were able to reconstruct various elements of their religion, including South Asian systems of religion and patriarchy. In spite of these endeavors at reconstruction which sought to put women back into their traditional roles in Indo-Caribbean communities, many East Indian women were able to navigate the treacherous waters of dual patriarchies (Christian and Hindu) to capitalize on new opportunities to better their lives, opportunities that did not exist in India.

After chattel enslavement became unmanageable, it was replaced by indenture. Indenture brought 143,939 South Asians to Trinidad between 1838 and 1918, of which only 29,448 are known to have returned to South Asia (Roberts & Byrne, 1996, pp. 129, 132). When it became apparent in the 1860s that most of these indentured people would remain in Trinidad after their agreements expired, the Church of England urged the colonial government in Trinidad to provide religious instruction, even if only for a few hours on Saturday or Sunday, to them because they were considered to be “semi-civilized, speaking a barbarous tongue, and worshipped strange Gods” (Bacchus, 2006, p. 68). Efforts to eradicate culture, history, and memory on the Indian subcontinent included the dismantling of local cultural, social, economic and political structures on the one

hand, and the forced departure of its people who migrated internally and abroad in order to survive. Western educational and religious institutions functioned together to play a central role in the discursive domination and the internalization of Western norms that operationalized Great Britain's colonization efforts, both on the subcontinent and in the Caribbean, thereby ensuring the perpetuation of coloniality in the thoughts, words and actions of the colonized themselves.

Preceded by the Church of England, the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and the Roman Catholic Church, The Canadian Presbyterian Church established a permanent mission in Trinidad in 1868 under the leadership John and Sarah Morton. However, conversion of indentured Indo-Trinidadians was not an easy task because, as missionary K.J. Grant pointed out, "Eastern people were separated from Western by nationality, language, dress, habits of life, social customs and prejudices, and above all religion" (Grant, cited in Sitahal, 1967, p. 58).

Mona, the protagonist in *The Swinging Bridge* (Espinet, 2003) weaves together a history that reveals how deeply embedded the Canadian Presbyterian Church was in the life of the indentured laborers. Mona's transgenerational memories span four generations and include her great grandmother Gainer's songs, her Grandmother Lily's notes in the back of her shop ledgers, and her Mother Muddie and paternal Aunt Alice's memories. Aunt Alice often told stories about her great-grandfather Joshua who was selected by the Presbyterian missionaries to serve as an example for other indentured workers. Mona herself recalls that "the Canadian missionaries had brought sweetness and light to us on their terms, wrapping us in a tight cocoon while they enjoyed the privileges of whiteness in a colonial society" (Espinet, 2003, p. 81).

Joshua is one of the first East Indians to convert and one of the first to benefit both economically and socially as he immediately ascends the Trinidadian social hierarchy. Joshua is educated at the Presbyterian mission school in Iere, where he becomes a teacher. He also emulates the missionaries and, in the process, adopts their norms and values. As he ascends, he becomes a money lender within the Indo-Trinidadian community, loaning money to other Indians for cattle, seeds, and to fund celebrations. When Joshua sees Gainder singing and dancing at a wedding, he enlists the help of an elder to propose marriage to her. However, the wedding is kept a secret from the Canadian missionaries, because a marriage to a non-Christian girl puts his advanced standing within the church at risk (Espinet, 2003, pp. 249, 253). These postmemories of Mona's great-grandfather Joshua connects her family with the first Canadian Presbyterian Missionaries, John and Sarah Morton, who established the first mission and first school for indentured South Asian laborers in Trinidad. In the same manner, many of the historical and traumatic events internalized and remembered in *Cereus Blooms at Night* (Mootoo, 1996) are also linked to the first Canadian Presbyterian missionaries whose objectives included not only the propagation of Western culture, but also the erasure of South Asian culture and history in Trinidad.

Joseph Nevadomsky's (1980) essay titled "Changes over Time and Space in the East Indian Family in Rural Trinidad" indicates that there were many cultural practices that were either forsaken altogether or discarded upon arrival in the Caribbean and then reconstructed later. Also, as Nevadomsky discloses one of the biggest immediate cultural changes was the initial loss of caste that occurred on the ships transporting workers to the Caribbean (Nevadomsky, 1980, p. 452). Carter and Torabully's (2002) *Coolitude: An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora* provides documentary evidence that shows multiple cases of caste related problems on the voyage from South Asia to the Caribbean, which included instances where indentured men on the ships refused to eat food that was prepared by lower castes (Carter & Torabully, 2002, p. 37). Thus, upon arrival in the Caribbean, some of the lower caste workers were determined to abandon their inferior social position and invented narratives that elevated them into higher castes in the new landscape. Earl Lovelace's (1996) *Salt* deals with this type of caste elevation. Moon, an indentured laborer, is given his contractual five acres of land and he reminisces about conversations prior to his departure from India. He was told there by everyone that crossing the ocean would force him to go down a level in caste, but on the contrary, Moon gave himself a Brahmin name and reinvented himself in the Caribbean (Lovelace, 1996, pp. 218-219). Nevadomsky (1980) remarks that loss of caste was further reinforced by the colonial system of dispersing new arrivals regardless of their religions, languages, and home villages. Consequently, upon arrival in the Caribbean, South Asians were alienated from their social structures as well as from their religious and cultural moorings, which made them all the more vulnerable to opportunistic missionaries.

Tyler from *Cereus Blooms at Night* (Mootoo, 1996) also remembers hearing about an early convert from the town of Paradise from his grandmother Nana when he was a child:

> 'I remember the first time I heard the name Chandin Ramchandin. It was long before arriving to work in Paradise at the alms house. Indeed, the recent rumours were elaborations of what I had heard many years ago when I was too young to pay attention' [….] I was ten or so. I was in the back of our house passing time with Cigarette Smoking Nana (to differentiate from Bible Quoting Nana, who I couldn't bring myself to get too close to, nor she to me since I was not turning out to be boyle enough for her church-going satisfaction) ... I was working up a froth pondering the specifics of family relationships. 'Nana, can your Pappy be your Pappy and your Granpappy at the same time?' Tyler recalls Nana's response:
>
> 'Yes could it could happen. The father could be the grandfather too. But it doesn't happen often and it's not, well, it's not good, it's not nice, you know, son.' .... 'Look here, son, you see, there was a fellow .... not from here, he was from Paradise, a fellow name Chandin, Chandin Ramchandin. You know, he only had a

> handful of years over me but when I was your age or so, they used to tell us that we must study hard so we could have the luck of that Ramchandin fellow. Hmmm, I wonder what become of him? Nowadays you don't even hear his name. It's like he disappeared off the face of the earth.' (Mootoo, 1996, p. 24-25)

The luck that Nana speaks of is Chandin's conversion to Christianity and adoption by the first Canadian Presbyterian missionary, Reverend Thoroughly. Old Man Ramchandin is an indentured field laborer from India living in the estate barracks with his wife Janaki and young son Chandin. After having undergone the long and treacherous journey and in an effort to shed caste, he is preoccupied with educating his son "out of the fields" and into a higher position. Tyler narrates Nana's postmemories:

> His eyes were closed but as usual he was not asleep. The old man kept himself awake by worrying about the future of his only child. He had been turning mathematical estimations this way and that, inside out and upside down in his head. He had, as usual, whipped himself up a headache with his obsessive predictions of what the state of his finances could be if he and his wife, Janaki, were to work one hour more, or even two hours more per day, so that enough funds might be accrued to send Chandin to a college in the capital, or even abroad to study a profession. With the rhythmic flicking of his thighs, he rocked the hammock and calculated how many years it would be before Chandin were eligible for enrollment in a college, how many extra hours there were in that many years - times two if his wife were also to work the extra time, factoring in a possible raise in their salaries. (Mootoo, 1996, p. 26)

At this moment, Reverend Thoroughly arrives in his buggy to propose that Chandin live with him in his house as a member of his family, to be educated by him in his new school, and help him with his missionary work. Ramchandin readily accepts because, much like crossing the *kala pani,* he views this as a favorable situation and a passport to opportunities that he cannot provide Chandin, and good fortune that would never have been possible if he had stayed in India.

Sandra Stewart (1981) states that in the beginning, formal education was an advantage only afforded to the indentured laborers as "minimal schooling for free blacks and Amerindians was tolerated by England" (Stewart, 1981, p. 188). Brinsley Samaroo (1975) states that most South Asian indentured laborers in Trinidad sent their children to the mission schools because of the economic advantages of a British education. Moreover, conversion combined with schooling offered immediate economic benefit as the Presbyterian mission hired Indo-Trinidadian teachers as part of the expansion of their mission on the island, which by 1911 included 61 schools and 8,080 students (Samaroo, 1975, pp. 46-48). As the mission schools proliferated, they were instrumental in preparing students for the Junior and Senior Cambridge examinations which were required not only for teaching positions, but also for low level civil service positions in the colonies.

So Chandin's adoption by the missionaries not only physically moves him from the barracks to the Thoroughly's house, but it also allows him to ascend in socioeconomic status within a very stratified androcentric colonial society, which was not possible in the caste system in South Asia.

The Reverend John and Sarah Morton began their mission work in Trinidad 1862 with the goal of converting all Indo-Trinidadians to Christianity, as well as educating them in the Scriptures. Their focus was solely on the East Indian population (Sitahal, 1967, p. 40). Harold Sitahal's (1967) master's thesis titled "The Mission of the Church in Trinidad: An Examination of the Church's Work and Influence among the Descendants of East Indians," reveals that:

> Morton's plan of evangelization was three-fold. This involved (1) to appeal to the adults in their own language, (2) to provide an English Education for the children of Indian immigrants, and (3) to train native teachers and preachers. It is not surprising that eventually one of the main tasks of the missionary was the supervisions and management of elementary schools. It was chiefly through this instrument that missionaries intended to accomplish their object of Christianizing the East Indians in Trinidad. (Sitahal, 1967, p. 54)

The church's focus on South Asians was also a contributing factor to the poor relations between Afro-Trinidadians and Indo-Trinidadians. African-Indian relations were strained from the very beginning due to the contractual compensation that the Indians received for their work. Samaroo (1967) discloses that the Canadian Presbyterian Church purposefully ignored the African populations and concentrated on the East Indian population. He quotes missionary K.J. Grant to show how the missions sought to cultivate a class that would help them to dominate the Afro-Trinidadian population, by enlisting: "East Indian people of our own Aryan race, if made to share in our privileges" (Grant, cited in Samaroo, 1967, p. 46). Samaroo contends that the missionaries' positive relationships with European descended merchants and planters alienated many in the African community who viewed both groups as their enemies. In turn, the planters and merchants viewed the African descended population as a possible threat to their personal and financial safety. In a 1919 petition circulated by these merchants, it was stated that that Indians under white planter control would be a powerful defense in the event of an uprising by the former enslaved Africans (Samaroo, 1967, pp. 54-55). Discriminatory missionary conversion practices, coupled with the way in which Afro-Trinidadians were positioned by planters, the church, and merchants, resulted in inequalities of opportunities and outcomes for African descended people, the effects of which persist up until the present in Trinidad.

Much of the earliest documented information regarding the South Asian indenture program derives from the notes and memoirs of Christian missionaries, some of whom detailed their interactions with laborers. Sarah and John Morton documented their experiences, which were recorded in *John Morton of Trinidad: Pioneer Missionary of the*

Presbyterian Church in Canada to the East Indians in the British West Indies; journals, letters and papers. Published in 1916 by Sarah Morton, the book provides a Christian historical perspective on indentured laborers during the Mortons' time in Trinidad. In the same fashion as Reverend Thoroughly in *Cereus Blooms at Night,* (Mootoo, 1996) the Mortons adopted an indentured laborer's son named Selal, who started living with them in 1869. Sarah Morton explains:

> when we first proposed to take him as our own his parents would not listen to it. After much urging his mother said if we would give her a dollar a month to buy tobacco he might come to us. On these terms we have him and should be very sorry to part with him ... our object is to endeavour to train him to be useful to his countrymen" (cited in Morton, 1916, p. 63).
>
> The Mortons also adopted a second boy named Allahdua.

In *Cereus Blooms at Night* (Mootoo, 1996) Tyler reveals that word quickly spreads across the island of Lantanacamara about the adoption of Chandin Ramchandin, who will be the first Indian to attend school in the Caribbean and the first "to get profession" (Mootoo, 1996, p. 29). The Reverend's motives are far from altruistic, as the conversion of the Ramchandin family and adoption of Chandin are part of a plan to convert all the indentured laborers on the island. The mission begins a seminary to train catechists to aid in the church's expansion on the island of Lantanacamara. This is quite an advancement for Chandin as a catechist is a prestigious position within colonial society. They also open a school for the children of indentured laborers and actively begin converting indentured laborers and their families.

Chandin is the only Indian at the seminary, his other classmates all come from the Shivering Wetlands. He mimics his taller, whiter classmates, unable to copy their height and color, but adopting their mannerisms, language, and style of dress. Sitahal points out that "pictures of early converts are always striking, especially in the way they appear to duplicate the garb and very demeanor of the missionary in their midst" (Sitahal, 1967, p. 58). Chandin also actively participates in the Reverend's fieldwork in addition to his studies at the seminary. The Thoroughlys even go as far as to consider a name change to a Christian name, such as Luke or Matthew, but eventually the Reverend decides against it because "people were most likely to be swayed by one of their own kind" (Mootoo, 1996, p. 30).

One of the first families of converts to follow in the Ramchandin family's footsteps also comes from their barracks. This family takes Christian names and their daughter Sarah enters the mission school. Chandin travels with the Thoroughlys on journeys where the Reverend actively promotes conversion on the island, but he is excluded from the family vacation to the Shivering Northern Wetlands. However, Chandin is happy with his new home and his conversion is not only a religious one as he adopts Western attitudes and judgments regarding his own people, feeling an "immense distaste for his background and the people in it" (Mootoo, 1996, p. 31). He also believes that the indentured laborers'

lack of fancy household goods results from their "apathy and a poverty of ambition" (p. 31). V.S. Naipaul's (1964) "A Christmas Story" also explores this theme through Randolph, a man who converts to Christianity as a young adult to secure a teaching job. Randolph remembers undergoing a name change and attending church regularly, and much like Chandin, he mimics the way the Christian missionaries dress and act. In the same manner as Chandin, he believes his fellow East Indians possess a "stupidity and backwardness" that embarrasses him (Naipaul, 1964, p. 42). Randolph remembers:

> It was a pleasure to hear myself be called Randolph, a name of rich historical associations, a name, I feel, thoroughly attuned to the times in which we live and to the society in which I found myself, and to forget that once - I still remember it with shame - I answered with simple instinct to the name of—Choonilal. That however is much in the past. I have buried it. (Naipaul, 1964, p. 41)

Thus, both male and female Indo-Caribbean writers remember the internalization of racism that is a consequence of the colonization process. This is in stark contrast to the missionaries and the many academic "experts" on the Caribbean who depend on the records kept by missionaries, who have ignored or minimized the self-loathing that occurs as a result of assimilation and denial.

When he is older, Chandin marries the previously mentioned convert Sarah and starts a family. For a while, Chandin continues his work for the Reverend, as both his interpreter and field assistant, but over time the strain of the unequal relationship is too much for him and he slowly recedes from the Thoroughly's private life. Chandin never really fits in with the Thoroughly family and the manifestation of internal strife causes him to withdraw from the family and suffer a total rejection by them (Mootoo, 1996, pp. 90-91). When Sarah runs away with the Reverend's daughter Lavinia, Chandin stops his work for the church and never returns. He begins to drink heavily and repeatedly rapes his daughters, until he is ultimately killed by one of them. Thus, the conversion of Chandin Ramchandin works well for the Reverand, who benefits greatly from Chandin's assistance in his successful conversion efforts, but does not work so well for Chandin himself, who is psychologically ruined in the process. Chandin's fate contrasts with that of Joshua in *The Swinging Bridge* (Espinet, 2003) who is able to take advantage of his education and church connections to advance his economic and social standing.

The Christian churches have influenced almost every aspect of life for Indo-Trinidadians, but this has come at a high price in relation to how the missionaries insisted on their rejection of ancestral South Asian lifeways and their unquestioned assimilation to Western norms and values instead. While their alienation from their communities of origin and themselves was traumatic, little of their suffering comes through in the few records from the era of indenture on the island, because most of these records were written by the missionaries themselves. Unfortunately, studies of indenture in Trinidad tend to rely heavily on missionary accounts, so that the silencing around the psychic damage which was inflicted by the churches on the Indo-Trinidadian population is perpetuated in much

of the academic work carried out on indenture. That said, creative writing by Indo-Trinidadian authors, such as *Cereus Blooms at Night* (Mootopo, 1996) and *The Swinging Bridge* (Espinet, 2003) has effectively challenged how events are, or are not, represented historically. The recollections of Nana and Tyler in *Cereus Blooms at Night* and Mona in *The Swinging Bridge* give voice to the silences created by memoirs such as those of John and Sarah Morton (Morton, 1916) which historians and anthropologists have utilized as important firsthand accounts of the indenture of South Asians in the Caribbean.

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INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE STUDY OF CREOLES AND CREOLIZATION

TWO STORIES AND A RECIPE IN AFRO-SEMINOLE ENGLISH LEXIFIER CREOLE

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Abstract
The following are two Sierra Leonean tales translated into Afro-Seminole Creole by Ian Hancock, in collaboration with Mrs. Ethel Warrior, the wife of Chief William 'Dub' Warrior, and the chief's sister Mrs. Choach Raspberry. Afro-Seminole English lexifier Creole is spoken today by African and Indigenous descended people in Oklahoma, Texas and northern Mexico and can be easily understood by speakers of Krio (Sierra Leone English lexifier Creole), Naija ("Nigerian Pidgin", or Nigerian English lexifier Creole) and other varieties of West African English lexifier Creoles, as well as by speakers of Gullah English lexifier Creole along the Atlantic coasts of South Carolina, Georgia and adjacent states in the U.S.

Key terms: Afro-Seminole Creole, Sierra Leone, English Lexifier Atlantic Creoles (ELACs), stories, recipes

Story 1: De two tittuh en de poon

One day one ole granny bin dey whey e sen one e lee gyalchile fuh go duh de ribber fuh wash e dutty pan en poon. Time e come back de gyal realize seh e bin leff de poon behime but e bin too faid fuh say. Eebnin come en dem siddung duh table fuh eat. De ole granny done ready fuh saab up de rice but e cyaan fine e big poon, e nuh see um innywey. E say 'gyal, entee ah bin sen hunnuh fuh go wash we saabin poon? Wisseh e deh? You leff um duh de ribber? You bes go bring um back fo ah whup you *good* fashin!' De gyal go back duh de ribber but e cyaan fine de poon. E tarrify fuh go home so e des duh siddung nex de ribber duh cry. Bumbye one ole ooman pass by en e see um duh cry. E ax um 'meck hunnuh duh cry, me daughtuh?' De gyal tell um seh e loss one poon whey e bin pose fuh wash en e faid fuh go home bitout um. De ole ooman tell um seh e kin hep um but fuss e fuh crub e dutty foot dem good en clean. De gyal gree.

When e done done fuh clean de ole ooman foot, de ole ooman tell um fuh gullung long de ribber some mo en e ‘en meet up wit one nex ole ooman weh e kin hep um. Duh so e do.

When e meet de seckint ole ooman e tell um how de fus ole ooman bin tell um how e could a hep um fuh fine de poon en ef e please could hep um. De ole ooman tell um seh yes e could a hep um, but befo e hep um e fuh cratch de skeeter bite whey dey all ober e back. De gyal cratch um cratch um tell de ooman satisfy den de ooman tell um seh e fuh pass on down de ribber bank tell e meet up long one nex ole lady en darra dey ole lady gwen able hep um fuh sho.

Whin e meet de tud ole ooman e tell um how de seckint ole ooman bin tell um e cud a hep um fuh fine de poon fuh sho en ef e please could hep um. De ole ooman tell um seh yes e shonuff could a hep um, cusin e fus fuh clean off e nasty so laig en pit merisin pon um.

When de gyal bin done clean off all de nasty en de ole ooman satisfy, den de ole ooman ax um dis queshin: “Two aig deddeh, one a dem black, tudder one white. Whush one hunnuh ‘en pick?” Di gyal tell um seh e wan’ pick de white one. Den de ooman ax um gen seh “one grain a rice, eeder one cup a rice, which one hunnuh ‘en pick?” De gyal tell um seh nummuh duh de one grain a rice e wan’ pick.

Well awright. De ole lady gi um de aig en de one grain a rice en e tell um e fuh deppon e way. Dasso e do. Soon ez e git a piece fur distant de gyal buss opin de aig fuh see whuh dey eenside um. Dey so, e see one big big house full a all kine a ting, eebin de dyzack same poon whey e bin loss. E *too* glad. So den, e teck de one lone grain a rice en e bile um, en de whole pot come *full* a rice. E care de poon en de pot a rice back home en de ole granny des too please fuh git back e poon en one full pot a rice.

Now, dishyuh gyal ha one tittuh whey see seh e tittuh now duh de granny favorite kaze a de rice en ting, en e git bex. E tell e seff seh *im* fuh do des whuh di udder one do, en ef e do dat, dem granny gwen like um sameway too. So when de time come fuh im go wash di plate en de poon duh de ribber, e leff de poon pon de ribber aidge fuh puppus, en when di granny ax um duh wuh meck e nuh care um back wit um, e des say “ah fergit.” Same as befo de ole lady say “You bes go bring um back fo ah whup you boontas good!”

De gyal go en e tan up nex de ribber duh bawl en holler tell a ole ooman yeddy um en e come ax um whuh duh ail um. De gyal tell um seh im granny poon done loss en ef e go back bidout um e sholy ‘en git a lickin. De ole ooman tell um seh e know wisseh de poon deh, but e fuh crub e dutty foot befo e tell um. De gyal kwinch up e face en tell de ole ooman seh e han dem *clean*, en e na’ab airy tention fuh tech numburry dutty tinky foot. De ooman seh berrewell den. Go on along, mebby sumaddy else ‘en hep hunnuh, e n’en be *me*.

E go long some mo duh cry loud fuh leh eribody fuh yeddy um, tell e meet one nex ole lady whey ax um duh wuh meck e duh cry so. E gi um de same tory bout how im poon

loss en ef e nuh fine um e granny ‘en whup de black off a e boontas when e git back home. De ole ooman tell um seh e could a hep um but fus off e fuh cratch de skeeter bite whuh duh run pizen whuh dey all ober e back. Nudder time agen de gyal nuh gree fuh ease de ole ooman. E tell um e bin fuh *shame* fuh eebin *ax* um fuh pit e clean han puntop e ole cratchup body. E go long some mo.

Den e meet anudder ole ooman en e taat fuh bawl en cry tell de ooman ax um duh wuh meck. E gi um de same tory bout de poon, en de ole lady tell um seh e could a hep um but e fuh fus clean off e nasty so laig en pit merisin pon um. De gyal tell um seh e fuh shame fuh ax um for do dat when him des d’a lee gyal.

So den de ole ooman show um two aig, one a dem white en one a dem black. E ax de gyal wush one e want. De gyal say e wan’ de black one kaze e bigger monuh de white one. Den de lady ax am ef e ‘ud a take a cup a rice eeder des one grain a rice, en de greedy big-y’eye gyal say duh de *cup* a rice e want, e n’en take no one lee grain a rice whuh couldn feed eebin a *anch*.

E take de aig en de cup a rice en e go. E nuh tell de ooman “tenky auntie,” e dess gullong. Soon ez e git some distant e side fuh bile de rice kaze hungry binnuh ketch um. E bile de pot a rice but stidda e duh cook, de rice bin des bile en bile away tell nuttin bin leff dey. De pot empty. So now de gyal know seh suntin wrong, e bes git back home.

E still nuh ha de poon so fuh leh e granny proud furrum e seh “look yuh granny, a done bring hunnuh one big fine black aig!!”

Tanka (’tan lack) de granny bin know bout de black aig, kaze e lock de do en de winduh dem fo e crack um open, en when e crack um open, all kine a sneek en spider en korpion en ting come out, en chase de gyal en e granny roun de house en kill dem tuh det. Dat bin do fuh de gyal en e granny all two.

Story 2: When hunnuh yie see sump’m hunnuh fuh shet hunnuh mout: de talkin’ skiffy

One fambly bin dey whey ha’ one gyal chile whey name Nancy. Dem nyuse fuh call um Nannuh. De gyal bin des too pudy; hunnuh bin fuh see de heer pon e hade, long en black, en e teet dem white luckah snow en e nose small en pinty! De whole a im face bin fine to *dat.*

All de man dem een da place bin hoan fuh married darra gyal fuh true: hunter, lyer, butcherman, doctor, bidnesman, all kine a man bin want hab um.

One a dem man, de bidnesman, bin able fuh coat di gyal en married um en dasso e do. Dem all two bin lib togedder fuh long.

Now, een dishyuh town whey dem lib, one nex lil boy bin lib dey too. Nyoung boy whey still binnuh go school. Dishyuh bubbuh bin fine same lack Nancy fine. But eebin de gyal hab eriting wuh e need, erreh time e see dis fine nyoung boy duh swonguh pon de skreet e lub um en e wan’ fuh dey nex turrum.

Des so ah bin tell hunnuh, Nancy man duh bidnesman, en kaze a dat e done use fuh trabble fa way fuh e wuck en leff e wife lone duh house. De boy know dis en e nyuse fuh teck e chance fuh sneak ober tuh Nancy house fuh spen time turrum. Dem all two begin fuh *study* kerryon togedder inny chance dem get.

De hunter man en de butcher binnuh frien da time befo Nancy cide e nuh want eeder one a dem. Dem still duh frien en when de hunter man see seh de nyoung boy binnuh spen time tuh de bidnesman wife e jallous, en e tell de butcher en dem each-anurruh meck plan how fuh deal wit um. So de butcher man go tuh de bidnesman house when e bin dey home fuh sell um some meat. While dem binnuh tanup tuh de doe duh talk, de butcher mention seh e could see de boy duh go bizit e wife any time when de man nuh dey dey. De man ax um "fuh true?" E tell um "yes, duh true." De man say "ef ah know seh duh true fuh true, ah en gi hunnuh five hunda dollah, but ef duh lie, ah en *daid* hunnuh." De butcher man say sho duh true, e n'en need fuh daid um.

One day de bidnesman say e haffuh leff fuh go do e bidness duh some fa way town, en e aks Nancy fuh put lee nyah-nyam togedduh fuh e care wit um. Nancy go take one fish, e pack de hade en de tail fuh e man but e keep de middle paat tuh one side. Im man say "you bleeze fuh care me go tuh de station fuh sen me pon de road" so dem leff togedder en when dem reach dey, den de man tell e ooman goodbye. E make lack e go een de station but e des go out anodder doe wisseh de butcher man binnuh wait furrum wit e cah. E cah'm back tuh de house quick en de man go een en hide up under de roof. Nancy nuh bin go home direc' kezzwhy e bin wan' stop tuh e chookleh house fus fuh tell um seh im man done leff en e fuh come turrum dat eebnin.

Da eebin de boy banyuh good en e go ober tuh Nancy house. Nancy leh e come eenside en e shet de doe behine um. Den e go tuh e man closet en teck out one e man bes shut, e ga'm tuh de boy fuh e wear. Den e play one record pon de victrola en e fix um one drink a polioti, e opin up one peach quat furrum, e gi um tettuh-poon en tolie, en e cook de fish furrum whey e bin leff tuh one side. Den dem go en lay down pon de bade duh chooneh.

Eenjurin de whole time dishyuh binnuh go awn, de man des bin dey upstaze duh yeddy de whole ting. E bex. Nancy en de boy do dem bidness, de man see de whole ting. E haaky whey Nancy tell de boy seh "duh de way how you kin lub me good, duh kezz a dat ah lub you. Me own man nuh able fuh satisfy me."

De boy 'taat fuh tire, Nancy tell um fuh drink mo gin fuh gi um mo trenk fuh do de bidness, e eebin tell um seh e en gi um hunda dolla fuh keep on duh chooneh wit um one time mo. De boy say "all right."

Den de boy say e haffuh leebe befoe dem lock de doe duh e own house, eeder dem en leff um outside. E teck off de man shut en gi Nancy, en Nancy chook um onneet de baid. All dis time, de man dey up dey, e nabber yeddy sissha nasteh ting een e life.

De boy go banyuh gen, pit on e close, Nannah ga'm de hunda dolla en tell um seh e en cah'm go paat-way home.

De time de gyal nuh bin dey dey de man come down fum whey e binnuh hide, e go out a de house. Nancy come home, e go leddown pon e baid en drap tuh sleep. Come two o'clock, e yeddy s'mbawdy duh nack pon de doe. "Who-da'?" "Duh me." "Who-da' duh me?" "Gyal hunnuh nuh know hunnuh man own woice? Duh me. Ah done come back home." Nancy aks um "wha' happen?" Im man tell um seh de train whey e bin fuh teck bin done leff bitout um, so e bin haffuh come back home. E tell Nannuh fuh go cook sump'm fuh e eat kezz e belly duh huller.

Time e done eat e fill, e tell de gyal seh, count uh e kin dey away summuch, dem nabber ha nuff time fuh eachanoder, so do, leh dem ketch lil bidness now. But Nancy done fuh tire, e nuh ha nuh trenk fuh do nutt'n no mo. E tell um "me belly duh hut me, ah nuh able."

E man bex. "Eh-eh gyal, wha' d'ail you? You nuh ha nuh feelin fuh me, dis fo mont' whey we nuh teck keer a bidness you wan' deny me now? Mussy you duh hide sump'm. Nancy feel seh e boun fuh do sump'm so e begin fuh teck aff e close. As e tan up dey staat nekkity befoe e man, de man pint pon e skiffy, e say "Nancy, you know seh da ting kin *talk*." E cack one e yaze en fawm seh e kin yeddy whey de skiffy kin talk turrum.

E tell e wife: "Nannuh, dis ting duh complain bout you, seh you bin try fuh ceeb me. You tink seh duh lie? E tell me seh dis eebnin one bubbuh bin come yah … wha? Wha' time de boy bin leff? ... by lebb'm o'clock? Oh? De boy say e bin fuh leff kezz dem muss lock de doe pon um duh e own house? ... en wha' de boy do when e bin dey yah? E drink polioti? E play me record dem? E eat one quat a peach? E gi um tettuh-poon, e gi um tolie? Oh? En Nancy bin gi um one a me shut fuh weer? ... Oh, hunnuh duh tell me seh de shut dey onneet de baid? Le' ah see. Hm! Look, duh dey e dey! Gyal, dishyuh ting sho duh complain bout you. Yeddy? E wan' tell me mo: Oh, me ooman gi im hunda dalla? Wha' meck*!?* E bin wan' gi um all canabba ting fuh meck e glad, kezz me, ah nuh able satisfy um? Choh!" De man gidup, e tun e back pon de gyal en e go tuh de nex room. E done fuh bex.

Now Nancy bex pon e skiffy kezz e tink seh duh e skiffy whey done pit um een disshyuh chrubble. So e go een de washroom en teck one tick en e begin fuh flamm de ting good fashin, e wale pon um en e tell um seh "You! You skiffy, yeddy me good; *when hunnuh yie see sump'm, hunnuh fuh shet hunnuh mout!* E bin des wan' fuh daid. But e nuh daid, en so e go leddown tuh e man fuh chry fuh fren um up.

De nex day, de man go bout e bidniss same lucka ebry day, e tan lack e done forget bout um. But Nannuh still nuh satisfy. E go fine one cunja man en e tell um all wha' happen. De cunja man tell um seh "s'mbawdy bin tell on hunnuh, e nuh bin duh hunnuh 'ting' whey tell hunnuh man dat." De gyal say "Hm." E say "Cunja man, ah wan' hunnuh fuh fix da' pussin, en befo e daid ah wan' fuh know who dat e be." De cunja man say all right. Soon de fix ketch de butcher, en befo e daid e confess, seh "yes, duh bin me whey tell e man bout de chooklah." Den e daid. Een dem time befo, ef duh cunja meck pussin

daid dem nubbuh binnuh bury darra pussin close tuh peepil house, dem muss cah'm go een de bush fuh bair' um.

All right. Some time pass, en one day de hunter man bin deppon duh hunt een de bresh. Nuh forget seh duh im whey bin tell de butcher bout de nyoung boy een de fuss place. Wice e bin dey een de bresh e yeddy s'mbawdy duh call um, seh "Howdy, me good frien'." E tun en look behine but e nuh see nutt'n cusin fuh one haid bone pon one stomp. E say "Duh who da' duh talk to me?" De haid bone tell um seh "duh me." De hunter man aks um "wha' hunnuh duh do yah so?" en de haid bone gi um answer, seh "duh me mout' wha' bring me come yuh. Ah wan' tell hunnuh *when hunnuh yie see sump'm, hunnuh fuh shet hunnuh mout!*"

Den de hunter man scaid. E taat fuh run, e run soatle e reach de chief a de town. E tell um seh "Chief, hunnuh n'en bleebe wha' ah bin dess see." E say "Chief, ah see one haid bone whuh kin *talk!!*" De Chief suck e teet. E say "Hunnuh nuh see seh ah busy? Meck hunnuh kin come yuh duh talk chupit talk bout haid bone whey kin talk? Go 'long fum yuh, leff me do!" But de hunter keep on duh bodder de Chief bout how e bin see one haid bone whey kin talk, en how e bin yeddy um duh talk en tell um howdy, so till de Chief say "All right. Ah en gi hunnuh two sojer fuh hep hunnuh care da haid bone come back wit hunnuh. But ef nummuh duh nonsen' whuh hunnuh duh tell me, ah en kill hunnuh!"

De hunter tell um seh "Chief, gi me *ten* sojer!" Dem go back tuh wishpat de haid bone dey. E graff um, e tell um "Bredder Haid Bone, we done come fuh tell you howdy." De haid bone nuh say *nutt'n.* De hunter man skiddish. E queeze de haid bone haad en aks um gen seh "Head Bone, *howdy!*" Nerreh wud. Now e face kibbuh wit sweat. E tell de sojer dem seh "Ah sway dis gwen talk. Le' we cah'm go back tuh de Chief house." Dem all go.

Dem reach tuh de Chief en dem show um de haid bone. De Chief say "disshuh duh de haid bone whuh pose fuh talk?" De hunter say "Yes Sah." Chief say "Berrewell le' ah yeddy um duh talk. Ah en gi hunnuh fo hour fuh meck e talk. Ef e nuh talk by dat, ah en daid hunnuh."

De hunter scaid tuh det. E kiss pon de haid bone; e lub up pon de haid bone. E baig de haid bone, de haid bone still nuh say one nattle wud. De Chief come back e aks um "You done meck e talk?" De man say "No Sah." De Chief tell de hunter seh e en gi um nummuh two mo hour, dasall, en e tell e sojer dem ef di hunter nuh bin foce um fuh talk by dat, dem fuh git ready fuh shoot um.

De fus hour pass, de man begin fuh cry. E sen fuh e wife, de ooman come but e kud'n hep um tall. Den de time come en dem shoot de hunter man. En des' de man die, erribawdy yerry de haid bone begin fuh talk. E say *when hunnuh yie see sump'm, hunnuh fuh shet hunnuh mout!*"

Da duh me tory, wisseh duh hunnuh own?

Recipe: Frybrade

Disshyuh duh sometin else gen whey de Istichatti [Native Americans] gi we. Fuh fix um, hunnuh en need:

White areeny flouah, fo cup
Sote, two lilly poon
Sugar, one reglah poon
Beckin powdah, one reglah poon
Shoatnin, one reglah poon
Worruh, two cup
Ile, two cup

Po de ile een hunnuh pan, bout deep ez tree inch. Set um pon de fiah fuh hot.

Wice e duh hot, crabble up de flouah en de sote en de sugar en de beckin powdah toged-duh, den whin dem done mix good fashin, steer een de shoatnin en de worruh en mash ebbiting soatle e done tun duh dough. De dough fuh sahf, hunnuh fuh able queeze one chonk uh rum wit hunnuh two han' tell e come flat en roun—bout two tree inch cross de top en hahf uh inch tick. Dem duh hunnuh lee brade dough dem, dem wan' fabuh ro biscuit. Leff dem duh one side.

Tess de ile fuh see ef e done git good'n hot dishya way: chuway one lilly piece de dough eentuh rum. En ef e begin fry one time, de ile ready. G'on en pit one hunnuh lee brade een de ile, e fuh begin fuh tun brown en rise up een de ile. Time e rise up pon top de ile, tunobuh rum and fry e udduh side soatle e brown too. Teck um out de pan en set um pontop nyuse-paper fuh leh de estry ile dreen out uh rum. Pit de nex lee shape uh brade dough eentuh de ile, en do de same ting gen. Some peepil lack fuh pit milk mona worrah een dem dough.

ATTITUDES TOWARD PAPIAMENTU AND SPANISH IN CURAÇAO: PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF A MATCHED-GUISE EXPERIMENT[1]

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Abstract
We present the results of a survey that was administered to 57 participants to investigate attitudes toward Papiamentu and Spanish in Curaçao.[2] The research method was an online matched-guise experiment, consisting of 'blind auditions' and a questionnaire to evaluate personality traits of speakers recorded in Papiamentu, Spanish and both languages. The attitudes were overall positive and somewhat more positive in the case of Spanish as compared to Papiamentu. The results revealed some differences in the evaluation of individual speakers, rather than between the two languages, highlighting the importance of control over specific characteristics of the recordings, including individual voice qualities.

Key terms: Curaçao, language attitudes, Papiamentu, Spanish, multilingualism

Introduction

In this article we present the results of an online survey that was designed to investigate attitudes toward Papiamentu and Spanish on the island of Curaçao. Papiamentu is a

[1] We thank the participants who took the effort to fill in the questionnaire. This research project would have been unthinkable without their willingness to collaborate and their efforts. We alone are responsible for any errors or misinterpretations.

[2] Notice that the variety spoken in Aruba is referred to as Papiamento, whereas the variety spoken in Bonaire and Curaçao is known as Papiamentu. The two varieties are mutually intelligible (Kouwenberg & Murray 1994, pp. 4-5), but they make use of different orthographies. In this article we will refer to the language as Papiamentu most of the time, as the survey was distributed among participants from Curaçao.

Spanish/Portuguese-lexifier creole, spoken as the major home language in Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao (the ABC-islands) that are part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Until recently, Dutch was the only official language in the islands, dominating formal domains such as governance, education and the judiciary. English and Spanish are also widely used, as home languages and as second languages due to migration, tourism and the increasing influence of the media (television, the internet).

In the study upon which this article is based, we investigated attitudes toward Papiamentu and Spanish by means of an online matched-guise experiment, consisting of 'blind auditions' and a questionnaire to evaluate personality traits of the respective speakers. The questionnaire was filled out by 57 participants of different age groups.

Previous studies about language use and language attitudes in Curaçao (Garrett, 2008; Kester, 2011, 2020) pointed out that Papiamentu was widely used and attitudes toward the language were very positive. Kester (2020) concluded from a statistical analysis of 471 questionnaires that the speech community of Curaçao was in fact very homogeneous, as language use and attitudes were similar across participants that belonged to different age groups and were of local versus foreign descent.

In order to contextualize our study of attitudes toward Spanish in Curaçao, it is important to briefly consider the role of Spanish on the neighboring island of Aruba, which is socio-historically and linguistically intimately related to Curaçao. Aruba has been experiencing a massive influx of Latin American immigrants since the 1980s due to the booming tourist industry on the island.[3] Carroll (2009; 2015) explicitly addressed the question as to what extent the waves of Latin American immigration over the past decades have given rise to negative attitudes and perceptions of threat with regard to the viability of Papiamento and Aruban culture among the Aruban population. Based on interviews, Carroll concluded that Papiamento was not in danger of language shift but instead was perceived as a strong marker of Aruban identity (2015, pp. 120-127). However, Carroll's interviewees also observed that the number and omnipresence of Latinx immigrants on the island had made many Arubans feel concerned that Papiamento and Aruban culture were in need of special protection: "there is a palpable anti-immigrant discourse targeted at the most recent wave of Spanish speaking immigrants" (Carroll, 2015, p. 122). The perception that some of these immigrants were of socio-economically

[3] Reports of the Central Bureaus of Statistics of Aruba and Curaçao reveal the following numbers for the major groups of Latin American immigrants (according to country of birth), based on the Census held in 2020 and 2023, respectively. The total sum of these groups is somewhat higher in Aruba, although the total population is smaller in size (Central Bureau of Statistics, Aruba, 2020; Central Bureau of Statistics, Curaçao, 2023).

	Aruba (2020)	Curaçao (2023)
Colombia	7.104	5.757
Dominican Republic	3.068	5.535
Venezuela	5.900	4.264
Total population	108.166	155.826

disadvantaged backgrounds seemed to have increased negative attitudes toward the Spanish language and its speakers: "the Spanish language is starting to be viewed as something that is not socially acceptable due to its association with the marginalized immigrant population in Aruban society" (pp. 128-129). Carroll raised the question as to whether this stigma would result in racism or the denial of equitable opportunities for Spanish-speaking immigrants (p. 129).[4]

Since the time of Carroll's research, the use of Spanish has greatly expanded on the ABC-islands, due to the political crisis in Venezuela. Oostindie (2019) observes that probably 10% of the population in the ABC-islands is of Venezuelan origin. Although the islands have a long history of migration by Latin American and Caribbean immigrants, more recently there has been concern about the Venezuelan immigrants because of the costs in terms of reception and crime (Oostindie, 2019). Obviously, these concerns may result in negative perceptions of Spanish-speaking immigrants and their language. Kester and Romero Ojeda (2020) specifically addressed the role of Spanish in Curaçao in an online survey that was filled out by 92 participants, who belonged to different age groups. The results indicated that attitudes toward Spanish were generally positive. Spanish was considered important for instrumental purposes such as getting a job and studying. The participants valued Spanish language skills: they wanted their children to know Spanish, they wanted to expand their own knowledge of Spanish and they did not think that Spanish posed a threat to Papiamentu. Hence, the influx of Venezuelan immigrants did not seem to have resulted in negative attitudes toward Spanish in Curaçao.[5]

In this article we report on an additional research project that was designed for the investigation of language attitudes in Curaçao, but based on a different research design, namely the matched-guise technique.

