

Global Caribbean(s): Interrogating the Politics of Location in Caribbean Literature & Culture

Keynote Speakers and Guests

Donette Francis, Department of English (Binghamton University)

Fictions of Feminine Citizenship charts an alternative history of racial and sexual formation in the Caribbean. It examines the ways in which the socialization of female sexuality and the violence of sexual intimacies have mattered to imperialist and nationalist understandings and practices of citizenship. The book moves across historical periods and national contexts ranging from nineteenth-century indentureship in Jamaica to early twentieth-century American military intervention in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Trinidad. Through an interdisciplinary and comparative study of novels by contemporary diasporic Caribbean women writers, *Fictions of Feminine Citizenship* demonstrates that the sexual realities of women and girls challenge conventional regional histories. Francis defines this emergent feminist literature as “antiromance,” and argues that these novels contest the heteronormative model of coupling that underwrites constructions of home, family, nation, and diaspora in the Caribbean. Writing against the critical impulse to underscore women’s agency, Francis considers instead how Caribbean female subjects dwell in liminal spaces of both vulnerability and possibility.

Prof. Mimi Sheller, Professor of Sociology - Director, Center for Mobilities Research and Policy Department of Culture and Communication Drexel University

Broken Borders: Caribbean Mobilities, (Im)Mobile Technologies and Fractured Spatialities

There is a longstanding interest in "global" themes of movement, migration and transnational ways of life amongst Caribbean writers and artists, but few studies within the social sciences that address how new technologies of mobile communication, software-supported mobility (and border security/detention), and changing patterns of offshore finance and air travel are re-shaping island spatialities. This paper aims to update the well-established view of the Caribbean as a mobile region by investigating how recent changes in the technologies and infrastructures of (im)mobility, the cultural practices of air travel and virtual travel, and the economic and political regulation of national borders and financial flows are reconstructing and respatializing Caribbean island-nations, leading to major reconfigurations of territory, authority and rights -- including the derogation of both state-centered political rights and universal human rights. The talk will focus in particular on the recent tragedy in Haiti, examining how "free trade" policies combined with offshore economic zones, border enforcement, migrant interception, detention and deportation, and military intervention (all various genres of im/mobility) to add such a devastating multiplier effect to the impact of the massive earthquake of January 12th, 2010.

Conference Presenters

Ian Bethell Bennett, Department of English (University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras) “Caribbean Locations: (Re)Circulating Images of beauty and the Power of Discourse in Caribbean Development”

As the Caribbean re-establishes itself as the oldest selling location in the world, a new discourse on Caribbean subalternity/alterity develops that allows for the repacking and reselling of once sovereign spaces to old colonial powers. The power of discourse to render visible or invisible, powerful or powerless, even in a late-capitalist, ‘post-colonial’ era when politicians and governments work to create agency for their citizens is ironical, given the rendering of these citizens as the very same objects of the colonial gaze. The region has arguably then reshaped its discourse by repacking old images, and redeploying them to serve similar yet different ends and agendas. The Caribbean becomes the playground for tycoons, land developers, and bankers who wish to avoid regulation and promote development. This paper reads Travel Magazines Islands, *Caribbean Travel and Leisure*, popular Magazines like *Vogue*, *Details* and *GQ* as they package and sell the Caribbean’s global allure, and simultaneously work with governments agendas to sell the sand to the highest bidder. It compares these works with literary renderings and theoretical framings that provide a way to examine the role the Caribbean plays in the global market place that encourages natives to be sold for tourist consumption.

Lara Cahill-Booth, Department of English (University of Miami)
Islands: Jamaica's *National Dance Theatre Company* and the Embodiment of Place

My paper explores how body kinetics and body expression create a common “language” and presents Jamaican dance theatre as an artistic enterprise that uses this relational discourse to communicate narratives of place between potentially fragmented island-nations. I focus on Rex Nettleford's choreography for Jamaica's *National Dance Theater Company* (NDTC). His syncretic dance aesthetic draws on Western classical and modern techniques, African ancestral rituals, popular dance forms and Jamaican gesture. His technique, vocabulary and style are particularly reflective of the history, the cultural inheritance and the geographical experience of the islands; his choreography roots the dancers and the audience in this cultural history and environment. In describing the technique, he explains that “the flexed foot is ... the symbol... of the hoe and pickax... and earthiness; the arms, like other parts of the body, must be able to describe the curve of the mountains, the flow of the rivers, and the ebb and flow of oceans.” I discuss the choreographic elements of *Sly Mongoose—Character Sketches 2* (2008) and *Kumina* (1971) to illustrate how this movement language embodies the Jamaican landscape. I then discuss *Katrina* (2006) to exemplify how this movement language is appropriated to embody other sites within the American Tropics. Through such examples I also discuss the intertextuality of staged dance theatre performances. My paper emphasizes that dance theatre is a transcultural performance genre that “writes” the very narratives of place that are also the focus of literary production. I ultimately posit that, because the region's artistic language relies on the sign-systems of spoken, written and kinesthetic language, a literary history of the Americas is not necessarily limited to written texts, but might also include of other forms of creative expression.

Marta Fernandez Campa, Department of English (University of Miami)
Caribbean Voices in Britain: Redefining the Politics of Location and Belonging

On the premise of the “global flows” and critical dialogue that this conference aims to generate, my paper proposal suggests the fruition of an analysis on the politics of location in the work of Caribbean writers in Britain such as Joan Riley, Grace Nichols and Linton Kwesi Johnson. I will be looking at the contributions that their work offers to the conversation on the social and intellectual impact of the Caribbean diasporas. In the work of these writers there is an effort to redefine and claim the exile's relationship to metropolitan spaces. Struggling against nationalism, sexism and racism that impose upon the authors a certain relationship to the British nation, their narratives *voice* the concerns, strength, fears and hope within the diasporic experience. Special attention will be drawn towards Nichols' use of the poetic and mythical figure of ‘Cariwoma’ in her long poem *Startling the Flying Fish*. Cariwoma articulates the idea of a ‘linkage’ of home that the exile carries with himself/herself as well as the necessity to recreate/re-imagine ‘Cariwoma’ (as home) in the process of migration and exile. The ‘thought’, ‘sigh’ and ‘pride’ that this mythical figure shares with the Caribbean migrants corresponds to the critical *thought* (and word) represented as a weapon in Johnson's dub poetry, the frequent *sighs* of Adella -the protagonist of Riley's *Waiting in the Twilight*- and the pride in the voice of the poetic personae in Nichols' *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*.

