

Processes of Cultural Transfer in 19th-Century Literature: The Caribbean within the Context of the Cultural Radiance of Europe, Exemplified by France and Spain (1789-1886)

I. Basis of Research

1. Scope of the Project: Space, Time

The project focuses on forms of representation within and outside literature, as well as on their continuously increasing overlappings, which had their origins in a time of radical colonial change. In order to explore how different types of colonialism are reflected and thematized in various written and pictorial media, we will look at simultaneous processes of transfer that unfolded between the mother countries and their colonial spheres of influence. Inter-colonial exchange will also be taken into account, even though it is superseded by the asymmetrical center-periphery relations. The dimensions of time and space are as follows:

1. **Space:** The island world of the Caribbean will be treated as space that forms a whole while at the same time being heterogenous [1], located in the colonial periphery, and referred to as a “caeleidoscope of colonial structures and dynamics” [2], where colonial experiences intensify within the sphere of influence of very diverse hegemonial systems, and generate dependence and distance, interchange and confrontation. In that context, the Spanish and French territories are within the domain of Romance studies. These regions do not only prove to be the most productive within this colonial sphere in regard to literature; it is also no coincidence that they were the setting of the social and political extremes found in that sphere: from the earliest secession in the case of Haiti (1804) all the way to the ongoing affiliation with the (French) mother country in the cases of Guadeloupe and Martinique; from social revolution, abolition, and the emancipation of the black underclasses (Haiti) to the late abolition of slavery in Cuba (1880/1886).
2. **Time:** The time span covered by this research project, 1789-1886, reflects the experience of a colonial threshold situation between dependence and independence. The parameters in terms of time have been chosen according to criteria that relate to the history of ideas and politics, as well as to social history: from the French revolution with its proclamation of human rights and its immediate impact on events taking place on Haiti to the abolition of slavery on the last (largest and most important) island of the Caribbean, Cuba (1880/1886). The research project thus covers a wide spectrum, ranging from the propagation of the idea of human equality in Europe to its ultimate realization with regard to the central issue – slavery –, which ultimately preoccupied the colonies much more than the issue of independence, which usually became pressing only when the abolition of slavery had already been achieved. The period of time under study thus is characterized by the fundamental change in the image of both humanity and society that took place in the course of the 19th century, as Europe was confronted with the newly perceived and categorized colonial spaces. This change then transformatively retranslated itself into these colonial spaces.

In the sphere of literature, the focus is on the Age of Romanticism, a supra-regional phenomenon of that era that had its origins in (post-)revolutionary Europe, and subsequently–

with much more delay than the political ideas of the French revolution – witnessed a broad reception and permutation in all of Latin America, as well as in the Caribbean (ca. 1830-1870). As far as the Caribbean transformation is concerned, however, it is difficult to draw a clear line between Enlightenment and Romanticism, neither in regard to chronological overlappings, nor to the eclecticism manifest in the works of many Caribbean authors, notwithstanding their adoption of the European terms for the respective periods.

2. Approach: A Comparison of Processes of Circulation and Transfer

The comparative approach to the literary production of the former colonies of France and Spain is not about static entities, but about processes of transfer and circulation that unfold simultaneously, subject to very diverse dynamics, between the center and periphery in a colonial threshold situation – processes that at the same time are also manifoldly intertwined. Just as the knowledge newly organized under Napoleon, and its representations and exponents, circulated in the respective mother countries (e.g., France), the writers of the colonial spaces did also circulate, not just between “their” periphery and “their” center, but (in the case of the hispanophone writers) between various peripheries and centers. The sphere of literature is constantly transcended, because the writers always also saw themselves as politicians, and – as becomes apparent from the very titles of literary texts from the French Caribbean – as ethnographers and historians; this identifies them as the central figures of multi-discipline encounters within the context of transcontinental processes of transfer. In order to reconstruct the horizon of knowledge and ideas of that time en bloc, it is not enough to read ethnological, historiographical, and literary texts simultaneously. Rather, an analysis of the dynamics of exchange and circulation shall reveal the various microhorizons (such as those oriented towards the respective national center) in which the actors move. Due to the exclusive orientation towards one center, these microhorizons distinguish themselves more clearly from each other in the periphery than in (post-)Enlightenment scholarly Europe with its extensive networks. In turn, overlappings and links between relatively autonomous hermeneutical spaces thus become all the more apparent in the texts and debates. In contrast to the approach of Edward Said, the actors in the colonies are not viewed as mere functions or objects of a hegemonial discourse, but as subjects participating in a continuous (virtual and physical) process of interchange with (various) European discourses and the proponents of these discourses. The hypothesis is that this very interchange between center and periphery has a profound impact on the horizons of knowledge and on the representations of reality in the European centers themselves, particularly in France, whose stronger cohesive power is due precisely to its flexibility in absorbing the contributions from the colonies into its own system of representation, thereby undergoing institutional and intellectual changes itself – an integrative strength lacked by the Spanish mother country in the 19th century, both in the sphere of literature and in that of science.