Research on language attitudes

Research on language attitudes is concerned with dispositions to specific language varieties. Ajzen (1988, p. 4) defined an attitude as "a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event". Attitudes toward language varieties are largely determined by intergroup relations and stereotypical opinions about speech communities and their individual members (Lambert et al., 1960; Giles et al., 1977, and subsequent work). On the islands of the former Dutch Antilles language attitudes are influenced by the colonial history of unequal power relations and ambivalence towards the metropole and its citizens. The population of the ABC-islands consists of pluri-cultural and pluri-lingual communities in which the majority of the population

[4] See Kelly (2015) and Kester and De Cuba (2025) for more recent studies about language use and attitudes toward Spanish in Aruba.

[5] See Van der Sloot (2010, 2011) for research about identity construction among Latinxs in Curaçao and Kester and George (2021) for a study concerning language use and attitudes toward Papiamentu among Latinx immigrants in Curaçao.

speaks Papiamento/u as their mother tongue, whereas Dutch was the only officially recognized language up until the first decade of the present century.[6,7]

Research on language attitudes can make use of *direct* methods such as questionnaires and interviews, at the risk that the results are affected by a social desirability bias (the tendency to provide "socially appropriate" answers, see Garrett, 2010, pp. 44-45). In order to avoid this methodological problem Wallace Lambert and his team developed the matched-guise technique (MGT) (Lambert et al., 1960) to study language attitudes *indirectly*, by means of 'blind auditions', in which the informants are not informed about the real purpose of the experiment. In this article we will present the results of an online survey that involved a MGT-experiment to study attitudes toward Papiamentu and Spanish in Curaçao.

Based on Carroll (2009, 2015) and Oostindie (2019) we hypothesize that negative perceptions of Spanish-speaking immigrants may have resulted in negative attitudes toward their language. As this hypothesis has not been corroborated by previous research based on a *direct* research method (questionnaires) it is interesting to investigate whether the use of an *indirect* research method (a matched-guise technique experiment) leads to different results, as the latter are expected to be affected in a lower degree by factors of social desirability and political correctness.

Methodology

The research project was realized as part of the bachelor's program in Spanish language and Culture at Utrecht University (Henriquez, 2023). We collected fourteen audio-recordings of seven female speakers who read a short text about the Curaçaoan flag in Papiamentu and Spanish (see Appendix 1). We selected six recordings that were read with great fluency and natural speed.[8] The recordings of two speakers (Speakers 1 and 2) were included in both languages. In the cases of Speakers 3 and 4 the recordings were included in one single language and played after the first recordings of Speaker 1 and Speaker 2.[9] Table 1 illustrates the order of the audio-fragments and their duration.

[6] The percentages of households speaking Papiamento/u in Aruba and Curaçao corresponded to 69.6% and 80.3% in 2000 and 2001, respectively (Central Bureau of Statistics, Aruba, 2004-; Central Bureau of Statistics, Curaçao, 2001).

[7] In 2003 Papiamento was recognized as an official language alongside Dutch in Aruba. The Netherlands Antilles recognized Papiamentu and English as official languages besides Dutch in 2007.

[8] Unfortunately, we were not able to execute a pilot study to test the validity of the audio-recordings due to time constraints. The other recordings were inadequate for the purpose, because they contained hesitations or background noises.

[9] Strictly speaking, only the cases of Speakers 1 and 2 correspond to the classical matched-guise technique, as the recording of two guises (namely Papiamentu and Spanish) are matched. In the cases of Speaker 3 and 4, however, we included a recording in one single language, a design known as the verbal-guise technique. See Loureiro-Rodríguez and Acar (2022) and Dragojevic and Goatley-Soan (2022) for more information concerning the two research methods respectively.

Audio-fragments	Speakers	Languages	Duration
A1	Speaker 1	Papiamentu	0.27
A2	Speaker 2	Spanish	0.28
A3	Speaker 3	Papiamentu	0.26
A4	Speaker 4	Spanish	0.26
A5	Speaker 2	Papiamentu	0.30
A6	Speaker 1	Spanish	0.27

Table 1 Order and duration of the audio-fragments in the two languages, as read by the four speakers and presented to the participants.

The four subjects were fluent speakers of Papiamentu and Spanish; they were similar in age (27-31 years) and all completed higher education (higher vocational education or university). Table 2 provides a short description of their countries of birth and their language backgrounds.

	Country of birth	Language background
Speaker 1	Curaçao	Acquired Papiamentu as her first language. Acquired Spanish at an early age, by watching television and socializing with Spanish-speaking friends. Her husband is from Venezuela.
Speaker 2	Colombia	Acquired Spanish as her first language. Acquired Papiamentu after moving to Curaçao at an early age.
Speaker 3	Dominican Republic	Acquired Spanish as her first language. Acquired Papiamentu after moving to Curaçao at an early age.
Speaker 4	Curaçao	Acquired Spanish as a home language, but being born and raised in Curaçao, she acquired Papiamentu simultaneously.

Table 2 Countries of birth and language backgrounds of the four speakers.

The questionnaire was made available in Google docs in June of 2023 (Appendix 3). The link to the questionnaire was distributed among the personal network of the second author and beyond by means of the snowball method. The questionnaire was preceded by an information letter about the research project and a declaration of consent to be ticked in a box by each participant (see Appendix 2). The research project was approved *post hoc* by the Linguistics Chamber of the Faculty Ethics assessment Committee of the Faculty of Humanities (FETC-H) at Utrecht University (project 25-100-01).[10]
The information letter and declaration of consent were formulated in Papiamentu and the questionnaire was formulated in Papiamentu and Spanish, in order to avoid a potential language bias (caused by the use of either Papiamentu or Spanish).

[10] The Linguistics Chamber of the Faculty Ethics assessment Committee of the Faculty of Humanities (FETC-H) provided permission for publication of the results in retrospect, stating that the study met the standards for approval of the committee.

After listening to each recording the participants evaluated the speaker with respect to 6 personality traits on a 5-point scale, scoring their agreement, neutrality or disagreement with the statement that the respective trait characterized the recorded individual they had been listening to. In the cases of economic level and level of education, the participants evaluated a 5-point scale ranging from 'low' to 'high'.

The personality traits to be evaluated by the participants were inspired by the model presented in Bayard et al. (2001) involving four semantic scales: power, competence, solidarity and status. The corresponding personality traits we included were: friendly (solidarity), attractive (solidarity), intelligent (competence), reliable (competence), economic level (status) and level of education (status). We only included 6 personality traits to evaluate the individual speakers, in order not to make the task too time-consuming or boring for the participants. The questionnaires were filled out by 57 participants, belonging to the age groups of 16-25 (17.5%), 26-54 (59.6%) and 55+ (22.8%).

Results

In this section we will first present the evaluation of the personality traits of the speakers recorded in Papiamentu and Spanish, respectively. In the second part of this section, we will compare the evaluations of the two speakers who were recorded in the two languages. In the tables we first present the traits corresponding to the solidarity scale (friendly, attractive), followed by the traits on the competence scale (intelligent, reliable) and the status scale (education level and economic class). For ease of exposition the point scores of 1 and 2 (expressing *disagreement* and *low level*) were grouped together, as well the point scores of 4 and 5 (expressing *agreement* and *high level*). All scores higher than 50% appear in bold font.

Comparative analysis of Papiamentu and Spanish

In order to generalize over the individual speakers, we calculated the average scores per language in percentages. As illustrated in Table 3, the evaluations of the speakers of the two languages were not very distinct and generally more favorable in case of the speakers of Spanish as compared to those of Papiamentu. Both groups were evaluated as friendly.

The speakers of Papiamentu were evaluated as somewhat more attractive and somewhat more economically privileged, but these scores were in the 'neutral' range. The average scores of agreement with the remaining personality traits were higher for the speakers

of Spanish. Hence, they were evaluated more often as intelligent, reliable and educated than the speakers of Papiamentu.

The person who is talking sounds	**Disagreement**		**Neutral**		**Agreement**	
	PA	**SP**	**PA**	**SP**	**PA**	**SP**
Friendly	10.0	6.5	31.6	33.4	**58.8**	**60.2**
Attractive	22.2	14.6	**53.8**	42.1	24.0	43.2
Intelligent	15.8	5.3	42.1	33.9	42.1	**60.8**
Reliable	18.8	12.3	38.0	36.8	43.3	**50.9**
	Low		**Neutral**		**High**	
Economic level	21.7	11.1	**50.9**	45.0	27.5	4.9
Education level	20.5	5.9	36.8	32.7	42.7	**61.5**

Table 3 Average scores of the six speakers recorded in Papiamentu and Spanish, respectively (scores in percentages).

In Tables 4 and 5 we take a closer look at the evaluations of the individual speakers of the respective languages. The results in Table 4 indicate that the recordings in Papiamentu were evaluated with neutral and high scores of agreement. Speaker 1 (A1) and 2 (A5) were both evaluated as friendly, but scores of agreement with the remaining personality traits (friendly, intelligent, reliable and educated) were systematically higher for Speaker 1 (A1), and lower (in the *neutral* range) for Speaker 2 (A5) and yet lower in case of Speaker 3 (A3).

The person who is talking sounds	**Disagreement**			**Neutral**			**Agreement**		
	A1	**A3**	**A5**	**A1**	**A3**	**A5**	**A1**	**A3**	**A5**
Friendly	7	15.8	7.1	14	47.4	33.3	**79**	36.9	**59.7**
Attractive	14.1	40.3	12.3	42.1	45.6	**73.7**	43.9	14	14
Intelligent	0	38.6	8.8	29.8	43.9	**52.6**	**70.1**	17.5	38.6
Reliable	10.6	33.4	12.3	21.1	43.9	49.1	**68.4**	22.8	38.6
			Low			**Neutral**			**High**
Economic level	10.6	36.9	17.6	35.1	**54.4**	**63.2**	**54.4**	8.8	19.3
Education level	1.8	43.8	15.8	15.8	42.1	**52.6**	**82.5**	14.1	31.6

Table 4 Evaluations of the personality traits of the three speakers recorded in **Papiamentu** (scores in percentages).

Table 5 shows that the evaluations of the speakers of Spanish were overall more positive (as compared to those of the Papiamentu speakers in Table 4), especially in the traits

related to competence (intelligent, reliable) and status (economic level, level of education). Speaker 1 (A6) and Speaker 4 (A4) were evaluated more positively than Speaker 2 (A2).

The person who is talking sounds	**Disagreement**			**Neutral**			**Agreement**		
	A2	**A4**	**A6**	**A2**	**A4**	**A6**	**A2**	**A4**	**A6**
Friendly	12.3	3.6	3.5	47.4	28.1	24.6	40.4	**68.4**	**71.9**
Attractive	26.3	14.1	3.5	49.1	36.8	40.4	24.5	49.1	**56.1**
Intelligent	12.3	3.5	0	49.1	22.8	29.8	38.6	**73.7**	**70.2**
Reliable	22.8	7.1	7.1	43.9	33.3	33.3	33.4	**59.7**	**59.7**
	Low			**Neutral**			**High**		
Economic level	19.3	7.1	7	**54.4**	42.1	38.6	26.3	**50.9**	**54.4**
Education level	8.8	5.3	3.5	42.1	26.3	29.8	49.2	**68.5**	**66.7**

Table 5 Evaluations of the personality traits of the three speakers recorded in **Spanish** (scores in percentages).

Hence, the analysis of the results per language indicates that there are no sharp distinctions between the evaluation of the recordings in Papiamentu and Spanish. Overall, the evaluation of the speakers of Spanish is somewhat more positive, but individual differences between the speakers seem to play an important role.

Comparative analysis of speakers recorded in both languages

Tables 6 and 7 present the evaluation of the personality traits of Speaker 1 and Speaker 2 who were recorded in both languages (corresponding to recordings A1, A6 and the one hand and A2, A5 on the other). The results in Table 6 indicate high scores of agreement with all of the personality traits of Speaker 1. Although the scores of agreement are somewhat higher for Papiamentu in some of the categories (friendly, reliable, edu

The person who is talking sounds	**Disagreement**		**Neutral**		**Agreement**	
	PA (A1)	**SP (A6)**	**PA (A1)**	**SP (A6)**	**PA (A1)**	**SP (A6)**
Friendly	7	3.5	14	24.6	**79**	**71.9**
Attractive	14.1	3.5	42.1	40.4	43.9	**56.1**
Intelligent	0	0	29.8	29.8	**70.1**	**70.2**
Reliable	10.6	7.1	21.1	33.3	**68.4**	**59.7**
	Low		**Neutral**		**High**	
Economic level	10.6	7	35.1	38.6	**54.4**	**54.4**
Education level	1.8	3.5	15.8	29.8	**82.5**	**66.7**

Table 6 Evaluation of the personality traits of **Speaker 1** when speaking Papiamentu and Spanish, respectively (scores in percentages).

cation level), the results are quite similar across the two languages. Notice that the scores for the personality traits of attractiveness and economic level are somewhat lower in both languages. Table 7 illustrates the results of the evaluation of the recordings of Speaker 2. Most agreement scores are in the 'neutral' range. Speaker 2 was only evaluated somewhat more positively in the case of friendliness. Overall, the recordings of Speaker 2 in Papiamentu are evaluated somewhat more positively in comparison to those in Spanish.

The person who is talking sounds	**Disagreement**		**Neutral**		**Agreement**	
	PA (A5)	**SP (A2)**	**PA (A5)**	**SP (A2)**	**PA (A5)**	**SP (A2)**
Friendly	7.1	12.3	33.3	47.4	**59.7**	40.4
Attractive	12.3	26.3	**73.7**	49.1	14	24.5
Intelligent	8.8	12.3	**52.6**	49.1	38.6	38.6
Reliable	12.3	22.8	49.1	43.9	38.6	33.4
	Low		**Neutral**		**High**	
Economic level	17.6	19.3	**63.2**	**54.4**	19.3	26.3
Education level	15.8	8.8	**52.6**	42.1	31.6	49.2

Table 7 Evaluation of the personality traits of **Speaker 2** when speaking Papiamentu and Spanish, respectively (scores in percentages).

Hence, the MGT-experiment revealed similar evaluations of the two speakers in the two languages and only a minor tendency toward more positive evaluations of the recordings in Papiamentu. Moreover, Speaker 1 was overall evaluated more positively in comparison to Speaker 2. Hence, the question arises to what extent the evaluations were affected by specific characteristics of the recordings. Individual voice qualities (independent of the spoken language) may play a role here, but the similarity of the scores in Papiamentu and Spanish constitutes an important result of the experiment.

Conclusion

In this article we have reported on an online survey that was designed to investigate attitudes toward Papiamentu and Spanish in the island of Curaçao. Based on work by Carroll (2009, 2015) and Oostindie (2019) we hypothesized that participants might have negative perceptions of Spanish-speaking immigrants and thus hold negative attitudes toward their language.

The research method consisted of a matched-guise experiment, involving 'blind auditions' and a questionnaire to evaluate personality traits of speakers who had been recorded previously when reading a text about the Curaçaoan flag in Papiamentu and/or

Spanish. The personality traits of the recorded speakers were evaluated by 57 participants of different age groups.

The results of the survey indicated that attitudes toward both languages were positive overall. A comparison between the results of the six speakers revealed that the speakers of Spanish were evaluated somewhat more positively than the speakers of Papiamentu. In the evaluations of the two speakers who were recorded in both languages, we found only minor differences in favor of the recordings in Papiamentu. Moreover, the results of the evaluations revealed differences between individual speakers, rather than between the two languages. Hence, the results highlight the importance of control over specific characteristics of the recordings, including individual voice qualities.

Obviously, the results of this study are far from conclusive and only present an initial step to unravel language attitudes in a complex pluri-lingual community. Future investigations should not only include more recordings of speakers of Papiamentu and Spanish but also control for salient characteristics of the recordings and the speakers in order to avoid linguistic and non-linguistic bias. A potential solution would be to test the recordings in a pilot-study with multiple participants to ensure that the recordings are free from (linguistic and non-linguistic) characteristics that may affect the judgments. In case of a matched-guise experiment, it is also important to ensure that the speakers recorded in different language varieties are not recognized as one and the same individual by the hearers.

An expansion of this seminal study could be relevant to unravel the perception of Spanish-speaking immigrants in the ABC-islands in order to prevent a potential increase in social prejudice and discrimination.

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APPENDIX 1: The two texts of the audio-fragments

Papiamentu:
E historia di e bandera di Kòrsou: E bandera di Kòrsou ta simbolisá shelu, laman i solo. E diseñadó a eksperimentá ku diferente koló pero finalmente a skohe dos kolo: blou i hel. Despues el a disidí pa pone e streanan aserka. Kada strea tin sinku punta, simbolisando kada un di e sinku kontinentenan di mundu for di kua su poblashon ta originá.E koló blanku a keda introdusí pa representá pas.
Spanish:
La historia de la bandera curazaleña: La bandera de Curazao simboliza el cielo, el mar y el sol. El diseñador experimentaba con diferentes colores, pero al final eligió dos colores: el azul y el amarillo. Después decidió añadir las estrellas. Cada estrella tiene cinco puntos, simbolizando los cinco continentes del mundo de donde proviene su población. El color blanco fue introducido para representar la paz.
English translation:
The history of the Curaçaoan flag: The Curaçaoan flag symbolizes the sky, the sea and the sun. The designer experimented with different colors, but finally chose two colors: blue and yellow. Then he/she decided to add stars. Every star has five points, symbolizing each one of the five continents of the world from which its population originates. The color white was added to represent peace.

APPENDIX 2: Information letter

Karta di informashon

Mi nòmber ta Christine N. Henriquez. Mi ta studiante di e programa Lengua y cultura hispánicas na Universidat di Utrecht. E kuestionario akí ta forma parti di mi bachelor tesis guiá pa señora dr. Ellen-Petra Kester di Universidat di Utrecht.
E bos di hende ta un karakterístika hopi importante ku ta forma parti di nos identidat. Nos ta purba krea un imágen di nos mes pa medio di nos manera di papia, aunke esaki ta sosodé inkonsientemente. Di mesun manera nos tambe ta krea un imágen di otro hende asina nos skucha nan papia. E ta un proseso natural ora ta trata di relashonnan sosial.

E kuestionario ta konsistí di 6 fragmento di oudio di hende muhé lesando un teksto. E teksto akí ta trata tokante e bandera di Kòrsou i ta na papiamentu i spañó. Kada fragmento ta siguí pa algun karakterístika personal. Skucha kada fragmento i duna bo opinion tokante e karakterístikanan di e persona ku bo a skucha.
E kuestionario ta tuma aproksimadamente 15 minüt pa yena i e partisipashon ta kompletamente voluntario. No tin kontesta korekto ni inkorekto; ta trata únikamente di bo opinion personal. Pa por yena e kuestionario akí, e partisipante mester tin mas ku 15 aña di edat i mester por komprondé i lesa spañó i papiamentu. Si esaki no ta e kaso, e no por partisipá.
E kuestionario ta anónimo. Pa sigurá bo anonimidat, bo no mester yena bo nòmber. Pa indiká bo edat bo por skohe entre e siguiente opshonnan 16-25, 26-54 òf 55+.
Lo archivá e resultadonan den un kòmpiuter sigurá pa Universidat di Utrecht durante por lo ménos 10 aña. Dr. Kester ku ami tin akseso na e resultadonan original, pero nos por bolbe usa nan òf kompartí e resultadonan ku otro investigadó pa kontestá otro pregunta di investigashon.
Si tin interes pa e temanan di e kuestionario òf e resultadonan di e investigashon por tuma kontakto ku dr. Kester via xxxx.
E investigashon lo wòrdu presentá na Faculty Ethics Assessments Committee – Humanities di Universidat di Utrecht pa pidi aprobashon. Si bo ta deseá pa duna keho tokante e proseso di e investigashon akí, por tuma kontakto ku e sekretario di FETc: fetc-gw@uu.nl, òf e funshonario di privasidat di Universidat di Utrecht: privacy@uu.nl
Bo a komprondé kon pa partisipá na e estudio akí?
□ Mi tin mas ku 15 aña i mi a lesa i komprondé e informashon ofresé akiriba.

APPENDIX 3: Questionnaire

E kuestionario ta anónimo. Bo edat si ta relevante pa e estudio. Skohe e grupo di edat ku bo ta pertenesé na dje.

16 - 25

26 - 54

55+

Tur teksto ku ta sigui despues di esaki lo ta na spañó.

Escuche el siguiente fragmento de audio y responda las siguientes preguntas.

Haz clic aquí para el audio.

La persona que está hablando suena:	En desacuerdo				De acuerdo
	1	2	3	4	5
Amable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inteligente	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Atractiva	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fiable* *Que se puede confiar	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Bajo/a				Alto/a
De clase (económica)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De un nivel de educación	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

ENVISIONING A CULTURAL CREOLE CONTINUUM: COLONIAL SUPPRESSION AND CULTURAL INNOVATION IN THE DUTCH AND BRITISH CARIBBEAN

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Abstract
The evolution of instances of Afro-Caribbean cultural expression in dance, music, and religion has been impacted by the colonial suppression of their African features. Linguistic concepts of creolization such as the creole continuum and feature selection inform the discussion of examples from the Dutch and British Caribbean, with a focus on the islands of Curaçao and Trinidad. The article analyzes ways in which colonial suppression has motivated creative innovation in sometimes surprising ways.

Key terms: Afro-Caribbean religion, Afro-Caribbean music, Afro-Caribbean dance, Curaçao, Trinidad

Introduction: Creolization, the creole continuum and Afro-Caribbean cultural expression

> *Ultimately, the dance practices [throughout the Caribbean] are evidence of an indelible creolization, transculturation or hybridization process.* (Daniel, 2011, p. 68)

Although precisely how to define the term *creolization* is still debated (e.g. Stewart, 2007), concepts of linguistic and cultural creolization have been explicitly and implicitly linked over the last few decades (e.g. Chaudenson 2001), despite objections such as those of Rath (2000, p. 99) who asserts: "Students of cultural creolization have treated it as analogous to linguistic creolization. This is a mistake." Nonetheless, linguistic models of creolization, which describe the evolution of creole languages, have sometimes offered insight into the development of other aspects of cultural expression in the

Greater Caribbean. In particular, the concept of a creole continuum for languages with "deep creoles" called "basilects" at one end, intermediate varieties or "mesolects" in the middle, and European standard languages or "acrolects" on the other (for example, Bickerton, 1973; Patrick, 1999) has significant parallels with what the Caribbean dance scholar Yvonne Daniel (2011) conceives of as a dance continuum (Albuyeh, 2015, 2018). Daniel's continuum extends from more African dance forms such as Puerto Rican *bomba* to intermediate dance forms with more European features such as Martinican *belé*, to the most European forms seen in Caribbean versions of the French *contradanse* which involve lines of couples who dance with an upright posture.

Feature selection and cultural expression

> *The formation of different languages and of distinct species, and the proofs that both have been developed through a gradual process, are curiously parallel*. (Darwin, 1871, p. 90)

One model of creole language evolution which can present useful insights into the development of cultural expression is the idea of feature selection and recombination, most famously outlined in Mufwene's 2001 work *The Ecology of Language Evolution.* Mufwene proposed that the the evolution of a creole language involves a process in which speakers select from the "pool" of linguistic features available from the input languages in the contact situation; the selected features are then recombined and restructured.

Recognizing potential parallels between biological evolution and language evolution has a long and distinguished history but has always been problematic in the details. Mufwene's adaptation of "theories of macroecology and population genetics" (Mufwene, 2001, preface) to creole genesis has been criticized for the lack of parallels between biological and linguistic evolution in general, as Lang's (2012) article "Dangers of the linguistic feature pool" makes clear. In addition, the shortcomings of the feature pool model in describing language evolution in specific cases have been pointed out as in the examination of the development of Pidgin Arabic by Avram (2022).

However, attempts to refine Mufwene's model continue. For example, Waegemaekers (2018) presents research which investigates the possibility of computationally quantifying the properties of linguistic features in competition "to help interpret the process of competition and selection, and ideally, predict the outcome of language contact" (p. 1). Her findings indicate that linguistic features with a higher functional load are more likely to be selected.

That aspects of the feature pool selection model could also apply to the evolution of cultural expressions was suggested in Albuyeh (2011) in which I pointed to Mufwene's model and argued that:

> It seems to me that the many contradictory claims made about the provenance both in terms of Caribbean words and the dances and music they name are precisely the result of an insufficient appreciation of the degree to which individual cultural features have been selected and recombined. (p. 83)

In the case of dance, it is specific African dance features, such as divided torso, all body parts in isolation, and flexed (bent over) posture, that Daniel uses to create her Caribbean dance continuum (Albuyeh, 2015).

As noted by Waegemaekers (2018) linguists researching feature selection in contact-induced language change have focused on constraints such as frequency, salience, semantic congruence and transparency (p. 1). Some such constraints could apply to the evolution of contact-induced cultural expression. For example, the relative frequency of the divided torso movement in African dances brought to the Caribbean colonies by the trans-Atlantic slave trade is suggested by the description of a number of Central African dances in Warner-Lewis (2003).

Innovation in linguistic creolization and suppression of creole speech

> *It is clear in fact that Creole languages develop as the result of 'linguistic violence' (and, as we shall see, frequently social violence too). In other words, we have to reckon with a break in the natural development of the language, the natural transmission of a language from generation to generation.* (Arends et al. 1995, p. 4)

An important factor which can appear underappreciated in some early descriptions of linguistic feature selection, as pointed out in Kouwenberg (2018), is the extent to which innovations appear, are selected, and survive in the speech of subsequent generations of speakers of contact languages. For example, Perez (2021) cites the innovative use of *límpyu* to mean "all" in the contact variety Afro-Yungueño Spanish spoken in the Bolivian Andes, apparently a reinterpretation of the words in the phrase "todo limpio" (all clean) in Spanish.

Although in general terms, the suppression of creole languages might conceivably push speakers in the direction of the overt prestige of the standard colonial acrolect or in the direction of the covert prestige of the basilect or "deepest" version of the creole language available, there is evidence that suppression of creole speech can also drive innovations which speakers adopt. For example, Perez and Zipp (2019) found that specific linguistic features were adopted in Afro-Yungueño Spanish which could be attributed to the suppression of the speech of the enslaved. They suggest that the use of unusual voice patterns such as falsetto and breathy voice to convey pragmatic meaning may be the result of enslaved speakers "not being allowed to express their opinion and exchange information freely while being supervised by slave overseers" (Perez & Zipp, 2019, p. 22).

Their examples include a speaker using falsetto "to express stance, i.e. intensification and the implied meaning of suffering" when describing going hungry (p. 16) and another speaker using breathy voice when describing being punished with a whip called *ñjérbo* (p. 19). They conclude that falsetto is used for expressive and discursive functions such as emphasis, solidarity or complicity while breathy voice emphasizes individual words. This complexity on the prosodic level, Perez and Zipp argue, may have evolved in response to "extralinguistic conditions, such as the experienced oppression and isolation" (2019, p. 22).

Innovation in cultural creolization and suppression of cultural expression

> *In the expressive interaction shaping creole forms, certain strategies are put into play which characterize creole intercourse: reversals, carnivalization, improvisation, mimicry, double-talk, feigned submission, and many other maneuvers, tactics, and schemes designed to steal power away from 'top-down' monolithic impositions.* (Baron & Cara, 2003, p. 5)

In the Caribbean, European colonial governments, often in conjunction with approved organized religious bodies, exerted control over the cultural expression of Africans and African-descended people. In Albuyeh (2021) I outline laws enacted in Trinidad by the British colonial government restricting Afro-Caribbean dancing (p. 212). Colonial legislation also restricted the use of musical instruments such as African drums. The next section focuses on the evolution of musical instruments used by the Afro-Caribbean population in Trinidad in response to the ongoing efforts at suppression. Even more threatening to both colonial governments and religious organizations were Afro-Caribbean religious practices. The section which follows examines efforts to restrict Afro-Caribbean religion and ritual by the Dutch colonial government and the Catholic church in Curaçao and the subsequent innovations which evolved in these cultural expressions.

Music in the British Caribbean: Tamboo bamboo and steelpan in Trinidad

> *[T]hese [African] ancestors were brought to a new land to undergo pressures towards culture change. But the musical instruments retained their basic percussional character though changing in form—skin drum, stamping tube, tambour bamboo, biscuit drum, dust bin and finally, steel drum—in unbroken continuity through centuries of human struggle for freedom to sing, dance and 'play masque'.* (Elder, 1969, p. 20)



Figure 1 Detail of a skin drum from "Negro Dance" 1836, Trinidad, by Bridgens Source [public domain] http://slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/988

When Britain took Trinidad from Spain in 1797, the British colonial government enacted legislation restricting Afro-Caribbean dancing to percussion instruments; in the wake of emancipation in 1834 their focus turned to prohibiting the musical instruments themselves (Cowley, 1992, pp. 606-611). As I point out in Albuyeh (2021 p. 213):

> Whereas in Curaçao, response to colonial suppression involved changing the venues where drum music was used such that the functions and occasions including the playing of the drums became more and more 'benign' under the colonial gaze, in Trinidad the musical instruments themselves were adapted.

In this way, African membrane (skin-topped) drums and the tradition of tone or pitch varying "talking" drums can be seen to have evolved through a series of stages into the steelpan instruments Trinidad is known for today.



Figure 2 Nigerian style of talking Drum at a Yoruba festival (detail), Source: "Cultural Drum at Osun Oshogbo Festival" by Compradeayobami, Creative Commons, via Wikimedia Commons

The first adaptations involved natural sources, bamboo used for stamping tubes, percussion instruments banged on the ground, and for "tamboo (or tambour) bamboo" percussion instruments, which produce alternating tones when hit with sticks. When tamboo bamboo and the carrying of bamboo canes were discouraged in the early twentieth century (Liverpool,



1994; Guilbault, 2007), musicians adapted metal containers from Britain and later the

Figure 3 Steelpan band, Source: "Steelpan Instruments at Trinidad and Tobago Car-nival" by Kip1234, Creative Commons, via Wikimedia Commons

US as percussion and tonal instruments, creating musical instruments out of biscuit tins (cans of cookies or crackers), dust bins (metal garbage cans) and metal oil drums. In this way innovation in the selection of musical instrument elements forms a continuum from African membrane and talking drums to steelpans.

It is true that steelpan musical instruments are not as obviously on the "acrolect" end of this continuum as Caribbean versions of the European contredanse. For one thing, the metal objects such as biscuit tins used for percussion were not originally European musical instruments. However, the fact that steelpan instruments are also used to play the melodies of non-Caribbean music shows the extent to which the innovations selected moved the instruments and music played away from the original African sources. Then Prime Minister of Trinidad, A. N. R. Robinson, celebrated the creativity of Trinidadian musicians in this way:

> Here, less than two generations ago, the most deprived members of the urban sector of this society, built on the age-old tradition of the drum. They tuned a steel membrane and made oil drums capable of interpreting the most complex and sophisticated musical forms. (Robinson, 1991, paragraph 5)

Religion and ritual in the Dutch Caribbean: Montamentu and Tambú in Curaçao

> *Caribbean peoples fashioned heterogeneous systems of belief out of the cacophony of practices and traditions that came forcibly together in colonial society ... [which were] frequently outlawed by the colonizers*. (Olmos & Paravisini-Gebert, 2022, p. 1)

> *Montamentu purposely equated specific African deities with corresponding Catholic saints, while simultaneously paying homage to African and Amerindian ancestral spirits. ... Participants embraced (or rejected) perceived memories from a veritable smorgasbord of possibilities; and by selective picking and choosing, descendants of Afro-Curaçaoan former slaves extended the concept of corporeal emancipation to social identity.* (de Jong, 2012, p. 4)

Noting the number of studies investigating Curaçao's creole language, Papiamentu, Dewulf (2022) bemoans the fact that:

> Curaçao's religious history has received far less scholarly attention. This is surprising considering that the island is exceptional not only because the Black population developed a language different from that of the Dutch colonizers, but also because they had different religions. (p. 107)

Catholicism was introduced to Curaçao by Spanish priests from Venezuela who, at first clandestinely, baptized people of African descent as early as 1677 (Dewulf, 2022, p. 109). The Christian Dutch on the island were apparently not interested in converting the

African population to their Protestant faith. In a 1741 report to the Protestant Dutch Reformed Church in Amsterdam, the pastor Wigboldus Rasvelt asserted that his predecessors in Curaçao had refused to accept enslaved members into the church and that slaveholders were concerned that baptized people could no longer be sold (Dewulf, 2022, p. 114). The third religion practiced by Europeans in colonial Curaçao was Judaism. Although Jews who moved from Brazil to Curaçao are thought to be responsible for Portuguese elements in Papiamentu (Freitas et al., 2019), evidence that their religion contributed to Afro-Curaçaoan religious beliefs is lacking.

Missing from works in English surveying creole religions across the British, French, and Spanish Caribbean (for example, Olmos & Paravisini-Gebert, 2022; Murrell, 2010; Edmonds & Gonzalez, 2010) is any discussion of the Dutch Caribbean and the Afro-Caribbean religion and spiritual belief known as *Montamentu* practiced in Curaçao. Determining the African source(s) of *Montamentu* is complicated by the fact that Curaçao became a slave trading entrepôt from the mid-seventeenth century. While estimates of the total number of captive Africans disembarked in Curaçao varies, the Slave Voyages 2025 database contains records indicating that at least 100,000 captive Africans were shipped to Curaçao to be sold to other colonies in the Americas between 1651 and 1800. Evidence that Africans ranging from Senegambia to West Central Africa, thousands of miles apart, were transported to Curaçao is also found in the database of Slave Voyages online (Slave Voyages Consortium, 2021, updated to 2025). However, there is evidence that Africans from what is now Angola in West Central Africa contributed the most to the *Montamentu* religious practices of the slaves who remained in Curaçao. De Jong (2022a, p. 88) asserts that "*Montamentu* continued the distinctly Angolan religious concept of communing with ancestral spirits… Ancestral spirits became sought in *Montamentu* as vehicles of sacred guidance and protection." Warner-Lewis (2003, p. 18) cites sources attesting to "several Central African ethnicities in eighteenth-century Curaçao" including people from Angola and nearby Loango, present-day southwestern Congo. De Jong (2022a, p. 83) points to the preference for Angolan slaves in the northeastern Brazilian Dutch colony of New Holland as underlying this demographic trend in Curaçao.

If colonial repression motivated the changes in the evolution of Afro-Caribbean dance and music discussed above, colonial repression influenced the creation of the religious practice of *Montamentu* from its very beginning. Dutch colonial repression of an Angolan stick fighting/dancing practice called *kokomakaku* in Curaçao appears to have motivated a bifurcation of the elements into a spiritual practice evolving into *Montamentu* and a largely secular practice evolving into *Tambú*, named after the skin-topped *tambú* drum which provided the musical accompaniment. De Jong (2022b, p. 97) asserts that "While *kokomakaku* laid the foundation for the eventual development of the sacred *Montamentu,* it also helped inspire the formation of secular versions, including the *Tambú* party."

De Jong points to Colonial Dutch legislation of 1740, 1741 and 1746 targeting *kokomakaku* which prohibited cultural activities by "Blacks and Mulattos" leading to "bad behaviour," the congregating of groups of seven or more people of African descent and walking carrying a stick, respectively. The resulting changes to *kokomakaku* included fighting/dancing with competitive words instead of sticks and moving the combat to secret locations (de Jong, 2022a, p. 87).

The element of secrecy also appears to have continued throughout the development of the religion, as did the stigma of colonial condemnation. De Jong (2022a) characterizes *Montamentu* as "a religion that developed on Curaçao during slavery and continues yet today, albeit practiced now in guarded secrecy" (p. 88). In fact, the name *Montamentu* seems to have itself disappeared from public view. De Jong explains:

> Few Curaçaoans today recognize the term *Montamentu* when referring to the religion, as many have adopted the disparaging term *Brua* (translated as 'witch'), which was introduced by Catholic priests and Dutch proprietors during slavery; or by the more general term *Tambú*, the name of the accompanying ritual drum. (2022a, p. 88)

Whether called *Brua* or *Tambú*, the hybrid spiritual practices of an evolving *Montamentu* continued to attract the condemnation of the Catholic clergy in Curaçao. From the standpoint of the orthodoxy of the Catholic church, it is unsurprising that a religion which exemplified the general notion of creolization to such an astounding degree in its development would be denounced. One of the most notable characteristics of *Montamentu* is its adoption of the ancestors and deities of a wide range of cultures.

First of all, an increase in West Africans remaining in Curaçao contributed to the deities adopted by *Montamentu*. These "West African gods … were now sought alongside ancestral spirits as vehicles of guidance and protection" (de Jong, 2012, p. 89). Notably, West Africans also contributed iron musical instruments to the music played by the *tambú* drums during *Montamentu* rituals. De Jong (2022a, p. 89) attributes this demographic trend to Dutch involvement in the *asiento* trade to the Spanish Americas in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Beyond African deities, Catholic saints were also incorporated into *Montamentu* as a result of the conversion of African and African-descended people to Catholicism in Curaçao (de Jong, 2012, 2022a). However, it may be that Angolans also brought in Catholic saints to the practice of *Montamentu*.

As Harms (2024) mentions, syncretic African-Catholic religious practices had emerged on the African continent in the areas affected by the trans-Atlantic slave trade starting in the late fifteenth century (Oliver & Atmore, 2001). Some West Central Africans had been converted to Catholicism, most significantly in the Congo/Angola area. Fromont and Iyanaga (2019) point out:

> Roman and Reformed Christianity reached the African continent, in sporadic missionary attempts as well as in the Euro-African societies that grew around the [slave] trading fort enclaves. Most significant, however, in terms of scope and impact on Atlantic cultures, was the independent conversion to Catholicism circa 1500 of the Kingdom of Kongo, an event that started a deep and long-lasting engagement among the inhabitants of the region with the religion and with European visual and material culture .... Catholicism did not simply replace Kongo traditions. Rather a new Kongo Catholicism gradually took shape, built on ritual, aesthetic, and cosmological components drawn from both central African and European traditions. (p. 3)

Thus, the initial Angolan input with respect to *Montamentu* could have also significantly predisposed practitioners to the mixing of African and European religious traditions.
De Jong (2012) notes one unusual example of this characteristic of mixing ancestors, saints, and deities from different sources:

> One particularly inventive Curaçaoan variation on the worship of ancestral spirits [inherited from Angola] was the homage *Montamentu* paid to the island's original inhabitants – the indigenous Arawak Amerindians. (p. 23)

Although the Arawak population in Curaçao was decimated, de Jong reports van Grol's (1941-1942) contention that "the African slaves idolized the Arawaks for their resistance …. This is evidenced by the inclusion of Arawak spirits into *Montamentu's* pantheon and the religion's elevation of Curaçao's caves to the status of holy sites" (de Jong, 2012, p. 23).
In the late eighteenth century, the Dutch West Indies Company established incarceration facilities in Curaçao to house prisoners from other colonies including modern Haiti, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Jamaica and Trinidad, who were often quartered with other slaves being held on the island (de Jong, 2022a, p. 90). De Jong (2022a) asserts that:

> *Montamentu* was suddenly impacted with a number of syncretic religions from each area, including Haitian *Vodou,* Brazilian *Candomblé,* and Dominican *Santería.* Already a refuge for Amerindian spirits, African ancestors, and West African deities, *Montamentu* now became home also to a rapidly expanding pantheon of Creole deities including *Vodou lwas* from Haiti and *Santería orishas* from the Dominican Republic. (p. 90)

De Jong (2012) characterizes the additions to *Montamentu's* deities as "the duplication and triplication of gods [which] separated *Montamentu* from other Afro-syncretized religions in the New World" (p. 26). De Jong also notes that while "Vodou and Santería may have embraced variants of the same god, yet rarely were these variants considered

anything but separate personality traits of the same [deity]" In contrast, in *Montamentu,* they are regarded as "independent deities able to coexist; and each is characterized by distinctly different Caribbean or African origins" (2022a, p. 91).

It should be noted that there has been some speculation about the source of *Montamentu*, perhaps caused by the multiplicity of influences in its development. However, Ansano (2015, para. 7) states definitively:

> The Afro-Curaçaoan *Montamentu* religion, described by some as a phenomenon imported from the Dominican Republic in the 1960's (Bernadina, 1981), actually shows definite continuities with 18th century 'dance houses', mentioned in a 1788 case in which Africans were sentenced to different types of punishment for professing to do magic and healing in a 'dance house' (Ansano, 2013). The continuity is not simply a tenuous resemblance of memories, being connected rather through practices like 19th century healing described as mesmerism by visiting Dutch priests, early twentieth century Almasola Dance (Ansano, 1990), 19th and 20th century accusations of and judicial encounters with *brua* or witchcraft, and traditional references to African cosmology full of *misterio* or deities. (Allen, 2007, pp. 237-245)

As this quotation from Ansano illustrates the practice of *Montamentu* (or *Brua*) was repeatedly judged and punished by religious and colonial authorities. De Jong (2022a, p. 92) reports that although earlier regulation of *Montamentu* "had the effect of strengthening its culturally risky forms" the aggressive assault on *Montamentu* after emancipation by the joined forces of the Dutch colonial government and the Catholic church:

> pushed *Montamentu* so far underground that it failed to reappear with prior strength and authority …. Today [modern Curaçaoans] remain quick to ostracise those believed to be *Montamentu* followers by labelling them *Preto Loango* (Black Africa) …. *Montamentu* devotees are also known to lose their jobs or places of residence for mere suspicion of involvement. (de Jong, 2022a, p. 92)

Instead, the repression has served to enhance the secular development of participation in the dance and music known under that umbrella term of *Tambú.* Having lost any religious focus, *Tambú* expresses Afro-Curaçaoan culture, nonetheless, through its choice of musical instruments and dance forms. De Jong describes how:

> *Tambú* has undergone multiple transformations …. As a sacred ritual, it continued to facilitate the worship of deities and communion with ancestors …. In its more recent evolution, it has produced a renowned Curaçaoan New Year's event through which bad luck … may ostensibly be driven away. In [a] … newer transformation … the so-called *Tambú* season, has become an occasion in which Curaçaoan youth revel in what they now consider party music. (2012, p. 4)

The ritual structure that *Montamentu* and *Tambú* inherited from the Angolan stick fighting tradition of *kokomakaku* had two parts, beginning with an open-ended invitation, whether to ancestors, deities or participants, followed by action which instead of fighting included dancing in a trance or later merely people dancing together. Recently, *Tambú* has been spread by a Curaçaoan diaspora to the Netherlands where *Tambú* parties now attract people from "several diasporas: Caribbean, African and East European" where "a parallel imaginative 'interpretive diaspora' emerges, one united around the shared experience of 'not fitting in'" to Dutch society (de Jong, 2022b, p. 104). De Jong (2022b) asserts: "In fact, with *Tambú's* distinct binary form and its 'open-door' policy of acceptance, these Dutch parties offer room for partygoers to share and celebrate in their individual diasporic histories while also acknowledging their collective immigrant reality" (p. 105).