Emilio Ceruti, Hispanic Linguistics (University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras)
Breaking down the *pater familiae* patterns: The castration of the Latin “macho” in the Nuyorican literature

The Puerto Rican diaspora literature is strongly related to this new conception of ethnic groups relocated to New York, which is the symbol of cultural idiosyncrasy created by many and different migratory waves. “El barrio” becomes the home just because this “non-assimilating colonial minority” takes control of a big part of the city translocalizing it in their homeland. Nonetheless, it is not always the case because of the modifications due to social phenomena that the immigrants suffer necessarily. For instance what we can call “la castración del macho latino” is a condition that leads to a rupture of Nuyorican literature with the Puerto Rican canon of the national paternalist literature as described by Juan G. Gelpí. The aim of this presentation is to analyze novels in prose such as *Down These Mean Streets* from Piri Thomas or poems of authors such as Tato Laviera, Luz Maria Umpierre, Pedro Pietri or Sandra María Esteves in order to examine the failure of the *pater familiae*. He is no longer the father who covers the needs of the family but he is the frustrated man who sees his role of “man of the home” threatened. We can notice it in metaphors like “la ganga” (that substitutes the family) or oppositions like the heat in Puerto Rico VS the cold in New York. Violence, crime, death challenge and the premature sexual attitudes are tools to “hacerse hombre”, that means to try to consolidate a machismo still blurred. In this type of literature, the corporal identities (tied to a national identity) are redefined in terms of gender, sexual orientation and race. Due to this loss of identity, ramifications are created among minority ethnic groups and minority literature movements.

Sika Dagbovie, Department of English (Florida Atlantic University)
Race as Costume & Commodity: Mariah Carey and the Marketing of Racial Fluidity

In the film *Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire* (2009), the main character asks her social worker (played by Mariah Carey), “So are you Italian or -- what color are you? Are you some type of black or Spanish?” Carey, as Ms. Weiss, counters, “What color do you think I am?”. This scene, not in Sapphire’s novel, symbolizes Carey’s seeming identity tease with the media and fans throughout her career. In December 2009 George Lopez posed the same question to Carey when she appeared on *Lopez Tonight*. Her response, “In this country, black,” intimates Carey’s representation of what I call the “multiracial neutral.” Carey’s image “sells” the idea of racial pluralism yet her image also remains “Other,” available for audiences and consumers of all racial backgrounds to claim, buy, or “own.” Since the debut of her self-titled debut album in 1990, Carey has publicly performed various “roles” including white ingénue, biracial outsider, black hip-hopper and erotic/exotic “Other.” Carey’s image both deflects and confirms blackness, creating an “in-between” status that gets reinforced via her racialized sexuality. I argue that she wears biracial stereotypes like a blackface “costume,” allowing audiences to explore racial and sexual fantasies while maintaining racial stereotypes. My presentation examines the “packaged” media image of Carey as mulatta seductress. Drawing on Richard Dyer’s *Stars*, I read Carey by analyzing her autobiographical representations, her videos and albums, and the celebrity reception and publicity surrounding her image. I conclude by discussing how Carey’s public feud with Eminem, a celebrity Harry J. Elam Jr. describes as “trafficking in blackness,” symbolizes the complexities of her seeming racial fluidity.

Mary Ann Gosser-Esquilín, Languages (Florida Atlantic University)
Greening an Island’s Consciousness: Puerto Rican Literary and Artistic Considerations

In the Caribbean, the environmental crisis is an unfortunate common denominator. From the colonial period, the sea’s currents brought the conquistadors and their sugar cane, their coffee, and their slaves. Today, the sea attracts hordes of tourists and a pleasure industry that depletes resources. Faced with this reality, it is worth asking what will happen if we continue to cement over the island, to use up arable lands, and to contaminate the beaches. The next section of this paper considers the exploitation and consumption of bodies due to drug trafficking and/or tourism as presented in the works of Mayra Montero and Mayra Santos-Febres. Their novels make the reader ponder over the close ties that bind the islands (including the island of Manhattan) since the geography of consumption is global. Bodies and the frenzied desire to consume them seem to be unstoppable, and its effects are devastating for our communities. The third section looks at a children’s story by Ana Lydia Vega (*En la Bahía de Jobos: Celita y el mangle zapatero*) as a hopeful example. In this beautifully-illustrated narrative, the mangrove is not made up of a central root, but being rhizomatic (as Édouard Glissant describes it in *Poétique de la Relation*), it connects the people of Puerto Rico to their African roots. The text emphasizes that the mangrove nourishes an entire ecosystem and feeds the creative spirit. To allow it to dry up would spell an imaginative crisis that would be repeated throughout all the islands (evoking Antonio Benítez Rojo). These works present the consequences of the degradation of the environment and warn of the short-term temptation to satisfy the world’s markets (agriculture or tourism). The dialogue between the texts, the photographs, and the illustrations reveals these anxieties.