The cultural marginalization of the Spanish mother country, on the other hand, gives rise to a multirelational reorientation of the hispanophone Caribbean, which finds prolific expression in the literature. Thus, it shall be demonstrated how the pattern of intensified mutual exchange, which – unlike in the case of the francophone Caribbean – goes beyond a bipolar dialogue between colonizers and colonized, and opens up to collateral processes of transculturation, significantly contributes to the emergence of foundational fictions. Hence, these writings do not only establish national literatures, they also need to be viewed as representations (or at least as antecedents) of a transnational literature. The hypothesis therefore is as follows. Not only does the reference to France, profound in both the French and the Spanish Caribbean, have an impact on the strivings for emancipation: in the French colonies, dependence on the mother country, and basically an interest in the perpetuation of

the status quo; in the case of Spain, cultural dependence on a foreign country, and thus dissociation from the own mother country. The diversity of relational references also fosters the voluminousness and originality of cultural production, thus indirectly contributing to political self-assertion

Even though most of the writers belonged to the elites, the amount and soundness of information available about their lives and doings – apart from their works – vary widely. Thus, it is necessary to use a heterogenous approach. Encounters, contacts, and crossover receptions – including such that transcend the traditional center-periphery axes – will be recorded, as far as possible, in a prosopographic database kept simultaneously by the entire research team. At the same time, these topics will be studied on the basis of the textual representation in the works of literature, whatever readership they may address. Thus, there is a special emphasis on intertextual references, motifs, and genre-specific frames of reference – in short, relationalities that can be reconstructed by means of a differentiated juxtaposition of the various cultural productions themselves. In that context, newspaper articles and biographical materials, such as letters or diaries, are valuable additional sources.

3. The Corpus of Texts

The time period under study, as outlined above, allows us to include literary players from all Caribbean islands (including those islands that by then had already gained independence: Haiti and the Dominican Republic). In compiling the corpus of texts, the most distinguished writers were chosen, who represent various stages of Romanticism, and whose works seem to have witnessed a comparatively broad reception at their time. This corpus can also be used for a possible sub-project 1 (the francophone Caribbean and Paris), while a separate, larger corpus of texts is to be compiled for a further sub-project (sub-project 2); after all, the 19th-century hispanophone literature of the Caribbean is as a whole considerably more voluminous than the francophone.

(Post-)colonial space of Spain

Heredia, José María (*Cuba, 1803-1895): Himno del desterrado [1825]

Manzano, Francisco: (*Cuba, 1797-1851): Autobiografía [1835]

Mercedes de Santa Cruz y Montalvo (Condesa de Merlin): Viaje a La Habana [1840]

Gómez de Avellaneda (*Cuba, 1814-1873): Sab [1845]

Tapía y Rivera, Alejandro (*Puerto Rico, 1826-1882): La palma del cazique [1852]

Hostos, Eugenio María (*Puerto Rico, 1839-1903): La peregrinación de Bayoán [1863]

Villaverde, Cirilo (*Cuba, 1812-1894): Cecilia Valdés o la Loma del Ángel [1833/1872]

Pérez, José Joaquín (*Santo Domingo, 1845-1900): Ecos del destierro [1873]

Galván, Manuel Jesús: Enriquillo, leyenda histórica dominicana (1503-33). (*Dominican Republic, 1834-1910) [1882]

(Post-)colonial space of France

Coussin, J.H.J.: Eugène de Cerceil ou le dernier Caraïbe. [1824]