Figure 4 Sculpture of *Tambú* performance by Patrick Mezas, exhibited in the Netherlands, Source: "*Tambú dansers en muzikanten*" by Claudia Kamergorodski, Creative Commons via Wikimedia Commons.

In this way, the oppression of racism and prejudice against the Other continues to impact the development of what began as Afro-Curaçaoan religious cultural expression. Whereas the African/basilect end of this continuum is illustrated by the earliest versions

of *Montamentu* practiced in Curaçao, the secularizing stages of *Tambú* can represent the intermediate/mesolect varieties, and certainly the international inclusive party version of *Tambú* in the Netherlands can be seen as the acrolect/European – and beyond – realization of cultural expression. The selection of cultural elements first impacted by Dutch colonial legislation as well as the strictures of the Catholic church on the island now embraces more diverse possibilities in this international context. As de Jong (2022b) reports, what she refers to as "Dutch *Tambú*" now includes not only Curaçaoans dancing with traditional *Tambú* "feet stomping and arms outstretched," but, for example, participants from the Democratic Republic of Congo jumping "in the latest *soukous* move," from Ghana combining moves from "hip-hop" and traditional high life, and from Turkey leaping and twirling in *erzurum* moves (pp. 105-106).

Conclusion

> *[A culture's] toughness and resiliency are determined not by a culture's ability to withstand change, which indeed may be a sign of stagnation not life, but by its ability to react creatively and responsively to the realities of a new situation.* (Levine, 1977, p. 5)

Creolization and the direction it takes, whether in language or culture, can be impacted by a number of factors, but in the Caribbean context, the colonial suppression of African cultural expression has had an undeniable effect. This research intends to show how the creative innovations adopted by Afro-Caribbean peoples in response to this suppression can be usefully viewed along a continuum similar to that applied to creole languages. The most straightforward of these seems to me to be the analysis of a Caribbean dance continuum as described by Daniel (2011). However, not unlike the sometimes obscure etymologies of words in a language, the Trinidadian music/musical instrument continuum from African drums to steelpan bands requires deeper digging for a full appreciation of the connections linking one end of this historical continuum to another. But to me the most remarkable evolution of Afro-Caribbean cultural expression is found in Curaçao. I agree with Dewulf's (2022) suggestion quoted above that religious practice in Curaçao should inspire more research than it has heretofore. The ways in which colonial suppression pushed the expression of African culture underground have made following the evolution of *Montamentu* to secular *Tambú* both surprising and rewarding.

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REVITALIZING PALENQUERO: TESTING CHATGPT'S CAPABILITIES AND LIMITATIONS TO ASSIST LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract
The rise of ChatGPT has reshaped language education, benefiting well-resourced languages like English and Spanish. However, endangered languages like Palenquero, an Iberian lexifier Creole spoken in Colombia, have not experienced similar advancements. This article explores Palenquero's sociohistorical challenges, past revitalization efforts, and ChatGPT-3.5's potential to aid its preservation by generating educational materials. Through an experimental approach using prompts typically designed for well-resourced languages, the study evaluates ChatGPT's capabilities and limitations in assisting language teaching for Palenquero. Findings highlight AI's creativity and ability to generate basic materials while also revealing its limitations, as its effectiveness depends on additional data and human linguistic expertise.

Key terms: Palenquero; language revitalization; ChatGPT; artificial intelligence in education; computational linguistics

Introduction

Linguists estimate that there are approximately 7,097 languages worldwide, with a significant number currently at risk of extinction. Many of these languages could face extinction within the next 100 years. Most linguists have typically focused on a small number of widely spoken and easily accessible languages, such as English, French, or German, for which ample data is available. In contrast, thousands of other languages have received little to no scholarly attention.

In San Basilio de Palenque, a Colombian village, approximately 2,000 individuals speak the Iberian lexifier creole Palenquero. Despite being the only place where Palenquero is formally taught, Spanish dominates the educational system in San Basilio de Palenque (Schwegler, 2013). Like many other Caribbean Creole languages, Palenquero lacks resources, data, and educational materials. Despite positive impacts from past revitalization efforts on the educational system and speakers' attitudes, Palenquero remains under-resourced and is classified as "definitely endangered" according to the criteria established by UNESCO (2003). Furthermore, Ethnologue (2023) categorizes Palenquero as having "digital language support still absent," placing it in the lowest tier and highlighting a significant gap in digital resources. Palenquero, alongside other endangered languages, requires increased documentation, research, and revitalization efforts, including strategies like second and heritage language teaching as proposed by Comajoan-Colomé and Coronel-Molina (2021, p. 897).



Figure 1 Schwegler, A. (2013). Map of San Basilio de Palenque, Colombia. https://apics-online.info/surveys/48

Recent artificial intelligence (AI) advancements, especially in tools like ChatGPT, have significantly impacted education and research for well-resourced languages such as English, Spanish, French, and German. However, under-resourced languages like Palenquero continue to lack access to these innovations despite their potential benefits for language preservation. This article aims to explore how effectively ChatGPT-3.5 can generate educational materials for Palenquero, including speaking, writing, listening, and reading tasks, as well as its ability to produce authentic Palenquero text from scratch. Historically, obtaining such materials for languages like Palenquero has been challenging, time-consuming, and expensive. In contrast, ChatGPT offers a cost-effective, time-efficient, and modern digital solution to enhance the availability and accessibility of educational materials.

This research highlights how ChatGPT can expand access to under-represented languages, produce more educational materials, and contribute to the preservation of endangered languages. By evaluating ChatGPT's effectiveness in cases such as that of Palenquero, this article demonstrates how new AI technologies can bridge the gap in language learning resources for underrepresented linguistic communities and potentially extend globally to other endangered languages.

This article begins with an overview of Palenquero's socio-historical context, including its origins and contact situation with Spanish. It then examines past efforts to revitalize Palenquero and introduces ChatGPT as a tool, exploring its potential role in supporting and enhancing language education and revitalization.

Palenquero's socio-historical background

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the transatlantic slave trade surged, bringing enslaved Africans to the Caribbean and Latin America. San Basilio de Palenque emerged as a sanctuary for escaped slaves, preserving crucial aspects of their African heritage. It is a Colombian village geographically located approximately an hour from Cartagena de Indias and three hours from Barranquilla by car (Hualde & Schwegler, 2008, p. 1). Within this refuge, a unique Creole language, Palenquero, arose, reflecting a fusion of Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, and Niger-Congo languages such as Kikongo from Congo and Angola. Currently, Palenquero stands as the only Spanish-based creole language in South America, featuring a lexicon and phonological structure system closely resembling Spanish, yet remaining unintelligible to native Spanish speakers (Lipski, 2020, p. 1; Schwegler, 2013). This linguistic creation symbolizes the resilience and amalgamation of diverse cultural influences, showcasing the lasting impact of the historical trade in the enslaved on language and heritage in the region. San Basilio de Palenque's residents proudly refer to it as the first free village in Americas.

Linguist Bickerton and anthropologist Escalante first recognized Palenquero as a Creole language during their visit and research in San Basilio de Palenque in 1970 (Lipski, 2012, p. 106). In comparison to its lexifier language Spanish, Palenquero tends to show minimal morphological inflection (Bakker, 2003, pp. 9-10).

Today, Palenquero is spoken by an active community of around 2,000 individuals, who represent just half of the population of Palenque. Additionally, there are approximately 4,000 semi-speakers of the language. In rather rare instances, Palenquero can also be found in Cartagena and Barranquilla, where an estimated 53% of Palenqueros have resettled, exploring new paths for socio-economic advancement. Palenquero primarily remains an oral language. Although a written form of Palenquero has emerged for local schooling in this millennium, it lacks standardized spelling. Hence, Palenquero's orthography can vary based on the preferences and practices of a given individual author or researcher (Schwegler, 2013).

Schwegler (2013) notes that Palenquero has consistently coexisted since the middle of the 17th century with dominant Caribbean Spanish in San Basilio de Palenque, Cartagena de Indias, and Barranquilla. In San Basilio de Palenque, Palenquero is also referred to as *lengua* or *lengua ri Palenge* (Lipski, 2020, p. 1; 2014, p. 192).

Traditionally, this language was reserved for community insiders, with rare use outside the community. Historically, Palenquero has faced stigma and has often been perceived

as inferior to Spanish, Colombia's predominant language (Schwegler, 2013). Table 1 illustrates typical experiences and challenges faced by Palenquero speakers.

Table 1 Stigma toward Palenquero (Lipski, 2014, p. 194)

Palenquero	Spanish translation
entonse kwando suto sabía salí di aí digamo e ri Malagana pa 'yá, ma hende asé ablá ku suto uuuuu, asendo suto mofa pokke suto taba kombesá lengwa palenkera	Entonces cuando salíamos de aquí por ejemplo Malagana [un pueblo vecino] la gente decía «uuuu» se burlaban de nosotros porque hablábamos lengua de Palenque.
pokke ma hende ri hwela taba aseba suto mofia, suto a dehá ri ablá que a vece había momento de que foratero venía para acá y le causaba era burla ané ta miní a buká eso akí pa suto ta ablando ku ané pa ané ta burlando ri suto e ante mahjende di hwela ase a bullá ri ma palenkero mamá mi y tatá mi a kelé p'i aprendé ese lengwa nu pokke kwando hende aseba salí pa lahwela ma hende aseba ablá «o moná, onde bo miní kwando bo te va?» y po ese rasón ma mamá suto a kelé pa hende ablá un.	Porque la gente de fuera se burlaba de nosotros dejamos de hablar [lengua ri Palenge] Vinieron aquí por eso para que nosotros habláramos con ellos para que ellos se burlaran de nosotros. Antes la gente de fuera se burlaba de los palenqueros. Mi mamá y mi padre no querían que yo aprendiera esa lengua, porque cuando las personas [de Palenque] salían para fuera la gente decía «¿o, niño, de dónde vienes; adónde vas?» y por esa razón nuestras madres no queríamos que habláramos así.

Around the year 2000, attitudes towards Palenquero began to shift. It now intertwines with the community's identity, serving as a cultural emblem and source of pride. As a distinct linguistic heritage, Palenquero embodies the historical resilience and cultural distinctiveness of the Afro-Colombian community, fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity among its speakers. Presently, Palenquero speakers feel much more comfortable using and sharing their language with outsiders (Schwegler, 2013). Consequently, Palenquero extensively mixes with Spanish, with frequent code-switching, a common phenomenon in communities with substantial language contact. Lipski (2014) further notes that this tendency is prevalent among young Palenquero speakers, who often incorporate words or complete sentences from Palenquero into their Spanish conversations. This behavior demonstrates an increasing appreciation for Palenquero among its speakers (Lipski, 2014: pp. 196-197).

The following paragraph from Lipski (2014, pp. 196-197) illustrates the use of code-switching among young Palenquero speakers. The paragraph highlights the insertion of individual Palenquero words into Spanish sentences:

> (1) Había una vez un **etule ri palenge** que viajaba para **Katagena** para el museo del oro y el **piacha** lo regañaba por que no podian **kume** en el museo kuando ellos salieron del museo ellos tenian mucha ambre y comenzaron a kume. (Lipski, 2014, p. 196)

This paragraph includes the Palenquero words: *etuli ri Palenge* (alumno de Palenque), *Katagena* (Cartagena), *piacha* (profesor), *kumé* (comer).

Previous revitalization efforts for Palenquero

Despite being classified as an endangered language for decades, Palenquero has experienced a significant shift in attitudes over the past two decades, driven by various revitalization initiatives aimed at its preservation. These efforts have played a crucial role in strengthening and safeguarding the language, with several key projects contributing to its continued resilience.

The community has established an ethnotourism office and cultural center featuring signage in Palenquero. Moreover, in 2005 the UNESCO, recognized the village San Basilio de Palenque as a "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity," while the Colombian government bestowed up it the status of "intangible heritage" (UNESCO, n.d.) These efforts have notably contributed to a surge in tourism to San Basilio de Palenque (Lipski, 2014, p. 194). Additionally, displaying Palenquero on signage enhances its prestige and visibility by incorporating it into public spaces in written form. Although the educational system predominantly operates in Spanish, a significant shift has occurred. Today, children are introduced to a limited yet symbolic Palenquero vocabulary during their preschool years. Additionally, elementary schools have incorporated a dedicated subject focused on teaching Palenquero language and culture, as noted by Lipski (2014, p. 194). Actively teaching and transmitting the language to younger generations is a crucial strategy for preserving endangered languages, as it can foster an entire generation of new speakers. Additionally, schools can serve as spaces for imparting traditional culture and values—knowledge that has often faded in the wake of colonization and mainstream education (Hinton, 2018, p. 447). Palenquero students are now actively involved in preserving their language. They interview older people and gather traditional stories (Lipski, 2014, p. 194). Documentation exercises like these can provide valuable resources for teachers and learners in the process of reviving or sustaining a language, such as the creation of print and online dictionaries (McIvor & Anisman, 2018, pp. 91–92).

While these traditional language revitalization efforts have significantly contributed to the preservation of Palenquero and remain invaluable for many other endangered languages, the following section introduces a modern, innovative approach to language preservation. This method harnesses Artificial Intelligence, exemplified by ChatGPT, to generate supplementary educational materials.

AI in language education

The advent of AI has revolutionized numerous sectors, including education. In language education, AI technologies like ChatGPT-3.5 have shown significant potential in transforming how languages are taught and learned. Thanks to advanced deep learning and natural language processing techniques, ChatGPT-3.5, a state-of-the-art Large Language Model (LLM) developed by OpenAI (2023), can understand and generate human-like

text in well-resourced languages, making it a valuable tool for language learning and teaching.

Javaid et al. (2023) explored the use of ChatGPT in developing educational materials for English, demonstrating its significant benefits in education. ChatGPT can generate human-like responses to text inputs, perform language translation, facilitate discussions, summarize content, and produce text. It enhances tutoring and personalized learning by providing on-demand, real-time assistance and immediate feedback. Teachers can use ChatGPT to develop educational materials, while students can seek clarification on course subjects. As AI technology advances, ChatGPT continues to improve, handling complex tasks more effectively and expanding its role in various educational applications (Javaid et al., 2023, p. 11).

Similarly, Kohnke et al. (2023) highlight that ChatGPT can determine word meanings in context, identify parts of speech (PoS), provide sample sentences, and correct and explain language mistakes. Additionally, it can generate texts in various genres, develop quizzes, and create dialogues while adjusting the difficulty level for beginners or advanced learners. It also facilitates language differentiation by translating content into the target language, allowing teachers to tailor materials to students' needs. Moreover, ChatGPT can generate comprehension and expansion questions, both open-ended and multiple-choice, to accompany reading tasks (Kohnke et al., 2023, pp. 539–544).

Methodology

The study upon which the present article is based employed ChatGPT-3.5, the free version available as of December 2023, to generate educational materials for Palenquero. Since ChatGPT-3.5 was trained on diverse datasets—including books, websites, and online texts—its knowledge is limited to information available up to September 2021, lacking access to more recent Palenquero-related publications. Expanding its training data could improve its effectiveness in this context.

The study aimed to assess the feasibility of using ChatGPT to create resources for an under-resourced language like Palenquero by analyzing its methods, capabilities, and limitations. To do so, it adapted prompts and strategies from Javaid et al. (2023) and Kohnke et al. (2023)—who explored AI-generated materials for well-resourced languages like English—to evaluate ChatGPT's performance with Palenquero.

The methodology involved modifying English-language prompts originally designed for well-resourced languages and applying them to Palenquero to generate speaking, writing, listening, and reading exercises. Additional prompts were used as needed to ensure linguistic and educational relevance. All prompts and ChatGPT's responses were documented through screenshots for analysis. This study hypothesized that ChatGPT-3.5 can generate basic educational materials in Palenquero when language-specific knowledge is not required but is inadequate for producing fluent Palenquero text due to its lack of explicit training in the language.

The capability of ChatGPT to generate text and content in Palenquero was evaluated using two approaches: creating content from scratch and incorporating additional Palenquero data. For the latter, five short lines from "Recording of Palenquero Creole (with transcription)" by Armin Schwegler (1998) served as supplementary data. This transcription came from an audio recording of a conversation between two women, offering authentic linguistic data for the study (p. 5):

(2) A0001: ¿yo? i tam ba Malagana; <¿mañana nu e matte?>
(3) A0002: mañana e matte.
(4) A0003: i tang kumu e miékkol o juebe; i tam bendé
(5) A0004: maí pilao ku yuka i maí.
(6) A0005: i ta yebá e planda.

In this study, the developed materials underwent analysis based on several key parameters: linguistic accuracy, educational value, and cultural relevance, in compliance with ethical guidelines for AI use in research. A more detailed discussion of these evaluations, including the implications of each parameter, is discussed after each exercise.
Further on, the generated exercises will be categorized as reading, listening, speaking, or writing tasks to align with standard language learning curricula, thereby ensuring comprehensive skill development. Due to the limited dataset, these exercises are not classified by proficiency levels (beginner, intermediate, advanced). Instead, the focus is on creating a diverse range of materials.

Results and discussion

Exercise 1: Cloze task

Prompt(s):

- I give you five lines of a conversation. Can you create a cloze exercise with them?
- Eliminate one word in each line.

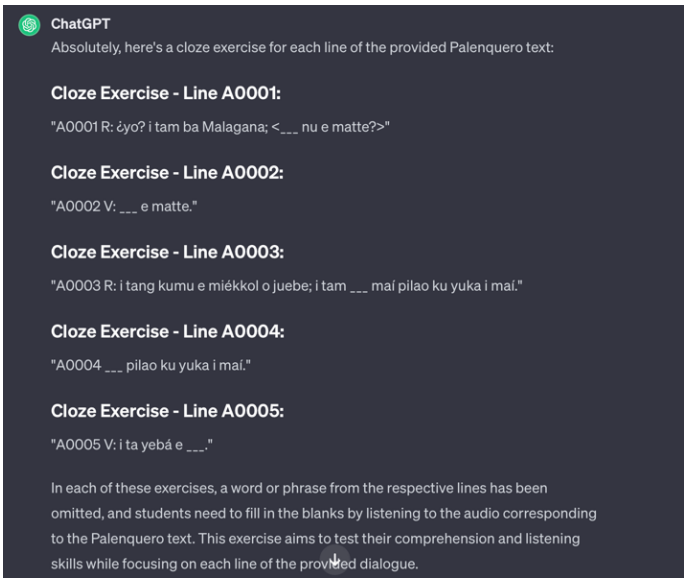


Figure 2 Cloze Exercise. ChatGPT, personal communication, November 18, 2023

This cloze exercise functions as both a listening and writing task. When audio is available, students listen and attempt to identify and write the missing words in the passage. If no audio is provided, they can infer the missing words from the given context. This process can be repeated with longer or varied conversations, allowing for the quick creation of multiple cloze exer-

cises for Palenquero. However, ChatGPT was unable to identify parts of speech in Palenquero and could not selectively remove only verbs or other specific word categories. Instead, it randomly omitted words, which, while not linguistically targeted, still produced reliable cloze exercises without requiring specific linguistic knowledge of the language.

Exercise 2: Reorder the Conversation

Prompt(s):

- Now mix the conversation, so students must reorganize it.

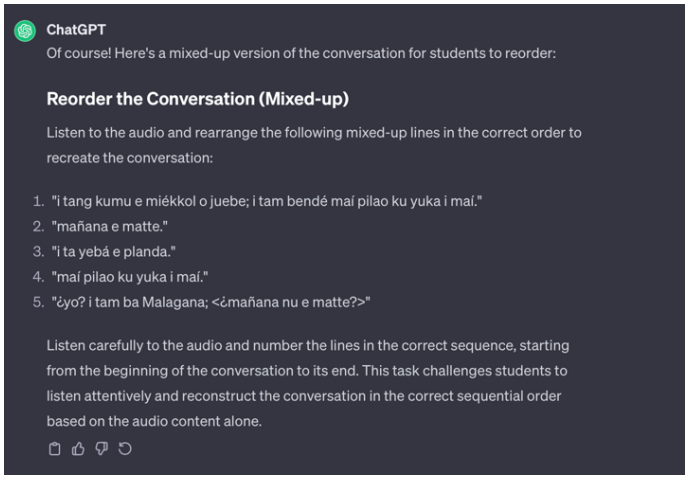


Figure 3 Reorder the Conversation Exercise. ChatGPT, personal communication, November 18, 2023

This exercise functions as both a reading and listening task. ChatGPT could successfully jumble the dialogue. The goal is for students to listen to the conversation and reorganize it correctly. If audio is unavailable, students can instead read the conversation and rearrange it based on contextual clues. ChatGPT allows for the quick, easy, and reliable generation of reordering tasks without requiring prior knowledge of Palenquero. Longer conversations can also be used, either by shuffling entire dialogues or by mixing individual lines within a lengthier exchange. By repeating this process, numerous new listening and reading exercises can be created to support Palenquero language learning.

Exercise 3: Multiple-Choice task

Prompt(s):

- Now, create a Multiple-Choice task with the same lines.

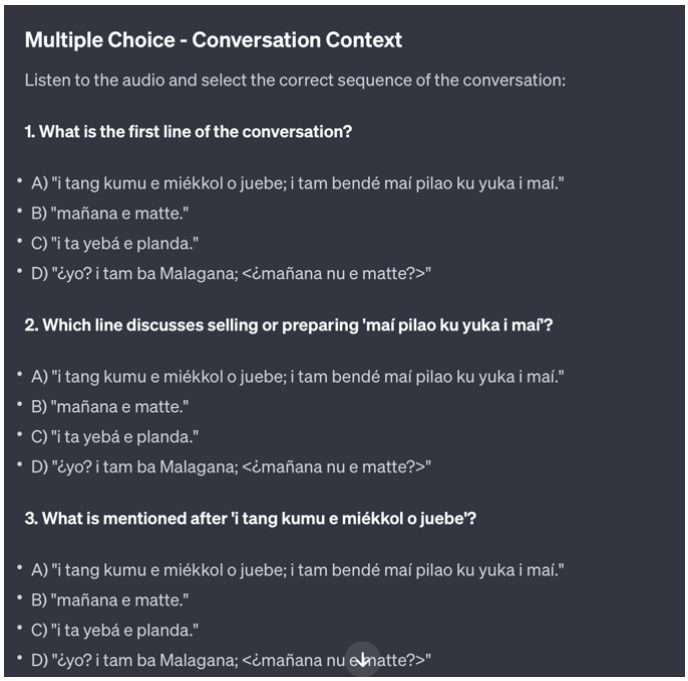


Figure 4 Multiple-Choice Exercise. ChatGPT, personal communication, November 18, 2023

When prompted to generate a multiple-choice task, ChatGPT produced a partially successful result, with only two out of three questions being pedagogically sound. This multiple-choice exercise serves as both a listening and reading task. Students

first read the questions and answer choices for a few minutes, familiarizing themselves with the content. They then listen to the audio, aiming to comprehend the conversation accurately and select the correct answer from the four provided options.

Exercise 4: Role Play
Prompt(s):

- Can you create any speaking exercise with the following data about Palenquero?

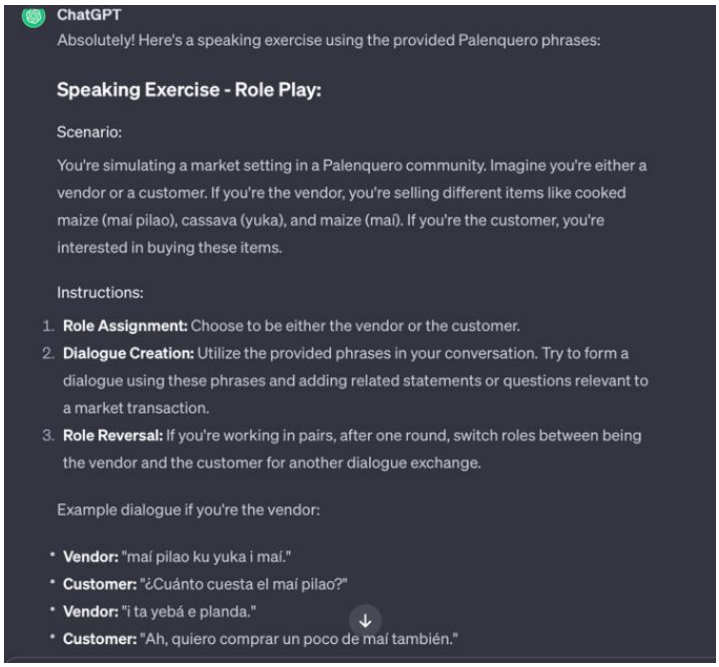


Figure 5 Role Play Exercise. ChatGPT, personal communication, November 18, 2023

This exercise primarily functions as a speaking activity but can also be adapted for writing. Surprisingly, ChatGPT was able to identify key words and context, likely due to its linguistic similarities to Spanish, to create a role-play scenario set in a market within a Palenquero community. However, it unintentionally included a Spanish sentence, highlighting the importance of human oversight. Students begin by reading the scenario generated by ChatGPT, then engage in a dialogue, taking on the roles of a vendor and a customer. While they must incorporate the provided sentences, they are also encouraged to expand the conversation by adding their own. If adapted into a writing task, students will compose a market dialogue, assuming both roles. To support this activity, ChatGPT even provided a sample dialogue as a reference for students to build upon.

Exercise 5: Story Building
Prompt(s):

- Can you also provide a writing exercise with the given data?

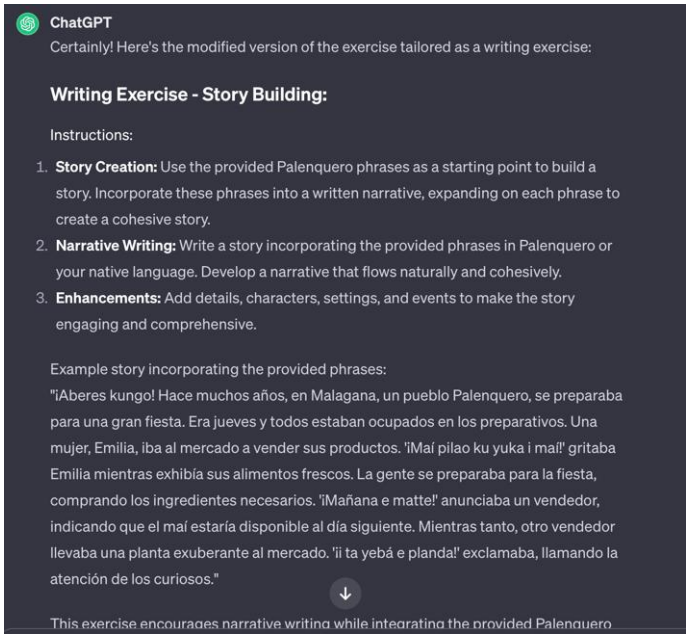


Figure 6 Writing Exercise. ChatGPT, personal communication, November 18, 2023

This task focuses on writing. ChatGPT generated a creative writ-

ing assignment that integrates the input data into a cohesive story. Additionally, it incorporated translanguaging, allowing students to use Spanish, their native language, as part of the narrative. To support comprehension, ChatGPT provided a model story, demonstrating how students might structure their own narratives effectively.

Exercise 6: Generated text in Palenquero

Prompt(s):

- Can you provide a text in Palenquero?

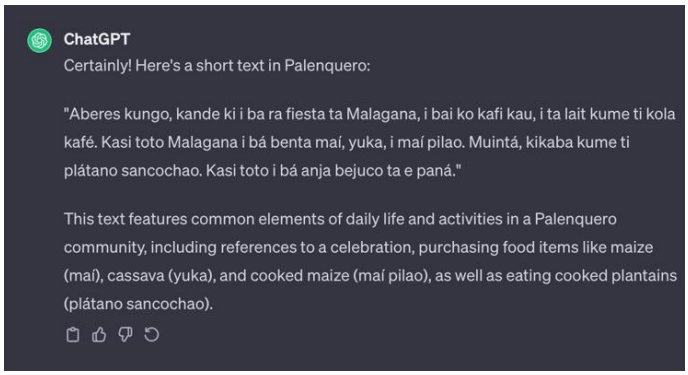


Figure 7 Generated Palenquero Text. ChatGPT, personal communication, November 18, 2023

When prompted with generating text in Palenquero, ChatGPT produced unreliable content, underscoring the essential role of human expertise in evaluating and refining AI-generated material. As noted earlier, ChatGPT requires additional data to generate educational resources effectively. To assess its capabilities, I prompted it to create a passage in Palenquero. While the model confidently produced text that superficially resembled the language, closer analysis revealed that it lacked authenticity, highlighting the limitations of AI in handling under-resourced languages like Palenquero.

Conclusions, further research and ethical considerations

This study shows that while ChatGPT struggles to generate authentic Palenquero text and accurately identify PoS, it can still be a useful tool for creating basic educational materials for an endangered language like Palenquero. Unlike well-resourced languages, the model relied on user-provided input but still successfully generated exercises across reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Even minimal input, such as a five-line conversation, proved effective in producing diverse exercises, demonstrating its adaptability when given additional data. This suggests that with further refinement and a larger data set, ChatGPT could develop a broader range of educational materials.

ChatGPT performed particularly well in tasks that did not require a deep linguistic understanding of Palenquero, such as reorganization and cloze exercises. Additionally, it exhibited creativity in developing pedagogically sound activities, including a speaking exercise set in a Palenquero market and a writing task incorporating translanguaging. Its ability to generate meaningful exercises was likely influenced by the linguistic similarities between Palenquero and Spanish, a language on which it has been extensively trained.

Despite these strengths, ChatGPT's limitations emphasize the crucial role of human oversight. The multiple-choice task, for example, contained inaccuracies, and the speaking exercise included an unintended Spanish sentence. The model's inability to correctly identify PoS in Palenquero further illustrates the need for linguistic expertise when refining AI-generated materials.

Ultimately, this study highlights ChatGPT's potential in supporting language revitalization efforts, especially as AI technology advances with improved data, algorithms, and neural networks. While human intervention remains essential, integrating AI tools like ChatGPT presents promising opportunities for developing cost- and time-efficient educational resources for endangered languages, reinforcing its value as a supplementary aid in language preservation.

This study utilized ChatGPT-3.5, the freely accessible version available during the research period. However, since its training data is limited to information available until 2021, it lacks access to more recent linguistic research and documentation on Palenquero. As previously noted, ChatGPT performs best when trained on large datasets, but Palenquero remains an under-resourced language with limited available data. Increased access to research papers, linguistic documentation, and annotated corpora could significantly enhance ChatGPT's ability to generate more accurate and pedagogically useful materials.

The natural language processing (NLP) market is projected to expand from $29.1 billion in 2023 to $92.7 billion by 2028 (Singh, 2023), leading to advancements in machine learning algorithms, expanded datasets, and overall AI performance. These improvements may positively impact ChatGPT's ability to handle under-resourced languages like Palenquero.

Despite these advancements, simply increasing the amount of available data is not sufficient. For ChatGPT to perform as effectively as it does for well-resourced languages, linguists and computer scientists must actively train the model on Palenquero's grammatical structures and contextual semantics. Currently, ChatGPT serves as a supplementary tool for educators, helping to create basic language learning materials, but it cannot replace formal education, native speakers, or existing instructional resources.

Future research should explore the potential of newer ChatGPT versions and other AI tools in generating Palenquero materials. Additionally, testing AI models on other endangered languages would provide a broader understanding of AI's capabilities in low-resourced language revitalization efforts. By expanding this initiative, AI-driven tools could play a more meaningful role in supporting language preservation and revitalization efforts worldwide.

The use of ChatGPT raises several ethical concerns, particularly when applied to low-resourced languages like Palenquero. While many of these concerns also apply to well-resourced languages, the challenges for underrepresented languages are particularly significant. One major issue is hallucination, where ChatGPT generates text that appears

semantically or grammatically coherent but is actually incorrect or nonsensical (Hua et al., 2024, p. 213). This occurred in Exercise 3 (the multiple-choice task), where one of the generated answer choices lacked semantic accuracy. A similar issue arose when I prompted ChatGPT to remove specific parts of speech, and the model failed to correctly identify grammatical forms. Another significant concern is bias, especially for languages like Palenquero that are not explicitly included in ChatGPT's training data. Since ChatGPT is fundamentally a probabilistic model, it generates text based on statistical patterns rather than true understanding. As a result, while its responses may appear logically structured, they can still be factually inaccurate from a human perspective.

Moreover, ChatGPT's biases can lead to the production of discriminatory or culturally insensitive content, as its training data predominantly reflect the perspectives of native English-speaking communities. This can result in cultural bias (reinforcing stereotypes related to gender, race, or social groups), linguistic bias (varying accuracy between well-resourced and low-resourced languages), temporal bias (limited to the timeframe of its training data), and political bias (shaped by the lack of diverse and representative sources in the training data) (Hua et al., 2024, pp. 213-218).

Addressing these ethical concerns is essential when using ChatGPT for language revitalization, particularly for underrepresented languages like Palenquero. Further research and human oversight are crucial to mitigating biases and ensuring the accuracy and cultural relevance of AI-generated educational materials.

Kohnke et al. (2023) emphasize the need for digital competency to ensure effective and ethical use of AI in education. This includes technological proficiency (understanding ChatGPT and staying updated), pedagogical compatibility (strategically integrating it into language learning), and social awareness (recognizing its limitations and ethical risks) (p. 546).

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INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE

CAUGHT IN A CONUNDRUM: TEACHERS' CALL FOR AUTONOMY IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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Abstract
In spite of the prevailing notion that the traditional way of teaching English as a distinct subject has long been proven to be pedagogically unsound, teachers in Barbados and the rest of the Caribbean are still being required adhere to the orthodox timetable slots established by education officials and school management teams that assign a specific slot for isolated English instruction. Teachers are conscious of the fact that their timetables are influenced by all of the institutional, political, sociocultural and contextual pressures exerted on the educational system in their country (Jules, 2019a; Kumaravadivelu, 2001), but their own opinions about how to do their jobs seem to count for very little in this equation, leaving them little room to assert their autonomy. In this article, we attempt: 1) to initiate a process whereby teachers are recognized and valued as practitioners with extensive and unique knowledge of learners and their special language needs as well as 2) to begin to incorporate teachers' best practice and recommendations in efforts to reform a system that at present is not designed to yield the best possible results.

Key terms: Caribbean teachers; English; instruction; timetable; autonomy

Introduction

The teaching of English to young learners is certainly not a new topic in language teaching (Islahuddin, 2023; Dehkordi, 2017; Graddol, 2006). That said, both teachers and learners at all levels in Caribbean school systems continue to experience challenges in the teaching and learning of English (Lörincz, 2022; Jules, 2019a). For that reason, this article incorporates a plea for assistance by a group of twelve teachers confronted with English instruction at the primary level in schools that exist in an environment where the majority of the population speaks two varieties of the language.

For these Caribbean teachers, the overriding uncertainty and confusion lies with the systemic and institutional frameworks within which they are expected to teach, most of

which are not sufficiently adapted to the bidialectal linguistic situation found in Barbados and elsewhere in the region and the implications for language learning in the classroom with learners who are speakers of a non-standard variety of English (Craig, 2006), especially when they are obliged to adhere to the traditional timetable and teach English in isolation as a separate subject area, an approach that has been roundly criticized in academic studies (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Jules, 2019b; Christie et al., 2011; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Feraria, 2019).

In spite of the prevailing notion that the traditional way of teaching English as a distinct subject has long been proven to be pedagogically unsound, teachers are still being required adhere to the orthodox timetable slots established by education officials and school management teams that assign a specific slot for isolated English instruction. Naturally, teachers are conscious of the fact that their timetables are influenced by all of the institutional, political, sociocultural and contextual pressures exerted on the educational system in their country (Jules, 2019a; Kumaravadivelu, 2001), but their own opinions about how to do their jobs seem to count for very little in this equation. In this article, we attempt: 1) to initiate a process whereby teachers are recognized and valued as practitioners with extensive and unique knowledge of learners and their special language needs as well as 2) to begin to incorporate teachers' best practice and recommendations in efforts to reform a system that is not designed to yield the best possible results.

Contextualization

In the past, most teachers had the firm conviction that one of the criteria for effective English teaching was for us to follow the timetable precisely; even "dutifully," with each subject being taught in isolation from the others, including English. Then, as more and more of us were exposed to the courses taught in the Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics Programme at one of the campuses of the regional university, we were introduced to another set of perspectives on English teaching. Through the efforts of our linguistics professors, we realized the importance of perceiving and teaching language as a holistic entity, that cannot be isolated from any other area of life. In our courses, we encountered study after study that demonstrated that teaching English in isolation, rather than as a thread that runs through every subject area, is counter to the optimal pathways for acquisition and learning of language.

Our exposure to the body of linguistic and pedagogical research complemented our day to day experience in the classroom. Both demonstrated clearly that teaching English as an isolated subject causes learners generally to experience difficulty in comprehending the application of the language taught in the classroom to any real function and purpose in their lives. In contrast, learners should experience ease in transferring their knowledge of English acquired from classroom instruction to communicate effectively in real-life situations (Jules, 2019a; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). We now had an acute realization of the obligation of applying the most effective systems of English instruction in our

classroom, by shifting from the customary timetable structure where English is taught in isolation to a form of delivery of English content that facilitates learners' optimum engagement, so that their experience and interfacing with the language extends to their daily routines as much as possible.

In my particular case, I was given more room than most of my colleagues to exercise some autonomy by implementing a more integrated and holistic approach to teaching English, because of the 'multi-grade' label assigned to my group of learners. The administrative judgement of that language teaching situation seemed to be that any innovation to assist these learners was admissible, even it necessitated some movement away from the established structure. Over the years, while transitioning to the tertiary level of teaching, both my experience in the school system as well as my background in linguistics have compelled me to do whatever I can to apprise teachers of effective and current trends in their profession via activities such as interactive lectures, conferencing, webinars, workshops and professional development sessions.

During my interactions with teachers, they have been forthright in their criticisms of an approach that requires them to teach English in isolation according to the timetable and in their pleas that their plight should be brought to the fore, so that the necessary assistance can be rendered. English teachers have extensive knowledge about what works and what does not work in their classrooms (Depradine, 2021; Christie et al., 2011). Despite this fact, it is common for teachers not to receive much in the way of encouragement from their school administration in their endeavours to demonstrate any autonomy in the delivery of English content to learners. In fact, it is not unusual for teachers to be prevented from drawing on their own expertise to deliver meaningful and effective English instruction in their classrooms (Simmons-McDonald, 2014).

Generally, in most Caribbean countries the distinction between the institutional and the political is not clear (Roberts, 2008; Hammond, 2015; Pai et al., 2006). This is evident in public education in particular, which is under the direct control of the government. Hence, in the Caribbean context, it is the usual practice for the government authorities with the responsibility for education to establish all the policies which regulate the curricula and instructional strategies to be followed in the country's educational institutions. At each school, a management group which can include the principal, senior teachers and/or teaching coordinators is tasked with generating a timetable that incorporates the government's policies. The management group puts much time and effort into planning the organizational structure and presenting it as the central system designed to equip the school with the standard procedures for carrying out the delivery of educational content. As a result, the master timetable represents a comprehensive and detailed arrangement of curricula and instructional schedules and tasks to which everyone in the institution, especially teachers, are expected to adhere, and teachers often perceive adherence to the timetable as an essential component of their role in upholding their school culture (Jules, 2021). Accordingly, in the Caribbean situation, the traditional

timetable is an essential aspect of the school culture which most teachers uphold fervently, with teachers making sure that in each classroom the timetable is displayed in a location where direct observation is uninhibited so that everyone knows what they should be doing at every moment of the day.

It is the norm for morning time slots to be reserved for English language areas such as reading, reading comprehension, grammar, composition and vocabulary. The generally held view is that because study in these areas are pivotal, teachers should be required to deliver English instruction at an optimal time when learners are most alert and energized to learn. As a result, not only is English taught in isolation from other subjects, but the language itself is compartmentalized so that it is taught as a collection of separate skills rather than being taught with an integrative approach as a holistic system (OECS, 2005; Jules, 2019b; Jules, 2021; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Zemelman et al., 2012; Nunan, 1995).

Therefore, it is not unreasonable to conclude that while educational institutions in the region are generally cognisant of some of the most informed and innovative approaches and methods in English teaching, this information appears to have minimal or no influence on political and institutional policies. In other words, although educational authorities and practitioners are exposed to research which verifies that English should be taught holistically, there is negligible evidence of the application of the corresponding teaching and learning principles in actual classroom instruction. Thus, in our countries the institutional and contextual restrictions which limit teachers' freedom to tap into their expertise and apply what they consider to be effective English instruction, in most instances remain intact.

From timetabling to autonomy: What the teachers themselves have to say

According to Waniganayake (2014) as teachers encounter increasingly convoluted challenges in the teaching and learning processes, they are required to demonstrate the highest level of good judgement and adeptness in their response. To make this point, we now present the voices of a group of Caribbean English teachers as they describe some of the problems that they have experienced in relation to timetabling, with many of them also proposing workable solutions to these problems as well.