Yvette Fuentes, Division of Humanities (Nova Southeastern University)
Making the Invisible, Visible: The Body and the Nation in Laura Ruíz Montes’ *A Ciegas*

In her essay “Los usos del eros en el Caribe” the Puerto Rican writer Mayra Santos-Febres contends that the erotic has served as a discursive strategy in Caribbean literature for quite some time. She argues that the erotic has often served as a gateway for ongoing discussions on Caribbean identity. This study analyzes *A Ciegas*, a one-act play by the Cuban poet and playwright Laura Ruíz Montes (Matanzas, 1966). In this work, Ruíz Montes relies upon both the erotic (specifically the female body) and the supernatural, to underscore the complex nature of gender and sexuality within Cuba’s national history. In *A Ciegas*, the female body and female sexuality appear in the shadows, ‘invisible’ within the nation. Ruíz Montes juxtaposes present and past, realism and the supernatural, and heterosexual and homosexual desire in order to elucidate the various forms of *difference* that remain outside official national discourses. Although the play ends without a clear resolution, through their ongoing dialogue, Ana and Sombra are made ‘visible’ to each other as well as to the reader/spectator. Through their dialogues, Ana and Sombra attempt to forge a space of their own within the nation’s public discourse. The play concludes with a knock on the door and the

lights suddenly turning on. At the conclusion, the question remains as to whether Ana and Sombra will step out of the darkness so as to fully become 'visible' within the public sphere.

Jon Glover, Department of English (University of Florida)

The Haitian Diaspora as a Counter-Culture of Modernity: Rethinking Haitian Political Modernity in *The Dew Breaker* and *The Butterfly's Way, Voices from the Haitian Diaspora*

There is a long tradition, then, of viewing Haiti as somehow exterior to the Western hemisphere and anterior to modernity itself, even as international and politically modern events ensue within the nation's borders. There is a strong resemblance between this discursive positioning of Haiti and Paul Gilroy's description of the Black Atlantic as a counterculture of modernity developed through the contradictory situation of "being both inside and outside the West" (30). This paper seeks to further develop this parallel by examining the authorial and editorial work of Edwidge Danticat, a Haitian writer who could be described as being both inside and outside the United States. If *The Dew Breaker* articulates Haitian diasporic issues through fiction, Danticat's editorial work on *The Butterfly's Way* brings multiple Haitian writers together to address similar issues in essays, poems, and short stories. Duvalier and Aristide are recurrent figures in many of the works included in this anthology, highlighting the importance of political discussion to the Haitian diaspora in the United States. Both *The Dew Breaker* and *The Butterfly's Way* demonstrate how the political affects the personal as well as how Haiti is neither isolated from Western hemispheric politics nor anterior to North American modernity.

Diana M. Grullón, Department of English (Florida International University)

The travesti in *Sirena Selena vestida de pena* by Santos-Febres: A literary technique for a globalized Caribbean

In the novel *Sirena Selena vestida de pena*, Mayra Santos-Febres uses the universally recognized character of the transvestite as a literary technique to portray how this figure forms part of contemporary Caribbean society. Consistent with the duality of idea and form present in Platonic and Aristotelian theories, the transvestite personifies both an archetype, and at the same time, a process of (re)construction that characterizes the dual nature of his "real" essence. Thus, based on these theories, the transvestite is an ideal literary technique that represents the duality considering the fact that though physically he attempts to look like a woman, anyone that sees him still questions if he's really a woman. The transvestite, in this case Selena, does not fit into either archetype, but rather into the process of (re)construction, redefining himself by what is supposed to be a woman. Selena recognizes the social construct and manipulates it by (re)constructing it. Nonetheless and based on this analysis, the transvestite functions as a literary technique for Santos Febres to adhere to the dominant global currents to the Caribbean, showing how this space serves as a place where transvestism is present, recognized and accepted for some, since it has become an international known figure and the Caribbean literature could not be exempt from it.

Anirban Halder, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures (University of Western Ontario)

"Fireflies caught in molasses": Walcott's Poems and Speaking of the Past

Derek Walcott once said, "The English language is nobody's special property. It is the property of imagination: it is the property of the language itself." Keeping Walcott's concerns in mind, this paper will attempt to locate the ways in which this "property of imagination" is reclaimed and reconceptualized by the poet in some of his poems. The identification of language as a "property" is perhaps most acute in one of his early poems, "Goats and Monkeys", where the poet contests with Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello* to redefine the play's central characters. However, writing back in the coloniser's language, is something that shows up Walcott's later poems as well as, such as, in his finest epic poem *Omeros* (1990) - where the poet 'mimics' Homer, Virgil and Dante's terza rima. Is it colonial mimicry or a far more engaged and productive use of a language to create a new set of aesthetics? Is he using metaphors to simply describe or metonymy to associate and bridge the diverse realities of island of St. Lucia (the poet's homeland) and 'a mainland' that is equally imagined? Is the technique a traditional way of rethinking traditions or a subversive fictionalisation of the canon that aspires to decolonise and question the politics of canon formation? These are some of the broad questions that my paper will consider while taking into account poems such as "Names", "The Sea is History", "A Far Cry From Africa" and some others written in different phases of the poet's career. Although, my analysis will primarily rely on postcolonial theories, to analyse the project of decolonisation in Walcott's poems, it will also look at his oeuvre from a new historicist point of view. In doing so, it will examine the method of using an expressively self-conscious voice, of a Caribbean subject, in unmasking the

colonial enterprise, through the use of visual language of poetry, as being aware and ‘strategically complicit’ (my emphasis) with the colonial enterprise itself.