Saint-Aurèle, Poirié (*Martinique, 1795-1855): Cyprès et palmistes [1833]

Chapus, Eugène/Victor Charlier: Titime? Histoire de l'autre monde. Paris [1833]

Maynard de Queilhe, Louis (Guadeloupe): Outre-mer. [1835]

Bentzon, Thérèse: Yvette. Histoire d'une jeune créole. [1835]

Levilloux, J. (*Guadeloupe): Les Créoles ou la Vie aux Antilles [1835]

Nau, Ignace (*Haiti 1808-1845): Un épisode de la Revolution [1836]

Prévost de Sansac, Auguste: Les amours de Zémedare et Carina et description de l'île de Martinique. [1840]

Eyma, Xavier: Les peaux noires. Scène de la vie des esclaves. Paris [1857]

Bergeaud, Emeric (*Haiti 1818-1858): Stella [1859]

Eyma, Xavier: Les peaux rouges. Scènes de la vie des indiens. Paris [1860]

Agricole, Eugène: Autobiographie. [1870]

Rosemond de Beauvallon (1819-1903), Jean Baptiste: Hier! Aujourd'hui! Demain! Ou Les Agonie créoles. Roman de mœurs coloniales suivi de La Charmeuse. [1885].

II. Sketch of the Subject and Formulation of Questions

1. The Caribbean as a Kaleidoscope of Colonial Dynamics (1789-1886)

With the turmoils of the French Revolution, the concurrent transvaluation of passed-down values, and the frequent changes of government between 1789 and 1815, the relationship between the Caribbean islands and their respective mother countries had become questionable, and called for a redefinition.

1.1. Abolitionism and the Mulatto Issue

Despite the Bolivarian liberation movement, and despite the fact that almost the entire South American subcontinent had freed itself from the shackles of colonialism, people in the Caribbean were not primarily concerned with the issue of independence; it was slavery, and the social and political problems associated with it, that preoccupied them. Once the abolition issue had been put on the agenda during the revolution, and once the Haitian slaves had taken matters into their own hands, it could no longer be ignored and dismissed, and dominated the debates even when it was not directly addressed. In the texts, however, there is often a shift from the abolition issue to that of equal rights for the coloured population (mulattoes), the

majority of which had already liberated at that time. The mulattoes were very active economically, and thus quite influential – factors that gained them many enviers among the less affluent whites, and repeatedly led to violent eruptions along the racial front lines, such as the pogrome of 1790 on Martinique, which marked the beginning of the revolutionary and civil-war like events on that island. To complicate matters further, the mulattoes, once they had acquired wealth, often owned slaves themselves, with the result that they were viewed as traitors by the blacks, and hated even more than the white slaveholders.

Only the works of those writers who were openly anti-abolitionist are not lacking in outspokenness. These advocates of slavery play a prominent role mainly in the literature of the French colonies. The preliminary results of my research suggest that they were split into two camps, which continued to exist even when slavery was abolished in 1848. On the one side, there were the (white) Béké authors, such as Prévost de Sansac, Eyma, Maynard, and Rosemond, who advocated the maintenance of the status quo and, with their exuberant, romanticizing descriptions of nature, not least also obfuscated social imbalances. On the other side, there were the socially involved authors who were well disposed towards the mulattoes – and probably also towards the slaves –, such as Levilloux, Chapus (both of whom were apparently mulattoes themselves), Bonneville (who was married to a coloured woman), and Agricole (the first black writer of Martinique; it is quite telling that he did not make his appearance until about 1870). In contrast, the writers of independent Haiti, spirited by the emancipation won after much bloodshed, decidedly came out in favor of the basic equality of the blacks. At the same time, this was the first black literature ever written, which emerged comparatively soon after 1804, given that the entire white educational elite had either been banished or had perished, and that, with the exception of a few literate mulattoes, the vast majority of the population, which by then was almost homogeneously black, could not even write their names. This held also true for the political leaders. Among the Spanish-speaking writers of the Caribbean, the Condesa de Merlín was the most prominent advocate of slavery, whereas many other works, such as those by Gomez de Avellaneda and Villaverde, today rank as abolitionist novels, even in those cases where the authors project the issue onto a mulatto slave and do not explicitly deal with the “Negro issue”, as in the novel *Sab*.