> *Teacher A:* My situation is that under Language Arts, there is a separation of the various areas such as grammar, comprehension, essay writing and spelling and vocabulary, scheduled on a timetable. This schedule disconnects learners' linguistic knowledge from their practical use of English. Instead of a holistic view of English that should be applied, where grammar is essential to oral and written communication, with the separation, learners perceive the components of English individually as just subject areas slotted on the timetable.
>
> *Teacher H:* Sticking to the timetable just ensures that teaching grammar, comprehension, essay writing and spelling and vocabulary in isolation leads to a lack

of consistency or continuity regarding the topics taught across each area. For instance, spelling and vocabulary words, reading comprehension and essay writing topics are usually given at random with no direct link to each other to reinforce a particular topic. As a result, no application or connection is established by learners for the real use of the skills of speaking, writing or reading.

Teacher C: Unlike my other counterparts, the issue regarding the scheduling of English language as distinct areas is not as pressing at my school. This is because the teachers seek to approach English Language teaching holistically by using specific thematic materials to teach the various language components, thereby showing the interconnectivity between the areas and eliminating distinctiveness. For instance, one reading passage can be used for building vocabulary, teaching grammar and enhancing comprehension skills.

Teacher V: It is possible to maintain a schedule that promotes greater integration of language components. This requires teacher training that emphasizes the links between the phonological, syntactic and semantic components that comprise a language so that teachers understand why and how they should develop their timetables. That type of balance is necessary so that the gap in linguistic competence does not have to widen any further because of isolated teaching.

Teacher S: A revision of the English Language timetable, where various areas are taught in isolation, is necessary for the improvement of the use of English by Creole-influenced vernacular (CIV) students. In my view, an integrated approach to the teaching of English aids learners in understanding the interrelationship among the language processes so that they can apply their knowledge in the various social contexts that require the use of the English language.

Dennis Craig (2006) asserts that the practice of teaching English as an isolated activity can be attributed to English mother-tongue traditions in language teaching which are inappropriate for learners in Creole-influenced vernacular (CIV) contexts. Some teachers also point out that it would be helpful if longer, more integrated timetable blocks replace the short slots assigned to individual content areas that are the norm at present, not just to make teaching more holistic and relevant, but also because some learners need additional time to interact meaningfully with the material. Longer interaction time is also beneficial to learners who find it less challenging to assimilate the information, as demonstrated in academic studies, such as Depradine (2021) and Biancarosa and Snow (2006).

The teachers posed the question: Is the completion of the curriculum as laid out in the timetable the overriding issue when we teach English, or is it catering to the specific language needs of our learners? Our group of teachers provided the following answers to that question:

Teacher V: Some teachers believe that timetabling proves to be useful for classroom administrative purposes because they have the opportunity to track their

students' progress in the various English areas. In addition, they perceive that timetabling assist[s] with their preparation for internal and external assessments which are also traditional procedures that are important to the educational system. However, there are two questions which arise as a result of these perceptions. What is the true definition of learners' progress in the English classroom? At what cost to the learners are these benefits achieved?

Teacher C: Another point is that one of the special learner-needs of our students is adequate utilisation of time. Time is needed to sufficiently address the basic literacy skills which are lacking in some of our students. Hence, the timetabling issue that arises is that adequate time is not allotted to English Language teaching in the primary school, which is the foundational period for secondary learning, must be given some priority.

Teacher A: I have a particular concern with how grammar is taught as guided by the timetable. In my view, this area of English should be taught in context with meaningful experiences to engage learners rather than in isolation based on rigid timeslots. In fact, David Nunan (1998) contends that in textbooks, grammar is often presented out of context as learners are expected to internalise isolated sentences through repetition and manipulation. Nunan's statement highlights the need for interactive sessions that are relatable to learners' experiences and introduce them to new ones. The application of this approach is compromised by the inflexibility of the timetable.

Teacher G: It is often said that a primary school teacher teaches children rather than subjects; thus, creating routine aids in child development. Additionally, due to the differences in structural features between their vernacular and internationally accepted varieties of English, scheduled classes, particularly in grammar, allow for vernacular speaking students to raise their awareness of the varieties and improve their communicative competence in the official language, English. However, with insufficient linguistic knowledge about the Caribbean setting and more specifically, the Creole-influenced vernacular situation existing in our country, timetabling becomes an arbitrary activity.

Teacher A: Although some efforts are made by teachers and authorities to introduce innovative, interactive strategies to education and curriculum development, the Caribbean continues to lag behind the many countries worldwide [which] have already adopted an integrated approach. While looking at some curricula outside of the Caribbean, it is noticeable that there is no division of the various areas in English teaching as the interrelationships among the language processes are recognised and considered. However, I belie[ve] that the structure of the traditional timetable with the segregation of areas and the rigidity of time slots make the implementation of methods to facilitate this type of collaboration required between the teacher and learner extremely difficult.

Teacher C: To my mind our primary issue with overcoming the challenges caused by adhering to the timetable lies with our call for support and to be recognised as practitioners with unique knowledge of our learners and their special language needs. Most students who enter our school require … our teaching to assist them in transitioning to Standard English. This is a clear and critical issue for the English teachers to address. However, in an effort to address this literacy issue, we encounter some institutional restrictions with one of the major hindrances being the organisation of the timetable. Although some teachers already take an integrated approach to teaching English, it must be a stance taken by all teachers and should be directed and represented by the timetable.

These responses reveal that this group of teachers are firm in the conviction that they need assistance in removing some of the institutional restrictions imposed by the timetable. In their view, the timetable in most instances hinders or retards their progress in English teaching. To my mind this is a glaring confirmation of their keen awareness that the timetable is merely the manifestation of a more deeply rooted problem in English teaching. My perspective is that such challenges are hardly ever exposed in isolation; they usually correlate with other difficulties in the true representation of the situation. Furthermore, often the resolution of one challenge has a ripple-effect, so that other difficulties are rectified, or the attempt to resolve one major obstacle requires solving others along the way. As a consequence, while the teachers highlight the timetable as a barrier to their effective language teaching, their call for acceptance of their autonomy in resolving this situation demands equal attention.

For most Caribbean primary school teachers, prior to the1960s and through to the 1980s the concepts of 'teacher' and 'autonomy' were never associated with one another. Our hope is that over the years a positive change has been gradually unfolding, so that the notion of teacher autonomy in the Caribbean context can become a respected and valued reality. Some authorities put forward the view that learners' success in language teaching interrelates with teachers' autonomy and their fervour to decide on the type of instruction they deploy in the classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006; Can, 2012). While there might be some evidence that some degree of change in this direction has occurred in the approach to English teaching among Caribbean teachers, there is ample evidence that in many Caribbean classrooms, teachers' decisions about English instruction still encounter significant institutional and political restrictions (Kumaravadivelu, 2001).

Success in English teaching in the Caribbean context seems to depend at least to some degree on the acknowledgement that teachers' expertise and knowledge make them eligible to be agents of change (Jules, 2019a). Teachers' beliefs, experiences and knowledge need to be valued and teachers need to be recognised as having unparalleled knowledge of their learners and their classroom context. This means that in most instances, the Caribbean teacher has sharp insights into their learners' varied English lan-

guage needs and has a basis from which to play a key role in the development of optimally effective instructional frameworks, approaches and methods (Can, 2012). For this reason, teachers who are keen to exercise their autonomy need to stay up to date with academic work on English Language teaching (Nafassi & Shafiee, 2019).

A move away from the established structures of the timetable will necessitate increased teacher autonomy based on a sound background of linguistic knowledge and familiarity with learners' language needs (Jules, 2019a; Mueller & File, 2020 Clay, 2016; Can, 2012; Farren, 2019). The idea of teacher autonomy must be perceived as a positive development for English teaching and learning in Caribbean. This means that teachers must perceive themselves as qualified to engage purposefully in reform and innovation, and simultaneously, school administrators must be confident in their teachers' ability to exercise their autonomy with efficacy for the benefit of all parties involved.

Possible solutions and conclusions

One possible element in a new approach that might respond to the concerns voiced by teachers in the section above would be the daily allocation of an open-ended 'literacy block' that could last as long as 90 minutes. Such a block would be designed to engage learners in meaningful and integrated language instruction based on the effective integration of all the areas of English instruction. As a result, learners would be immersed in an environment that facilitates their processing of English holistically, rather than as consisting of distinct, isolated areas and skills as stipulated in the traditional timetable (Christie et al., 2011; Hwang et al., 2019; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Furthermore, the length of the literacy block would ensure that learners who require more time to assimilate the content are not disadvantaged by the rigid time slots in the traditional timetable. Another clear benefit to the longer duration of the literacy block is that it would enable other areas of the curriculum such as science, social studies and mathematics to be integrated with English. It is in this context that the thematic approach to language teaching can also be adopted as an alternative. This "theme web" approach allows the teacher to focus the content on several areas at once via the use of a theme which integrates all of them. Thus, alongside the literacy block, the thematic approach would facilitate a holistic perspective of the various subject areas. Finally, a thematic approach would not only recognize and value teacher autonomy, it actually relies upon the teacher to use that autonomy in creative ways to link the different content areas.

The teaching of English is becoming more and more vital to students' eventual success in their chosen careers, as well as in their capacity to be life-long learners (Graddol, 2006). In order to teach English most effectively, institutional barriers such as the imposition of isolated time slots dedicated to particular English skills must be removed. This means that political and institutional authorities need to establish the necessary frameworks for reforming English teaching, such as replacing short, isolated time slots with larger blocks where teachers can exercise their autonomy to teach more holistic

and integrated lessons. If measures such as this are taken, a more flexible and open-ended approach to timetabling can transform the timetable itself from being a part of the problem to being part of the solution (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Can, 2012).

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LITERACY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN MULTILINGUAL ISLAND COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF BONAIRE

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Abstract
The aim of the research which forms the basis for this article was to gain a clearer picture of literacy, language proficiency and illiteracy/alternative literacy among individuals aged 16 and older across different age groups and native languages, so that a multi-year program can be developed in collaboration with other stakeholders to create specific programs and interventions to address illiteracy. The recommendations include: 1) Supporting multilingual education practices to better serve students with diverse linguistic backgrounds, including differentiation in language instruction and classroom activities; 2) Strengthening support programs for students suspected of having low literacy skills; 3) Emphasizing foundational skills in Dutch and Papiamentu/o for students with alternative literacy backgrounds; 4) Expanding literacy programs focusing on the use of preferred languages outside of school hours; 5) Enriching the curriculum with culture-oriented topics and activities that reflect the diverse backgrounds of students; 6) Improving and integrating digital access and digital literacy skills; 7) Promoting library use through collaboration with the local library and assistance in obtaining library memberships; 8) Providing continued clarity on policies regarding instructional languages; 9) Continuing research on students' language proficiency and linguistic needs in the multilingual education context; 10) Conducting ongoing research into new methods and approaches for addressing alternative literacy; and 11) Maintaining efforts to engage parents through parent evenings, workshops, and events.

Key terms: Bonaire, illiteracy, alternative literacy, policy, multilingualism

Introduction and contextualization

Someone who is functionally illiterate has too much difficulty with reading and writing to function effectively in daily life. Since 2015, the Bonarean Reading & Writing Foundation (Stichting Lezen en Schrijven – SL&S) has been committed to "eradicating illiteracy in Bonaire through a structural approach" (Stichting Lezen en Schrijven, 2025). A survey from that same year found that 17 percent of the population born in Bonaire struggles with reading and writing, which corresponds to the Dutch average published in 2016 of 18% (Odenthal & Bouwman, 2016). Although further research is needed to determine the extent to which these percentages are comparable, we can conclude that a large section of both communities appears to experience challenges when it comes to access to written correspondence and texts.

Illiteracy makes people vulnerable, not only in the labor market but also in healthcare and well-being. A person with low literacy skills is at increased risk of losing control over financial matters and administration. The official language of Bonaire is Dutch, Papiamentu/o has been declared a regional language in accordance with the European Charter for Minority and Regional Languages by the Bonairean island council in 2024. Dutch is reported to be the home language of about 25% of the population, the majority, 60%, of the population's prime language is reported to be Papiamentu and about 12% report to speak Spanish. Most of the population is proficient in multiple languages at a conversational level.

The community of Bonaire, similar to many of the other island communities in the Caribbean, is experiencing fast population growth through in-migration, mostly from Europe and the Americas. The population of Bonaire has doubled in just a dozen or so years since the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles (CBS.nl, 2018, 2025), mainly driven by this high immigration rate. The linguistic backgrounds of these immigrants vary; they are often proficient – orally and in writing – in other languages than Dutch and Papiamentu/o

In collaboration with partners in healthcare, education, and government, a large number of successful initiatives have been established in Bonaire to promote reading and writing skills. However, significant concerns remain about the literacy levels of a portion of the population, which is why, in 2023, researchers from the University of Aruba and the University of Curaçao were commissioned to identify the current challenges and the complexity of this issue. Ultimately, this analysis led to recommendations that form the basis for expanding efforts to combat illiteracy, but also to capitalize on the alternative literacies of the diverse communities in Bonaire.

Literacy is a complex set of skills that most people acquire at a young age. In addition to learning letters and numbers, it also involves pronouncing words and texts, finding and understanding information in texts, and simultaneously learning to write. Numeracy

is also considered a part of literacy, and finally, we must not forget the increasing importance of digital literacy. Thus, illiteracy can manifest in different forms: difficulty with reading, writing, arithmetic, or digital literacy.

The approach to tackling illiteracy is generally focused on individual development, including educational initiatives where participants voluntarily acquire skills. These initiatives require that participants recognize their need, are motivated to do something about it, and ultimately have the time and resources—such as transportation—to participate. It is also important to remember that illiteracy carries a stigma, causing many people to feel ashamed when discussing it. These factors—effort, motivation, shame, and return on investment—are crucial in evaluating initiatives aimed at addressing illiteracy. Addressing this issue requires a shift in perspective, moving from a sole focus on the illiterate individual who must be "developed" to a focus on a society that accommodates illiteracy.

Bonairean society is multilingual: not only are the four main languages—Papiamentu/o, Dutch, Spanish, and English—used alongside each other, but most people also switch between these languages in daily life, often for different purposes. This makes it more challenging to assess literacy levels; in many cases, it is more accurate to speak of alternative literacy, where people are indeed literate, but perhaps not in Dutch or the language that is considered the norm.

Bonaire is undergoing a rapid transition from an informal society to a formal society. In the informal society, the written word was not a barrier to social integration and presented only a minor obstacle to entering the labor market, government, and business sectors. In formal society, the written word determines one's chances of success. A society that sets high literacy standards for its citizens is less inclusive for those with lower literacy skills unless appropriate safeguards are put in place. The interventions proposed in this report are aimed at incorporating these safeguards.

Challenges with literacy make people vulnerable, leading to difficulties in accessing medical and social care, financial and tax administration challenges, and problems with reading and following correspondence, legal documents, and more. It is known that illiteracy often goes hand in hand with social isolation, significantly reduced economic opportunities, decreased motivation to participate in society, and financial dependence (Cree et al, 2023). This makes illiteracy a complex issue.

These issues for illiterate individuals also have consequences for others, such as healthcare and service sector employees who must allocate extra time for communication with illiterate individuals and, in a multilingual society, often act as translators. The time investment required for these professionals is frequently not recognized in their performance evaluations, even though these skills are essential for successfully carrying out their roles.

Ultimately, these issues have broader societal consequences: the problem of the illiterate citizen is intertwined with complex socio-economic issues that impose significant financial and social costs on society. In the case of Bonaire, the multilingual character of the community adds a layer of complexity to challenges in literacy: although most individuals are multilingual, literacy is in general expected to be literacy in Dutch. However, Dutch is a foreign language for about 75% of the population, and for new in-migrants it is a language to which they have never been exposed to before (Faraclas et al., 2022).
The approach to addressing illiteracy is generally focused on the illiterate individual, who must learn to read to be less of a burden on society. Too often, it is forgotten that this is only one side of the coin. Illiteracy is a reality, and in many cases, educational programs provide only a limited solution. In this context, it is crucial to explore opportunities for multimodal and multilingual communication, strengthening support and training for healthcare workers and service sector employees, with an emphasis on recognizing the efforts these professionals are already making. Finally, it is also important to recognize that illiterate individuals exist across different segments of society, each requiring a different approach based on their specific needs—such as students, school dropouts, foreign language newcomers, active citizens, and senior citizens.

The research project

The aim of the research which forms the basis for this article was to gain a clearer picture of literacy, language proficiency and illiteracy/alternative literacy among individuals aged 16 and older across different age groups and native languages, so that a multi-year program can be developed in collaboration with other stakeholders to create specific programs and interventions to address illiteracy.
This project was conducted in three phases. Prior to the project, a document study was carried out on the 2015 report of Literacy Research on Bonaire (*Onderzoek Geletterdheid op Bonaire*), and in consultation with Stichting Lezen en Schrijven, it was agreed that the approach in 2023-2024 would be adjusted. The renewed approach included the impact of low or alternative literacy on various stakeholders, including healthcare workers, professionals working with illiterate individuals, and ultimately, organizations in both the private and public sectors as well as the potential for these stakeholders to mitigate the impacts of low or alternative literacy on the individuals involved.
Two master's students from the University of Curaçao, Lucretia Leming and Haidy Ligeon-Wijngaarde, conducted simultaneous studies as part of their theses under the supervision of Eric Mijts from the University of Aruba, leading to a report on low literacy and alternative literacy in Bonaire (Mijts, 2024). Leming and Ligeon-Wijngaarde mapped out the current literacy approach in Bonairean education and formulated recommendations for possible interventions. Each student conducted a literature review to outline literacy challenges and potential solutions. One student focused on literacy ap-

proaches within the pre-vocational secondary education track (VMBO) and junior general secondary education track (MAVO), while the other concentrated on adult education programs at the Forma education and development center. The students used the same assessment tool that was applied in the 2015 literacy study and conducted interviews with education professionals and employees at training venues in Bonaire. They compiled their findings into conclusions and recommendations. Their research provided valuable insights into literacy approaches in schools, including adult education at Forma and training programs at workplaces.

The final phase of the research involved analyzing these master's theses in close collaboration with SL&S, conducting expert interviews on literacy and multilingualism, and performing a close reading of policy documents and studies on language, education, and literacy in Bonaire. This resulted in an inventory of key issues surrounding illiteracy and potential interventions. These findings were then discussed in a final round of meetings with healthcare providers, education professionals, and government employees, leading to the recommendations presented in a report.

The recommendations from this report were presented to the community in Bonaire in October 2024. SL&S will determine a concrete timeline and budget for further addressing the challenges related to literacy in Bonaire.

Results

The 2024 study highlights the complexity of the issue: illiteracy and alternative literacy are part of a socio-economic web where various challenges are intertwined. Additionally, literacy challenges take on different forms for different groups, requiring tailored solutions. The main groups identified are students in school, school dropouts seeking to enter the labor market, non-native speakers entering the education system, experienced professionals, and senior citizens. Each of these groups faces literacy challenges that require targeted approaches.

The master's theses revealed several recommendations made by teachers across various education levels (Wijngaarde, 2024, p. 33-34). Firstly, there is a clear need for differentiated approaches to tackling illiteracy in education. Teachers emphasize the need for practical strategies tailored to students at different language and education levels. A second key need is continuous screening and support; the Bonairean education system should consistently invest in screening methods and ensure appropriate support for those in need. Thirdly, teachers also expressed the need for training and support to apply effective literacy remediation strategies.

A crucial point raised by teachers is the necessity of increasing parental involvement through information sessions, workshops, and other events. These should focus on children's language development and provide useful suggestions for language stimulation at home. Lastly, teachers expressed a need for new research-based approaches to address illiteracy and better evaluation of implemented strategies.

Stakeholder discussions revealed enthusiasm for practical literacy solutions in education. The demand for diagnostic materials is evident, along with the need for contextually relevant reading materials that resonate with students. A widely supported idea is the development of a digital multilingual school magazine designed by teachers and students, aimed particularly at students with low literacy levels. Additionally, teachers see potential in creating literacy-supportive materials for after-school programs and home use.

The research also showed that Forma's approach to illiteracy is highly valued. This became clear both in the master's theses and in discussions with stakeholders in Bonaire's education and healthcare sectors. However, Forma's efforts alone are insufficient to meet the needs of all illiterate individuals that seek to increase their literacy. Many struggle with feelings of shame, making it harder for them to seek help. This is particularly true for senior citizens.

A significant portion of Bonaire's older population grew up in an informal, oral society where written texts and forms played little role. Bonaire's transition to the status of a municipality of the Netherlands following the "10-10-10" (October 10, 2010) referendum-based constitutional changes led to a formalization of government processes, creating a knowledge and cultural shift that many found difficult to navigate. Literacy training for older citizens yields limited results; instead, a more effective approach would focus on utilizing their existing skills through proactive administrative support systems.

Both for older citizens and other groups facing literacy challenges, reducing the stigma surrounding illiteracy is essential. Public campaigns through media, social media, and community outreach can promote solidarity, integration, and awareness of available support.

The first instinct to address illiteracy is to respond by organizing courses and creating brochures to encourage people to engage. This works—to some extent. For example, among older adults, the ability to absorb new information and learn from it declines, while predictive ability increases. Setting up literacy training programs for these groups, whether focused on basic literacy or digital skills, yields only very limited results. These citizens deserve a different approach, one that is not primarily focused on teaching new skills but rather on making use of the skills they already possess.

One possibility discussed during the interviews was the further development of permanent support for administrative matters, including text assistance — professional guidance under supervision that can proactively help with textual challenges. Respondents referred to the deployment of Life Coaches, individuals who dedicate themselves to providing long-term support to people and families facing these kinds of challenges.

For older citizens, working professionals, school dropouts, and non-native lateral entrants, it is crucial to address the stigma surrounding low literacy. Literacy challenges exist worldwide, including in Bonaire. It is therefore recommended to use media campaigns — such as radio and television programs on self-reliance and social integration,

social media content, or short radio commercials — to foster solidarity and integration while also raising awareness about skill development and available support services for people with low literacy.

An idea that resonated with multiple respondents was the creation of a Bario Bus, which would follow a fixed weekly schedule and station itself in various priority neighborhoods. This bus would focus on accessible, multilingual services provided by independent professionals, offering support with correspondence, financial administration, health insurance, and communication with government agencies. Additionally, it could function as a mobile socio-cultural activity center, providing literacy programs, among other services. The bus should make weekly visits to areas where complex social issues, including low literacy, are more prevalent.

The research made it clear that institutions and individual professionals in Bonaire are making significant efforts to accommodate the diverse communication needs of the local population. This places high demands on professionals, particularly those familiar with the languages spoken in Bonaire and the various needs of its people. Often, these professionals invest additional time to help address the challenges many Bonairians face. It is recommended that these professionals be recognized for their efforts and receive further support in developing these services, including additional training and allocated time to fulfill this role. Likewise, extra coaching should be provided to professionals who have not yet acquired these skills.

Finally, it is also important to consider differences in written communication skills. Beyond translating messages into Bonaire's different languages, ensuring text accessibility through word choice and formatting is essential. The use of pictograms can further enhance comprehension. While many (online) Dutch language documents have already been translated into Bonaire's other languages, even greater improvements in communication quality can be achieved by enhancing their accessibility.

All of the above-mentioned approaches to addressing low literacy in multilingual Bonaire would benefit from the establishment of a Language Hub (*Taalpunt*), a central point dedicated to supporting literacy education at all levels, assisting professionals and organizations in textual communication and interactions with people with low literacy, as well as serving as a reliable partner for the government in all literacy-related matters.

Conclusion

The 2023–2024 study built on the research published in 2015 by the Stichting Lezen & Schrijven [Reading & Writing Foundation] and the 2022 study on a new language policy for Bonaire (Faraclas, Kester & Mijts, 2022). One key conclusion is that low literacy will probably always remain a challenge in Bonairian society. Therefore, it is essential for all stakeholders to remain committed to both addressing the needs of individuals with low or alternative literacy skills and supporting literacy education. It is important to recognize that literacy is an issue affecting different groups, each with distinct needs

and possibilities: the student in the classroom, the school dropout seeking access to the labor market, the non-native lateral entrant, the experienced professional, and, ultimately, senior citizens.

The recommendations in the report can be divided into several categories. First, they focus on individuals with low literacy by continuing and expanding literacy courses, in combination with the possible deployment of life coaches and a Bario Bus. A second strategy involves systematically adapting communication through the use of more accessible language, pictograms, and improved text formatting. Naturally, efforts must continue to ensure the availability of more accessible reading materials, including a contextually relevant and multimodal newsletter for different educational levels, as well as the ongoing need for Papiamentu/o-language reading materials.

The education sector—spanning primary, secondary, and adult education—continues to require adequate diagnostic tools and literacy curricula that address Bonaire's multilingual reality. Additionally, a long-term study should be considered to evaluate approaches to low literacy in a multilingual environment, tracking the various target groups previously discussed. Finally, it remains crucial to establish a Language Hub with a clear mandate and responsibility to support and facilitate these initiatives where necessary. This Language Hub could work to create a network of accessibility ambassadors within relevant organizations and businesses, promoting an inclusive society.

The masters research conducted as part of the present study (Leming, 2024; Wijngaarde, 2024) led to the following recommendations for educational practice, which are further substantiated in the two theses:

- Support multilingual education practices to better serve students with diverse linguistic backgrounds, including differentiation in language instruction and classroom activities.
- Strengthen support programs for students suspected of having low literacy skills.
- Emphasize foundational skills in Dutch and Papiamentu/o for students with alternative literacy backgrounds.
- Expand literacy programs focusing on the use of preferred languages outside of school hours.
- Enrich the curriculum with culture-oriented topics and activities that reflect the diverse backgrounds of students.
- Improve and integrate digital access and digital literacy skills.
- Promote library use through collaboration with the local library and assistance in obtaining library memberships.
- Provide continued clarity on policies regarding instructional languages.
- Continue research on students' language proficiency and linguistic needs in the multilingual education context.
- Conduct ongoing research into new methods and approaches for addressing alternative literacy.

- Maintain efforts to engage parents through parent evenings, workshops, and events.

These master's theses have demonstrated that the issue is not solely about low literacy but, in many cases, also about alternative literacy. There is a complex dynamic of language proficiency among the students in schools that participated in the present study, in which different languages play different roles. It has become clear that, beyond the traditional concept of low literacy, there are also nuances in how students are proficient in different languages. This highlights the need for a more inclusive approach to language education and support, taking into account the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the student population.

Implementing the above-mentioned interventions could mark a significant step forward in Bonaire's development as an inclusive society, where all residents have the opportunity to grow and fully participate in social life.

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TAAL DOET ER TOE

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Samenvatting
In dit artikel wordt betoogd dat het voor onderzoekers belangrijk is dat zij de taal leren van de regio waar zij onderzoek uitvoeren. Om die reden zijn de betrokken onderzoekers Hanneke Tuithof en Jan Bant begonnen aan een leertraject Papiaments. Het vormgeven van dit traject was maatwerk dat was afgestemd op hun wensen, behoeftes, en praktische overwegingen. In combinatie met de digitale tools die ze hiervoor hebben gebruikt, past dit traject goed bij de behoefte inzake aard en mate van beheersing van het Papiaments bij het doen van onderzoek op de drie betrokken Benedenwindse eilanden Aruba, Bonaire en Curaçao, in het bijzonder en in het onderwijs.

Sleutelwoorden
Papiaments, taalonderwijs, thuistaal, schooltaal, onderzoeker, onderzoekscontext

Summary
This article argues that it is important for researchers to learn the language of the region where they conduct research. For this reason, the researchers Hanneke Tuithof and Jan Bant have started a Papiamentu learning trajectory. Shaping this trajectory was customized to their wishes, needs, and practical considerations. In combination with the digital tools they have used for this purpose, this trajectory fits well with the need regarding the nature and extent of mastering Papiamentu when conducting research in the three Leeward Islands Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, particularly in education.

Situatieschets
In een klaslokaal zitten havo 5-leerlingen te overleggen over de historische Canon van Curaçao. De leerlingen overleggen met elkaar in het Papiaments, Nederlands, Spaans of Engels. Het zijn leerlingen van het Radulphus College op Curaçao, en ze hebben in het kader van een onderzoek de opdracht gekregen om vensters uit de historische Canon

van Curaçao te kiezen die voor hen betekenisvol zijn. Dat gaat het beste in de taal die dichtbij hen of die van hun gesprekspartner ligt. In de Canon van Curaçao zijn 50 vensters opgenomen met gebeurtenissen, objecten of personen die een belangrijke rol spelen in de geschiedenis en cultuur van Curaçao (Canon van Curaçao; https://canoncuracao.cw/). De leerlingen zijn druk aan het overleggen terwijl hun geschiedenisdocente glimlachend rondloopt en toelichting geeft bij sommige vensters. Ze verwijst naar onderwerpen die in de les aan bod kwamen of helpt leerlingen om te bedenken wat voor hen betekenisvol is. Zij komt uit Europees Nederland en geeft in het Nederlands les, maar houdt rekening met de beginsituatie van de leerling. Daarvoor heeft ze de geschiedenis van Curaçao en de regio bestudeerd, en heeft ze ervoor gezorgd dat zij de basis van het Papiaments begrijpt.

Inleiding

In didactische modellen zoals het Model Didactische Analyse (MDA) van Van Gelder et al. is de beginsituatie van de leerling het uitgangspunt (Van Gelder et al., 1971). De hierboven beschreven docente houdt veel rekening met de beginsituatie van de leerlingen. Leerlingen leren niet alleen op school, maar ook in informele situaties. Docenten kunnen voortbouwen op de kennis en vaardigheden die leerlingen in hun thuissituatie opdoen. Omdat deze culturele of sociale bagage niet bij alle leerlingen hetzelfde is, vraagt het veel ervaring en inspanning van docenten om te identificeren wat leerlingen thuis of elders al geleerd hebben. Dat het leren beter gaat als het onderwijs aansluit bij de beginsituatie van de leerlingen is al lang bekend. Voorkennis, ervaringen, meningen, waarden en normen horen bij de beginsituatie, maar ook de taal is onderdeel van de beginsituatie van de leerlingen. Vaak wordt bij taalverwerving in het kader van de beginsituatie het onderscheid gehanteerd tussen DAT (Dagelijks Algemeen Taalgebruik) en CAT (Cognitief-Academisch Taalgebruik), dus het verschil tussen dagelijkse of thuistaal versus schooltaal (Cummins, 2008; Hajer & Meestringa, 2020).[1] Nieuwer is het inzicht uit taaldidactisch onderzoek dat een meertalige aanpak – die in het klaslokaal ruimte biedt aan thuistalen – onderwijs toegankelijker kan maken. Toegankelijker, omdat door zo'n aanpak meertalige leerlingen zich gezien voelen en zij gebruik kunnen maken van kennis en vaardigheden die zij in andere talen dan de schooltaal hebben ontwikkeld. Het gebruiken van de thuistaal van leerlingen kan ondersteunen bij het aanleren van een nieuwe taal of het begrijpen van schooltaal (Smit, 2022).

Binnen het NWO-onderzoeksproject Re/Presenting Europe: Popular Representations of Diversity and Belonging werken meerdere universiteiten en hogescholen samen aan een

[1] In het Engels spreekt men van *basic interpersonal communicative skills* (BICS) en *cognitive academic language proficiency* (CALP). Zie Jim Cummins, "BICS and CALP: Empirical and Theoretical Status of the Distinction" in *Encyclopedia of Language and Education, 2nd Edition, Volume 2: Literacy*, eds. Street, B. & Hornberger, N. H. (New York: Springer Science + Business Media LLC, 2008), 71-83. Zie voor het Nederlandse taalgebied Hajer, M. & Meestringa, T. Handboek taalgericht vakonderwijs. Bussum: Uitgeverij Coutinho, 2020.

inclusieve Europese samenleving waarin jongeren zich thuis kunnen voelen. Daarbinnen wordt door Hanneke Tuithof, Jan Bant en Joram Appel onderzoek gedaan naar de wijze waarop docenten betekenisvol onderwijs kunnen vormgeven in een diverse klas, zoals de docente in de situatieschets aan het begin van dit artikel. Dit onderzoek wordt in diverse klassen in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden uitgevoerd, inclusief Aruba, Bonaire en Curaçao (de zogenaamde ABC-eilanden). Tijdens haar eerste bezoek in 2023 aan Curaçao en Bonaire zag Hanneke Tuithof, onderzoeker en lerarenopleider bij de Universiteit Utrecht, dat het Papiaments in de pluriforme klassen aldaar een significante rol speelt bij het vormgeven van een betekenisvol curriculum. Omdat zij in 2024 naast Bonaire en Curaçao eveneens Aruba zou bezoeken, vond ze dat het haar observaties en interacties zou verrijken om een basis in Papiaments te hebben. Zij was in de beschikbare tijd niet in staat om het niveau te halen om docenten en leerlingen in het Papiaments te interviewen, maar zij vond wel dat ze moest werken aan een basis van de taal en dat zij de culturele context moest leren kennen om de situatie op de ABC-eilanden, en daarmee de context van dit onderzoek, te begrijpen.

Zij kwam in contact met Jan Bant, promovendus aan de Radboud Universiteit en afkomstig van Aruba. Hij was bereid om haar te begeleiden. Dit artikel bespreekt hoe dit maatwerktraject om de taal en context te leren past bij de alledaagse realiteit op de ABC-eilanden, en ook hoe dit traject didactische inzichten oplevert over taalverwerving en taalgebruik. Daarnaast wordt beschreven dat dit traject alleen heeft plaats kunnen vinden door verschillende digitale middelen te gebruiken, waarmee kennis over taal en culturele context tussen de Antillen en Europees Nederland ook op grote afstand kon worden uitgewisseld en opgedaan. Zonder online met elkaar te spreken, informatie opzoeken en digitale tools had dit traject niet vormgegeven kunnen worden. Tot slot wordt er gereflecteerd op de waarde van het opdoen van kennis over de taal en context waar mee en waarbinnen de docenten en leerlingen betrokken bij het project opereren.

Papiamentu en Papiamento

'Papiamentu' wordt gebruikt op Curaçao en Bonaire, terwijl men het op Aruba heeft over het 'Papiamento'. De drie eilanden hebben elk hun eigen kleine verschillen van de taal, waarbij het grote onderlinge verschil vooral zit in de spellingswijze (Etymologisch), Aruba (Papiamento) vergeleken met (fonologisch) op Curaçao en Bonaire (Papiamentu).[2]. Het Papiaments wordt wereldwijd door ongeveer 270.000 mensen gesproken. Op de ABC-eilanden speelt deze taal een belangrijke rol als thuistaal van veel leerlingen (Jacobs, 2012).[3] Volgens het Nederlandse Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek

[2] In dit artikel wordt 'Papiaments' gebruikt voor zowel Papiamentu als Papiamento.

[3] Voor meer informatie en data zie: CBS, *Caribisch Nederland; gesproken talen en voertaal, persoonskenmerken* (2022), https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/cijfers/detail/82867NED; Dienst Inspectie van het Onderwijs, *Doorlichting van het Arubaanse Onderwijsbestel* (november 2021), 32, https://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/documenten/rapporten/2022/04/05/doorlichting-van-het-arubaanse-onderwijsstelsel---tussenrapportage; De meest recente data van Curaçao komt uit 2001 en laat zien dat Papiamentu bij 81,2%

spreekt 88,4% van de bevolking van Bonaire Papiamentu. 62,4% van de bevolking gebruikt Papiamentu als eerste taal. De Nederlandse Onderwijsinspectie rapporteert dat in 2010 bij 68% van de gezinnen op Aruba thuis Papiamento wordt gesproken. 6% van de gezinnen spreekt thuis Nederlands. Wie het niet thuis spreekt, gebruikt het gedeeltelijk wel in sociale situaties. Bij de meest recente census van Curaçao gaf 78% van de respondenten aan thuis als eerste taal Papiaments te spreken. Daarna volgde Spaans met 8,4% en Nederlands met 7,9% van de respondenten (Census Curaçao, 2023).

Papiaments leren

Zoals de in de situatieschets beschreven docent geschiedenis in Curaçao rekening houdt met de beginsituatie van haar leerlingen, is kennisname van de beginsituaties van Hanneke Tuithof en Jan Bant van belang om de context van dit artikel te begrijpen. Hannekes werkende leven begon als geschiedenisdocent in het voortgezet onderwijs. Daarna werd ze lerarenopleider aan de Universiteit Utrecht. Dat taal er echt toe doet, werd haar heel erg duidelijk toen ze voor haar promotieonderzoek, dat zij in 2017 succesvol afsloot met een proefschrift over de vakdidactische kennis van Nederlandse geschiedenisdocenten, geschiedenisdocenten interviewde die een nieuw examenprogramma moesten geven. Ze zou in het Engels publiceren, maar merkte dat er in de vertaling wat verloren ging, zoals gevoelens van frustratie en typische Nederlandse vakbegrippen. Ze heeft uiteindelijk het hoofdstuk dat gebaseerd is op die interviews in het Nederlands geschreven en in die taal opgenomen in een Engelstalig proefschrift (Tuithof, 2017). Sindsdien doet ze onderzoek en geeft ze onderwijs en nascholing aan docenten in opleiding. Haar huidige onderzoek richt zich op de professionele ontwikkeling van docenten en op curriculumontwikkeling. Haar moedertaal is het Nederlands en ze heeft in het voortgezet onderwijs vijf jaar Latijn gehad. In 1989 heeft ze een paar maanden Spaans geleerd vanwege een reis. Ze vindt het lastig om fouten te maken en dat zit haar in de weg bij het leren en spreken van een nieuwe taal. Ook is ze meer visueel dan auditief ingesteld waardoor het woordbeeld belangrijk is voor haar taalbegrip. Verschillende van haar oudstudenten werken op Curaçao en Bonaire. Ze is in februari 2023 voor het eerst op Bonaire en Curaçao geweest, in februari 2024 nog een keer en ze heeft toen ook Aruba bezocht.

Jan Bant is promovendus in de geschiedenis aan de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen. In zijn onderzoek kijkt hij naar de rol van sport, en in het bijzonder honk- en softbal, in het leven van Nederlands-Caribische mensen. Daarvoor studeerde hij Filosofie en American Studies in Groningen, en Geschiedenis in Leiden. Hij is geboren en opgegroeid op Aruba en is in de zomer van 2014 verhuisd naar Nederland. Als Arubaanse Nederlander en Nederlandse Arubaan is Nederlands zijn ‘eerste’ moedertaal, en Papiaments zijn

van de bevolking aldaar de meest gesproken taal was. Ze voor data: CBS, *Fourth Population and Housing Census Netherlands Antilles 2001, section H, Tables Dealing with Household Characteristics* (CBS, 2001), table H.7, 264, https://www.cbs.cw/_flysystem/media/tables-h-household-characteristics.pdf.

‘tweede’. Hij leerde Papiaments in het alledaagse leven op Aruba: bij het sporten, op school, op straat, en door bijbaantjes. Daarnaast was Papiaments tot en met de derde klas van de middelbare school een verplicht vak. Dit leertraject biedt Jan de mogelijkheid om zelf ook op een andere manier met zijn ‘tweede’ moedertaal bezig te zijn en zich op een nieuwe manier tot deze taal te verhouden.

In het flexibele leertraject Papiaments was er ruimte voor het leren van woordjes en grammatica, maar vooral zochten de onderzoekers naar authentieke contexten om te leren over de aard van de taal en de cultuur. Omdat de onderzoekers beiden in het onderzoeksproject Re/Presenting Europe werken, leek het hen goed om binnen die context de taal te leren. Dit traject hebben is vervolgens vormgegeven op grond van vier overwegingen:

1) Wat bij de beginsituatie van Hanneke paste: wat aansloot bij haar voorkennis, manier van leren en waar zij gemotiveerd door raakt. Het moest ook rekening houden met haar kennis en ervaring als vakdidacticus geschiedenis, deskundig op het gebied van onderwijs en leren.

2) Wat praktisch haalbaar was met het beschikbare materiaal en binnen de beschikbare tijd: Jan en Hanneke hebben beide een fulltimebaan en konden elkaar een keer per twee weken spreken. Hanneke kon met name in het weekeind huiswerk maken en doordeweeks af en toe woordjes oefenen. Er zijn niet veel tools en methodes beschikbaar. Hanneke en Jan hebben een geschikte methode kunnen vinden en digitale tools en digitale communicatiemiddelen ingezet.

3) Wat aansloot bij de context waarin de kennis gebruikt zou gaan worden: het onderzoeksproject naar het vormgeven van een betekenisvol curriculum.

4) Wat Hanneke de meeste handvaten gaf om bij bezoek aan de ABC-eilanden meer contact te maken met leerlingen en docenten, en om de context waarin zij handelen beter te begrijpen.