Sheri-Marie Harrison, Department of English (University of Missouri-Columbia)
Oonya Kempadoo’s *Tide Running* and the motif of *Ménage à Trios*

In Kempadoo's *Tide Running*, a picturesque combination of colonial history and modern day tourism provides the backdrop for the relationship between the novel's protagonist Cliff, a Tobagonian teenager and a wealthy visiting couple. In the novel, echoes of colonial history and slavery are as pervasive as the images of American cable television. Amidst these echoes and images, are the preacher's equally ubiquitous admonishments against the neglect of children, who in turn respond to their abandonment by abusing sex, alcohol, and drugs. My presentation is a parallel exploration of Cliff's and the couple's *ménage à trios* and the tripartite relationship between colonial history, American television, and Christian evangelizing. I argue that the narrative's investment in the threesome motif, offers us a lens through which we can explore the politics of desire, wealth, neglect, and responsibility in the postcolonial Caribbean. I will consider *Tide Running's* unsettling narrative exploration of the global politics of desire, neglect, wealth, and responsibility. *Tide Running* is set in Plymouth, a small town whose main attraction is the oldest stockade in Tobago, built in 1811 by the British. The coral-stone structure and four cannons overlook a much-photographed view of Turtle Beach. This picturesque combination of colonial history and modern day tourism provides the backdrop for the relationship between the novel's protagonist and a wealthy visiting couple. This presentation will parallel Cliff's and the couple's *ménage à trios* with the tripartite relationship between colonial history, American television, and Christian evangelizing.

Yi Huang, Department of English (University of Miami)
Chinese Shop as a Space of Intersectionality: Patricia Powell's *The Pagoda* and Elizabeth Nunez's *Bruised Hibiscus*

This paper examines the different representations of the Chinese shop in Patricia Powell's *The Pagoda* and Elizabeth Nunez's *Bruised Hibiscus* to explore the entangled racial, ethnic and gender relationships in the (neo) colonial settings of the Caribbean. Powell delineates the shop as a space that connects Chinese indentureship in the West Indies and African slavery through examining the relationship between a cross-dressing Chinese shop owner passing for a man and her female octoroon partner who passes for white. Nunez's representation of the Chinese shop centers around the marriage of an opium-addicted Chinese shop owner and an Amerindian woman and the latter's connection with a Creole woman passing for white. This paper argues that Powell and Nunez both interrogate the conceptualization of racial purity by exploring the intersection of Chinese women's diasporic experiences with those of Creole women passing for white, through which they challenge the racial hierarchy which the conception of racial purity vehemently seeks to be maintained. It also contends that the space of the shop, in both novels, reifies the interactions among the heterogeneous racial and ethnic groups, which enables both writers to destabilize the dichotomy between the dominant and the peripheral, “them” and “us,” and to affirm that these racial and ethnic groups constitute each other and participate in the identity-formation of each other. In this sense, the geographically and culturally circumscribed Chinese shop embodies the borderless diaspora space in which the differentiated gendered diasporic experiences intersect.

Joanna Johnson, Department of English (University of Miami and Essex University)
“Topography Delineates its Verse”: Derek Walcott’s Depictions of the English Countryside

Derek Walcott's writing appears to resist much explicit connection with or description of the English rural landscape in comparison to the detailed topographies of both his native Caribbean and of North America. Walcott writes about the English countryside relatively sparingly; this is particularly noteworthy when we consider his indebtedness to the classic poets and dramatists of the English literary tradition, many of whom were pastoralists. Rather, Walcott's engagements with English pastoral tradition are in less direct ways: through his prose writings or poetry that pay deliberate homage to English poets themselves; and also through his writing style, where he reflects the meter, rhythm, or language of English pastoral poetry. Where Walcott does show more direct engagement with a rural landscape in the British Isles it is with the Welsh, rather than the English, landscape. Thus, in its unwillingness to engage directly with descriptions of the English countryside, Walcott's writing positions itself on the margins, challenging the discourses that shore up the myth of the rural as an unsullied, organic, or natural space. Walcott's own pen furrows the soil just as steadily as it does for the English writers of which he speaks, but this time not to

reify the myth of the purity of the countryside, but perhaps instead to expose it. This paper will examine how Walcott's intense concern with the physical and geographical aspects of his Caribbean locations is far from mirrored in his depictions of the English rural landscape, where his refusal to directly engage with what one critic calls the "muffling inclusiveness" of the English countryside serves instead as a challenge to such a view.

Jeff Karem, Department of English (Cleveland State University)

Birth of a Hemisphere: The Spanish-American War and Caribbean Resistance Writing

Many U.S. scholars have treated intellectual developments like pan-Africanism and counter-discourse against U.S. imperialism as essentially autochthonous cultural property, though these concepts have significant roots in the Caribbean. This essay focuses primarily on the contributions to pan-Africanism and anti-imperialist discourse by intellectuals from Haiti and Trinidad, who were influential in their time but have been critically neglected today, including Anténor Firmin, Benito Sylvain, and Henry Sylvester Williams. This paper explores Caribbean discourse in the wake of the Conference, including Sylvain's *Du Sort des Indigènes dans Les Colonies d'Exploitation* [On the Fate of Indigenous Peoples Under Colonial Exploitation] (1901) and Firmin's *M. Roosevelt, Président des États-unis et La République de Haïti* [Mr. Roosevelt, President of the United States and the Republic of Haiti] (1905). These works anticipate subsequent resistance writing and re-visitations of American history in the United States during the New Negro Renaissance and after, especially in the works of DuBois, who would later boldly claim for himself the title of "father of pan-Africanism." As my title's allusion to Poe's "The Purloined Letter" suggests, the contributions of the Caribbean islands have been appropriated and nationalized by U.S. culture, hidden in plain sight.