De onderzoekers spraken elkaar een keer in de twee weken online via MS-Teams of Whatsapp en zijn begonnen met basiswoorden en dagelijkse zinnetjes. Door herhaling en bespreking bouwde Hanneke een kleine woordenschat op. De onderzoekers bezochten de tentoonstelling over Anton de Kom in het openluchtmuseum in Arnhem en de opstelling van de vensters van de Canon van Nederland. In beide opstellingen gaat het over het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden en komt het koloniale verleden aan bod. De onderzoekers konden zo woorden in het Papiaments koppelen aan de geschiedenis en context van de eilanden. Zij hebben samen eenvoudige teksten vertaald, zoals gedichten en het lied ‘Tula, warda’ van de Curaçaose artiest Doble-R. Hierbij gebruikten ze een fysiek en een digitaal woordenboek (Glosbe). Het ging om teksten die veel van de cultuur en geschiedenis laten zien, maar niet makkelijk zijn omdat er veel “dichterlijke vrijheid” wordt betracht. Dat Hanneke in Glosbe zinnetjes kon invoeren uit de teksten hielp haar om met de taal te puzzelen. Daarna hebben de onderzoekers gewerkt met een basiscursus

in boekvorm die is ontwikkeld door Mario, Marta, en Gregor Dijkhoff, die in eigen beheer uitgegeven is (versie 2020). Dit is de enige goed verkrijgbare methode voor zover bij de onderzoekers bekend is. Hoewel de methode een hele goede basis voor woordenschat en grammatica en dagelijkse gesprekken biedt, gaat het om een technische en weinig dynamische benadering van de taal. Verder gebruikten de onderzoekers voor het makkelijk en vaker oefenen van woorden en uitspraak een app van U-talk. U-talk is een app waar allerlei talen mee kunnen worden geleerd. Woorden zijn in thema's gegroepeerd en gebruikers kunnen op een speelse manier de woorden leren en overhoren van makkelijk naar moeilijk. Het is mogelijk om steeds meer woorden tegelijk te repeteren en de woorden in te spreken en dan te vergelijken met de uitspraak van een *native speaker*. Ook gebruikten de onderzoekers Quizlet, een overhoorprogramma dat in het Nederlandse voortgezet onderwijs veel gebruikt wordt. Zinnetjes die de onderzoekers in de online sessies bespraken en oefenden konden hierin makkelijk opgenomen en zo herhaald worden. Door de digitale tools en websites kon Hanneke op een flexibele manier woordjes en grammatica en over de cultuur leren, zodat er in de online contacten meer tijd over bleef voor het contextrijke leren. Als Jan op Aruba verbleef konden Hanneke en Jan met elkaar blijven communiceren en het voegde ook iets toe dat Jan vanaf het eiland waar hij is opgegroeid Hanneke kon vertellen over de taal en cultuur.

In de gesprekken die beiden voerden, kwam de cultuur van de ABC-eilanden en die dynamiek van de taal volop aan bod. Ze lazen artikelen op de website van het Caribisch Netwerk NTR en probeerden een Wikipedia-pagina over een sportheld op te stellen. En ze hebben zinnen voorbereid die in de context van het onderzoek bruikbaar waren. Ook gebruikten ze kinderboeken en liedjes in beide talen. Deze contextrijke manier van leren paste bij Hannekes beginsituatie, leervraag en manier van leren. Maar het paste ook bij de dynamische taal die het Papiaments is. Door de sporen "van de geschiedenis van Europees kolonialisme en Afrikaanse slavernij op Caribische bodem" is de taal in zichzelf heel contextrijk (Oostindie & Van Stipriaan, 2021). De basis voor het Papiaments werd gelegd door de vermenging van de taal van Portugees-joodse slaveneigenaren met de Afrikaanse talen die de totslaafgemaakten meebrachten en, wat later, met het Nederlands van de kolonisator. Woorden als diaranson (de dag waarop je je rantsoen kreeg) laten zien dat de taalgeschiedenis in zich draagt. De onderzoekers ervoeren in hun traject dat het contextrijk leren niet alleen betekenisvoller leren opleverde, maar dat het nodig was om de aard van de taal goed te begrijpen.

Door de complexe trans-Atlantische geschiedenis is het Papiaments ook een voorbeeld van taalcontact. Er hebben veel talen en ontwikkelingen bijgedragen aan het Papiaments zoals dat nu gesproken wordt en dat kan worden ervaren als de taal wordt gesproken of bestudeerd (Oostindie & Van Stipriaan, 2021). Hanneke vindt het lastig om fouten te maken, maar door de lokale verschillen (Papiamentu, Papiamento) en het voorkomen van woorden uit meerdere talen voelt de taal voor haar niet als een object dat ze moet beheersen, maar als een subject tot wie zij zich graag wil verhouden. Dat de taal veel

Spaanse woorden bevat en dat er ook Nederlandse en Engelse woorden gebruikt worden, gaf haar het gevoel dat ze al veel wist en dat ze terug kon vallen op al verworven kennis als ze de nieuwe taal niet genoeg beheerste.
)De taal wordt per eiland verschillend gebruikt en uitgesproken. Bijna iedereen spreekt naast Papiaments Nederlands, Engels of Spaans. Dat dit een hindernis kan zijn, ervoer Hanneke tijdens haar bezoek aan de eilanden in februari 2024. Het was voor haar niet makkelijk om Papiaments te spreken, omdat zij als beginnend spreker het spreektempo van veel gesprekspartners moeilijk kon volgen en omdat ze tijdens haar bezoek voornamelijk op scholen en universiteiten was waar ook veel Nederlands wordt gesproken (zie bijv. Departement Onderwijs Aruba, Integraal Taalbeleid Onderwijs 2023). Ook is ze niet erg auditief ingesteld en heeft ze het nodig om woorden te zien. Lezen ging daarom beter. Het gebruiken van eenvoudige woorden als "hopi bon" of "hopi laat" of het juist uitspreken van "dispensa mi" of "mi nomber ta" hielpen bij het maken van contact. Door te laten merken dat ze de taal aan het leren was, kreeg ze suggesties voor goede zinnetjes of uitspraak.
Door de focus op Papiaments was Hanneke wel beter in staat om te ervaren hoe meertaligheid het dagelijks leven van de eilanden bepaalt en voerde zij er gesprekken over: Papiaments, Engels, Nederlands en Spaans worden door elkaar gebruikt, ook door haar. Ze sprak twee uit Nederland afkomstige geschiedenisdocenten die de taal inmiddels begrijpen en daarmee hun leerlingen beter begrijpen. En ze kwam in een Arubaanse brugklas waar leerlingen thuis Papiaments (8 leerlingen), Engels (6 leerlingen), Nederlands (2 leerlingen), Spaans (8 leerlingen) en Chinees (4 leerlingen) spreken, terwijl de schooltaal Nederlands is. Twee ervaren docenten op die school gebruiken Papiaments in hun Nederlandstalige lessen als steuntaal om contact te maken en woorden uit te leggen. Op alle scholen die ze bezocht, ook de scholen die opleiden voor Nederlandstalige toetsen/examens en Nederlands eisen als instructietaal, hoorde ze Papiaments in en buiten de klas. Kortom, het Papiaments heeft een hele belangrijke rol als thuistaal (DAT) en voertaal in het onderwijs. Joyce Pereira heeft de houding van Arubanen ten opzichte van onderwijs in het Papiaments of het Nederlands onderzocht, en komt tot de conclusie dat lokale leerkrachten "[de manier] waarop de leerlingen reageerden op de nieuwe kennis en vaardigheden die ze opdeden in hun eigen taal zeer positief vonden," wat door Hanneke bij haar lesbezoeken wordt bevestigd (Pereira, 2018). Dit bevestigde tevens dat het leren van de taal waarin het onderzoek werd uitgevoerd hielp om de taalcontext waarin les wordt gegeven op de ABC-eilanden te begrijpen.

Beginsituatie, rijke contexten en taalsteun

Het leerproces van Hanneke en deze ervaringen met taal op de scholen op de ABC-eilanden illustreren hoe belangrijk het is om aan te sluiten bij de beginsituatie van leerlingen/lerenden. Het gebruik van rijke contexten en taalsteun zijn middelen om dit te doen. In taaldidactiek wordt het aanbieden van rijke contexten door middel van kennis

en verhalen, het vormgeven van interactie en het geven van taalsteun gezien als manieren om taalontwikkeling te bevorderen (Hajer & Meestringa, 2020). De onderzoekers ervoeren bijvoorbeeld hoe saai en demotiverend het is om tien keer zinnetjes met dezelfde grammaticale constructie te maken en te bespreken. Als de onderzoekers teksten vertaalden, lazen of schreven die aansloten bij onze eigen interesse of de situatie waarin de taal gebruikt zou worden, waren we veel gemotiveerder. De rijke contexten helpen niet alleen om een taal te leren, maar ook over de cultuur waarin de taal gebruikt wordt te leren. In de Europees-Nederlandse context wordt in de huidige curriculumvernieuwing van het taalonderwijs taalbewustzijn en cultuurbewustzijn bewust aan elkaar gekoppeld.

Hanneke zag op de eilanden dat het gebruiken van meerdere talen in de klas werkt en dat dit aansluit bij het inzicht dat taalsteun geven werkt en dat talen elkaar kunnen versterken. Talen zijn verbonden aan ervaringen, kennis en herinneringen. Die kracht wordt ontsloten als leerlingen meerdere talen kunnen gebruiken. De leerlingen die Hanneke op de eilanden sprak, gaven aan dat dit voor hen werkte. Er werd aan haar aangegeven dat ze zich begrepen en gezien voelden als een docent wat over hun achtergrond wist, over de geschiedenis van het eiland, maar ook over de taal die er thuis gesproken wordt en als daar rekening mee wordt gehouden.

Conclusie en discussie

Door deze ervaringen raakten de onderzoekers niet alleen meer overtuigd van het belang van rekening houden met de beginsituatie om betekenisvol onderwijs vorm te geven, maar begrepen we ook dat het hanteren van meertaligheid in de klas enorm kan bijdragen een betekenisvol onderwijs. Jantien Smit benoemde in haar openbare les als lector meertaligheid in 2022 dat meertaligheid in de klas onderwijs rijker en eerlijker kan maken: Allereerst omdat meertaligen zich meer gezien en gehoord voelen als hun thuistaal welkom is. Daarnaast omdat in een meertalige context er via rijke contexten aan vakinhoud en deelvaardigheden van taalontwikkeling in samenhang gewerkt kan worden (Smit, 2022). En met die twee kenmerken wordt kansengelijkheid in het onderwijs vergroot.

In het NWO-onderzoeksproject Re/Presenting Europe proberen de onderzoekers te beschrijven en onderzoeken hoe docenten onderwijs kunnen vormgeven dat betekenisvol is voor hun leerlingen in een diverse klas. Dat is niet los te koppelen van de beginsituatie van de leerlingen en ook niet van de taal. Papiaments is onderdeel van de cultuur op Curaçao, Bonaire en Aruba. Betekenisvol lesgeven gaat uit van het rekening houden met de beginsituatie zoals de thuistaal van de leerlingen (DAT). In de praktijk zou dat dus meertaligheid betekenen met het gebruikmaken van rijke contexten en taalsteun. Dat gebruik van DAT in het onderwijs meerwaarde heeft en wordt gewaardeerd door leerlingen en lokale gemeenschappen wordt door de literatuur en door de bevindingen van Hanneke ondersteund. Hoe dat gebeurt in een context waarbij er tot, of meer dan,

vijf talen in één klaslokaal worden gesproken, waarbij de lesmethode is geschreven in een taal die de meeste leerlingen niet vloeiend beheersen en vanuit een perspectief dat de meeste leerlingen niet herkennen, en hoe een docent die niet al die talen (vloeiend) beheerst daar mee om gaat, is een onderzoeksonderwerp dat niet alleen op de ABC-eilanden, maar ook in soortgelijke (postkoloniale) contexten kan worden uitgevoerd.
Door zelf een taal te leren ervoer Hanneke aan den lijve wat het betekent om te werken met rijke contexten en ondersteuning van andere talen. Door op deze manier te leren over de taal, geschiedenis en cultuur van de eilanden is zij anders naar haar onderzoek gaan kijken. Eerst was zij op zoek naar hoe inhouden en werkvormen helpen om betekenisvol onderwijs vorm te geven, maar door dit leertraject en de ervaringen op de ABC-eilanden, zag ze hoe groot de rol van taal hierbij is. Het leren van het Papiaments en het leren over de context waarin de taal wordt gesproken helpt om de rol van onderzoeker te vervullen, om de context waarin les wordt gegeven te begrijpen, en heeft praktisch inzicht gegeven in taalontwikkeling en het opdoen van contextkennis met behulp van digitale middelen. Relatief eenvoudige tools als het digitale woordenboek, de taal app, het online samen kunnen praten via MS Teams of Whatsapp, de NTR-website Caribisch Nederland, de authentieke contexten hebben de eerste auteur allemaal ondersteund in het vormgeven van een betekenisvol maatwerktraject. Het gebruik van VR-brillen of adaptieve tools die zich aanpassen aan het niveau zouden dit kunnen aanvullen. Onderzoek van Pim Renou en Pieter Mannak suggereert bijvoorbeeld dat het gebruik van VR en andere digitale leercontexten waardevol kunnen zijn bij “de contextualisering en beleving van het verleden” (Mannak & Renou, 2023). De waarde van die middelen zijn onmiskenbaar. Hoe die middelen niet alleen op individueel niveau door een volwassen onderzoeker, maar ook in het klaslokaal kunnen worden ingezet is een interessant onderwerp voor vervolgonderzoek. Zeker waar het gaat om een relatief kleine taal, waarbij het niet vanzelfsprekend is dat er in die taal (digitaal) lesmateriaal en applicaties beschikbaar zijn.

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CRUCIAN ENCOUNTERS: ATTITUDES TOWARDS L2 ACQUISITION OF CARIBBEAN ENGLISH LEXIFIER CREOLE IN THE US VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Abstract
This article investigates attitudes toward Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole (or Crucian) and its acquisition among newcomers to the United States Virgin Islands (USVI), based on an analysis of public online comments on internet forums related to the logistics of moving to the USVI. Commenters demonstrate positivity toward Crucian by requesting information and resources, as well as explicitly favorable comments. More rarely, negativity is also observed, as well as warnings about using it and rejection of its status as a distinct variety. The overall positive attitude lends hope that Crucian will gain greater acceptance, as are other Caribbean creoles.

Key terms: Crucian; Virgin Islands; second language acquisition; creole, attitudes

Introduction and methodology

The plurilingual Caribbean island of St. Croix, together with the other United States Virgin Islands (USVI) can be said to be diglossic with Standard American English (SAE) usually being used in more formal contexts and Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole, the local variety of which is known on St. Croix as Crucian, (sometimes spelled Cruzan, Ethnologue, n.d.) usually used in less formal contexts. While SAE is the language of officialdom and education, Crucian is valued for its expression of homegrown culture. As Tonks (2020) explains in her work on the status of Crucian among high school students, teachers, and administrators, they "embrace[d] it as the language of the people, while also denigrating it as being inappropriate for use in formal settings" (Tonks, 2020, p. i). Islanders have innovated the term "yanking" to refer to the use of SAE by Crucians both when conversing with outsiders and to display their own education level, travel

experience and generally high status among themselves, i.e., talking like a "Yankee" (Sterns, 2008, p. 96).

As a "tourist paradise" as well as a frequent destination for immigration from other Caribbean locations, the USVI is the site of constant linguistic and cultural encounters between islanders, visitors, and immigrants. Less than 50% of the population can trace its ancestry on the island back more than a few generations. Of the other 50%, most (approximately 35% of the total population) are first, second or third generation migrants from other Caribbean islands, especially Puerto Rico, St. Lucia, and the Dominican Republic. The remaining 15% of the USVI population hails from the mainland United States, attracted by generous tax incentives as well as the beautiful beaches. Overall, around 90% of the population is raced as Black, with those raced as White are mostly arrivals from the continental U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

The resulting multicultural, multilingual mix guarantees exposure to many language varieties, and opportunities for their acquisition. Unfortunately, resources for would-be learners for many of these varieties are highly limited. There are two self-published glossaries of Crucian vocabulary (Sterns, 2008; Valls, 1981), both written by non-linguists, and both now out of print and difficult to access. In terms of the research literature, there is one unpublished dissertation on Crucian phonology (Plata Monllor, 2008) and one unpublished dissertation on the sociolinguistic situation in St. Croix high schools (Tonks, 2020), as well as one journal article on Crucian plural morphology (Sabino et al., 2003). Otherwise, Crucian appears only in passing in other work on Caribbean English(es).

In addition, the acquisition of creole languages in general is highly understudied. While the intersection of acquisition research and creole studies is substantial, to date the focus has primarily been on the effects of second-language (L2) acquisition on the grammatical properties of the resulting creoles, rather than tracing the path of creole acquisition in subsequent generations (Lefebvre et al., 2006). The literature on first language (L1) acquisition of creoles as native languages is scant, and research on L2 acquisition of creole varieties is even more negligible, in spite of its frequency of occurrence in the Caribbean context, due to the constant movement of people to, from, and between islands.

Remedying this gap in the literature is far beyond the scope of this article. However, I take a first step in that direction through an analysis of public online discourse about Crucian language and learning, both from new and prospective arrivals as well as from Virgin Islanders.

Due to the popularity of the USVI as an adopted home, there is a wide array of relocation services available through private companies, community forums or personal networks. In addition to such practical matters as shipping belongings, rental arrangements, and so on, virtual spaces and communities offer advice on topics like cultural adaptation.

These online discourses now occur primarily within private Facebook groups. However, in past years, much of the activity happened on public internet forums hosted by websites devoted to relocation services. Two of the largest of these are VI Moving Center (n.d.) and VI Now (n.d.), which features a dedicated subpage on language issues called "Virgin Islands Language" as well as online forums. Within its forums, the search term "dialect" yields 18 search results. A similar search on the VI Moving Center forums yields approximately four pages of search results, totaling approximately 80 items.
All of these, together with the forum threads in which they appear, were read in their entirety by the author. A preliminary thematic analysis of emergent topics and patterns was undertaken. The comments were found to cluster around the following themes:

1. Resources
2. Positivity
3. Negativity
4. Warnings
5. Rejection

These are each discussed independently in the following section. Anonymized versions of the comments are quoted verbatim where relevant.

Results

The presence of the dedicated language page on VI Now, "Virgin Islands Language" (n.d.), indicates that in spite of the islander practice of "yanking," new arrivals soon become aware of linguistic difference and of Crucian itself. Additionally, this linguistic difference prompts them to inquire about possible resources for learning this new (to them) variety. As one commenter asks, "I wonder if we WASPs can get some training in Cruzan?" Commenters express hopes and spread rumors that the University of the Virgin Islands offers such training – which, sadly, it does not. Others share information about one-off cultural events featuring language on the island. In addition to inquiries about classes in Crucian, commenters also express interest in finding conversation partners. One even solicits a translator (intended for visiting colleagues). While this commenter attracted some ridicule, others chimed in that comprehension could indeed be difficult, asking "does it get easier to understand what they are saying once you live there for awhile?" and "my brain doesn't work as fast as their speech!" To address such difficulties, commenters themselves act as resources - asking and answering questions about new vocabulary items they have seen and overheard.
These requests for resources indicate a willingness to learn and general positivity towards Crucian. One commenter exclaims that they "love this stuff! .... I love to try to figure out what the local folks are saying and how they talk to each other." Another says that they "would never think (tink?) that the language is mangled," indicating their awareness that SAE interdental fricative consonants (or 'th' sounds) are pronounced as

alveolar stops in Crucian. Another states that "the path of the least resistance is to immediately dismiss it as broken English." Importantly, both of these commenters presuppose and acknowledge the existence of negative attitudes towards Crucian as "mangled" or "broken." Yet the commenters themselves reject such attitudes, considering them unjustified. Another commenter argues eloquently, and in surprisingly – but gratifyingly! – linguistically well-informed fashion that:

> Caribbean children (not just in the USVI) are told that they don't speak 'properly.' Instead, they should be taught that they speak a perfectly good language and they are going to learn a second one- with different rules- for use at school and in certain other situations. One is not a bad imitation of another language, it is a separate language! Wha' say you, me son?

In closing with an attempt at expressing themself in Crucian, this commenter demonstrates their own acquisition efforts as well as a supportive attitude toward its use, even if the exclusive use of SAE in an educational context is not challenged.

Much more rarely, commenters not only acknowledged but actively supported negativity toward Crucian. One commenter drew a clear opposition, very familiar from other situations of diglossia, between "clear" and "decent" SAE versus "unprofessional" "broken" and "lazy" Crucian. Their initial post generated an avalanche of opposing responses, which strongly rejected this characterization of Crucian. Yet there were also two responses in support of the commenter's original anti-Crucian position.

Occasional warnings were issued to newcomers about appropriate use (or non-use) of Crucian. Without ever explicitly using the phrase "cultural appropriation," commenters were clearly sensitive to the potential problems of outsiders using this insider variety. As one advised, "don't try to 'own it' or 'be it.'" Another emphasizes the importance of considering "the time and place." While (limited) use is acceptable ("OK, in small doses," and "use the odd word"), the consensus is to "be cautious" and avoid "trying SO hard." Still, one commenter noted that they "have had no negative reaction when [they] speak Crucian."

Finally, there is rejection of the idea that any special learning is needed for Crucian, or that it is significantly different from SAE. These comments come from islanders themselves, who are also active in these internet forums as providers of insight and advice. These commenters are typically supportive in terms of explaining vocabulary items and cultural/practical differences. Yet at times, they push back against the idea that Crucian is not English, and against fetishization of it. In response to one request for resources, an islander comments that "you don't need a book, it will just come naturally if you are around locals." In contrast to my own experience on the island, another claims that "most people who live here for a period of over 4 to 6 months can understand it anyway." Another adds that "we are speaking English, if you listen carefully you'll understand. *Stop being fascinated by the accent*" [emphasis mine]. Another gets straight to the point by simply stating flatly, "We speak English." Such resistance doubtless stems from the

all-too-common portrayal of Crucian as a "merely" dialectal or "lesser than" form of SAE, so that distinguishing it from SAE in any way may trigger suspicions of ascribing it lesser status.

Conclusion

In summary, migrants to the USVI from the American mainland display positive attitudes towards Crucian, which is spoken by islanders who are raced mainly as Black. This presents a strong and encouraging contrast to mainstream attitudes towards African American English in the American context, which is still too often stigmatized and dismissed as an inadequate and inferior form of English (Bailey et al., 2013, *passim*). Although Crucian shares some features with African American English, it is significantly different not only in terms of its linguistic properties, but also in terms of its social status. This openness toward the acquisition and use of Crucian, though stymied by a lack of academic and pedagogical resources, reflects a promising broader trend in the Caribbean toward acceptance of local varieties. In recent years, Haitian (a French lexifier Creole) has gained official status as a national language, as well as a language academy, and greatly expanded its use in the educational system through the efforts of activists and the support of organizations like the MIT-Haiti Initiative (n.d.). Meanwhile, Jamaican (an English lexifier Creole) or Patwa has followed a similar trajectory (Romero, 2023, *passim*), enjoying its own academic unit, the Jamaican Language Unit (n.d.) at the University of the West Indies, which gained attention outside Jamaica and academia for its recent work with the filmmakers of *Bob Marley: One love* (Green, 2024). Language courses are offered in Jamaican both through the unit and by individuals as a tourist attraction, as well as at other North American institutions like the African Language Program at Harvard University (n.d.).

It is to be hoped that Crucian will follow the same path toward greater acceptance in all social contexts, including official and educational arenas.

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VIEWPOINTS FROM THE EDUCATION SECTOR ON DUTCH EDUCATION IN CURAÇAO

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Abstract
This research made use of a survey to investigate how the education sector viewed the current state of Dutch language education and what the wishes and needs were for improving Dutch language education in Curaçao. To this end, written questions (k=21) were presented to a group of informants (n=18), consisting of relevant actors in the education sector. The results show that the education sector expresses a moderate set of opinions regarding the state of Dutch at school at all levels. There is a pronounced preference for an approach to Dutch as a foreign language (DFL) and a revision of the existing framework documents. The most prominent need was for contextualized, locally adapted Dutch language teaching materials, with appropriate assessment tools, evaluation, and training. Most recommended that the use of Papiamentu to support Dutch language education should take place in a structured manner.

Key terms: Curaçao, Dutch education, Papiamentu/o, contextualisaton, teaching materials, postcolonial context

Introduction

The Caribbean Leeward ABC (Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao) and Windward SSS (St. Maarten, Saba, and Sint Eustatius) islands, together with the Western European country of the Netherlands, comprise the Dutch Kingdom. Between 1945 and 2010, the six islands constituted the Netherlands Antilles, with the administrative seat in Curaçao. Aruba succeeded in acquiring a separate status within the Kingdom in 1986. On the Leeward Islands, Papiamento (in Aruba) and Papiamentu (in Bonaire and Curaçao) is the generally spoken language, while on the Windward Islands, Caribbean English and

[1] This contribution is based on Severing, Echteld, Bérénos and Severing-Halman (2025).

English lexifier Creole are the most important home languages. Since the new Constitution in 2010, the islands of Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba (BES) are politically special municipalities of the Netherlands. Since then, alongside the Netherlands, the islands of Curaçao, Aruba, and St. Maarten (CASt) have been autonomous countries within the Kingdom. As a result, the BES islands fall under the education policy and inspectorate of the Netherlands. The local island administrations of the BES islands each have their own education deputy who is primarily responsible for educational infrastructure.

On the three Papiamentu/o-speaking ABC islands, Dutch is the administrative language and the main language of instruction in education. Since the islands came under Dutch rule (1634), Dutch has been the language of administration and education. The Catholic mission consistently used the local languages of the islanders, primarily the enslaved, to convert them. In the 19th century, the mission launched a targeted campaign to use Papiamentu/o for catechesis, during which the first books were published in printed form. At Sunday school, children and adults were therefore taught in Papiamentu/o using Dutch-Papiamentu/o catechisms and grammar books.

Since the second half of the 20th century, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MOWCS) of Curaçao has attempted, together with the University of Curaçao and the Nederlandse Taalunie [Dutch Language Union or TU] (all translations are by the authors of the present article, unless specified otherwise), to ensure that primary and secondary school students in Curaçao receive optimal education in the Dutch language, adapted to the (language) situation on the Leeward Islands. In this process, it has been increasingly acknowledged that the optimal way to achieve this is through teaching Dutch as a Foreign Language (DFL).

To further support the transition from offering Dutch as a Mother Tongue (DMT) [*Nedertands als moedertaal* or NMT] to offering Dutch as a foreign language, DFL [*Nederlands als vreemde taal* or NVT] the MOWCS, the University of Curaçao, and the Dutch Language Union [*Taal Unie* or TU] wanted to collaborate on the development of a strong and sustainable DFL-Carib network and enrich it with education experts from primary education (PO) and secondary education (VO) in Curaçao. As part of further developments to achieve this goal, in 2021 these three partner agencies organized two information sessions each on DFL, where delegations of school boards, school leaders, and subject teachers were invited by the MOWCS to exchange ideas. In the four sessions, four levels of education were represented: 1) primary education; 2) VSBO (prevocational secondary education tracks); 3) HAVO/VWO (more advanced secondary education tracks); and 4) SBO/HBO(special/basic education tracks)/Dutch teacher training program .[2] The intended goals were: (1) to create support for Dutch as a Foreign Language (DFL) by providing information about it, by sparking curiosity, and by gauging

[2] The participants in this online discussion (November 11, 2021) were the Sector Director of Education and Science of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MOWCS) of Curaçao the relevant official

how local teachers and Dutch linguists think about Dutch as a Foreign Language; (2) to identify key actors in the field who might want to come and support the (DFL) network; and (3) to select recommendations for a meeting of the Ministers of Education of Aruba, Curaçao, St. Maarten and The Netherlands. An online meeting had been held earlier as preparation. During this virtual meeting, a plan was conceived with regard to one of the stated objectives to conduct a brief survey as preparatory work for a consultation between the Ministers of Education of the four countries scheduled for early 2022. This study would provide a concrete, up-to-date impression of the state of Dutch in the field which would come directly from the field itself. To this end, the University of Curaçao was asked to conduct the study upon which the present article is based. The study was designed: (1) to collect data based on a quick and limited survey of a sample made up of participants from the educational field about their current situation and their levels of satisfaction regarding Dutch as a non-native language (NVT) education in schools and (2) to identify their needs and wishes concerning NVT education in Curaçao. A concise report with the results was intended to serve as a basis for the official documents of the four-country consultation. Two research questions were formulated for the survey that constutued the main instrument of the study:

1. What is your evaluation of the current state of Dutch education at school?
2. What are your wishes and needs for improving Dutch education?

Dutch in education in Curaçao

The regulations regulating each educational level, and indicating the role of the Dutch language at each level, can be found in the various national ordinances (see respectively: De Vries, 2009 and the LUOC, PB 1985, p. 43). The requirements set by the government for the different education areas and subjects, and thus also for the subject of Dutch, are generally described in terms of core objectives and competencies. These target goals for the Dutch school subject can be further operationalized for certain school types in subject curricula, which provide explanations and guidance for material developers, language coordinators, and teachers. In 2021, the Curaçao government approved a language policy plan (MOWCS, Policy Sector, 2014).

Teaching methods for Dutch as a school subject

Teaching methods and textbook series for Dutch as a school subject were adopted from the Netherlands educational system at the beginning of the last century. The need to improve educational performance led to education becoming increasingly contextualized in the second half of the twentieth century. From the late 1950s, for initial and

from the Language Union (Drs. Martijn Nicolaas), and staff from the language section of the General Faculty of the University of Curaçao (Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Echteld, Prof. Dr. Ronald Severing, and Bernadette Bérénos, MEd).

advanced Dutch language and reading education in primary schools, local Curaçao-designed comprehensive programs were used, intended for the six islands of the former Netherlands Antilles. These comprehensive programs, or synthetic methods, always included all the distinct didactic learning lines. Together, these editions formed a complete method line for language and reading education from grade 1 to grade 6. The design of the learning lines and their didactic implementation were already based on an approach to Dutch as a foreign language (DFL) at that time.

The starting point was that the children did not have Dutch as their home language, but instead their home languages were Papiamentu/o on the Leeward Islands and English alongside English lexifier Creole on the Windward Islands. Characteristic of this new didactic approach was an explicit explanation in the treatment of language elements that are not found in Papiamentu/o or English. This was based on a contrastive analysis of these three languages carried out by the authors. For example, because Dutch has different articles linked to grammatical gender, while Papiamentu/o and English do not, this needed to be addressed with corresponding exercises. The same applied to conjugation and inflection based on a similar contrastive analysis. This is what a native language method does not offer. Native speakers have exposure from their environment since childhood and internalize such features.

Much of this innovative approach can be attributed to Dr. Caesarius Mommers, who was a scientific associate and university lecturer at KUN in Interdisciplinary Education between 1966 and 1990. For his doctorate in social sciences, he wrote the well-known dissertation *Reading with the Finger*. This friar from Tilburg, affiliated with Zwijsen Publishers, was the advisory source and model for the Friars of Tilburg in Curaçao with their well-known monastery in Scherpenheuvel. Mommers was the father of the innovative reading method *Veilig leren lezen* [Learning to Read Safely], which is still used to teach initial literacy to 85% of children in the Netherlands as well as in Flanders. *Veilig leren lezen* proved to be the model for our earlier Dutch as a Foreign Language learning-to-read method *De eerste stap* [The First Step].[3]

Upon entering grade 1, six-year-olds began learning the Dutch language using the oral language method *Taalzaakonderwijs* [Language Matters Instruction] (Oirschot et al., 1960). Reading and writing instruction also started immediately. For this, the structural method for initial reading instruction, *The First Step* (Evonius et al., 1957), was written. In the 1980s, as a result of changing insights, this structural method was replaced by a subsequent structural method that included global elements, titled *The Third Step*. Students were not given base words but were first introduced to core sentences. After they learned Dutch sentences, the focus shifted to structure exercises with words that were

[3] Dr. Mommers was succeeded by Prof. Dr. Ludo Verhoeven as the main author, currently also affiliated as a professor at the General Faculty of the University of Curacao and at the University of Curacao Research Institute

by now familiar (Zefrin, 1983). The sixteen-part method *Zonnig Nederlands* (Oirschot et al., 1961; Centrum Leermiddelen Utrecht, 1990), developed for grades 1 through 6, fit seamlessly into this. The strong cohesion between these methods was the result of related groups of developers aiming for a consistent learning pathway for primary education, then still referred to as elementary education.

In the late 1980s, a basic manual for learning Dutch was written for Papiamentu/o-speaking schools, titled *Bon Hulandes* (Martinus, 1988). Currently, various methods from the Netherlands are used in primary education in Curaçao, such as *Taalactief*, *Zin in Taal* and *Taalleesland*. These innovations related to the learning of Dutch as a foreign language in primary education have never been integrated into teaching materials for secondary education. Despite repeated requests from the education sector over decades, a comprehensive method for the subject of Dutch has never been developed, except for supportive teaching materials written and distributed by individual authors or groups of teachers. Secondary schools use, for example, *Nieuw Nederlands* and *Topniveau* for Dutch lessons. The Dutch as a Foreign Language Network has been established to share knowledge and expertise between the TU and the six Caribbean Dutch islands.

Performance in learning Dutch

Over time, there have been regular reports on performance in learning Dutch in the Caribbean Netherlands. In general, and for centuries, the results in the subject of Dutch have been disappointing. (Appel & Verhoeven, 1991; Narain, 1995). In the most recent government report: *Education Report 2018-2019 The State of Education in Curaçao*, the following passages include findings that also refer to the subject of Dutch:

> The current outcomes are the result of the course of the teaching and learning process and the care and guidance provided. In general, students perform below the standard on average. Students in primary education perform below the standard on average in mathematics, arithmetic, and Dutch.
>
> Within secondary education, the progression rate is not consistent and/or below the standard, and students perform on average below a grade of 6.0 on the central exam. This has implications for the transition to further education and the course of students' school careers. The persistence of these threats in the mentioned areas harms the quality of education, the value of diplomas, and the quality of the individual that our education ultimately delivers. (Education Inspectorate, 2020, p. 12).

Under heading 1.4 "Positive trends" it is stated that:

> The stimulating supervision by the Education Inspectorate, together with the efforts of the schools, has ensured that there are generally positive developments underway. Continuing and initiating these trends across the different types of education could lead to even more improved results. When the result of the risk analysis in 2017 is compared with the result in 2020, it can be noted that steps

> have been taken towards quality improvement within education. (Education Inspectorate, 2020, p. 12).

In paragraph 3.3 “Results” it is stated that:

> Under the quality domain ‘results’, the average scores of students at the end of primary education for the subjects Papiamentu, Dutch, and mathematics in the period 2014-2015 through 2018-2019 are included. The risks for a majority of schools lie in the area of student performance in Dutch and mathematics. The average score on the end-of-primary education test for these subjects is generally below the standard at some schools. (Education Inspectorate, 2020, p. 123).

In a recent evaluation report of the final primary education test, the correlation between the subjects Dutch, Papiamentu, and mathematics is calculated (Vries & Padilla-Bomberg, 2021, p. 17). From this, it can be seen that students who score high in Dutch also perform well in mathematics, whereas the correlation between Dutch and Papiamentu is low.

The Present Study

Design, Sample, Instrument, Procedure

The target group for the present research consists of employees involved directly with education in the field. To assemble a representative sample group, stratified sampling was used in which the sample units: education levels and types of staff were distinguished. To answer the research questions, data were collected using a questionnaire with closed-ended questions. The sample (n=18) consisted of staff from different educational levels (primary education (n=4); pre-vocational secondary education tracks (VSBO) (n=5); more advance secondary education tracks (HAVO/VWO) (n=2) and special/basic education (SBO/HO) (n=7)). For further stratification among the participants, staff playing different roles were invited, including teachers (n=11), school leaders (n=0), coordinators (n=2), educational officers (n=2), and others (n=3). In total, 18 survey questionnaires were completed, all of which were fully filled out.

The two research questions formed the basis of the survey questionnaire, drafted in Dutch. In addition, given the nature of this study, the focus was primarily on the micro-levels of education, namely Dutch lessons classroom situation where students and teachers meet. The use of this frame of reference, or structure, helps to organize actors (teacher and students), processes (instructional and learning activities), and variables (educational level, satisfaction, and desires) (Wellner et al., 2019). The questionnaire included items related to goals, final objectives of subject curricula, learning material, methods (somewhat at the meso- and macro-level), training and professional development for teachers and educational actors, recognizability and contextualization of teaching materials in Dutch lessons in terms of content and presentation, and subject didactic approaches such as mother tongue and foreign language approaches. The questionnaire

(for details, see Appendix 1) consisted of statements, with which the participant could indicate on a five-point Likert scale the extent to which they agreed, for example:
B3. I am personally satisfied with the textbooks and other materials in the Dutch lessons.
1 = Not at all; 2 = A little; 3 = Fairly; 4 = Satisfied; 5 = Very satisfied

1 =00 - 20%	**2** =21 - 40%	**3** = 41- 60%	**4** =61 - 80%	**5** =81 - 100%	*value*

There was a total of 21 questions (k=21) divided over the first research question (k=16) and the second research question (k=5). For the first research question, consideration was given to two sub-themes: Subtheme 1a) participants' assessment of the status of Dutch education in their schools (questions A1-A9) and Subtheme 1b) participants' levels of satisfaction with Dutch education in their schools (questions B1-B7). Followinfg the items related to the second research question (questions C1-C5), there was an open question: *Which teaching method(s) are currently used at your school or schools?* Finally, there were also dotted lines for *Comments*.
Through the Sector Director of the MOWCS, officials from the education sectors and school boards were contacted with an invitation to the management and a request to invite a limited number of school leaders and teachers (see Appendix 1). Due to the limited time available for calling, consulting the informants, data analysis, and reporting, the research was already referred to as a *rapid consultation* in the invitation by the Sector Director. The four afternoon sessions that took place on December 7 and 8, 2021, in a classroom at the UoC each lasted only one hour, taking into account the restrictions imposed by the locally applicable COVID-19 measures at that time. After a brief explanation to supplement the invitation letter and an introduction, the questionnaire was presented to the attendees, with a request to indicate only the desired choice for each statement and advice that a short extension would be possible after the 30 minutes normally allotted to complete the survey.

The data from the completed questionnaires were analyzed using the programs Excel and SPSS. Since the questionnaire was designed with a practical purpose and was predominantly exploratory in nature, more attention was paid to validity, and the statistical reliability was assessed to a limited extent. For each question, the mean (M) was calculated (min. 1 and max. 5 points) and the standard deviation (SD) to get an impression of the spread of scores and the average scores of the respondents. Percentage scores were also included, as a scale of 10 or 100 is generally easier to interpret than results on a five-point scale. In the interpretation, the respondents' choices were valued as follows.[4]

[4] For the sake of clarity, recalculation of the scores using Linear Transformation was omitted, as a result of which the percentages may be somewhat flattering.

Based on the Dutch grading scale (from 1-10), the percentages here can be interpreted as follows: 100% = excellent; 90% = very good; 80% = good; 70% = more than sufficient; 60% = sufficient; 50% = almost sufficient; 40% = insufficient; 30% = poor; 20% = bad; 10% = very bad.

Results for Research Question 1, Subtheme 1a: State of Dutch Education (for details, see Appendix 2, Tables 1, 2, 5, and 6)

From the responses to the first survey question (A1), it appears that actors in the education sector in Curaçao believe that they have been sufficiently informed (A1: M=3.7; SD=1.01; 63.3%) about the objectives of Dutch as a foreign language lessons. Note, however, that the percentage of 63.3% is not very high. On the one hand, participants think that their school follows the mother-tongue approach fairly well (62.2%) in Dutch lessons (A2: M=3.11; SD=0.99; 62.2%). On the other hand, they judge that their school adopts the foreign-language approach fairly reasonably (56.7%) in Dutch lessons (A3: M=2.83; SD=1.74; 56.7%). In general, the participants believe that the content of Dutch textbooks minimally (37.8%) matches the interests of Curaçaoan children (A4: M=1.89; SD=0.74; 37.8%). When asked whether there is sufficient supporting material such as dictionaries, workbooks, audiovisual materials, etc., for Dutch lessons, the response is moderate (48.9%), with a score that just falls short of 50% (A5: M=2.44; SD=1.12; 48.9%). Participants have higher levels of agreement with the propositions that preparing Dutch lessons requires a lot of effort (75.6%) from the school (A6: M=3.78; SD=0.63; 75.6%) and that conducting and evaluating Dutch lessons also requires a lot of effort (76.7%) (A7: M=3.83; SD=0.50; 76.7%). It is clear that the participants are in nearly unanimous agreement (90.0%) that Papiamentu may certainly be used as a support in Dutch lessons (A8: M=4.50; SD=1.77; 90.0%). Finally, participants are in substantial agreement that they and their colleagues already use Papiamentu as a support in Dutch lessons (66.7%) (A9: M=3.33; SD=0.88; 66.7%). The overall average scores indicate that the participants' assessment of the current state of Dutch education at their schools is reasonably good/sufficient (64.2%) with an average score of 3.21 on a five-point scale (Questions A1-A9: M=3.21; SD=1.34; 64.2%).

Results for Research Question 1, Subtheme 1b: Levels of Satisfaction with Dutch Education (for details, see Appendix 2, Tables 1, 3, 5, and 6)

Participants are in only moderate agreement with the propositions: 1) that they are satified with the results of the Dutch lessons in their school (46.7%) (B4: M=2.33; SD=0.88; 46.7%); 2) that students enjoy their Dutch lessons (40.0%) (B1: M=2.00; SD=0.67; 40.0%); 3) that students are satisfied with the textbooks and other materials used in their Dutch lessons (43.3%) (B2: M=2.17; SD=0.76; 43.3%); 4) that the participants themselves are satisfied with the textbooks and other materials used in their Dutch lessons (48.9%) (B3: M=2.44; SD=1.07; 48.9%); and 5) that Dutch lessons at their school follow the mother tongue teaching methodology (46.7%) (B6: M=2.33; SD=1.76; 46.7%).

In addition, they believe that colleagues are slightly more satisfied with the textbooks and the results of the Dutch lessons in their school (53.3%) (B5: M=2.67; SD=1.67; 53.3%). Participants who indicate that they follow a foreign language teaching methodology in Dutch lessons appear to be reasonably satisfied (61.1%) with their results (B7: M=3.06; SD=1.61; 61.1%). The general average of results for the subtheme of Levels of Satisfaction with Dutch Education is only 48.6% (G=2.43; SD=1.32; 48.6%) which is well below the levels registered for the subtheme of Status of Dutch Education.