Brandi Kellett, Department of English (University of Miami)

The Past as (Dis)Orienting Force: Diasporic Consciousness in *Praisesong for the Widow*

Paule Marshall negotiates cross-cultural identities within the African diaspora in her writing. Although she acknowledges the frustrating limits placed on African and Caribbean Americans, Marshall is most interested in synthesizing a diasporic identity that celebrates the positive cultural elements of African heritage while also illuminating an awareness of a shared history which provides the foundation for highly functioning subject positionalities and intra-Caribbean dialogue. Marshall argues through Avey Johnson that black subject positionality can only be attained through an awareness of and a reckoning with one's place in the African diaspora. Or, as Brand might argue, one must confront and reconcile the absence felt by and the affirmation achieved through the Door of No Return. Marshall's portrayal of living in the diaspora is distinct because she recognizes both the feelings of absence and fragmentation which result from passing through the Door of No Return, and simultaneously affirms the rich cultural heritage that exists for those in diaspora. Her representational practices suggest bearing witness to all the resources from which those in the African diaspora can draw; strong cultural elements of music, dance, religion and community exist in Marshall's figuring of the African diaspora, and of the Caribbean in particular. For Marshall then, the Door of No Return recognizes absence, but such loss and isolation need not define the diasporic community, for there is an acting history here of culture, creativity and resistance. Marshall's promotion of cross-cultural, diasporic consciousness as crucial to acts of resistance and to subject positionality allows her to develop a congruent view of history which prizes African cultural legacies and modes of resistance in her inclusive notion of the African diaspora.

Marie Léticée, French (University of Central Florida)

Sexuality, migration and *jardin Creole*: the triangular fate of the Guadeloupean people

Pineau has written several novels on and about her island of Guadeloupe, many of them dealing with issues of displacement, migration, France and Guadeloupean identity. The theme of the *jardin Creole* is also explored in Pineau work as well as sex as an enslaving element for both male and female characters. In this paper, I am interested in decoding Pineau's vision of Guadeloupe as home, especially for those Guadeloupeans who find themselves exiled in France either voluntarily or involuntarily. Pineau's imagination of characters who seem to be in bondage and Glissant's description of a people who seem incapacitated and in constant flux and reflux between France and Guadeloupe urge me to look deeply into the symbolism of sexual bondage, displacement and the creation of a Guadeloupean identity. In addition, at a time when Guadeloupean are exercising great pressure on France for economic equality while denouncing threat to their own health and security by this same French Government, the question remains: where is home for Guadeloupeans? And who is in control of their destiny?

**Elena Machado Sáez, Department of English (Florida Atlantic University)
Locating the Market Aesthetics of Caribbean Diasporic Historical Fiction**

The global approach to aesthetics adopted by Caribbean diasporic writers identifies the marketplace as a necessary mediator of artistic production, with globalization opening and closing avenues for circulating a postcolonial politics of narrating history. I use the term “market aesthetics” to refer to the ways in which such fiction understands its own materiality as a commodity as well as the potential and the pitfalls of such historical narrative as a form of capital circulating in a global market. While texts by diasporic Caribbean writers are often integrated into the ethnic literary canons of Global North nations such as Canada, Britain and the United States, my presentation assumes that their work moves beyond nation-state literary traditions to posit a global market aesthetic that acknowledges the marketability of ethnicity while also articulating a postcolonial ethics of historical revision. The literary imagining of the past aims to locate the origins of diaspora in empire and employs a postcolonial approach to historicize the economic networks and contemporary mobilities of globalization. The genre of historical fiction functions as a literary intervention that seeks to counteract globalization’s erasure of historical context, while also positing the Caribbean as central to the historical development of Europe and the Americas. At the same time, Caribbean diasporic historical fiction is fraught with ambivalence about its ability to posit historical counter-narratives within a book market that packages ethnicity as a commodity and thereby domesticates multicultural voices.

**Amelia Moore, Department of Anthropology (University of California, Berkeley)
The Bahamas as Example: Making a Caribbean Green Paradise for the World?**

This paper focuses on the implications of making The Bahamas into an exemplary space for forms of scientific “green” experimentation and on the ways in which separate arenas of exemplification- tourism, marine science, and sustainable development- are currently co-creating a particular material vision of The Bahamas and its island nature as specifically unique while simultaneously global, as existing dangerously close to the edge of ecological and economic collapse yet somehow containing the secret of ecological and economic redemption. This paper examines the production of The Bahamas, the Bahama Islands, and Bahamian subjects as exemplary problems, objects, and sites for the practices and processes of sustainability in order to address the following questions: what ways is the country exemplified for certain interests in the name of certain projects of reinvention, embodying certain hopes and ideas for a future? As critical scholars, how do we examine the very ways in which powerful examples are made? As a result of this focus on the greening of The Bahamas, this paper also takes up the politics of being (and not being) Caribbean.

**Paula Morgan, Department of Languages and Literatures (University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad)
“Something Inside is Laid Wide like a Wound”: Walcott’s City of Pain and Promise**

“Something Inside is Laid Wide Like a Wound” explores Walcott’s evocation of Laventille, the urban slum which crowns the frenetic city of Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Laventille has been magnet for generations of impoverished workers and migrants whose drift to the city was initiated since the newly emancipated slaves fled from the sugar estates in the quest for an elusive freedom. They were subsequently joined by generations of inter island migrants to create a settlement which stands as an enduring legacy of the middle passage, both in terms of resilience, fortitude and rich creativity; and poverty, hopeless and disenchantment.

This paper reads Walcott’s representation of Laventille which range from its romanticization in *Steel* as the birthplace of the nation’s primary exports- its carnival arts; its projection as an externalization of diseased social mores of the nation in “The Spoiler’s Return”; and as symptomatic of an unrecoverable traumatic loss generated by some “deep amnesiac blow” in “Laventille.” The final segment of the paper reads Walcott’s representation against a contemporary though emblematic media representation of Laventille. The paper interrogates the prognosis that the nation’s cultural ambassadors, creative thinkers, artisans and poets – all overcomers of an earlier season of empire, would thereby be empowered to mount a defense in relation to contemporary manifestations of the same impulse.

**Tanita Muneshwar, Humanities (York University)
Reclaiming (her)story: Transnationality and the Diasporic Search for ‘Home’ in Ramabai Espinet’s *The Swinging Bridge* and Ryhaan Shah’s *A Silent Life***

The feeling of ‘otherness’ and invisibility can transport with the Indo-Caribbean woman when she enters the diaspora, leaving her unsure of and unable to form her own identity. The search for ‘home’ can be overwhelming and arduous if she has not confronted her Indo-Caribbean past of strong-willed women who refused to be silenced and trapped by male patriarchy. Ramabai Espinet and Ryhaan Shah are Indo-Caribbean women who have written on the Indo-Caribbean woman’s experience on transnational identity and the diasporic search for ‘home.’ *The Swinging Bridge* and *A Silent Life* chronicle the multiple exiles that are a part of the Indian experience in the Caribbean and within the Diaspora through what literary critic Brinda Mehta calls "exile trajectories" of their Indian ancestors and their own exile (Mehta, 2006). Impacted by the multiple displacements of race, gender, identity, space and nationhood, the narrators unravel the representational liminality of Indo-Caribbeanness at home and in the Diaspora through the scope of memory in which they must confront not only their own pasts but the secrets of their family history. In this paper, I argue that the experiences of Indo-Caribbean women in the Diaspora are similar as inscribed by cultural notions of gender. I argue that by rediscovering and reclaiming their Caribbean and Indian past, the protagonists’ lives are no longer silenced and caught in between the balance of a swinging bridge; but their identities are reclaimed and memories of the past provide accessibility in recreating ‘home.’

Supriya M. Nair, Department of English (Tulane University)

Deterritorializing Diaspora: Time Travelers in Nalo Hopkinson’s Speculative Fiction

Arjun Appadurai’s *Modernity at Large* reconsiders the practice of ethnography in a modern “landscape” marked by mobility and migration rather than the conventional fixities of ethnonational boundaries. Such global flows, in which spatial confines, historical consciousness and cultural identities are deterritorialized, produce a “profoundly interactive” global ethnoscape, to use Appadurai’s neologism. This paper will examine “the self-imagining as an everyday social project” that Appadurai theorizes for modern (and one could say now postmodern) conditions of possibility in an age of migration. What does deterritorializing ethnoscaping imply for the science fiction, or as she prefers more broadly, the speculative fiction of Nalo Hopkinson, herself a living example of such flows? Not only does Hopkinson embody her own “mashed up” Caribbeanness in her writing, having lived in Jamaica, Trinidad and Guyana and now a resident of Toronto (another dimension of Caribbean space, one could claim), her preference for the hybrid mix of genre identities (science fiction, dark fantasy, magical realism, folklore) further emphasizes a literary deconstruction. In the time and space warp of the imaginative worlds she constructs, my paper claims, Hopkinson’s characters radically interrogate what we consider “real” racial, sexual, national, and gender identities. Extraterrestrial does not always mean outer space aliens in Hopkinson’s fiction, since she critiques alienating ideologies right here on earth. But in her reprogramming of such normative cultures, she borrows the science fiction device of time travel, rearranging both humans and objects in space and time (in a different way from Wilson Harris’s quantum imagination). My paper will specifically analyze characters that travel in time (not necessarily in Time Machines) and metamorphose into grotesque beings. Focusing mainly on her recent novels, I argue that such re-imaginings challenge us to question the stability of what we consider human and subject to ethical scrutiny the terrible consequences on those we reject as aliens.

Lara Stein Pardo, Department of Anthropology (University of Michigan)

“Photography and Memory: Reconstructing the Family Album”

This presentation addresses the artworks of Nereida García-Ferraz and Elizabeth Cerejido and their use of photography to address questions of memory, history, family, and place. García-Ferraz, who currently lives in Miami, and Cerejido, who recently moved to Houston, left Cuba with their families in 1970. Their photographic works highlight their efforts to reconstruct historical familial narratives from a time and place distanced, but not removed from Cuba – Miami. In this analysis of their work I address a question asked by the conference: “Can we resituate our understanding of ‘location’ as an indeterminate, or even shifting, locus of cultural inscription and what is at stake in such an effort?” I also add to this question by addressing what it means to reconstruct the family album from abroad. How do artists use both memory and photography to find footing on shifting ground? How have artists disrupted the idea of the photography as historical document?

In the twentieth century, photography functioned to immobilize “the flow of family life into a series of snapshots” and to perpetuate “familial myths while seeming merely to record actual moments in family history . . . the family photograph . . . can reduce the strains of family life by sustaining an imaginary cohesion, even as it exacerbates them by creating images that real families cannot uphold” (Hirsch 1997:7). As interpretations of the “family picture,” García-Ferraz and Cerejido’s photographs move beyond generic family photographs and stretch into the *imagination*

of a family photograph and the family album. They recreate the family album through their imaginations of history and memory by telling parts of their own life stories, their struggles with migration from Cuba, and their attempts to make sense out of their lives while understanding their family histories. Where the family photo was once a one of a kind document, digital technology is changing the way we interact with images and the way we perceive the archetypal family album. The works of García-Ferraz and Cerejido, produced in and using technology of our twenty-first century digital era, both highlight and challenge ideas about photography's permanence and the relationship between history, memory, family, and place.

Jerry Philogene, Department of American Studies (Dickinson College)
Wyclef Jean and Cultural Citizenship: -Don't Believe the Hype, Lips "Do" Lie