Results for Research Question 2: Wishes and Needs for Improving Dutch Education (for details, see Appendix 2, Tables 1, 4, 5, and 6)

Participants are in very strong agreement with the proposition that they would like to see a revision of the goals, final objectives, and curricula for the subject of Dutch in Curaçao (85.6%) (C1: M=4.28; SD=0.87; 85.6%). They are in significant agreement with the proposition that they would like to learn a structured approach to using Papiamentu as a support in teaching Dutch (78.9%) (C2: M=3.94; SD=0.78; 78.9%) and in even stronger agreement with the proposition that their colleagues would like to learn a structured approach to using Papiamentu as a support in teaching Dutch (84.4%) (C3: M=4.22; SD=1.31; 84.4%). The proposition with which participants most strongly agree (92.2%) is that the material for Dutch lessons should be recognizable to the students, both in terms of content and presentation. This response has the lowest standard deviation in the entire survey (SD=0.49) indicating that the respondents have a strongly consistent opinion (C4: M=4.61; SD=0.49; 92.2%). Participants also strongly agree (88.9%) and consistently agree (SD=0.50) that further training should be provided on approaches to the subject of Dutch (C5: M=4.44; SD=0.50; 88.9%).

Results: Teaching Methods Used and General Comments

Results regarding the teaching methods that are actually used in the schools where the particpants are based can be found in Appendix 2, Table 7 and Figure 1. General comments can be found in Appendix 2, Table 8.

Conclusions

The investigation upon which this article is based was designed to answer two research questions: (1) What is your evaluation of the current state of Dutch education at school? and (2) What are your wishes and needs for improving Dutch education? The responses to these questions can be summarized as follows:

Status of Dutch Education: Participants are reasonably informed about the objectives of Dutch as a foreign language lessons. Less than half consider support materials such as dictionaries, workbooks, audiovisual materials, etc., for Dutch lessons to be adequate. A much greater percentage of participants feel that it takes a lot of effort to prepare, conduct, and evaluate Dutch lessons and that the content of the Dutch textbooks hardly

matches the interests of the children. There is almost unanimous agreement that Papiamentu may be used as a support in Dutch lessons, but substantially fewer participants report that Papiamentu is currently being used as a support in Dutch lessons in their school.

Levels of Satisfaction with Dutch Education: Overall, levels of satisfaction with Dutch education are lower than optimal. Respondents are only in moderate agreement with the propositions that they are satisfied with the results of Dutch instruction at their school, that students find their Dutch lessons enjoyable, and that they, their colleagues and their students and are satisfied with the textbooks and other materials used in the Dutch lessons. That said, those who report that they follow the foreign language teaching method in Dutch lessons express substantially higher degrees of satisfaction with their results.

Wishes and Needs for Improving Dutch Education: To improve Dutch education, there is a clear consensus among participants that the material for Dutch lessons should be recognizable to the students, both in terms of content and presentation and that there needs to be a revision of the goals, final objectives, and subject curricula for Dutch in Curaçao. Participants and their colleagues also express high levels of desire to learn a structured approach for the use of Papiamentu as a support in Dutch lessons in particular, as well as for more training in approaches for teaching Dutch in general.

In summary, while participants were only mildly enthusiastic concerning the current state of Dutch education in Curaçao and their levels of satisfaction with it, they displayed high levels of enthusiasm for initiatives to improve it.

Recommendations

Based on the results of our quick consultation with those most directly involved with Dutch education in Curaçao, we formulate the following recommendations which are aimed at addressing their most fervent wishes and meeting their most urgent needs related to the improvement of Dutch education on the island. These recommendations may also be relevant for the other Papiamentu/o-speaking Caribbean islands and even beyond:

1. Revising the framework documents core objectives, final attainment targets, and curricula for the subject of Dutch. The applicable documents that form the framework for Dutch education can be revised and, if necessary, further updated. The framework documents at the macro level, ultimately determine the Dutch language lessons in the classroom at the micro level. Therefore, it seems wise during organized meetings to discuss the framework documents that this be done together with the teachers. This will make it clearer within which margins teachers have the freedom to be creative without exceeding their own authority. It will become clearer what the competencies are of the minister, the school boards, the school leaders, the teaching team, and the teachers themselves. In 2013, SPLIKA organized a conference under the auspices of the TU in Aruba with the

participation of representatives of the other Caribbean islands. The focus was on furthering the process of a framework for the teaching of Dutch as a Foreign Language in the Caribbean Region (NVTiC) and attention to a specific NVTiC didactics. Publishing a collection of articles with the contributions of the experts, as a substantive framework document, is therefore recommended.

2. Adopting a structured approach to the use of Papiamentu/o as a support. Teachers already indicate that they use Papiamentu/o in the classroom as a support for teaching Dutch as well as in general interactions with students. They believe that such practices should be allowed. However, there is a strong need for training in order to do so in a structured way. Transparent guidelines will provide more calm and stability not only on the part of teachers and students, but also on the part of parents, some of whom are wondering whether the use of Papiamentu/o could somehow be detrimental to the learning of Dutch.

3. Increasing the recognizability of the teaching materials. The strongest desire expressed by the participants in the study is that the materials for Dutch lessons should be recognizable to the students, both in terms of content and presentation. Based on this, it is strongly recommended that the focus be on local materials production for Dutch lessons that, through the choice of themes, locally oriented presentation, appealing illustrations, and functional layout, become recognizable and thus meet this clearly articulated need. The most obvious choice is a colorful comprehensive method, or synthetic method, which includes all relevant learning paths that correspond to the described objectives in the core documents. It is particularly advisable to align the themes with the themes of the already developed methods for the subject of Papiamentu/o for the three Leeward Islands (see Appendix 2, Figure 1). In addition, it is essential that sufficient supporting materials such as workbooks, audiovisual materials, dictionaries, etc. are made available for Dutch lessons. Digital platforms like the Network for Dutch as a Foreign Language Education in the Caribbean (NVT-Carib) network and others offer supplementary materials and the opportunity to exchange ideas about the nature of the materials and their effects. Additional materials will not only provide variety in offerings but also provide extra opportunities for accomodating differences in learning ability and learning style. A solid, contextualized comprehensive method and access to sufficient appropriate supporting instructional material can enhance peace of mind in teaching and have a stabilizing effect. After all, the issue of Dutch is addressed daily: it concerns the language of instruction, and the subjects of Dutch language and reading are on the schedule every day. Nevertheless, the uniformity of a national comprehensive method does not have to hinder creativity and differentiation. In principle, thematically oriented local education will lead to less unnecessary effort in preparing and delivering Dutch lessons. Working from the familiar to the less familiar provides certainty and more possibilities for broad consultation and exchange between teachers. Ultimately, it

is expected that this important area for improvement along the road to optimizing Dutch language education will not only result in more enjoyment of learning and teacher satisfaction, but also lead to better performance outcomes.

4. Providing more training to teachers on didactic approaches. Periodic continuing education is very useful in education, especially training on choices and applications of approaches regarding language didactics at school and in the classroom. As suggested by the results of the survey, it is advisable to use training sessions to jointly gain more clarity about the differences between such concepts as mother tongue, second language and foreign language. Because the composition of the school population differs by neighborhood, school type, and educational level, deepening and refining such concepts is important for making decisions and implementing them at school and in the classroom. These professional development sessions should not be limited to the 'general teacher' of primary education and the Dutch subject teacher in secondary education. For optimal results in terms of how school language policy translates into practice and applies in the lessons of all subject areas, it will be most effective to encourage the participation of all other subject teachers as well.

In addition to training sessions on framework documents and on language didactic approaches in the teaching of Dutch and other languages, there also is a need for training on structured approaches to the use of Papiamentu/o at school and in the classroom. Of course, it is always effective to have further training sessions when implementing new didactic material. Support from, for example, NVT-Carib with backing from the TU can make an effective contribution to this. In higher education, the teacher training programs for Dutch and other school languages at the General Faculty of the UoC structurally address concepts such as mother tongue, second language, and foreign language in the subject didactics modules. The nature and extent of the use of the various learners' mother tongues is also studied alongside the pedagogy of Dutch as a foreign language (DFL). After all, Dutch is a foreign language (DFL) for the Papiamentu-speaking child in Curaçao. During such training, students become aware that they themselves, if they potentially move to the Netherlands for further studies, will continue to learn Dutch as a second language (L2 or NT2). Moreover, for a child who speaks Spanish, English, French, Kreyòl, and/or an English lexifier Creole, acquiring Papiamentu in the Curaçaoan language community, and also being required to learn Papiamentu at school, is a matter of learning Papiamentu as a second language (PTT). Awareness of such diverse situations and needs deserves greater attention in teacher education and language in-service training for the education sector.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 ATTACHMENT 1 QUESTIONNAIRE

A SURVEY OF NEEDS REGARDING DUTCH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN CURAÇAO SCAN 2021
EDUCATION LEVEL: PO VSBO HAVO/VWO SBO/HO
SESSION DECEMBER 7 2:00-3:00 PM 3:30-4:30 PM
SESSION DECEMBER 8 2:00-3:00 PM 3:30-4:30 PM
UOC ROOM R1-05

Background information
The Ministry of OWCS wants to carry out a quick scan in preparation for the meeting between the four countries in the kingdom in 2022, in order to get a concrete, recent impression of the situation of Dutch in the field. To do this, relevant informants from various education levels have been invited for a quick consultation. In about an hour, opinions will be collected using a brief questionnaire. The results will serve as real, up-to-date information from the Curaçaoan language education field for the meeting.

The main questions in this quick scan are:
1. What is the opinion on the current state of Dutch education at school?
2. What are the wishes and needs to improve Dutch education?

I am a
Teacher School Leader
Coordinator Education Officer; Other .....

Dutch Education Quick Consultation Questionnaire
Please indicate, by ticking the circle of your choice with values from 1 to 5, to what extent you agree with the statements**.**

1. What is your opinion on the current state of Dutch education at school?

1a. Status
A1. I have been well informed about the goals of the Dutch as a foreign language lessons.
1 = Not at all; 2 = A little; 3 = Fair; 4 = Good; 5 = Very good

A2. Our school follows the mother tongue approach in Dutch lessons.
1 = Not at all; 2 = A little; 3 = Fair; 4 = Good; 5 =Very much

A3. Our school follows the foreign-language approach in Dutch lessons.
1 =Not at all; 2 = A little; 3 =Fair; 4 = Good; 5 = Very much

A4. The content of the Dutch textbooks matches the interests of our kids.
1 =Not at all 2 = A little; 3 =Fair; 4 = Good; 5 =Very good

A5. There is plenty of supporting material like dictionaries, workbooks, audiovisual material, etc. for the Dutch lessons.
1 =Not at all; 2 =A little; 3 =Fair; 4 = Good; 5 =Very much

A6. It takes effort to prepare the Dutch lessons.
1 = Very little; 2 = Little; 3 = Fair; 4 = Much; 5 = Very much

A7. It takes effort to deliver and evaluate the Dutch lessons**.**
1 =Very little; 2 =Little; 3 =Fair; 4 = Much; 5 =Very much

A8. I think using Papiamentu/o as support in Dutch lessons is totally fine.
1 = Completely disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither disagree/Nor agree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Completely agree

A9. My colleagues and I use Papiamentu/o to support the Dutch lessons.
1 = Rarely or never; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Sometimes yes and sometimes no; 4 = Often; 5 = Almost always

1b. Satisfaction

B1. The children enjoy the Dutch lessons**.**.
1 = Not at all; 2 = A little; 3 = Fairly; 4 = Very nice; 5 = Really nice

B2. The children are happy with the textbooks and the other materials in Dutch lessons.
1 = Not at all; 2 = A little; 3 = Fairly; 4 = Satisfied; 5 = Very satisfied

B3. I am personally satisfied with the textbooks and the other materials in the Dutch lessons.
1 = Not at all; 2 = A little; 3 = Fairly; 4 = Satisfied; 5 = Very satisfied

B4. I am happy with the results of the Dutch lessons.
1 = Not at all; 2 = A little; 3 = Fair; 4 = Satisfied; 5 = Very satisfied

B5. My colleagues are happy with the textbooks and the results of the Dutch lessons.
1 =Not at all; 2 =A little; 3 =Moderate; 4 =Satisfied; 5 =Very satisfied

B6. In our Dutch lessons, we follow the mother tongue teaching method and we're happy with it.
1 =Not at all; 2 =A little; 3 =Moderate; 4 =Satisfied; 5 =Very satisfied

B7. In our Dutch lessons, we follow the foreign language teaching method and we're happy with it. 1 =Not at all; 2 =A little; 3 =Moderate; 4 =Satisfied; 5 =Very satisfied

2. What are your wishes and needs to improve Dutch education?

C1. I would like to see the goals, final objectives, and subject curricula for the subject Dutch in Curaçao revised**.**
1 = Completely disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither disagree/Nor agree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Completely agree

C2. I would like to learn to use structured Papiamentu/o as support in the Dutch lessons.
1 = Completely disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither disagree/Nor agree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Completely agree

C3. My colleagues would like to learn to use structured Papiamentu/o as support in Dutch lessons.
1 = Completely disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither disagree/Nor agree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Completely agree

C4. The material for the Dutch lessons should be recognizable to the students, both in content and presentation.
1 = Totally disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Totally agree

C5. We need to get refresher training again on approaches in the Dutch subject.
1 = Totally disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Totally agree

Which teaching method(s) are currently used at your school or schools?
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Remarks
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Appendix 2 Questionnaire Results

Table 1 Results regarding Dutch language education in Curaçao, 2021 (N=18)

	A survey on the needs regarding Dutch language education in Curaçao conducted on December 7 and 8, 2021	**G**	**SD**	**%**	**Oordeel**
1. What's the opinion on the current state of Dutch education at school?					
	A. STATUS UPDATE	**3.21**	**1.34**	**64.2%**	**Good**
A1	I have been well informed about the goals of the Dutch as a foreign language lessons.	3.17	1.01	63.3%	Good
A2	Our school follows the mother tongue approach in Dutch lessons.	3.11	0.99	62.2%	Good
A3	Our school follows the foreign-language approach in Dutch lessons	2.83	1.74	56.7%	Reasonable
A4	The content of the Dutch textbooks matches the interests of our kids.	1.89	0.74	37.8%	Weinig
A5	There is enough supporting material like dictionaries, workbooks, audiovisual material, etc. for the Dutch lessons.	2.44	1.12	48.9%	Reasonable
A6	It takes effort to prepare the Dutch lessons.	3.78	0.63	75.6%	A lot
A7	It takes effort to carry out and evaluate the Dutch lessons.	3.83	0.50	76.7%	A lot
A8	I think it's perfectly fine to use Papiamentu/o to support Dutch lessons.	4.50	1.77	90.0%	Totally agree
A9	My colleagues and I use Papiamentu/o as support for the Dutch lessons.	3.33	0.88	66.7%	Often
	B. SATISFACTION	**2.43**	**1.32**	**48.6%**	Reasonable
B1	The children like the Dutch lessons.	2.00	0.67	40.0%	Reasonable
B2	The children are happy with the textbooks and the other materials in the Dutch lessons.	2.17	0.76	43.3%	Reasonable
B3	I am personally satisfied with the textbooks and the other materials in the Dutch lessons.	2.44	1.07	48.9%	Reasonable
B4	I am happy with the results of the Dutch lessons.	2.33	0.88	46.7%	Reasonable
B5	My colleagues are happy with the textbooks and the results of the Dutch lessons.	2.67	1.67	53.3%	Reasonable
B6	In our Dutch lessons, we follow the mother-tongue teaching method, and we are satisfied with it.	2.33	1.76	46.7%	Reasonable
B7	In our Dutch lessons, we follow the foreign language teaching method and we're happy with it.	3.06	1.61	61.1%	Satisfied
2. What are the wishes and needs to improve Dutch education?					
	C. WISHES FOR THE SHORT AND LONG TERM	**4.30**	**0.87**	**89.0%**	**Many wishes**
C1	I would like to see the goals, final objectives, and subject curricula for the Dutch subject in Curaçao being revised.	4.28	0.87	85.6%	Totally agree
C2	I would like to learn to use structured Papiamentu/o as support in Dutch lessons.	3.94	0.78	78.9%	Agree
C3	My colleagues would like to learn to use structured Papiamentu/o as support in Dutch lessons.	4.22	1.31	84.4%	Totally agree
C4	The material for the Dutch lessons should be recognizable to the students, both in terms of content and presentation.	4.61	0.49	92.2%	Totally agree
C5	We need to get some refresher training on approaches in the Dutch subject again.	4.44	0.50	88.9%	Totally agree

N= number of participants; G=average; SD= standard deviation

Table 2 Correlation regarding the *current state* (questions A1-A9) in Dutch language education in Curaçao

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9
A1	1								
A2	-.239	1							
A3	.110	.043	1						
A4	-.347	.244	.549*	1					
A5	-.458	.206	.067	.330	1				
A6	.320	-.405	-.034	-.533*	-.176	1			
A7	.164	-.410	-.351	-.503*	-.166	.766***	1		
A8	-.108	-.316	-.153	-.213	-.028	.100	-.031	1	
A9	.249	.085	.109	-.199	-.207	.535*	.504*	-.462	1

* Correlations are significant at the 0.05 level (2-sided).
** Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-sided).
*** Correlations are significant at the 0.001 level (2-sided).

Table 3 Correlation regarding satisfaction (questions B1-B7) regarding Dutch language education in Curaçao

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7
B1	1						
B2	.764***	1					
B3	.469*	.592**	1				
B4	.472*	.412	.493*	1			
B5	.150	.087	.334	.151	1		
B6	.047	.124	.069	.321	.132	1	
B7	.052	.263	.050	.455	-.138	-.007	1

* Correlations are significant at the 0.05 level (2-sided).
** Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-sided).
*** Correlations are significant at the 0.001 level (2-sided).

Table 4 Coherence regarding short- and long-term wishes (questions C1-C5) concerning Dutch language education in Curaçao

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5
C1	1				
C2	.514*	1			
C3	.286	.608**	1		
C4	.648**	.382	.395	1	
C5	.100	.207	.019	.255	1

* Correlations are significant at the 0.05 level (2-sided).
** Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-sided).
*** Correlations are significant at the 0.001 level (2-sided).

Table 5 Correlation between current status, satisfaction, and short- and long-term wishes regarding Dutch language education in Curaçao

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5
A1	1																				
A2	-,239	1																			
A3	,110	,043	1																		
A4	-,347	,244	,549*	1																	
A5	-,458	,206	,067	,330	1																
A6	,320	-,405	-,034	-,533*	-,176	1															
A7	,164	-,410	-,351	-,503*	-,166	,766**	1														
A8	-,108	-,316	-,153	-,213	-,028	,100	-,031	1													
A9	,249	,085	,109	-,199	-,207	,535*	,504*	-,462	1												
B1	-,411	,000	,192	,113	,597**	-,133	-,167	-,094	-,094	1											
B2	-,682**	-,024	,146	,428	,695**	-,154	-,073	-,103	-,082	,764***	1										
B3	-,223	-,047	,220	,558*	,441	-,516*	-,278	-,294	-,217	,469*	,592**	1									
B4	-,249	,401	,398	,570*	,470*	-,367	-,252	-,107	,000	,472*	,412	,493*	1								
B5	,000	-,045	,038	,196	,020	-,336	-,467	-,113	-,113	,150	,087	,334	,151	1							
B6	,124	,264	,054	,285	,263	-,084	-,126	-,036	-,107	,047	,124	,069	,321	,132	1						
B7	-,481*	,204	,102	,519*	,202	,012	,080	-,068	,065	,052	,263	,050	,455	-,138	-,007	1					
C1	,137	,029	-,226	-,472*	-,127	,723**	,745**	,018	,459	-,096	-,070	-,433	-,121	-,664**	,048	,147	1				
C2	-,340	-,064	-,334	-,301	,028	,315	,404	,060	-,135	,000	,109	-,238	-,296	-,484*	-,471*	,311	,514*	1			
C3	-,236	,066	-,227	-,261	-,105	,194	,141	,429	-,256	-,190	-,148	-,269	-,064	-,118	-,367	,177	,286	,608**	1		
C4	,131	,089	-,011	-,275	,113	,625**	,418	-,032	,302	,171	,025	-,202	,043	-,228	,022	,169	,648**	,382	,395	1	
C5	-,368	,463	-,236	-,017	,545*	-,217	-,149	-,063	,042	,503*	,390	,256	,296	-,157	-,169	,177	,100	,207	,019	,255	1

Table 6 Correlation between current status, satisfaction, short- and long-term wishes in Dutch language education in Curaçao and education level and position

Nr.	Vragen	Onder-wijsniveau	
A1	I have been well informed about the goals of the Dutch as a foreign language lessons.	.410	.215
A2	Our school follows the mother tongue approach for the Dutch lessons.	-.667**	.227
A3	Our school follows the foreign language approach for the Dutch lessons.	.372	-.460
A4	The content of the Dutch textbooks aligns with our children's interests.	-.105	-.305
A5	There is sufficient supporting material such as dictionaries, workbooks, audiovisual material, etc. for the Dutch lessons.	-.511*	-.147
A6	It takes effort to prepare the Dutch lessons.	.270	-.170
A7	It takes effort to conduct and evaluate the Dutch lessons.	.185	-.298
A8	I think Papiamentu/o as support for the Dutch lessons is perfectly acceptable.	.391	.368
A9	My colleagues and I use Papiamentu/o as support for the Dutch lessons.	.000	-.324
B1	The children enjoy the Dutch lessons.	-.139	-.464
B2	The children are satisfied with the textbooks and other materials for the Dutch lessons.	-.242	-.570*
B3	I am personally satisfied with the textbooks and other materials for the Dutch lessons.	-.058	-.347
B4	I am satisfied with the results of the Dutch lessons.	-.105	-.286
B5	My colleagues are satisfied with the textbooks and the results of the Dutch lessons. We follow mother tongue teaching methodology in the Dutch lessons and we are satisfied with it.	-.028	.357
B6	We follow mother tongue teaching methodology in the Dutch lessons and we are satisfied with it.	-.341	.208
B7	We follow foreign language teaching methodology in the Dutch lessons and we are satisfied with it.	-.191	-.302
C1	I would like to see the goals, attainment targets, and subject curricula for the Dutch subject in Curaçao revised.	-.018	-.241
C2	I would like to learn how to use structured Papiamentu/o as support during the Dutch lesson.	-.079	-.210
C3	My colleagues would like to learn how to use structured Papiamentu/o as support during the Dutch lesson.	.117	.238
C4	The material for the Dutch lessons must be recognizable to the students, both in terms of content and presentation.	-.032	-.102

* Correlations are significant at the 0.05 level (2-sided).
** Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-sided).
*** Correlations are significant at the 0.001 level (2-sided).

Table 7 Dutch methods used at the different levels of education among the participants

Primary education, PO	**N**		**N**
Synthetic methods		**Supporting material**	
Veilig Leren Lezen	1	John & Joonie for preschoolers	1
Zonnig Nederlands	2	Nieuwsbegrip (digital practice)	2
Taalactief boek	2	Taalactief Woordenschat (Vocabulary)	2
		Taalactief Spelling	2
Secondary Vocational Education, VSBO			
Nieuw Nederlands	5	Self-made material	1
Taalactief	1	Nieuwe stijl digital material)	2
		Diataal BV (progress tests)	1
		VO Content	1
		VIA Studiemeter (level tracking)	1
		Vocabulary HAVO/VWO	1
Higher General Education, HAVO/Preparatory Scientific Education, VWO			
Nieuw Nederlands	2	Diataal BV (progress tests)	1
		VO Content	1
Higher Education, HO			
Taalproblemen van nu	2	Towards better use of Dutch (Syllabus Primary school)	1
		Muiswerk (digital practice platform)	1
		VIA Studiemeter (tracking level)	1
		Via Preliminary	1
		Via Follow-up	1
		Compilation of methods	1

Table 8 Comments from respondents during flash consultation with the education field

No.	Comments per respondent
1	Dutch is spoken all day long. Very occasionally Papiamentu. Dutch is understood quite well. It only becomes difficult when they have to articulate something. The teacher must radiate enjoyment. Introducing a bridging class is a good idea, with Dutch as a foreign language for those students who cannot keep up. The teacher must be open to teaching techniques or offering Dutch as a foreign language effectively.
2	Dutch is not alive among the children because they do not use it often. Methods do not align with our children's world of experience. Material must be developed by the teacher themselves to make the subject matter understandable for the students. The students usually perform well, but Dutch is hardly applied by the child themselves. Teaching Dutch must become much more fun and, above all, be applied at their level; the NT2 approach is essential.
3	Offer Dutch as a foreign language from a multilingual perspective.
4	Visual support; language coach network; adapting methods to the children's world of experience.
5	Supporting material available but of too high a level. The method that is available is nice, but not suitable.
6	Is Dutch actually a foreign language? Because of the beginner level of our children. It is interesting to know the vision behind this. Support may be provided, but with a strategic approach. Papiamentu as a support language.
7	Further training, ability to purchase a license; preconditions (internal) in order, cable TV; combat aversion to Dutch; maintain CEFR for determining target level; genuine attention to multilingualism; language-oriented subject teaching and vice versa.
8	Further training, supporting material, particularly digital learning resources; multilingual education with support for Papiamentu; establishment of a national language platform; a Method for Dutch as a Foreign Language.
9	Method needed; Modernize *Zonnig Nederlands*, extend principle to secondary education. Maintain a good balance in Papiamentu/Dutch lessons. Continuous learning line. Primary education on school language vocabulary; reading aloud in class; ensure prerequisites are in order.
10	Having access Access to the daily news program, *Het klokhuis*, Text book for immigrant children.
11	Maintain CEFR level; consult educational publishers; utilize master's programs for mother tongue-to-foreign language conversion; do not focus solely on Dutch; License for *Muiswerk*, *Diataal*, *Appl* for all primary school students; extra Dutch lessons, language exchange. PLC linking. Materials.
12	Teacher training necessary, examine how this is done in other countries.
13	High level of teacher self-reliance on all fronts. Teachers do not always have a sufficient command of the language themselves. More programs in understandable Dutch.
14	Revise attainment targets. Joint NVT method. Having workbooks available is highly desirable. More language content on radio and television; the environment plays an important role.
15	15 There are no comments.
16	Develop a uniform method for all special education schools; Teachers must have more frequent opportunities to share experiences.
17	Aversion to Dutch has been steadily increasing over the last 10 years. Perhaps due to negative feedback and poor test results. Speaking anxiety is high.
18	Insufficient Dutch language proficiency upon entry. Vocabulary too low. Dutch is not a fun subject. Speaking anxiety. Improved after a year, but required a great effort from both sides, teachers and students, to reach the desired level.

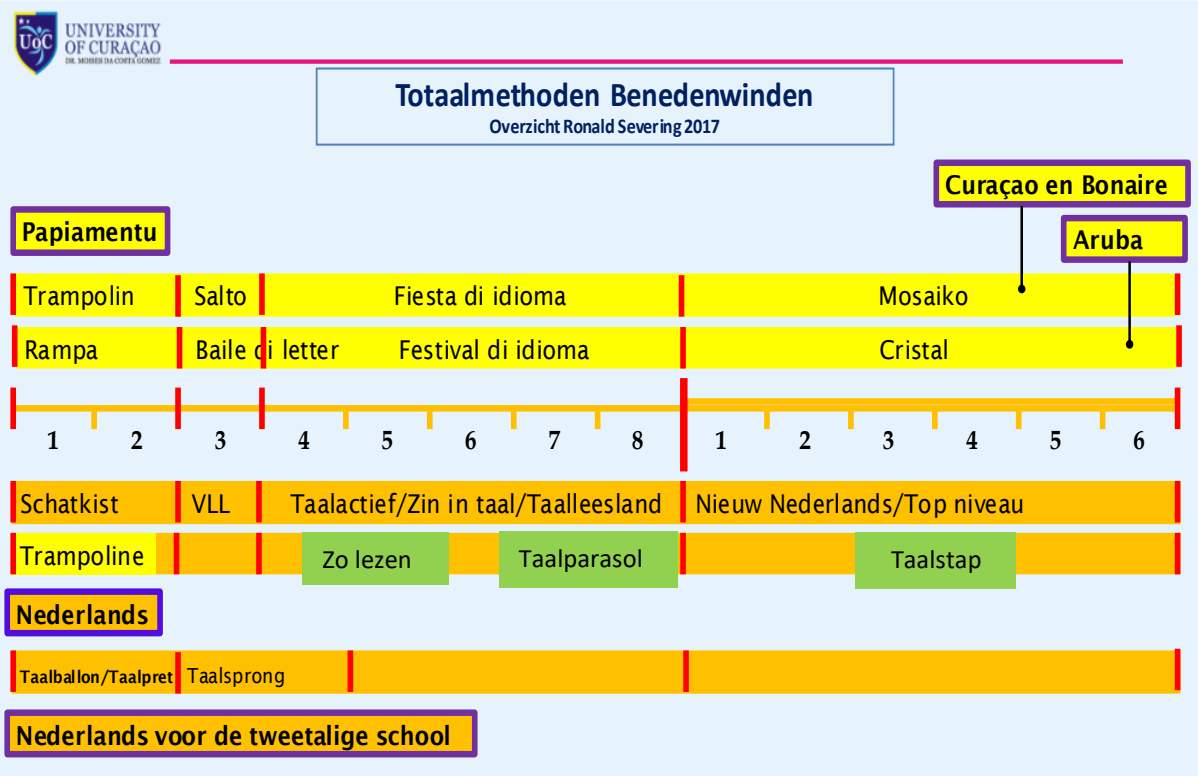


Figure 1 Overview of comprehensive methods used and developed for Dutch and Papiamentu/o on the Leeward Islands (Zo lezen, initial reading in group 3, Taalparasol, for groups 4-8, and Doeltaal have not yet been developed). Publications of Fundashon pa Planifikashon di Idioma, FPI. (See: Severing, et al., 2008; 2014). Some are in preparation.

INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE STUDY OF SOCIETY AND HISTORY

VOICES FROM AWAY: HOW THE PLURALITY OF ISOLATION AND WORLDLINESS SHAPE THE COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATION OF SABA PEOPLE

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Abstract
We human beings are social creatures, spending a great deal of energy ascertaining and establishing our in-groups while simultaneously distinguishing ourselves from our out-groups. This article focuses on this social dynamic in relation to Sabans, the people of the Dutch island of Saba in the northeastern Caribbean, through the lens of Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles & Smith, 1979; Solis & Giles, 2014; Giles et al., 2023). This is done by means of examining an written online conversation among native Sabans and others *from away*, in such a way as to contribute to our understanding of how the contrasting concepts of the cultural isolation and the worldliness of the Saba people fuse together to form Saban identities.

Key terms: Saba, Dutch Caribbean, communication accommodation theory, multilingualism, creoles, historical persistence

Introduction

The island of Saba in the Dutch Caribbean is an island of contrasts. Faced with hardship and extreme challenge, as well as isolation and abandonment from whatever country has been flying its flags on Saba's shores, Sabans have not only risen in strength as a result of that adversity, they have also connected to other cultures, travelling far and wide, integrating in diverse societies, and bringing that cultural awareness home to the island. Despite a long history under the Dutch flag, the language of the island is Saban English Lexifier Creole. (Holm, 2004, p.91-93) which is a spoken creole with minimal written information preserving this heritage. A dictionary of Saban English (Johnson, 2016) and

an analysis of its grammar are useful tools, but beyond a rich and valuable volume titled *Silhouettes*, (Crane, 1987) which transcribes interviews with Sabans born near the turn of the previous century, there are almost no known records of the actual language appearing in a written format. Saba people themselves often don't consider their language valuable enough to be used for writing. For this reason, detailed studies of the language are very limited.

As a non-Saban with a long history on this island, and a language aficionada as well, I have always been fascinated with the local language, the code switching, and the communication accommodation happening all around me. My neighbours can engage in a very standardised English conversation with me on the street, using a few sprinklings of *local colour*, and then seamlessly code switch into a far more creolised language when another Saban passes by. There are times when their language borders on unintelligible for me–that is, until they recognise my presence and unconsciously accommodate me into their speech. Sabans usually make these accommodations in an automatically hospitable way, therefore awareness of this phenomenon can be seen as a step along the journey of knowledge, acceptance and preservation of this vital piece of Saban identity. Recognising my positionality in this equation, I realise that it is extremely difficult to complete an in-depth study of patterns of communication accommodation on Saba. Additionally, the sociolinguistic dilemma of the observer's paradox (Labov, 1981) suggests that merely drawing attention to the act of speaking through recording and other investigative means will alter the resulting speech chains.

For the purposes of this article, I will be focusing on an interaction that occurred online in 2020 through the lens of the Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles & Smith, 1979; Solis & Giles, 2014; Giles et al., 2023) by specifically highlighting the isolation and worldliness of the Saba people. Online posts, while written–and therefore enduring–are also still a fairly good modern day reproduction of vernacular speech. Certainly, a Facebook posting also uses language specific to written communication, such as emojis, but at the same time it is a fairly instantaneous and reactive medium, eliminating much of the thought processes of drafting and editing which are involved in writing.

The interaction I have chosen to investigate deals with a very heated topic–and one which has pitted Sabans against non-Sabans to a great degree. Because the exchange was quite volatile, this also minimised the "attention paid to speech." (Labov 1981, abstract). Nevertheless, it is fairly clear that Sabans have no experience writing in their creolised language, which is why standard English, the school requirement for any written assignment, takes a prominent place in the communication.

The title of this article, *Voices From Away,* highlights the multiplicity of the points of view of immigrants to Saba, Sabans who have lived or are currently living off the island, the voices of absentee leaders abroad dictating what Sabans should do, and those Sabans who have travelled into the world and reside *away.* In Saban English, the term *from away* and *away* are used to signify anywhere off island, as in *She comes from away*, *He*

is sending money from away, I'm going to live away, etc. *Away* is an all-inclusive term used to mean anywhere that is not Saba. That said, Sabans who live *away* are always considered to be Sabans.

Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) is a theoretical framework developed in order to understand how and why speakers modify their speech, tending to reconcile their way of speaking and communicating to converge with members of their in-groups and diverge from members of their out-groups (Giles & Smith, 1979; Solis & Giles, 2014; Giles et al., 2023; Hitlin et al., 2021). Solis and Giles (2014) explain more specifically:

> [CAT] was developed in the 1970's for predicting and explaining the adjustments individuals make to create, maintain, or decrease social distance in interaction, changes that are enacted for reasons that go beyond the mere exchange of referential information and emotions. (p.107)

The first of the two main concepts involved in accommodation is convergence:

> a strategy whereby individuals adapt their communicative behaviors in such a way as to become more similar to their interlocutor's behavior, Typically, this is done to seek approval, affiliation, and/or interpersonal similarity as a manner of reducing social distance. (p.108)

The second strategy of divergence:

> leads to an accentuation of speech and nonverbal differences between the self and the other. Often (but not always) the motive behind divergence is precisely the desire to emphasize distinctiveness from one's interlocutor, expressively highlighting contrasting group identities. (p.108)

The situation on Saba

Historical isolation and worldliness

Despite its almost unheard-of existence for the international traveler and its small scale community, Saba is a dynamic and vigorous 13 square kilometer island in the Dutch Caribbean with a remarkably cosmopolitan population. Saba may claim only about 2000 inhabitants, but the languages that circulate throughout everyday life on the island allude to a multicultural mindset typically found at the major crossroads of internationalism. Geography has contributed to a history of isolation for Saba, which boasts of breathtakingly steep cliffs dropping directly to the sea, with no navigable landing for boats and unrelentingly steep terrain completely unsuitable for the colonial plantation economy. The Spanish conquistadors dubbed Saba *isla inútil* (useless island) [this and all other translations in this article are by the present author, unless specified otherwise], while the Dutch felt that, other than its natural defensive capabilities and its possibilities as a pirate lair, Saba had little to offer. During the time that Saba and St. Eustatius, the nearest

island, were in the hands of the English, Thomas Stapleton wrote that Saba and St. Eustatius were "but rather of disadvantage to his Majesty, being refuges for any who desire fraud, and were better under water than above" (Espersen, 2017, p. 67).
Nevertheless, adventurous souls still found their way to settle on the island, involving themselves in subsistence agriculture and cottage industries, which unfortunately provided little in the way of what dominant discourses have dubbed "development" for the inhabitants of the island. As could well be imagined, on a 13 square kilometre island, "the only outlet for growth has been the trek to the sea." (Johnson, 2012, p. 41). Fishing has always played an important part in the economy of the island, and indeed its proximity to the fishing grounds of the Saba Bank was likely instrumental in its early settlement.
In colonial times, the Netherlands divided their shipping routes into Klein Vaart and Grote Vaart. The Grote Vaart routes ferried goods between the Caribbean and Europe, and the Klein Vaart vessels shuttled cargo between and among the islands. Most of the Klein Vaart vessels were captained by Sabans, and many Sabans were ship owners as well. Between 1743 and 1770, there were no fewer than 20 ships that were captained by Sabans. Sabans also made a good name for themselves as boat builders. Esperson (2017) notes that while the Klein Vaart trade offered substantial opportunities for Sabans, there was an ambivalence on their part toward the Geoctroyeerde Westindische Compagnie (or GWC, often translated into English as the Dutch West India Company or WIC), which is demonstrated by the scarcity of correspondence and documentation between the island and the GWC administration (Esperson, 2017, p. 62). Additionally, Johnson (1983) states that Sabans were constructing ships of up to 60 gross tons in Tent Bay and Wells Bay, listing the details of numerous ships, both large and small, constructed on the island (p.43). He concludes that "Tempered by his harsh surroundings and forced to emigrate, success to the Saban abroad became a must" (Johnson, 1983, p. 69). Thus, the plurality of experiences ranging from isolation to the worldliness gained from overcoming that isolation, has shaped Saban identities.

Linguistic isolation and worldliness

Linguistically speaking, Sabans have also embraced linguistic plurality. Their isolation has not only been from the rest world. Indeed, since Saba did not even have a road connecting its five villages until the mid-20th century, there also exist stark linguistic differences due to the geographical difficulty in walking from one village to the next. Sabans of today can still tell in a second which village someone comes from. Even when referring to themselves, there are several different expressions used. The most widely used form *Saban* seems to be the most frequently encountered term in the villages of The Bottom, St. John's, and Windwardside, while *Sabian* seems to be the preferred form in the mountain-perched village of Hell's Gate. (Johnson, 2016, p. 178.) In addition, I

have noted the common use of *Saba people*, used by Sabans speaking to other Sabans to refer to themselves.

The language of Saba is Saban English Lexifier Creole, whose vocabulary is based on the English lexicon of the Scottish and Irish settlers in Saba, but whose grammar is largely shaped by Niger-Congo languages, similar to other Atlantic Creoles (Holm, 2004, p. 91). Nevertheless, Dutch is the official language of the island, and is the language used in the legislative, judiciary and political realms. Current students cannot graduate from the one school on the island unless they have a high academic proficiency in Dutch, in spite of the fact that Sabans have been isolated from the Dutch language throughout their history.

It is clear that, throughout its colonial history, Dutch speaking settlers on Saba have always been an extreme minority, if present at all. As early as 1659, the Saban settlers requested that an English speaking clergyman be sent to the island, as hardly anyone could speak Dutch. (Espersen, 2017, p. 51) Moreover, this was six years before the English raid that expelled the small sector of the island's population which was officially listed as "Dutch." Being a Dutch island for most of the period since colonisation began, Saba would have likely had a Dutch speaking Gezaghebber or Lt. Governor who would have been able to correspond with officials in St. Eustatius in Dutch, as the two islands were administratively grouped together during the 18th century. (Espersen, 2017, p. 62) Up until 1976, there was no secondary school on Saba. Post-primary students were required to venture out into the world and attend school on another island, often living with family members who had also relocated abroad. These students, usually as young as 11 or 12, faced the extreme hardship of being torn from their families and thrown into another household, often living on an island where their peers spoke Papiamentu/o, which for them was an unknown language, and being forced to study in Dutch, yet another strange language. Some of the selected children may have found this too difficult to handle, but most stuck it out, resolved to succeed, and proceeded both to speak fluent Papiamentu/o with their friends, as well to graduate with a diploma from a Dutch-language school. Sabans from this generation are admirable in their resiliency and flexibility. This situation, typical of the many difficulties faced by Sabans in the past, reflects the paradox of contingency and challenge, in which extreme hardship can forge strong and vibrant individuals.

Since the establishment of the island's first and only secondary school in 1976, students have been able to stay with their families on Saba and continue their education. Dutch had long been the established language in the classroom under the nuns from the Netherlands who had been coming to the island to educate children since the early 1900s. However, it was becoming evident worldwide that children should have the right to learn in their home language. Educators and linguists on Saba, most likely considering the prevalent trends in language research and policy-making in the 1980s, quietly and calmly changed the language of instruction to Caribbean Standard English, more closely

linked to the English used in the United Kingdom than that used in the United States. This added yet another language to Sabans' multiplex repertoires.

Sabans are, for the most part, quietly multicultural. Dutch visitors are often shocked to find out that the Saban they have known for a period of time actually speaks Dutch! A Dutch *ambtenaar* (government official) recently "confided" to me personally that Sabans knew nothing of the world. Nothing could be further from the truth, but Sabans do not see any reason to blow their own horn about their worldliness.

Sabans' connections with the wider world are not only manifested in their plurilinguality. Will Johnson, the island historian, quotes Mr. Felix Choisy, a deputy mayor of French St. Martin in the 1960s, saying that Choisy's words "to a large degree hold true for Saba":

> I have traced the roots of quite a few island families, and have reached the conclusion that it's a misconception that black Caribbeans are descended from African slaves only. My mother had a Spanish name, and my maternal grandmother had German and Flemish blood. On my father's side, I have ancestors from Scotland, the Balearic Islands, and Portugal. My great grandmother was an Indian who was taken to St. Barthelemy by a sea captain. I think I owe my high cheekbones to her. I believe we Caribbean people are a separate ethnic group, with our own Antillean personality. The colour of our skin is irrelevant. I have seen families change from black to white and vice versa in three or four generations. (quoted in Johnson, 2017, para. 7)

The paradox of contingency and challenge

Throughout the centuries since the first European settlers arrived on the island, Sabans have struggled to create a livelihood for themselves. Sea captain, sailor and fisherman were common occupations, but Sabans realized prominence in many other fields as well. Life was certainly not easy for those who went to seek their fortunes abroad. They had to develop confidence, self-reliance, and bravery. Added to the psychological challenges that had to be overcome, most of these Sabans faced physical threat as well. With so many making their living from the sea, it followed that many Sabans had relatives who never returned from their marine voyages.)

Sabans are used to be being ignored by colonial authorities and left to solve their problems on their own. The story of The Road that finally linked the island's villages illustrates this in detail. Engineers from the Netherlands offered no help and left the Sabans to their own devices. The Sabans responded by enrolling themselves in a correspondence course and creating a masterpiece of road engineering.

Nikki Mulder from Leiden University wrote an enlightening study of Saba, published in 2018. In "Stories of Autonomy on Non-Sovereign Saba: Flipping the Script of Postcolonial Resistance," Mulder examines some of the legendary stories told on the island, as

well as how new stories are told, and offers some engaging insights. In one of the interviews conducted by Mulder, a local shopkeeper stated, “Most of the time we’re here on this island by ourselves. We have to fend for ourselves basically. We don’t have extra help.” (Mulder, 2018, p. 15) Sabans are able to get on and get things done by themselves. Sabans have their own idea about how to do things. They are capable and have authority to tell their own stories, and they are able to determine how to best run their own society. If they don’t agree with you, they may just wait until you eventually go away, as is the case with many Dutch *experts* who arrive to change things, or they may just wait for you to mess up and make a fool of yourself as was the case with a Dutch construction company installing septic tanks. “Sabans are so damn stubborn, if they don’t like your idea, they just won’t do it.” (van Xanten, H, personal communication 30 October 2019). But, if they understand your reasoning and see the value of your idea, they will support you. During the Corona virus lockdown from April 11 until May 10, 2020, the Sabans, with very few exceptions, stayed home. They didn’t need to storm the government with their assault weapons, or to protest in favor of any vague ideas of individual freedom. They may not have liked it, and they may not have even agreed with it, but they understood the reason, and for the most part, they worked within the restrictions. As a result, Saba was able to contain the virus very quickly.

Of course, in a discussion of the long-suffering nature of the islanders, it is important to mention that Sabans are not quiet people who avoid confrontation. Sabans can be very vocal, have extremely strongly held opinions, and do not often hold back from a fight. Grudges on the island can sometimes last for a very long time. Sometimes these opinions are voiced on the street, often in the local hardware shop, and currently very often on facebook postings. In the next section, we will examine some of these written and oral communications to better understand the strength of Sabans’ convictions.

Mulder observes that:

> It is true that Sabans do not passively accept the way state power is now differently exercised [since Saba was incorporated as a municipality into the Netherlands as a result of the “10.10.10” referendum held on 10 October, 2010]. Their attitude of resistance is, however, difficult to capture in the vocabulary of Eurocentric social science. Sabans do not think of themselves as victims nor do they invoke anti-colonial rhetoric. Rather, they boast of their ability to outdo the Dutch in matters of governance while calling for a more actively and genuinely engaged metropolitan state. (2018, p. 12)

Inherent in the Saban concept of hard work is the idea of getting things done. If there is a task at hand, then Sabans appreciate those who simply roll up their sleeves and get on with it. In this regard, the Sabans often view the European Netherlands as being too bureaucratic. Certainly, the Netherlands has a reputation internationally of being a paperwork-loving nation.

Mulder (2018) notes that Sabans have used the Dutch word *overleg* (translated in most dictionaries as "deliberation") to communicate this lack of action. It is important that she heard this term used in Dutch, first of all because it points to the fact that Sabans do have a useful command of the Dutch language, but also as a translanguaging device to indicate that there is no adequate translation. *Overleg* happens in Dutch with Dutch people. Mulder recounts an interview she had with the Harbormaster, a Saban, after a small FedEx plane crashed near Fort Bay in 2015. The Harbormaster jumped to action; the fishermen rescued the pilot and were sent back out to rescue the packages. But after intervention from the Dutch chief of police, inaction ensued and the plane sank to the depths. The Harbormaster said, "You either work with local people, or you work without local people. If you work without them, local people themselves will do it. Local people don't wait for no *overleg*. They try to get things done" (Mulder, 2018, p. 22).

Communication accommodation in Saban discourse

As previously mentioned, Saban English Lexifier Creole is a language which as yet has almost no written corpus. For this reason, the particular online text which forms the focus of the current study is a useful starting point for investigating the ways in which Sabans converge and diverge in their speech to accommodate or shut out their interlocutors. This particular interchange occurred on Facebook. At a time when most of the world is turning its back on the social media platform, Sabans are still embracing this networking website for all vital and essential information disseminated regarding island government, social life, commerce and public health. You simply cannot live on Saba and not be connected to Facebook. This particular posting was a private communication. For that reason, all identities are concealed.

The full text is available in the appendix. The full text, as well as the excerpts used within this paper, have not been edited in any way to redact any words deemed "unacceptable," since the social unacceptability of language is highly subjective. In this transcription, the title "NON-SABAN 1" refers to the original non-Saban poster, and all subsequent non-Saban posters are assigned numbers in sequence ("NON-SABAN 2," "NON-SABAN 3" etc). Given the sheer numbers of Sabans responding, all responses from a Saban are simply titled "Saban" unless it is the original poster, then they are titled "SABAN 1."

Divergence and convergence

The way in which the posters create divergence is very clear in this text. Saba is so small that almost everyone knows almost everyone. For that reason, I could very easily distinguish which posters are Saban and which are non-Saban.

I will start by relating the incident as it happened during the COVID-19 lockdown. The following was posted by a respected, albeit agitatorial, member of the community:

Saban 1: I am taking note that some none Sabans [meaning non-Sabans] are being very personal and critical with our Island Governor and here is where we as Sabans got to stand up in defense of our Governor.

The Governor has been doing a great job where it pertains to keeping the community well informed.

My only issue with his announcements is that they are done a little to late. With social m dia this should be done minutes following his meetings with his team.

Fellow Sabans stand up for one of us.

The comments began with residents noting that the non-Sabans were upset for not being able to walk the streets. The non-Sabans in this incident, who are Dutch, responded that the governor was breaking the lockdown, as he was seen driving on the street. Sabans jumped to the defense of the governor and stood united to support their him. Soon, the discussion turned to reveal a vital rift between the Dutch and the Sabans: citizenship and entitlement to funds from the European Netherlands.

The Saban, on whose Facebook page the entire conversation was posted, soon responded: "You are out of order to come on my page to try and belittle Sabans about being Dutch or about money from Holland."

The Dutch person responding took up the argument that when Sabans want money, they beg for it from the Netherlands. This seems to be a common insult thrown at the Sabans by the Dutch. The Sabans responded that, since Saba is part of the Netherlands and they pay taxes, it makes sense that they receive funding from den Haag. Sabans are aware that the amount of taxes they currently pay does not cover governmental disbursements to the island, but the fact remains that Saba is technically just as much a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands as is Limburg.

The issue of citizenship is another constant struggle for the Sabans. Sabans have a Dutch passport. However, Saba is conveniently part of the Netherlands, or not part of the Netherlands, depending on the individual whim of a given Dutch official or a particular law. A quick study of Dutch/Overseas Territory/BES law will put your head in a tailspin. A Saban responded to the Facebook posting by a Dutch resident by stating, "Saba people didn't vote to get treated like second class citizens!"

Guno Jones examines the contested dynamics of citizenship in great detail in his 2016 article titled "What Is New about Dutch Populism? Dutch Colonialism, Hierarchical Citizenship and Contemporary Populist Debates and Policies in the Netherlands."

In the economy of citizenship, social goods such as security, opportunity, privilege, responsibility and wealth are unevenly distributed, perpetuating the dichotomy of master versus enslaved. Just as the Dutch dragged their feet for almost 50 years until they could determine that the enslaved were *ready* to be freed, so did they indefinitely postpone independence of their colonies until they, the white European, could determine that the locals were *mature* enough to govern their own lands (Jones, 2016, no page). This question of tiered citizenship is an issue without resolution on Saba, and one which binds

local residents against those of privilege who arrive on the island from the European Netherlands.

There are some very important linguistic devices that arise from this Facebook posting well worth considering through the lens of communication accommodation theory. The first one that jumps out is the use of family terms, which are used in the more common truncated form: "cuz" and "unc" as well as the specification of first cousin, which makes a closer connection since practically everyone born on the island are cousins of one another. Sabans place an extremely strong value on family ties, and given the small scale of the island, most people are related to most others. The fact that persons with the surnames Johnson and Hassell completely dominate the registers points this out. By using these familiar terms, the Sabans responding to the posting draw their dividing lines: we are family--you cannot be family. Family sticks together. In this heated argument, where the Dutch poster is obviously looking to get a reaction out of the Sabans, the Dutch person also hits another hot topic: saying the Sabans are not, indeed, Sabans.

> NON-SABAN (Dutch): Most of you are no sabaans. You married with americaans and columbiaans …
> SABAN: So there are only few real saban people. The rest is full of shit.
> SABAN: if anyone is full of shit it has to be you because you definitely don't know a damn thing where our family came from!
> NON-SABAN (Dutch): ok. Sounds fine. We are born dutch and at the end of the day the same
> NON-SABAN (Dutch): i do not know were your family is from but it must be better than mine
> SABAN: what kind of dumb remark is that? I don't consider myself to be better than anyone else, but you're talking nonsense to people whose ancestors go back many generations!

Given that Sabans were forced to emigrate and find their livelihoods *away*, it seems to be a difficult concept to then determine who is Saban and who isn't. Sabans who live, and have lived, abroad for most of their lives, still have a strong connection to the island. Some of those posting in response do not live on the island, but I have designated them as SABAN precisely because of these family ties. For that reason, the family terms become vital to establish that identity, regardless of place of residence.

Use of Saban English Lexifier Creole, Dutch and Papiamentu/o

There is some limited use of Saban English Lexifier Creole in the postings, as indicated in the comments cited below. Had this been a spoken exchange, the use of Saban Creole would very likely have made the conversation far less accessible to non-Sabans. Given the heated nature of the argument, and the rapid-fire exchanges, one might expect far less *attention to speech*. However, I don't believe that this use of a more standard Eng-

lish is an attempt at convergence with the non-Sabans. Sabans are only recently beginning to develop an understanding of the value of their own language; however, they are still far from accepting Saban Creole as an option in written form. The main written language that Sabans have been exposed to is school-based, Standard English. I believe that this monitor identity is still overshadowing a good deal of their text-based communication.

Sabans got to stand up and put them into they place
The tears came in my eyes
You are only firing after the Governor
That is what majority of Governors are doing
They have to be on the street same way a nurse
Report he ass
You living on [place name]
Keep you friends close
Let them suck salt
She cannot walk her dog so she upset…she know what she need to do.
them comments was enough to hush they mouth

The original non-Saban (Dutch) poster writes only in English. This could be an accommodation technique recognising that Saba is an English speaking island. However, given the hostility of the original poster and their aptitude to inflame the situation, it is unlikely that this person is choosing to make a closer bond with Sabans. I interpret this exclusive use of English to signify that Sabans are not capable of speaking any language other than English. On the other hand, the Sabans sprinkle in a fair amount of Dutch, such as telling the Dutch person *op te zouten* [Piss off], as well as more detailed messages:

SABAN: Hmmm remember what you saying
Cause no matter what we come from saba
Hope when this virus is over
Governor can send you were you come from
Beter dat je nu vertrek
Praat niet over saba mensen
En waar woon je nu up saba
Ben je hier geboren nee
Ga terug
[Better you leave now
Don't talk about Saba people
And where do you live now{?} on Saba
Were you born here
Go back]

NON-SABAN (Dutch): you are really crazy

NON-SABAN (Dutch): we will and i hope that you guys get no more money from holland. Bless you
SABAN: Hahahaha
Ben je nu gezaghebber
Gefeliciteerd
[Are you now the island governor
Congratulations]

SABAN: Wil see you soon
Then you wil see who is crazy are not
Punt uit
Ga nu je koffie drinken
Geziekert
[Full stop
Go drink coffee now
Pisser]

Sabans can speak Dutch. Even though it is not a daily occurrence to hear the Saban communicate in Dutch, translanguaging often happens when, as we witnessed earlier, the Sabans need a Dutch word to communicate a Dutch concept, such as *overleg*. Here, however, the Sabans are not only demonstrating that they are, indeed, worthy to be Dutch citizens, but also to show the Dutch poster that they are worldly and intelligent people. Additionally, they recognize that communicating to someone in their mother tongue will reach their heart, not just their head. And the Sabans here need to make sure that this Dutch person understands the depth of their anger and wish that the Dutch person will "*opzouten*."

At one point in the argument, the Saban posting takes an intriguing linguistic spin:

SABAN: don't worry
When you disrespect
Ower governor you have a big problem
Bai sinta hombu
Bai bo sanka bak

This person has chosen to post in Papiamentu/o. This breaks radically from the use of Dutch, which by calculated design showed the Dutch person that the Sabans also speak their language. But this use of Papiamentu/o is meant to divide. The Dutch person is absolutely thrown out of the conversation at this point. The Dutch Facebook poster is demonstrating clearly colonizing ideas, which this Saban picks up on and highlights by using the language of the people, the language of the freed enslaved. Papiamentu/o is not spoken on Saba, yet most Sabans know it. Most of those adult Sabans who had to leave the island to attend high school in Aruba, Curaçao or St. Maarten, and those in the Leeward Islands quickly picked up the local creole (Papiamentu/o on the ABC Islands

and St. Martin English Lexifier Creole on St. Martin) from their classmates. By this use of other creole languages beside Saba English Lexifier Creole, the Saban is unifying the islanders—all of the islanders who find themselves under Dutch colonial rule. She is also demonstrating that Sabans are multilingual and worldly, and she is throwing the *secret language* of the enslaved back in the face of the oppressor.

Conclusion

The online exchange considered in this article allows us to experience both the ideological convergence and divergence between Sabans and those from away, as well as linguistic strategies designed to establish in- and out-groups. Sabans don't allow others to invade their ideological territory, and will unite in their familial and historical bonds, fight to defend their own, and fight for recognition and respect. Paradox is a common experience for Sabans, who are aware that resilience and strength come from suffering, that being part of a European kingdom brings both security and discrimination, and that isolation goes hand in hand with worldliness. This awareness contributes significantly to the repertoires of identity of the people of Saba.

Sabans use a number of linguistic devices to draw their group together against the outsider. Calling upon family relationships is key to indicating who does and who does not belong. Additionally, Sabans make extensive use of their linguistic repertoire including English, Dutch and Papiamentu/o, to clearly mark boundaries and establish connections. They primarily communicate in English but use Dutch to indicate that they are educated and worldly. Minimal use of their own language, Saban English Lexifier Creole, indicates that Sabans still don't view their own language as a valuable resource to be used against the outsider and for now Papiamentu/o seems to better serves that purpose.

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APPENDIX

SABAN 1: They are mad cause they cant walk the street

SABAN 1: Sabans got to stand up and put them into they place.

SABAN 1: Correct Cuz

NON-SABAN 1: We all want life to go back to normal. At the end of the day our governor is doing what he thinks is right for the island and is doing a better job than most world leaders. What shows the most is how much he cares for the people of this island.

SABAN: I watched a program today on TV. They were interviewing about four people who lost family members because of the coronavirus. It was so hard to watch. The tears came in my eyes. They were explaining about how hard it was to not be able to hug their dying mother or uncle or father. Even kids. The thought of these things just makes me wonder what kind of heart do people have who only thinks of money. Who just cannot obey what the leaders are saying to stay home in order to save lives. Family members who have to die alone is no joking matter. In just a while the lock downs will be lifted a little. We will have to live with the distance measures for a while.

NON-SABAN 1: Well stay home and safe lives. That is also for our governor.
SABAN 1: I assume you realize that you are responding on my page. Let me make it abundantly clear to you that under no term or condition am I going to accept or tolerate you coming on my page to say anything or disrespect our Island Governor. You are out of order to come on my page to try and belittle Sabans about being Dutch or about money from Holland. If that is all you can try to belittle Sabans with good better, because o for sure will mop up your damn floor in a radical manner. So I am hereby requesting you to remove your disrespectful remarks or face a full fledge nasty retaliation. You have been respectfully informed and reminded that this is my page and I don't appreciate your bullshit.
NON-SABAN 1: i did not say any disrespectful thing about your govenor. I just wrote he was on the road with his family visiting his family while we are on "lockdown." The rest is up for you to think about
SABAN: You ate the one that is constantly asking for money from holland
SABAN 1: you read what I wrote. It is none of your damn business if the Governor goes on the road. You don't decide who goes where. As I said please remove your nonsense from on my page otherwise you will have to accept a good tongue lashing. Parasites like you got no call on our island that our forefathers built up without any Dutch money. You are only firing after the Governor because you cannot be walking your dog.
NON-SABAN 3: Interesting this coming from someone walking their dog in the village of Windwardside on the first day of lockdown, completely disrespecting the Governor or the safety of the people on the island that you live on. "He who is without sin can throw the first stone."
NON-SABAN 1: The governor is creating a hate culture by telling people to call the police if you see people on the street while he goes on the street. Shame shame shame
SABAN: That is what majority of Governors are doing world wide as their needs to be consequences for people who fail to follow simple directions. This is a matter of saving lives and people can't / choose not to follow simple directions.
A Governor / Police are essential workers, common sense is they have to be on the street same way a nurse / doctor still has to go to work.
NON-SABAN 1: so the govenor has to go in the var with his famliy to visit grandma working at big rock?
SABAN: Sounds like a personal issue to me that you should address/ confront him about.
NON-SABAN 1: Yes we are dutch and yes all the money you need comes from holland. Thank you
SABAN: so what are we French?
NON-SABAN 1: no dutch also. Thats what you voted for.

SABAN: I don't think any Saban voted to be Dutch. We were born and raised on an island that was colonized by Holland so our passport naturally is a Dutch passport not that anyone particularly "voted to be Dutch."
NON-SABAN 1: 10 10 10 people voted. And were do you go when you need money?
SABAN: so if we are Dutch and we get money from the "Dutch" government what is the problem?
SABAN: Some people voted not everyone was on board it's not like they had much of a choice when majority rules...
We don't go anywhere, common sense we are a Dutch Island who's directly under Holland thus Holland naturally supports it's Dutch Island same as France supports St. Martin (French Side St. Maarten etc).
SABAN: Saba people didn't vote to get treated like second class citizens!
SABAN: 🙏 Saba/ my Saba people my prayers are with you all everyday 🙏
NON-SABAN 1: what planet are you from
NON-SABAN 1: Most of you are no sabaans. You married with americaans and columbiaans …
NON-SABAN 1: So there are only few real saban people. The rest is full of shit.
SABAN: I'll pray for you as well 🙏. My island people know me, they know I'm born and raised on Saba and at the end of the day that's all that really matters.
SABAN: if anyone is full of shit it has to be you because you definitely don't know a damn thing where our family came from!

NON-SABAN 1: ok. Sounds fine. We are born dutch and at the end of the day the same
NON-SABAN 1: i do not know were your family is from but it must be better than mine
NON-SABAN 1: ok
SABAN: what kind of dumb remark is that? I don't consider myself to be better than anyone else, but you're talking nonsense to people whose ancestors go back many generations!
NON-SABAN 1: you need to read
SABAN: you need to learn how to spell!
SABAN: explain that!!
NON-SABAN 1: I do not know what it is you want me for but please go ahead and enjoy your victor
SABAN: Hmmm remember what you saying
Cause no matter what we come from saba
Hope when this virus is over
Governor can send you were you come from
Beter dat je nu vertrek
Praat niet over saba mensen
En waar woon je nu up saba
Ben je hier geboren nee

Ga terug
NON-SABAN 1: you are really crazy
NON-SABAN 1: we will and i hope that you guys get no more money from holland. Bless you
SABAN: Hahahaha
Ben je nu gezaghebber
Gefeliciteerd
SABAN: Wil see you soon
Then you wil see who is crazy are not
Punt uit
Ga nu je koffie drinken
Geziekert
SABAN: I warned you to stop insulting Sabans about money from Holland. Is that all you can come with.
NON-SABAN 1: i think you have a problem. Go get help
SABAN: if you don't like Saba and Saba is so bad as your painting it why don't you just leave. The governor is doing the best as he can. Better then other places for sure. I may live in holland and my fiancé is Dutch but Saba is home and your 100% disrespect with your comments. Jonathan [the governor] was my teacher and is a great person. What ever he does is no one business.
SABAN: report he ass
SABAN: Johnny has won himself a personal stalker!!!
NON-SABAN 2: I'm not from Saba but I have to jump in here. This gentleman forget that Saba pays taxes too? Holland is going with all of it so naturally Holland must pay what it agreed to pay. *Punt Uit*. The money comes from the taxpayers.
SABAN: Yesh have it with you
U lucky old man
[name of NON-SABAN]
Don't forget we those meet in [place where NON-SABAN lives]
Then we wil see who need help
NON-SABAN 1: how do you know i am a old man?
SABAN: don't worry
When you disrespect
Ower governor you have a big problem
Bai sinta hombu
Bai bo sanka bak
SABAN: Imagine someone that hasn't paid a drop of taxes... Came to Saba for free health care benefits and all there is to offer.. .. & now has the audicity to talk about the Sabans?! Well well well…

NON-SABAN 1: when a governor disrespect what he is preaching. We all have a problem
NON-SABAN 1: you are so wrong. We pay taxes here. What is your problem
SABAN: *Opzoute dat moet je doen*
SABAN: It's clearly you the one with the problem. What kinda taxes you paying? Your dog tax? 😂😂😂 Or taxes to complain 😉🤣🤣 Probably the only 2 useful things remaining of you in life 😊
NON-SABAN 1: ok
NON-SABAN 1: you are clearly not able to understand any thing
SABAN: You living on Booby Hill. Hth you know about the Governor being in Hells Gate or in Big Rock? Is monitoring and minding his business part of your retirement plan on the island?
SABAN: $9000 for your ticket to your grave 😂 Live and let live... LEARN TO MIND YOUR BUSINESS and not the Governor nor anyone else's on Saba…
NON-SABAN 1: you did not read the posting correct. Can you even read? We posted friend saw him
SABAN: Your friend saw. And then what? Automatically it's your business to start on the gov and Sabans? Your friend have your navel string holding man 😂😂😂
SABAN: .... 😉😉😉 ... Police had a right to laugh... I know you had to sound like ah good ol' cunt on the line 😂😂😂😂😂

NON-SABAN 1: our goveror on road with his family to see family
NON-SABAN 1: We called police because that's what they want right? We call on Johanaton and they start laughing
SABAN: haul ya ass padnuh coming with that shit I'm 100 saban and married to a Colombian so that makes my son any less saban go up your skunt man All you guys wanna do is bitch and complain if it's so bad on Saba go home that's where you wanna be
SABAN: saba has a right to help all of us pay tax only thing the Dutch don't tax is the air we breath how dare you say you hope we don't get anymore money you moved to Saba to retire but majority of old people that move to Saba from American and holland all they do is bitch and complain you came to our island our culture and deal with it we can't go to holland and bitch about y'all culture we keep to ourself and do us instead of bitching do you and leave us alone you choose to come here
SABAN: I wonder what nationality we are, as far as I can see my passport, we are Dutch, oh forgive me we are second class Dutch.
Keep you friends close and your enemies closer.
Our fathers and families have worked hard for almost 400 years to build this land to what it is today and for our next generations to come.
The Governor is the law, as simple as that.

NON-SABAN 4: Things are Running Very Well....with Island Government N Our Medical Field, N Law enforcement, N grocery stores N pharmacy! Gas's station as well! Keep Up the Amazing Efforts! Stay In doors! Save Lives! 💜
SABAN: Yes [name of original poster], some are downright disrespectful of our Governor.
SABAN: Tell them go back where they come from as soon as they can *opzouten*
SABAN: I was very upset reading the Terrible remarks about my First Cousin the Leutenant Governor Shame on you he has done a Fantastic Job, keeping us up to date during this very Scary time in our lives, he is Protecting us all, you should get down on your Knees and thank the Almighty God, for him, and our Government we can't go in another Man's Country, and take over and Dictate, you made sure to come Saba, and get Richer then before, we Sabans Stand up for Our Country and who matter who Governs it.Let us try and see you do his Job?I can Proudly Say Our Leutenant Governor is the Best. God Bless Him and his lovely Family.
SABAN: our Cuz being monitored, eh. We all know better and we shouldn't feed that individual by responding. The Governor and his team and everyone else involved in keeping us safe are to be commended for they are doing a fantastic job and we should be grateful for many world wide are not so fortunate. Who don't like it, let them suck salt.
SABAN: Governor of Saba is the best person in a crisis. He is keeping us calm and together with health care trying to keep us safe. He has our full admiration and respect. God bless him.
NON-SABAN 5: Wow ... there's just a troll trying to get a rise out of you all...Governor Johnson is doing a terrific job under dire circumstances, just as he did during the hurricanes a few years ago. I think 'mental illness' from the lockdown is making people react so. Perhaps [name of NON-SABAN] should call the mental health hotline and ask to speak to someone. This is not a time to attack but rather to pull together as a community. Both Saban's and non-Sabans
NON-SABAN 5: I am sorry to say but who gets it in their head to put something useless on facebook not even seen by their own eyes? I believe that our Governor had more important things on his mind right now than to read all this waste of energy and insinuations made by grumpy old men grooving.
SABAN: [NON-SABAN 5] for the win
SABAN: story is that it's the wife posting and answering!
NON-SABAN 5: I know that. I had the experience before....
SABAN: an old drunken woman I am told. She cannot walk her dog so she upset. Orion coming tonight and Mutty's Pride tomorrow morning. KLM has charter flights so she know what she need to do.
SABAN: lol
NON-SABAN 3: That's what we were thinking!

SABAN: Sounds like that old woman does not know what the title of being a Governor entails. But then again,she will not be the first whiner or the last one to hit out at the Saba people. Take it in stride my people and know that if they landed on Saba chances are they are running from something back home, whether it's financial,criminal or emotional.
SABAN: I thank him for what he doing he are protecting us and our island u cant please everyone they cant see what is happening in the states how many are dying if they dont like what he is doing let them go where they come from this is our beloved island SABA
SABAN 1: Well, I was of the view that this [name of NON-SABAN] was a man. But I came to understand that is a old drunken woman upset because she cannot walk her dog now under the lockdown. Well, get yard is big enough so she can drink her rum and walk her dog on her property. It's sad, a total embarrassment to all women
SABAN: Unc doesn't matter who THAT THING is, them comments was enough to hush they mouth!
NON-SABAN 3: Thank you [name of SABAN 1]
Well said.
SABAN: They love the free healthcare so they can get their cocktail of drugs for free.

BEYOND THE STRIKE AND *THE HERALD*: THE ST CROIX LABOR UNION CREATES ITS OWN INSTITUTIONS TO MAKE WORKERS INDEPENDENT

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Abstract:
Well-known in the Caribbean is the 1916 strike by the St. Croix Labor Union. Lesser known are the institutions which the union spearheaded from 1918-1921 to empower the laborers. Some of these institutions include: 1) conducting polls to determine laborer opinions on territorial sovereignty; 2) encouraging thrift through founding a savings bank; and 3) offering reasonably- sized lots as small farms for sale to the laborers to grow their own produce. Using the Danish matricules (*Rigsarkiv* [Danish National Archives], 1754-1917), the property books of the Recorder of Deeds (Government of the US Virgin Islands, n.d.), St. Croix newspapers, oral histories and censuses, this article follows the establishment of these institutions and their effect on the quality of life of laborers and their families.

Key terms: St. Croix Labor Union, D. Hamilton Jackson, *The Herald* (St. Croix), sugar cane laborers in St. Croix, St. Croix Labor Union Savings Bank, Ralph de Chabert

Introduction

For nine weeks from January 24, 1915, to February 26, 1916, in a protest against low wages and poor living conditions, over four thousand St. Croix field laborers refused to work in the sugar cane fields in St. Croix. Per 9-hour working day, the first-class laborers' wages were 20 cents, second-class 15 cents and even lower wages were paid to third-class workers. Besides the low wages, the workers were disgruntled with the intolerable working and living conditions they endured on the estates. As the labor action progressed, they were expelled from their homes and provision grounds. Additionally, they were frustrated with police brutality, inequity in representation in the court system,

and stringent vagrancy laws that controlled the laborers' free time. David Hamilton Jackson, leader of the St. Croix Labor Union, continually brought up these areas of concern in public speeches and editorials in the island's union-owned newspaper *The Herald*. His forceful and consistent messages were absorbed by listeners and readers, and he encouraged union officers to go out and read the newspaper to illiterate laborers to ensure that they heard and understood the latest news and the purpose of the union.

Opposed to the Labor Union's demands for higher wages, the Planters' Association, a group of European descended planters whose attitude toward the workers had not changed since the days of enslavement under the Danish which had lasted from 1733 to 1848, were openly supported by the colonial administration. The governor recused himself from the strike negotiations because of insults made against him made in public speeches by Jackson. Metropolitan officials, therefore, intervened and assigned middle class men to the negotiating team (De Chabert, 2009, p. 12). Whereas the Union was demanding 50 cents per day, a compromise yielded 30 to 35 cents for first-class workers and corresponding increases for second and third-class workers (Boyer, 1983, p. 76). The officers and workers' immediate reaction to the raise in wages proclaimed the collective action as a victory. In reality, while "it procured modest gains for workers …. the strike enabled the Black working population to stand eye-to-eye with the White planter class and as free men demanding what was their just due" (Highfield, 2018, p. 350).

Feeling self-confident and empowered, Jackson's early impulse was to find an adequate office and meeting space in both of the major towns on the island for the St. Croix Labor Union. "At the end of 1915, the St. Croix Labor Union numbered 6,000" (Boyer, 1985-1986, p. 80, see also De Chabert, 2009, p. 12). Thus, with members' dues, Jackson took out a mortgage on real estate that would proclaim the success of their collective action. He selected two large architecturally detailed structures in the Danish colonial style, both situated on prominent streets. Jackson acquired 1B King Street in Christiansted from a private owner. He also purchased a large planter's townhouse, spanning a two-plot lot at 32-33 King Street, Frederiksted, popularly known as "Cumberland Castle." Originally, this property had housed the offices of the St. Croix Sugar Factory, owned by Danish joint shareholders. Additionally, he bought 17 Church Street in Christiansted, which in 1921 was renovated to be utilized as a central office for the Labor Union in that town (De Chabert, 2009, p. 54). It is ironic that these structures were the former town houses of the upper class, who comprised twenty-five percent of the population, and who had owned agricultural acreage employing hundreds of enslaved Africans, ancestors of the field hands who were now striving to make a living wage. As substantial union halls, these buildings were visual symbols of the victory of Black workers over the planters. In a speech given on Liberty Day, November 1, 1919, in Frederiksted town, Jackson reminded the union members, "from a penniless people in 1916, you today own property worth over $100, 000" (De Chabert, 2009, p. 29).

The Labor Union was organized by young, intellectual men from the middle class, many of whom were descendants of the free colored, who in the early 1800s "as they were outnumbering Whites, were becoming restive for their rights as a growing class" (Highfield, 2018, p. 239). In the early 20th century Jackson had risen as their charismatic leader, along with Ralph Bough, Ralph De Chabert, and other members of the Mutual Improvement Society, a lecture/debate organization established in 1913 which had become "a breeding ground for analyzing ideas and issues" (Highfield, 2018, p. 239). These young men expressed what they observed to be lacking in the lives of the laborers and what they as the middle class felt lacking in their own lives: greater civil and political rights. In their multiple struggles, these members of the island's middle class had voiced their desire for employment in the government civil service; a lowering of the franchise to gain voting rights; and participation in elections for a representative seat on the Colonial Council. "Denied access to these positions, the middle class sought to start their own protest by joining with the working class, to challenge restrictions on black social advancement" (La Motta, 1992, p. 181).

The 1916 strike raised wages for sugar cane laborers; however, important points were neglected in the compromise which simply focused on wages. Forgotten were the everyday concerns of retaining free of charge the laborers' estate housing and provision grounds, in which they planted nutritious foods to supplement their largely carbohydrate diet.

This article will highlight Jackson and his contemporaries' personal vision for the laborers. These middle class men foresaw some of the institutional changes that needed to be implemented for the workers to advance, to uplift their lives and to experience personal self-sufficiency. Three relevant institutions were founded to foster such changes: 1) laborers were involved in their first experience in voting; 2) a savings bank was created for the growth of laborers' money; and 3) a more extensive, more reasonable plan for land distribution than what had existed beforehand was established. Among the long-term effects of these institutions would be the equity that the workers themselves would develop over the years, and the anticipation of a better standard of life that they hoped to garner under US administration.

The vote for vs. against the transfer

The constant communication between the many groups of migrant Virgin Islanders in the United States and the Crucian leaders on the islands kept the union abreast of happenings occurring in New York and Washington. Even the Navy officials, who were beginning their administration of the newly-acquired islands, were amazed at how well-informed this group of young intellectuals was regarding the progress of these mainland groups in their testimony before Congress in the 1920s. (Dookhan, 1979, p. 26).

Before the St. Croix Labor Union had time to fully bask in its collective victories, the Danish West Indies was being spotlighted on the political landscape, as the US was

poised to buy the territory from Denmark. Prior to the discussions of sale, Danish West Indian inhabitants' views were overlooked by the global powers. This hastily- organized third attempt to purchase the islands had Jackson himself thrown off-guard without the ability to adequately host union meetings with the laborers. Consequently, the union set up a make-shift unofficial ballot system to learn which path the laborers preferred: sale to the US or a continued relationship with Denmark.

"The agricultural workers cast 4,027 votes for the sale of the islands to the US; 7 votes for continued association with Denmark. In their polling of the planters, the majority of which was 27, voted for the sale" (Caron, 2021, p. 11). The results were accepted by the Union's Supreme Council (consisting of officers and district superintendents) and were read at each of the meeting halls. Throughout the negotiations, the Danes had been demanding that the US set up such a voting process to poll inhabitants' opinions. The US, however, could not do so, because Congress had not bestowed citizenship on the residents. Thus, Jackson had given the laborers their first experience in voting, which is usually a right rooted in citizenship, a status which they had not thus far been granted by any nation state. Having this chance to vote was not forgotten by the island's working class and served as a memory of something to strive for in the future.

A few days later, Jackson telegraphed the results of the vote to Denmark. He then gathered a delegation, comprised of middle class men, who traveled to Denmark "with the aim of acquiring The West Indian Sugar Factory, which operated the mill and estates at Bethlehem. The transaction never materialized" (Highfield, 2018, p. 349). Jackson's reasons for favoring the transfer after vocally and publicly supporting Denmark's rule over the islands for years showed that "he foresaw greater opportunity for all people, more and higher free schooling, and a flourishing economy in which islanders could be shareholders" (G. James Fleming, as cited in Boyer, 1985-1986, p. 81). In *The Herald*, Jackson threatened rebellion if the sale was not approved (1916).

Establishing the Labor Union Savings Bank

Throughout his numerous open-air speeches, Jackson had emphasized the need for the laborers to practice thrift. In theory, the tangible habit of depositing their pennies reinforced the idea of developing a sense of saving in the minds of the laborers. Jackson wanted them to envision purchasing and working their own property, growing provisions for their own consumption and for sale. For each worker to build up a downpayment for land, a bank needed to be created.

Already the workers were paying their dues of 20 cents weekly at their nearest Union Hall. Additionally, they paid medical and funeral premiums. When, upon the news of a deceased worker, each member paid an additional 3 cents in their dues as a contribution to his burial. This death benefit added up to $10 for a first-class worker's death, and $8 for a second-class worker's death (De Chabert, 2009, p. 79). The dues and the fees were

collected by the clerks and deposited in the bank. Mary Richards, who lived at Cumberland Castle, the headquarters of the union in Frederiksted, clerked for the organization (U.S. Census Bureau, 1920). De Chabert (2009) writes:

> When Jackson was President, he received money at the (Union Hall) counter when the clerks were out. They never counted money when leaving and no reckoning was made when they returned … the money was lost through the hands that had handled it. (pp. 31-32)

Jackson realized that the low wages that the laborers were receiving were not allowing them to increase their savings. For the laborers to earn more and for the planters to get more work from the laborers, the Planters Association and the Union had agreed on a task-based system in which laborers and planters together determined the specific jobs and the rates of pay. Depending on the season, the tasks varied: planting, weeding, cane cutting and carrying cane to the factory were measurable tasks that were assigned a wage. Task wages for first-class workers were fixed at 50-55 cents per day: 30-40 cents for second-class workers and 15 cents for third-class laborers (Dookhan, 1983 p. 6). This created a more independent work system that eliminated the need for a driver directing the work. With the higher wages, greater deposits could be accrued in savings accounts. Dookhan notes that the Naval administration supported the task system agreement, which was covered by an arbitration process (Dookhan, 1983, p. 7). Once the charges for rental of housing and provision grounds were deducted by the plantation owner, however, even the first-class workers, who earned 50-55 cents per day under the new agreement, were still living below subsistence level (De Chabert 2009, p. 15).

In Europe, Denmark had its own bank for workers called the *Arbejdsbanken* (Workers' Bank) which was never transplanted to Danish West Indies. The previously established colonial banking institutions in the islands, which were designed to cater to the needs of merchants and planters, did not recognize the laborers' banking needs, nor equate them to those of the workers in Denmark. There was little that middle class men, say nothing about laborers, could do to amass substantial money to open shops or develop businesses (Highfield, 2018, pp. 215-216).

In 1921 Jackson had resigned from the union and Ralph de Chabert became president of both the union and the bank. At the time, there was a 3000 Danish West Indian franc (the currency used at the time) shortfall. The lack was attributed to the many different union enterprises for which there were no separate accounting systems. The ledger showing the accounts of *The Herald,* which collected subscriptions and sold ads and *The Herald* Corporation, which did side printing jobs, also included the mortgages of the estates owned by the union, rentals from valuable in-town property that the union owned, rentals from estate property and the sale of produce and animals from the estates.

Each one of these entities should have been accounted for on its own, showing its own credits and debits. To make matters worse, one entity "borrowed" funds from another to pay its operating expenses and vendor bills.

The purchase and sale of estate properties by the Union

Between 1916 and 1922, there were only inconsistent and small increments in the wages for laborers, and these were neither improving their standard of living nor gaining a sense of self-reliance. Jackson therefore determined that land ownership was the only solution.

Yet, Jackson could see that the sugar industry was in decline. "Between 1916 and 1920, sugar exports totaled 15,000 and 12, 000 tons, surpassing the 10,000 tons for the first time since 1907. Sugar exports remained below 7,000 tons for the rest of the decade" (La Motta, 1992, p. 108). This decline could be attributed to multiple factors, including fluctuations in the price of sugar, the lack of cane cutters, the variable weather conditions, and incompetence in managing the estates. Thus, there were many bankrupt estates held by the Naval/VI Government. Jackson himself experienced this as well on his own estate, Mt. Victory, Northside Quarter, which he purchased in 1922 and rented out to workers (De Chabert, 2009, fn. 34, p. 89). Because of these problems, some of the independent planters were turning their properties into stock farms (La Motta, 1992, p. 108).

Planters in general were reluctant to give up their land, even their marginal portions, to their former employees as small farms. Owning land had political implications. Under the Danish Colonial Law of 1906, the franchise to vote was restricted to men who owned at least 500 acres of property or had substantial salaries. Additionally, the possibility of running for a seat on the Colonial Council was the privilege of those who owned large tracts. Ownership of land was the basis of political power for the white elite class (La Motta, 1992, p. 110). For the struggling laborer, there were few choices: maintain the status quo by working as a field hand, work on a stock farm, or produce cane to sell to the large factories.

The land distribution program of 1881-1892 under former Danish Governor C.H. Arendrup had established a scheme in which qualified laborers (parcelists) lived and worked on specific parcels of land, paying off the price of the parcel in installments so that they would become landowners. At the time, drivers and foremen with adequate family members able to work on the parcel were chosen as parcelists. Twenty-acre tracts were contracted out to those who had shown initiative and independence. Estate Humbug and Estate Work and Rest were thus subdivided into parcels primarily for the growing of cane with the grinding of stalks to be processed at the government factories.

Under this scheme, devoting every bit of land to the raising of cane was the focus, so that parcelists could show a profit. Little attention, however, was paid to the parcelist's family's food security, since no land was allotted for them to plant food for themselves,

and most had no money to purchase food. These parcelists were assisted in constructing their homes but little technical expertise or financial assistance was given to them. In the end, these parcelists were unable to turn a profit on their production and pay their mortgages to the colonial government. Therefore, most lost their property due to inability to pay the mortgage and this phenomenon was immediately used by the planters to falsely accuse the parcelists of "laziness."

One arm of the St. Croix Labor Union Bank was the Labor Union Realty Corporation. With the dues of thousands of members, this entity first acquired Estate Northside in Northside Quarter. Then Jackson purchased from "Gerda Johanne and Olaf Olsen, Marticules 20 and 21 in Estate Grove Place and in Hard Labor" (Prince Quarter Matricules, 1918, Rigsarkiv, 1911-1918). The Olsen family had resided at the great house in 1911, with three children (Danish West Indian Census, 1911). Oluf was a former gendarme, stationed at Fort Frederik, and Gerda lived in Frederiksted town with her father E. Malgrav (a hospital inspector). In 1911, Gerda Olsen was the owner of the two estates (Matricules, 1911, Rigsarkiv, 1911-1918). How she herself became sole owner needs to be traced.

In 1918, Jackson and the union officials reworked Ardendrup's parcel scheme, offering laborers fewer acres so that they could adequately manage the crops that they had planted and have less to pay in mortgage. In an editorial in the *Herald* (August 4, 1920), Jackson wrote that those who worked the land preferred to be called "a small farmer" rather than "a peasant proprietor." No matter their name, he said "If any truth-seeker wishes testimony as to the ability of the Crucian small farmer, let him visit the Union Estates, Grove Place and Hard Labor. The evidence is abundant" (Jackson, 1920).