As a concept, a diasporic citizen arguably lies at the heart of the temporal nature of citizenship. As a diasporic citizen, Haitian Firstly, the paper explores the visual imagery produced in the 2006 hit, *Hips Don't Lie*, with Lebanese/Columbian musician Shakira in order to understanding the complexities of Caribbean American citizenship and cultural identity. Secondly, this paper addresses the performative posturing and linguistic praxis of Jean and Shakira's video. With visual elements of *rara*, a folk musical tradition during Holy Week in Haiti, the video is infused with a transatlantic or trans-American sound and visual circuits. Resonating with the secular and the sacred, the playful and the political, *Hips Don't Lie* is laden with cultural coded critiques that are endemic to the Haitian *rara* song tradition. Within the furiously gyrating hips of Sharika and the biting agile lips of Jean, *Hips Don't Lie* is embedded with a playfully carnivalesque critique and powerfully political dynamic that directly tackles issues like anti-immigration politics and military and economic imperialism. As Jean proclaims, "No more do we snatch ropes. Refugees run the seas 'cause we own our own boats," he is engaged in a declaration of citizenship; one that contests power relations and one that is entrenched within immigrant identity politics and the complex forms of transnationalism. Thus, Jean's performance is an **articulation** and a **reordering** of citizenship, one that creates a space wherein to construct a diasporic citizenship that is distinct from conventional understandings of "immigrant" or "foreigner"; one that creates a space wherein these terms are reinscribed and/or resisted in local, national and transnational contexts. By framing an examination of Haitian diasporic identity through popular culture, this paper aims to call attention to the ways in which Jean specifically, but Haitians living in the "10th department" generally negotiate their identities and navigate the affective dimensions of citizenship and power within various hegemonic communities

Alix Pierre, Office of Academic Affairs (Morris Brown College)
The Maroon Aesthetic in Francophone Caribbean Visual Arts

As natives of France surrounded by nation states in the Caribbean basin, the inhabitants of Guadeloupe and Martinique are caught between their Frenchness and their Caribbeaness. This double-consciousness is more acute when it relates to cultural practices. The subjects find themselves caught between a Eurocentric value system and a Pan Caribbean one. The Creoleness Movement has essentially translated the concern for a truly Pan Antillean culture in the field of literature. The work of Guadeloupean visual artist Joël Nankin looks at ways the identity/cultural quest manifests itself in other art forms. The motif of marronage-common to artists of African descent-serves as the center post of Nankin's aesthetic. The painter who is himself a musician, performer, and political activist weaves a tapestry of artistic freedom and authenticity centered on marooning. We contend that Nankin's oeuvre is a manifesto that complements In Praise of Creoleness-the essay published by Raphaël Confiant, Patrick Chamoiseau and Jean Bernabé, the founding members of the Mouvement de la Créolité-and sheds light on the intricacies of Francophone Antillean art forms.

Kris Rampersad (Independent Scholar)
Bartering Caribbean Culture with a New Mercantilism: The UNESCO Convention & EU-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement

This presentation will examine how the Caribbean is presented and represented in Caribbean popular and literary culture vis-à-vis its geographic and other positioning in the global cultural arena including the spaces of the UNESCO (2005) Convention. In an audiovisual representation of the rich literary and oral multicultural repertoire of the region, it will map the journey towards formation of a Caribbean coalition on cultural diversity, in considerations of claiming international space for Caribbean culture. I will identify the challenges of doing so, particularly in the problematic contexts of defining the Caribbean itself (vis-à-vis the conventional geographic definitions of

UNESCO's cultural diplomacy); of historically unresolved contestations 'national' vs. 'regional' (as in Calypsonian Black Stalin's 'The Caribbean Man') and now further confronted with balancing the local in the global in emerging questions over the implications of the EU-CARIFORUM EPAS and applicability of the Convention in the face of the dynamic diversity that already exists in the Caribbean.

Alessandra Rosa, Department of Global & Sociocultural Studies (Florida International University)
Tocando la guitarra/Playing the Guitar: An Audience of Latina Women Body Image and the Film *Real Women Have Curves*

Audience study on the issue of Latina women body image is absent in Anglo-American culture which consists of the female body image ideals found in Hollywood mainstream media images. The purpose of this audience study was to provide a contrast to the portrayal of the female body image found in Hollywood (a culture of thinness, predominantly white, blonde hair, and blue-eyes) and the portrayal of the Latina women body image (guitar-shaped) found in the film *Real Women have Curves*. Through this contrast, you can see why films such as *Real Women have Curves* are very rare to find in mainstream media, especially in Hollywood movies, yet they are very much needed to serve as an alternative and positive role model for younger Latina girls. Through a brief analysis of the film, literature review about body image, and an audience research through the use of a focus group discussion. Findings demonstrated that Hollywood's female body images affect the self-esteem and identity of Latinas. A perspective of interest found that Hollywood's portrayal of people of color has had deep impact on maintaining and spreading preconceived stereotypes that clash with the pre-established-imagined community of whites. Therefore, this notion promotes the vision of people of color as the "Others", deviant, and also inferiors. As a result, this study proved a general agreement of the lack of alternatives and opportunities for more diversity in media's images of women of color. More research needs to be done concerning media's female body images effects on Latinas.

Patricia J. Saunders, Department of English (University of Miami)
When the Empire Bites Back: Food, Fun and Fking for Discerning Tourists**

The connection between how the Caribbean is viewed and how it is consumed is not merely discursive. The Caribbean region became a location of desire for tourist at precisely the same moment that consumer goods from the region were increasingly sought after. Krista Thompson charts the processes involved in turning what had viewed/seen as zone of "tropical death" into a location where the mercantile elite could both increase their wealth and flaunt it, all while also acquiring a tremendous amount of cultural capital in the process. Ironically, food, or more specifically fruits, were an essential element in this shift in the visual economy of the region. Laurent Cantet's *Heading South* (2005) manages to combine both characterizations of the Caribbean. Adapted from three short stories by Danny Leferrière, *Heading South* presents Haiti as a proverbial sexual playground for three middle-aged white women on holiday. My critique of the film is aimed specifically at linking the patterns of visual consumption developed during the colonial era to contemporary manifestations of what Krista Thompson refers to as the "visual economy" that informs consumer expectations, desires and experiences in the Caribbean.