The savings bank had mortgaged 1,400 acres and 300 cattle (La Motta, 1992, p. 194) from the dues paid into the Labor Union Savings Bank. Downpayments were thus made first for the foreclosed Estate North Side, then for Estates Grove Place and Hard Labor (Matricule 1918, No. 13, 20-21, Rigsarkiv, 1911-1918) which were purchased on Jan. 29, 1918, by the Labor Union from Gerda Johanne and Oluf Olsen for 100,000 Danish West Indian francs.

Using the two Federal Censuses of 1920 and 1930 (U.S. Census Bureau), it is possible to find out who moved from the estates on which on which they had originally labored during the strike to purchase land in Grove Place and Hard Labor from the St. Croix Labor Union Realty Corporation. By 1930, a good number of plots in Grove Place, outside the original village for the enslaved which was situated in Matricule 21 (Rigsarkiv, 1911-1918), were purchased. The new owners, who had been the former laborers during the strike on the other West End estates such as Estate Enfield Green, Estate Prosperity and Estate William, had placed deposits on the land.

The first family to own such a plot was that of Solomon and Margaret Parris, born in Nevis (U.S. Census Bureau, 1930). In an oral history recorded by M. J. Soule, Margaret Parris insisted that Jackson gave her and her husband the land, however, years later she

was asked to pay for it and refused (Soule, 2002). In 1920, Solomon Parris, 16, was living with his mother, Mariah on Estate Castle Coakley. Mariah brought her two sons to St. Croix from Nevis. Richard Schrader also tells of another family in La Valee, one of the Northside Quarter estates owned by the Labor Union. The mother had died and the daughter had expected the land to be passed down to her. Instead, the Labor Union officers at the time of the mother's death insisted that the daughter had to re-pay the union for the cost of the land. Richard Schrader tells how the daughter was able to convince them that her mother had paid for the land (Schrader, 2005).

Conclusion

The fifth anniversary of the Labor Union's founding on Nov 1, 1922, was marked with "a monster parade through the streets with 5,000 participants" (Editorial, 1922). Describing the event, Jackson writes in a *Herald* editorial:

> Much is yet to be done, and in time will be accomplished in spite of the foes without and the traitors within …. From the darkness to the light, from bondage to Freedom, from oppression to liberty in five short years is something to be appreciated. This fifth (anniversary), we jubilantly celebrate the day not in a spirit of bravado, but in joyful thanks to the Almighty, who has brought our people safe through all and who still leads them over. (Jackson, 1922)

Between 1918 and 1921 the St. Croix middle class union activists' vision for the laborers on the island had achieved some concrete results. Institutions had been created for the laborers to become self-reliant and to achieve a sense of personhood in the eyes of the state. The laborers, some of whom had become small farmers, had realized what equity could be gained through land ownership and savings. Above all, according to Mario Moorhead, community leader and author, "Jackson saw the 'humanness' in the laborers, Jackson as a leader saw us (native Virgin Islanders) as equal human beings. He allowed us to grow from inside out" (Moorhead, 2024). This was a key characteristic that differentiated the union organizers from the island's ruling merchants and landowner elites.

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REFLECTIONS ON BÀNDABOU: RESILIENCE, RESISTANCE AND SOCIAL CHANGE AFTER ABOLITION IN THE RURAL SOCIETY OF CURAÇAO

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Abstract
Questions about the impact of enslavement on Curaçaoan society are crucial to consider, but it is also important to examine the period that followed Emancipation in 1863. In this article, I reflect on the social conditions that prevailed in the westernmost part of the island from the 1860s until the 1920s.

Key terms: Curaçao, Bándabou, Emancipation, abolition, colonialism, resistance, resilience

Questions about the impact of enslavement on Curaçaoan society are crucial to consider, but it is also important to examine the period that followed Emancipation in 1863 (see, for example Allen, 2007). In the present article, I reflect on the social conditions that prevailed in Bándabou, the westernmost part of the island from the 1860s until the 1920s. While the abolition of enslavement was no doubt a great step forward in legal terms for the African descended majority in Curaçao, the former owners of the enslaved, who still constituted the ruling classes of the island, made sure that the political, economic and social conditions that prevailed during enslavement would persist well into the 20th century, especially in rural areas such as Bándabou. During this period, the transition away from enslavement was slow, and hampered by colonial subjugation, exploitation, and paternalistic attitudes. The persistence and resilience of the formerly enslaved would eventually force the elites to make political, economic and social concessions, but in many significant ways, the promises of Emancipation are yet to be fulfilled for the island's people up until today.

On July 1, 1863 when slavery was abolished a total of 6,751 enslaved people were set free in Curaçao, while 8,000 African descended and colored people already had already obtained their freedom. Economically, the conditions in rural Curaçao improved little over the following decades, with a report issued by the official Dutch representative H. van Kol in 1901 differing little from the pre-Emancipation report issued by official Dutch representatives W. A. S. Grovestins and W. C. Boeij before Emanicipation in 1791 (van Kol, 1901; Grovestins & Boeij, 1791/1998). In both reports, the rural population of the island was depicted as living in a state of deep poverty and in urgent need of food, water, and medical assistance.

What is absent from these reports is the unrelenting resistance of the people of Bándabou and the rest of the island and their refusal to accept inequality as well as their dependency on and humiliating treatment by the former masters. This resistance took different forms, ranging from continuous acts of disobedience and obstruction to at least three violent uprisings during the 18th century in Bándabou itself, including the massive revolt under the leadership of Tula in 1795. In day-to-day life, however, resistance was mostly expressed in an attitude of defiance and anger which was largely kept inside the family and inner social circles. This resistance was often articulated in oral tradition, folk tales, and artistic expression, including the African influenced rhythms and lyrics of *tambu* music and performance (Rosalia, 1997) and Bándabou was a center for such cultural activity and activism. The widespread use of Papiamentu (Leeward Islands Iberian lexifier Creole) and its inclusive and unstandardized African influenced language practices, rather than Dutch, can also be seen as a form of resistance on their part.

Due primarily to climatic and other natural circumstances, the Dutch Leeward islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao never became flourishing plantation economies exporting tropical products, as was the case for so many of the other regions of the Caribbean. As a center for commerce and transshipment, however, the port city of Willemstad in Curaçao has remained crucial in regional economic and financial networks from the early colonial period up until today, making it relatively prosperous. That said, the often-changing geopolitical panorama in the greater Caribbean region had a major impact on the financial wellbeing of Willemstad.

For example, in 1881, problems arose with Venezuela under its leader Guzman Blanco who introduced high tariffs for goods entering his country from Curaçao. This did not eliminate the commercial function of the island, though. Instead, it shifted the nature of the flow of goods, forcing Curaçaoan merchants to rely more on contraband. Confrontations with Venezuela have included efforts by Curaçao's much larger neighbor to gain control over the island, or even to annex it, leading to very tense situations between Venezuela and The Netherlands. The rural western part was particularly affected, as it depended on the general wellbeing of the economy.

The rural part of Curacao consists of hilly lands covered with thorny bushes and other vegetation typical of semi-arid tropical climatic zones. Only in the lower valleys where

subterranean water is available can more vegetation be found. This is where the island's orchards and *hòfi* [gardens] are to be found (all translations are by the present author unless specified otherwise). The *kunuku*, (the agricultural fields of the rural areas) had to provide food and other products for the town and the ships in the harbor. During the 19th century, even before abolition, the number of plantations fell sharply, and only a few plantations or *kunuku grandi* were well managed, such as Savonet in Bándabou (Baetens & do Rego, 2009; Renkema, 1981). Most served as private country estates where the island's elites could escape the busy and crowded town life and as collateral to get a mortgage during hard times. During this period, more and more European descended families left the rural areas to live in Willemstad, leaving their plantations under the responsibility of a trusted agent or *fitó*. Hence their direct relations with the small farmers and farmhands and consequently their relations to their lands and their tenants became more distant and capricious, leaving many rural people with a sense of abandonment.

The most important staple crop for feeding the rural population during the era of enslavement and thereafter was *maishi chikí* or sorghum (*sorghum vulgare*) which is also cultivated as a major source of food throughout the savannah and Sahel regions of West Africa. Other crops included maize, peanuts and a variety of beans along with melons and pumpkins. There was also a focus on rearing sheep, goats and poultry as well as pigs and cattle. Salt production in the *saliñas* became an important product for almost all the plantations along the coast and provided a source of income when frequent droughts made agriculture precarious. Employment as farmhands for the big land owners and as laborers in salt production offered work and some income for rural families. Other local products that could generate income were the pods of the divi-divi tree which were used in tanning hides, the production of charcoal and even the provision of water for the town and visiting ships.

The years before abolition were relatively good for the *shon* [plantation owners] because between 1847 and 1850 rainfall was fairly adequate. After Emancipation, their main concern was how to adapt to a new situation without the availability of unfree labor. Plantation owners now had to confront a mobile labor force over which they no longer had absolute control and whom they now had to pay. This was a key motivating force behind their decision to allow their former enslaved workforce to use part of the plantation ground to live on under a contract system known as *paga tera* which had already been in use during the era of enslavement for those who had already achieved their free status.

Under the *paga tera* system, in return for being allowed to build a house and live on the plantation, the formerly enslaved tenant was required to work without pay during 10 to 12 days a year and would be on call to work for the plantation owner whenever needed in exchange for a can of flour and a small allowance. Tenant farmers could plant their crops on a designated plot and keep some small animals. For each plantation the contract

could be different. Tenants were also allowed to use water from the wells, to gather salt and firewood and some other necessities, as agreed to by the owner. Tenants were usually not allowed to have cattle, while some were allowed a few goats. Sometimes there were additional charges such as the obligation to deliver 60 bags of charcoal each year at Santa Martha plantation (Baetens & do Rego, 2009).

These strategies were aimed at preventing the tenants from becoming economically independent and advancing out of subjugation. They also ensured that landowners had readily available labor at hand and cornstalks to feed their most important asset, their cattle, with a tenant only allowed to retain a few stalks for their thatched roof. These contracts perpetuated the unequal relationship between landowners and tenants. The landowner class wanted to keep the social order as it was in the era of slavery. So, the mobility of the free people was restrained and aimed to serve the economic goals of the planter class. The *paga tera* system was one of exclusion and exploitation which often incorporated other elements from the time of enslavement, such as humiliating treatment, the sexual abuse of tenants, and interference in their social activities.

The colonial government exerted strict control over the rural population. From the 1860s onward, every plantation owner had to file a report on the people and farm animals on their land to the district master, who compiled the data for the government. These reports, together with policing and civil registry functions assigned to the district master were important instruments for maintaining discriminatory law and order on behalf of the colonial authorities, including restrictions on travel to Willemstad for the laborers, but not the *shons*.

Apart from the oppressive political, economic and social arrangements set up by the *shons* and enforced by the authorities, the dry and unpredictable weather also significantly impacted rural communities. After some good years with sufficient rainfall in 1864 and 1865, Curaçao suffered a serious drought in 1866, limiting the possibilities of the newly emancipated population. 1882 to 1885 were again very bad years with limited rainfall, but in 1886, hurricane force winds and heavy rains destroyed most dwellings in the Willibrordus area. The century closed with another prolonged dry period from 1897 to 1900, while the heavy rainfall during 1912 resulted in severe damage to dams and retaining walls, as well as to erosion of arable land and damage to fields and animals. Most years produced a meager or bad harvest, prompting the out-migration of men, who left their families in distress and at the mercy of governmental and church assistance to avoid large scale famine.

Tenants and free people also made use of the *savaan* [commons or public lands] in between the plantations. While these lands were used by plantation owners for grazing their cattle, they were also used by the common folk to raise sorghum, which was rain dependent and produced one harvest (occasionally two) in a year. Failure of a year's harvest could mean starvation. Without water wells, they could not practice irrigation

agriculture. They supplemented their diet by hunting birds and iguanas, gathering shellfish in the muddy shorelands, fishing from the rocks and collecting edible plants from the bush such as *kadushi* [a kind of cactus] Under such conditions, pilfering fruits and animals from plantation property became a survival strategy.

From archival records, oral histories, and the study of topographical maps it has become apparent that until the dawn of the 20th century, most hamlets and dwellings were still on plantation lands (Werbata, 1910; Brenneker, 2018; Gibbes et al., 2015; Hartog, 1961). This is an indication that most freed persons stayed for some time, probably a generation or two, on the lands of their former masters. However, there were also quite a number of people who wanted to start life anew away from the *kunuku grandi*, in spite of the fact that the possibilities of gaining a decent living on the limited and not-so-fertile *savaan* lands was in most cases bleak. This was also a real challenge due to the continuing general dependency on the *kunuku grandi* for water and jobs, as well as for gathering fruits and other edibles, hunting small game, fishing from the shore, collecting salt and firewood, and so on.

As Emancipation was nearing, the Protestant Dutch colonial government became aware of the role of religion in replacing coercive domination with discursive domination, leading them at last to accept the Catholic church as a partner due to its hierarchical structure and its stress upon obeying the existing social order. Catholicism and its rituals had a wide appeal among the rural population. It gave them a sense of worth and belonging. The Catholic Church also assisted the poor and preached in Papiamentu, the local language! That said, the Catholic Church was very much part of the colonial system and demanded full authority over the lives and norms of the common people, including the Eurocentric rejection of African based cultural expressions.

Almost all the lands of Bándabou were private properties of the *shons* [the elite landowner's class]. The only domain lands were those next to some of the fortifications such as Westpunt and Boca Samí. Starting from the 1820s, the Church deployed an intensive missionary strategy that not only encompassed almost the entire population but also controlled the geographical space with a string of settlements, notably at the parishes of Westpunt, Barber, Soto and Willibrordus in the 19th century. The Church acquired land and became a player in parceling and renting out land to its followers. But this, together with some parcels given in last wills (e.g., Sami Liber) was still not enough to make a fundamental difference. Substantial and structural land reform involving the acquisition and parceling of some bigger plantations (such as the Flip and Mahoema estates) would not take place until the first decade of the 1900s, as an initiative of Governor De Jong. Meanwhile, some of the landless had no other alternative than emigration to other countries in the region who were in need of farm labor, such as Colombia, Venezuela, Suriname and Cuba (Dekker, 1982; Paula, 1973).

Another group went to Willemstad to fill low paid positions that needed no special preparation. Those with a skill such as masons, carpenters, and the like eventually became

part of the urban middle classes. These individuals acted as a bridgehead and maintained their relationships with their families in Bándabou. They also became intermediaries between town and countryside for goods, news, and ideas and thus agents for social change. After 1876, when phosphate mining in the eastern part of the island offered work, male laborers from Bándabou could participate thanks to their connections in town (in Otrobanda) where they could stay on their way to and from the mines. With the bad state of the dirt roads connecting Bándabou to Willemstad it was quite an endeavor for them to cover the distance by foot or even by donkey.

Others, such as the marketeers, most of them female, frequently took the road to town to sell their produce, thus continuing older traditions as well as becoming an essential part of the new social structure. This gave the local women, already the central figure in the family in the era of enslavement time, an edge in a community where males were often absent. They also engaged in the female-centered cottage industry of making straw hats.

Coming out of slavery without any means of production and protection made life extremely difficult for the rural population in the western part of Curaçao between the 1860s and the 1920s. It this article, I have explored how these people, despite facing scarcity and numerous other challenges, demonstrated remarkable resilience, as well as resistance to social and economic disparities, neglect, marginalization and humiliation.

The most fundamental change however came in the first quarter of the 20th century when the petroleum industry came to the island and attracted many laborers from the countryside, offering them a viable alternative (van Soest, 1976). It was at this time that more and more families began moving off of the plantation lands, as a kind of liberation. Meanwhile more plantations were acquired by the government for the purpose of parceling them out to make rural people more independent. But it was the new industrial order which gave them a real alternative to the feudal system of the landowners. The formerly enslaved and colored people of Bándabou had to wait, however, until the 1940s for their political emancipation, which ultimately furthered their struggle for equal rights and social acceptance.

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LONGUE DURÉE, DIASPORIC WAVES AND TRANS-PERFORMANCES: RADICAL RE-READINGS OF AFROPOLITAN AND AFROPEAN BELONGING ON BOTH SIDES OF THE AFRO-ATLANTIC[1]

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Abstract
'Afropolitan' and 'Afropean' are terms that are being increasingly used in relation to contemporary African diasporic lifeways. From diverse locations along the African, European and Caribbean littorals of the Afro-Atlantic, we undertake radical re-readings of Afropolitan/Afropean belongings by disturbing the limited temporal, spatial and non-intersectional frames within which Afropolitan and Afropean hybridities are normally considered.

Key terms: Afropolitanism, Afro-pean, cosmopolitanism, inclusivity, diversity, African ancestral lifeways, Afro-Atlantic, matrix languages, linguistic diversity

"Afropolitan" belongings and African ancestral lifeways: African prehistory

A well-recognized and pernicious dimension of coloniality is the projection of the norms and lenses of the colonizing 'center' onto the colonized 'periphery.' Moving from the realm of space to the realm of time, a less recognized but perhaps even more pernicious dimension of coloniality is the projection of the norms and lenses of our deeply colonial present onto the hundreds of thousands of years of less deeply colonial and precolonial human history. In this article, we demonstrate how Afropolitan and Afropean belongings

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in the present cannot be meaningfully understood without acknowledging that these phenomena emerge from a long trajectory of dynamic hybridity that can be traced back in time over the longue durée of human existence and traced back through space over wave upon wave of multidirectional diasporic human displacement.

Besides upending and extending the temporal and spatial matrices within which Afropolitan and Afropean entanglements have unfolded, we also highlight the fact that although, by the very nature of their lexical components, the compound terms "Afropolitan" and "Afro-pean" center problematic notions of ethnicity and consequent vulnerabilities to systems of ethnocentric domination, they cannot be considered in isolation from equally problematic intersectional notions of gender, class and species, and consequent intersectional vulnerabilities to systems of patriarchal, economic and anthropocentric domination. Among the most interesting insights that emerge from the temporal, spatial and thematic border-crossings that we engage in here are novel understandings of Afropolitan and Afropean belongings as ingenious, contingent, messy, resistive, and contradictory trans-performances.

Over the past few hundred years, the process of the naturalization of non-cosmopolitan, exclusionary, and homogenizing mono-lingualism, mono-culturalism and mono-ethnic identification was first inflicted upon the peoples of the colonizing nation-states of the Global North and then was extended to the 'independent' nation-states of the formerly colonized Global South. The resulting spread of the non-cosmopolitan and exclusionary insularity of modern Western European lifeways which began fairly recently in human history is now assumed to be 'natural' and 'normal,' i.e. the way it is, the way it always was, and the way it always will be.

At the same time, recent findings in areas such as ancient DNA analysis (Reich, 2018) and archaeology/ anthropology (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021) indicate that most of the 300,000 years of human history has been characterized by a cosmopolitan openness and hospitable inclusivity that has allowed intense and sustained convivial contact, as well as trans-genetic, trans-ethnic, trans-cultural and trans-linguistic hybridity. For example, specialists in the archaeology of Africa of the so-called Middle Stone Age, that is, the period stretching from 300,000 to 30,000 years ago, are increasingly coming to the realization that long distance trade and related phenomena that can also be seen as indicators of cosmopolitanism, probably first emerged in Africa before humans began to settle permanently in fixed communities, and only later spread to the Middle East and Europe. Anthropologists S. Mcbrearty and A. Brooks contend that:

> Proponents of the model known as the "human revolution" model claim that modern human behaviors arose suddenly, and nearly simultaneously, throughout … [Africa, Europe and Asia] about 40 to 50,000 years ago …. [This] model creates a time lag between the appearance of anatomical modernity [which happened in Africa 300,000 years ago] and perceived behavioral modernity, and creates the impression that the earliest modern Africans were behaviorally primitive. This

> view of events stems from a profound Eurocentric bias …. In fact, many of the components of the 'human revolution' … are found in the African Middle Stone Age tens of thousands of years earlier. These features include … increased geographic range, … long distance trade, … art and decoration. These items do not occur suddenly together as predicted by the "human revolution" model, but at sites that are widely separated in space [i.e., Kenya, South Africa and Morocco] and time. This suggests a gradual assembling of the package of modern human behaviors in Africa, and its later export to other regions. (Mcbrearty & Brooks, 2000, p. 453)

S. Ambrose, a specialist in African pre-history, observes that: "The increase in long-distance transport of obsidian during the late Middle Stone Age [from 300,000 to 30,000 years ago] reflects the African origin and development of large-scale regional social networks" (Ambrose, 2012, p. 56). Increasingly, those who study the *longue durée* of human history are coming to understand that it is human cosmopolitan inclusivity, cooperation and cohabitation in Africa, rather than Eurocentric Darwinian notions of individualized competition, that assured the survival of our species from the Middle Stone Age onward.

Anthropologist L. Boissoneault first quotes archeologist R. Potts who states that: "If it was every hominin for itself, that would have been a disaster, and that could've been one of the reasons why the … [Early Stone Age] way of life disappeared" (Potts, cited in Boissoneault, 2018, p. 2). Then Boissoneault continues using his own words to assert that:

> Maybe that's why the Middle Stone Age peoples in [the 300,000 year old East African site at] Olorgesailie got 50 to 60 percent of their tool-making materials from far away …. [because they were part of] a prehistoric trade network—one that existed 100,000 years earlier than scientists previously thought. (2018, p. 2)

The critique of Western linguistics advanced by proponents of approaches based on epistemologies from the Global South (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Canagarajah, 2007; Bagga-Gupta, 2024) challenge the colonial gaze on the study of language that too often implicitly elevates language practices normalized by Northern colonial domination, such as linguistic imperialism, linguistic competition, linguistic exclusion, monolingualism, etc., to the level of naturalized 'universals.' One of the most obvious traces of pre-colonial cosmopolitanism in the Global South is the persistence of zones of intense linguistic, cultural and ethnic inclusivity, diversity, hybridity, and fluidity among indigenous and other colonized peoples into the modern colonial period and, in some cases, such as that of West Africa and the Caribbean coasts of South and Central America, into the neo-colonial present.

West Africa, which has played such a key role in shaping the lifeways of the Caribbean and the rest of the Afro-Atlantic, is a global 'hot spot' for cosmopolitan linguistic, cul-

tural and ethnic diversity, hybridity and fluidity. With thousands of distinct named languages belonging to at least four different named language families, and thousands more named cultures and ethnicities, it is not uncommon in West Africa to find a single community or a single individual speaking many named languages and trans-performing many named cultures and ethnicities.

We suggest that, for most of their colonial and post-colonial history, the speakers of West African English lexifier Creoles generally have used these Creole varieties in trans-performative Afropean ways that promote inclusive plurilingual conviviality, in sharp contrast to the exclusionary, Darwinian zero-sum performances of linguistic competition promoted by the use of standardized 'named' languages from the colonizing metropoles of the Global North. The linguistic practices of cosmopolitan inclusion, diversity, hybridity and fluidity that have usually been embodied in the use of West African Colonial Era Creole varieties are more similar to the cosmopolitan language practices of users of the ancestral varieties spoken throughout the pre-colonial era than they are to the exclusionary linguistic practices that have usually been embodied in the use of English, French, Spanish, Portuguese or Dutch.

Afropean-ness is not a new phenomenon, but its directionalities and modalities have changed over time.

"Afropean" belongings and African ancestral lifeways: The case of the *lançados*

While the term "Afropean" is normally applied to recent waves of African immigrants and refugees to xenophobic, exclusionary and insular European societies, it can also be usefully applied to much older and more sustained waves of European immigrants and refugees to welcoming, inclusive and cosmopolitan West African societies. Afropeanness has a long history in West Africa, but for most of that history Afropeans were Europeans who became Africans. Historian J. Russel-Wood states that:

> [F]rom an early date, overseas territories had been regarded as … depositories for [the] undesirables of … Portugal: convicts, New Christians, gypsies [Romani], etc.
>
> Vagrancy, being a public nuisance and agitator, … adultery and sodomy [including LGBTQ+ lifeways], were the more frequently cited crimes [for which people were exiled] …. At the first opportunity, many … jumped ship …. [and escaped and assimilated to African lifeways, becoming *lançados*]. (1998, p. 107)

So, it is not unreasonable to assume that most of these outcasts on the Portuguese ships who reached the West African coast during the 1400s and 1500s experienced greater food, housing, work and social security in the average West African village than they did back at home in Europe. That said, many Portuguese sailors themselves also saw life in West Africa as better than in Europe and joined the convicts to become *lançados*.

The *lançados* and their Afropean lifeways became a longstanding and prominent feature of the West African coast. Historian A. R. Disney observes that:

> There were … in … [West Africa] by the late 15th century various Portuguese, and Portuguese mixed-bloods, who had settled there permanently … amongst the Africans…. [with these] informal settlers and their Afro-Portuguese descendants becoming steadily more widespread …. [A]s a group they were usually referred to … as *lançados*. (2009, p. 50)

The cosmopolitan openness and inclusive lifeways of West Africans made them good hosts and generally welcomed these Portuguese renegades. Disney continues:

> Some *lançados* settled in existing African villages; others, … founded new villages of their own. In accordance with African tradition, they were treated as 'guests' by their … 'hosts' …. *Lançados* were expected to conform to the local laws and customs. Most settled down with … African women, whom they married in accordance with traditional … [West African] rites –such marriages were not recognized by the … [Catholic church]. (2009, p. 51)

Lançados can also be seen through a trans-performative lens, with any individual *lançado* mastering a complex set of Afropean linguistic, cultural and ethnic repertoires where trans-linguistic, trans-cultural and trans-ethnic Afropean performance was the norm rather than the exception. Disney concludes:

> Most *lançados* became in effect cultural hybrids, while their Afro-Portuguese descendants were … from birth a people in-between. They spoke a Portuguese [lexifier] Creole that was also widely used as West Africa's language of trade [at the time], and their community evolved a syncretic form of Catholicism adapted to West African conditions …. [they] spoke the local … [languages] fluently, and their food and everyday lifestyle was largely African. Some *lançados* became completely Indigenized. (2009, p. 51)

The West African Portuguese lexifier Creole varieties that emerged during this time along the coast could be considered to be expressions of this Afropean trans-performativity, with their trans-performative complexity only increasing as a number of these varieties were relexified to English over the following centuries, becoming an important source in the emergence of West African English lexifier Creole varieties that are spoken there today, such as Pichi in Equatorial Guinea, Cameroonian Pidgin, Naija in Nigeria, Sierra Leone Krio, etc.

Ancestral cosmopolitanism and inclusivity: Afro-Atlantic "creole" varieties in the "Dutch Caribbean"

The "Dutch Caribbean" is currently comprised of six island territories, geographically divided into two groups: Saba, Sint Eustatius, and Sint Maarten, also known as the SSS Islands; and Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, often referred to as the ABC Islands. Because of their desirability as strategic trading hubs, these islands have been occupied by various colonizers, including Spain, France, Britain, and the Netherlands. In 1815, these six islands were included in a single non-sovereign jurisdiction known as the Netherlands

Antilles, with Dutch eventually imposed as the language of governance and instruction in schools.

The transatlantic slave trade merged inclusive, cosmopolitan African language practices with existing inclusive, cosmopolitan Indigenous Caribbean language practices. Subsequent and continued migration from Europe, Latin America, and surrounding Caribbean islands have contributed to these islands' rich linguistic diversity. We argue, however, that without the perpetuation of inclusive, cosmopolitan African language practices through the emergence of Afro-Atlantic 'Creole' varieties on these islands, their linguistic diversity would have been severely reduced in the face of the imposition of a standardized colonial language, such English, Spanish, French or Dutch, as has occurred elsewhere in the Americas.

We explore the historical emergence of an inclusive, cosmopolitan matrix of sociolinguistic factors that have allowed for the retention and expansion of linguistic diversity in the Dutch Caribbean. We specifically examine the critical roles played by ancestral African language practices, whose inclusive and cosmopolitan nature has been perpetuated through the widespread use of Afro-Atlantic 'Creole' varieties by the populations of these islands. This article addresses how ancestral African language practices and colonial legacies continue to impact linguistic, cultural and identificational repertoires in these societies. It also illustrates how language and colonial asymmetries of power are intricately intertwined by juxtaposing official, exclusive "top-down" language policy with unofficial, inclusive "bottom-up" subaltern policy making.

Given that these six islands do not constitute a unified geographic or cultural unit, their histories are addressed below in two distinct sections: one focusing on the SSS islands and the other on the ABC Islands, acknowledging their separate yet interconnected colonial trajectories.

The SSS Islands: Afro-Atlantic creole varieties and ancestral linguistic practices

The three SSS islands are geographically close to other British, French, Spanish, Swedish and Danish colonized islands, which has allowed for continuous movement of people with substantially divergent linguistic, cultural and identificational repertoires. St. Maarten has an extremely diverse population with most speaking at least 3 of the following languages: Afro-Atlantic English lexifier Creole, Afro-Atlantic French lexifier Creole, English, French, and Spanish. St. Martin Afro-Atlantic English lexifier Creole and/or St, Martin Afro-Atlantic French lexifier Creole, whose words come from English and French, but whose associated inclusive and cosmopolitan language practices show influences from West and Central African languages, have served as matrix languages that have fostered linguistic diversity on the island.

Due to its strategic location, Sint Eustatius (aka Statia), was used as a bargaining chip in European conflicts, changing hands 22 times between the 1600 and 1800. By the 1770s, it had become an important slave-trading depot and commercial hub. Most of

island's diverse population speaks at least 2 of the following languages: Afro-Atlantic English lexifier Creole, English, and Spanish. Statian Afro-Atlantic English lexifier Creole has served as a matrix language that has fostered linguistic diversity in Statia.
Despite the fact that only a very small percentage of the populations of any of the SSS islands speaks Dutch, the Dutch language was officially imposed by the Dutch colonial government as the language of governance, the courts of law and the only language of instruction in the schools. This policy put most children at a severe disadvantage, since very few speak any Dutch before starting school. SSS Islanders also complain that they cannot understand court sentences and government documents in Dutch, but their requests for translations into a language that they are familiar with have been consistently dismissed.

Over the course of the 20th century, Saba was the first island to take this situation into its own hands by explicitly rejecting the Top-Down approach to language policy taken by the Dutch government and instead adopting Saban English as the language of governance as well as the language of instruction in the schools, without waiting for the Dutch government to give them permission to do so. In St. Martin, official policy was also eventually just ignored in favor of an informal pluri-lingual approach to governance and languages of instruction.
In Statia, the 2012 education inspection reports (2012 Inspectie Onderwijs) revealed alarmingly low academic performance due to Dutch being the primary language of instruction. Primary students were 2 to 4 years behind European Dutch students in reading comprehension and mathematics. Secondary students faced a 2-year setback in Dutch and mathematics, and a 1.5-year setback in English. Overall, the use of Dutch negatively impacted academic performance across all subjects, including Dutch itself.

Faraclas, Kester and Mijts (2019) conducted a community based policy making exercise throughout the island in 2013, which recommended that since Caribbean English is the home language for most students and widely used in daily life, maximal academic performance was more likely if English, rather than Dutch, was the main language of instruction. The recommended switch began in 2014, with implementation starting in the 2015–2016 school year, alongside systematic teaching of Dutch as a foreign language.
The Dutch Inspectorate of Education's 2016 reports showed substantial improvements across all four primary schools in Statia compared to 2012, confirming a positive transition from Dutch to English as the language of instruction. By 2018, reports for the Gwendoline van Putten secondary school indicated further positive developments in educational quality, with percentages of students passing final exams increasing substantially in 2016 and 2017, reaching 100% in certain tracks. These improvements demonstrate the critical role of aligning language of instruction with students' home languages.

The ABC Islands: Afro-Atlantic creole varieties and ancestral linguistic practices

Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire officially became Dutch territories in the 1630s. Shortly after conquering Curaçao, the Dutch converted its excellent natural harbor from a naval base into one of the largest transshipment points for the enslaved destined for other parts of the Caribbean and South America. Among the diverse populations of the ABC Islands, the Afro-Atlantic Iberian lexifier Creole Papiamentu/o is the most commonly spoken language, with most people speaking at least 2 other languages: Spanish, English and/or Dutch. As an Afro-Atlantic Iberian lexifier Creole, whose words come from Spanish or Portuguese, but whose associated inclusive and cosmopolitan language practices show influences from West and Central African languages, Papiamentu/o has served as a matrix language that has fostered linguistic diversity on the ABC islands. The colonial authorities from the Netherlands officially imposed Dutch as the language of government and instruction in 1819. However, a report in 1828 indicated that only a limited number of students understood Dutch, and even fewer could speak it. Efforts to print Papiamentu/o teaching materials in 1838 were rejected, and schools prohibited children from speaking any language other than Dutch.

During the period of chattel enslavement, the Dutch apartheid-based model of colonial administration relied primarily on coercive means of domination, so that the Dutch were not inclined to share their linguistic, cultural and religious repertoires with the African descended enslaved majority in their Caribbean colonies. But, after the Haitian Revolution in the late 1700s and the resulting abolition of enslavement in the Dutch Caribbean in 1863, less coercive and more discursive means of domination became necessary, prompting the Dutch to eventually attempt to impose their linguistic and cultural repertoires on their formerly enslaved subjects through “universal” formal education in Dutch. But by then it was too late. Spanish speaking Catholic missionaries from neighboring Latin American countries had already successfully begun to establish Papiamentu/o medium churches and schools for the African descended population. This led to the early emergence of a set of Papiamentu/o orthographies, and the publication of a Papiamentu/o grammar guide in 1874, followed by a Dutch-Papiamentu-Spanish dictionary the next year.

In the many surveys carried out in the ABC Islands over the course of the past few decades (Faraclas, Kester and Mijts, 2022), the people of all three islands have expressed their hopes, not to just retain their linguistic diversity in the future, but also to expand it. Survey respondents typically indicate that they want all four of the most commonly spoken languages on the ABC Islands, Papiamentu/o, English, Spanish, and Dutch, to be promoted even more, and they feel that a knowledge of all four languages would best prepare their children for their future lives on their island. Surveys also consistently indicate that on all three ABC Islands the overall attitude toward Dutch remains generally positive to this very day, despite all of the real pain and damage that the use of Dutch

in the schools and the government has inflicted on nearly every family over the past two centuries.

It is useful to consider here the Caribbean Spanish speaking population of the island of Puerto Rico and how they reacted to a very similar imposition of English in the schools after the U.S. seizure of the island from Spain at the end of the 19th century with a conscious and almost visceral rejection and avoidance of the English language that has persisted for generations. This strongly exclusionary (but entirely understandable and justifiable) reaction toward the imposition of English as a colonial language on the part of the people of Puerto Rico where Spanish is the most widely spoken language, is radically different to the strongly inclusive reaction to Dutch on the part of the people of the ABC Islands where Papiamentu/o is the most widely spoken language (Faraclas & Odugu, forthcoming).We contend that the fact that most of the population of the ABC islands speaks an inclusive Afro-Atlantic Creole as one of their home languages, rather than an exclusive colonial language like Spanish, has helped them to retain their ancestral African cosmopolitanism, and has helped to prevent them from rejecting Dutch.

In Aruba, a long process of community consultation has resulted in the design and piloting of the Proyecto Scol Multilingual (PSML). This initiative differs from most Top-Down attempts to reform educational systems which would have involved a forced choice, zero-sum game approach that involves replacing the colonial foreign language (in this case Dutch) with the students' main home language (in this case, Papiamentu/o) in early education, while transitioning back to the colonial language after a few years of primary education. Instead PSML is a multilingual education initiative designed to promote and celebrate the island's linguistic diversity by integrating all four languages into translanguaged classrooms in both primary and secondary education. Since Papiamentu/o is the mother tongue for the majority of students in Aruba, PSML emphasizes initial literacy and the introduction of key concepts in Papiamento alongside literacy and subject matter in English, Spanish and Dutch.

Although in practice they have always done so, students and teachers now finally have permission to use all 4 languages whenever they wish, and students who have Spanish, English or Dutch as home language can now assume the role of teacher for the others. A community based policy initiative was carried out in Bonaire in 2021, which has recommended a similar approach to that adopted in Aruba.

Creole varieties and Afropolitan and Afropean cosmopolitanism and inclusivity

As has been the case everywhere else for most of the colonial and neo-colonial history of the Afro-Atlantic, Afro-Atlantic 'Creole' varieties, including the English lexifier, Iberian lexifier, and French lexifier varieties found in the Dutch Caribbean, have been relentlessly marginalized and demonized, even by their own speakers, who often refer to them as 'bad' or 'broken' varieties of English, Spanish or French. Up until extremely

recently, Afro-Atlantic 'Creole' varieties have been systematically deprived of any governmental support whatsoever, and instead they have been viciously attacked in official discourse and policy initiatives. With the partial exception of Papiamentu/o, little or nothing has been done to standardize Afro-Atlantic 'Creole' varieties and most have remained largely unwritten with no official orthography.

Despite all of this, Afro-Atlantic 'Creole' varieties have survived and thrived, becoming the most widely spoken varieties in the 'Dutch Caribbean' and the varieties which most of the population feel are closest to their preferred and most deeply resonating cultural and identificational repertoires. We would therefore like to suggest that:

> 1) The successful Bottom-Up Language-Making that has resulted in the widespread use of, and preference for Afro-Atlantic Creole varieties in the Dutch Caribbean is in no small way the result of these varieties being demonized by the colonial and neo-colonial authorities and never being standardized or being given any official recognition or support. Unlike Dutch, French, Spanish and English, this has allowed Afro-Atlantic Creole varieties to emerge in the image and interests of the colonized, rather than the colonizer (Faraclas, 2025).
>
> 2) The speakers of Afro-Atlantic Creole varieties have successfully ignored, over-ridden and subverted official Top-Down policy initiatives by patiently and persistently insisting on speaking (and therefore thinking and acting) in their own image and interests.
>
> 3) Afro-Atlantic Creole varieties have become a vehicle for the perpetuation of the inclusive, cosmopolitan ancestral language practices of the African and Indigenous descended majority of the Dutch Caribbean thus supplanting exclusive Top-Down Language Policies with inclusive Bottom-Up Language Policies.
>
> 4) For these reasons, even though Afro-Atlantic Creole varieties are spoken by the majority, they have not become exclusive 'killer languages,' like English or Spanish. (Faraclas, Odiegwu & Alabede, forthcoming)

Over the past centuries, the people of the Dutch Caribbean can be said to have used their ancestral African cosmopolitanism and sovereignty in relation to language in order to implement their own Bottom-Up informal language policies, with considerable success. They have done a remarkable job in maintaining their linguistic diversity in the face of stiff opposition from their colonial and neo-colonial governments. Even though they are proud of that achievement, they are striving for even more linguistic diversity in the future.

Their unrelenting resistance to their governments' epistemically violent attempts to impose the exclusive use of Dutch on them in the courts, the administration and the classroom, has not resulted in them rejecting Dutch as a language, but instead they are insisting that Dutch be taught alongside the other languages that they speak in an inclusive, translanguaged way. After centuries of largely ineffective Top-Down Language policy enacted and imposed by their governments, the people of these islands are demanding

that they be consulted, so that their informal, Bottom-Up, inclusive and cosmopolitan approach to language and languaging can finally become integrated into formal, official governmental policy and practice.

Conclusion

Temporal, spatial and intersectional archaeologies of the terms Afropolitan and Afropean reveal millennia-old traditions of African cosmopolitanisms and "creolized" trans-performance that: 1) have, in the general case of the term Afropolitan, allowed for inclusion, diversity, and hybridity among peoples and their linguistic, cultural and ethnic repertoires on both sides of the Afro-Atlantic; and 2) have, in the particular case of the term Afropean, allowed for economic and political refugees fleeing the exclusionary lifeways of Europe to receive a hospitable, generous, and open welcome on the part of their West African hosts, in stark contrast to the treatment of African immigrants in Europe today.

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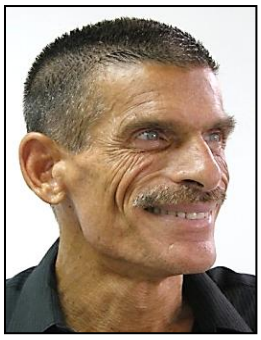
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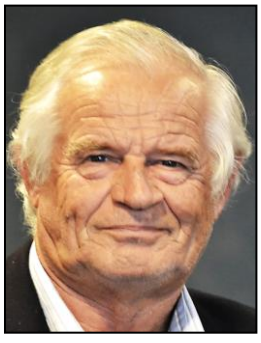
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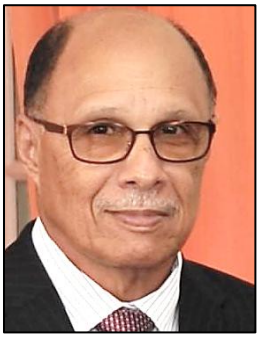
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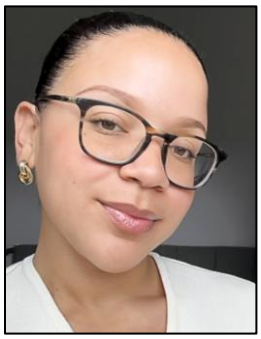
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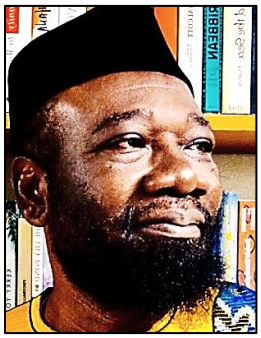
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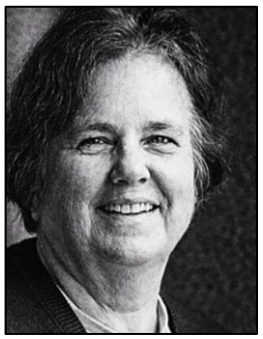
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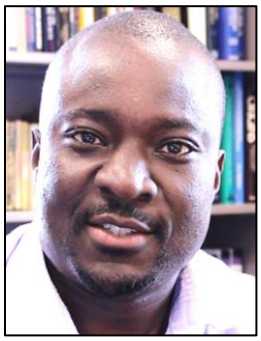
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ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST



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