Andrea Elizabeth Shaw, Division of Humanities (Florida Atlantic University)
Duppy Shirley: The Global Politics of a Jamaican Haunting

Ghost stories merge disparate entities: the unreal and the real, the intangible and the tangible, the past and the present. The resulting dissonance signals a tension between real and imagined existences, and numerous contemporary readings of this dissonance suggest that literary spectral presences are markers of marginalized histories or unspeakable national traumas. When stories of a haunting gain infamy and become nationally told tales that rise to the forefront of a nation's consciousness of a spectral presence, what do these stories reveal about that nation's imagination of itself? Can we explore issues of nationhood and identity by "interrogating the politics" of haunted locations and ghostly performance? My presentation contemplates Caribbean "duppy" stories that have attracted national attention. Several such tales are in circulation in Jamaica, among them stories of the White Witch of Rose Hall, the Kendal train crash, and Duppy Shirley. All of these purported hauntings are anchored to specific Jamaican locations and events in either the public or private domain. Additionally, these reports have all been fictionalized in various narrative forms. My presentation will focus on the tale of Duppy Shirley, a haunting that gained national attention during the 1980s and features a disgruntled ghost who has returned to Jamaica to collect money owed to her by relatives. This haunting became the subject of numerous newspaper reports and was subsequently fictionalized as a song and dramatic production. My paper probes the following questions: How do

public discourses about supposedly real ghosts relate to the island's imagination of itself? Furthermore, how does the fictionalization of what many would already consider fiction interlope on the meaning of these tales?

**April Shemak, Department of English (Sam Houston State University)
The Limb/o Gateway of Caribbean Refugee Articulations**

This paper considers the figure of the refugee in Caribbean discourse and literature. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's discussions of the politics of hospitality—the processes through which states engage with “strangers” at their borders—I consider how Wilson Harris' notion of the “limbo gateway” provides a useful concept for considering the transnational spaces in which asylum seekers exist and imagining the poetics of hospitality for New World refugees. Harris imagines the re-assembling of parts as re-remembering by invoking the idea of the “phantom” limb as mythical archetype. Refugees are themselves poised at a “gateway” that exists at the locus of hospitality—so that it is either an entryway or checkpoint, where determinations are made regarding who is allowed entrance into the nation, and who is excluded. I would like to suggest that refugees enter into a “limbo gateway” as their testimonies become fractured and maligned via “processing” by INS officials. A radical reordering of speech and language occur in the limbo gateway. Moreover, the corporeality of the “limbo gateway”—as dismemberment, phantom limb—allows us to consider the ways in which testimony also depends upon refugee physicality. I discuss this in relation to Edwidge Danticat's memoir *Brother, I'm Dying* in which she recounts the death of her uncle, Joseph Dantica, while being detained by U.S. immigration authorities. Through Danticat's portrayal of Joseph Dantica's ordeal, we see how the poetics of hospitality—the struggle over communication and interpretation that occurs in space of hospitality—is manifested in the limb/o gateway of the refugee's body.

**Walteria Tucker, Languages and Linguistics (Florida Atlantic University)
Prepare, Process, Package: The Consumption of Haiti in Hispanic Caribbean Literature**

In 1804, Haiti became the first nation of free blacks in the Western Hemisphere. Despite its many noteworthy advances, however, Haiti's post-revolutionary existence, replete with dictators, interventions, and overall political instability has made the nation synonymous with abject poverty, squalor, and backwardness. Many authors have examined the ironic fact that the very same Haiti that provided the model for American cultural and political independence has been systematically eliminated from the hemispheric consciousness of self. Few, however, have dealt with the ways in which specifically Caribbean nations deal with the Haitian “situation” in their national literatures. Since Alejo Carpentier's 1944 discovery of the “real maravilloso” in the ruins of the Citadelle La Ferrière, Haiti has been forever linked with the notion of Latin American identity, in particular, and American identity, in general. Interesting to me are the ways and the means by which Haiti resurfaces in Cuban and Puerto Rican narratives and what allusions to Haiti in these texts imply about its relationship to the Hispanic Caribbean. The works of John Beverley, Sybille Fischer and Mimi Sheller will be used to discuss how representations of Haiti work to perpetuate its disavowal and render it a consumable product for the rest of the Caribbean in general, and for the Hispanic Caribbean specifically. I will focus on works by Cuban and Puerto Rican authors who have prepared, processed, and packaged Haiti in such a way that its culture, language, and even sexuality are able to satisfy long-held cravings for that which is local and exotic. Thus, I hope to explain how it has been and will continue to be possible for the Hispanic Caribbean to consume Haiti positively as a symbol of its marvelous reality and negatively as a Caribbean personification of decay, disease, and decadence in literature.

**Cristina-Georgiana Voicu, Faculty of Letters (University of Iași, Romania)
Dislocation and Otherness: Exploring Caribbean (Is)landscape in Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea**

In this paper, I will argue that the only hope that the displaced person has for gaining identity is through the text. The primary focus of this paper is to define how the text is used to speak for the silenced, otherwise known as Other in the canonical text. Jean Rhys writes about the Caribbean lands that were colonized and reveal the aftermath of this colonization. For Jean Rhys, this idea is somewhat problematic since she is (and writes about) a white Creole and is therefore part of this colonial history. She focuses on her alienation as a result of this history, presenting herself also as a victim. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, I argue that through the text, Antoinette takes control of her story and that she makes a symbolic return to her native Caribbean. The experience of being oppressed by her husband and the memory of her island home compels her to act, and this action gives her an identity that was formerly withheld. So, I will argue that the only hope that the displaced person has for gaining identity is through the text. Thus, I will analyse the location of the White Creole protagonist in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* who is poised between the

desire for rootedness and the inability to belong. The youthful Antoinette, a stranger in her tall, far, island birthplace, exists in an exilic condition within the lush fallen Edenic (is)landscape. Jean Rhys's fiction, *Wide Sargasso Sea* has raised troubling issues in relation to place and belonging. Whereas Rhys herself would have been perceived within Dominican society as unequivocally located within the White Creole planter class, she succeeds in problematizing the location of the white Creole heiress who is the protagonist of her most famous novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*.