In the discussions about equal rights and the abolition of slavery, which always resonate in the literature of that time, the importance of the center-axis periphery and of the interchange between colony and mother country becomes very evident. While the central governments were in charge of regulating these colonial matters by means of legislative actions, there also seems to have been a lively exchange of ideas between intellectuals and writers from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. In that context, the abolitionist movement in France, centered around illustrious names such as Lamartine and Tocqueville, distinguished itself much more than its counterpart in Spain, where a bill regarding the abolition of slavery was submitted (and thrown out) in 1811, yet not much happened subsequently until events escalated in the 1870s. This difference had a pronounced impact on the cultural ties with the respective mother country, as well as on the literature: With regard to social and political matters that were of crucial importance to the colonies, Franco-Caribbean literature could develop in an atmosphere of mutual exchange with the literature of its mother country; the Spanish-speaking intellectuals, however, had to look for other, and new, points of reference outside of Spain when it came to that key issue.

While this is just one indicator of the integrative ability of French culture, it also clearly shows that it was possible to look within the existing relations of power and dependency for the solution to problems that fundamentally affected literature. The lack of resonance in Spain, on the other hand, caused people in the colonies to take matters into their own hands,

which eventually led to a call for political emancipation, and for a separation of the colonies from the mother country. This is clearly illustrated by the debates about politics and literature held independently of Spain by the Del Monte circle on Cuba, even though the views advanced there were not exclusively of an explicitly abolitionist nature. Rather, the call for homogenization, cleansing, and the encouragement of interethnic marriages, voiced by those circles on the basis of racial aspects, is in line with the role of the mulatto as a unifying figure and as a synthesis of white culture and black nature, propagated by many works of literature in the Spanish and French Caribbean – a go-between role that met with strong disapproval among the advocates of slavery; after all, they viewed the mulattoes, who had acquired property and education, as a dangerous mixture that stirred up the otherwise content black slaves in their patriarchal plantation idyll by spreading harmful social-revolutionary ideas from Europe (Maynard, Sansac). How were the slave revolts and the role of the mulattoes portrayed in literature? How do the Béké writers reconcile their adoration of the metropolis as a stronghold of culture with their assertion that the harmful ideas come exclusively from the mother country?

1.2. The Periphery-Center Axis

Thus, as far as the French-speaking writers are concerned, their cultural ties with their mother country do not seem to have decreased in strength. This holds true for both their biographies and their literary orientation. The writers had studied in Paris, and when the protagonists of their works, such as the characters of the novel *Les créoles ou la vie aux Antilles* (1835) by the Gouadeloupan author Levilloux, must sail back to their Caribbean homes upon having completed their education “en métropole”, they leave the mother country only wistfully, with a “hymne d’amour et de reconnaissance” on their lips. This Francophilia turns out to be no problem for those writers from the colonies who are explicitly loyal to France, as well as being patriots. The political and social conflict rather leads the two literary-political fractions to outdoing each other in terms of patriotism – most of all when it comes to the sensitive issue of their loyalty with the mother country at the time of the British invasion in 1794. In close interchange with the historiography of their mother country, they thus seem to contribute significantly to the construction of a historical myth that still continues to dominate the eurocentric “Mémoire historique”, which still is commonplace in the French school books, and is deplored by intellectuals like Glissant as a belittlement of Afro-American contributions to the development of the country. This criticism is directed at the depiction of the revolutionary period in the Caribbean, as well as at the so-called *schoelcherisme*, which takes the view that the abolition of slavery in 1848 was not hard-won by the slaves themselves, but entirely owed to the abolitionist movement in the mother country.[3]

Even in independent Haiti, upward mobility was achieved almost exclusively by adopting French culture, and many people tried to get an education in France. In the literary manifestations, such as the first Haitian novel, *Stella*, by Bergeaud (1859), freedom is personified by a white woman, and the national poet Coicou assures the former mother country, after the Prussian military defeat on France in 1871, of the loyalty and love of the Haitians: „Où, France, nous t’aimons, comme plusieurs, sans doute, / De tes propres enfants ne t’aimeront jamais; / Et partout où ton doigt nous indique la route/ C’est là que nous cherchons l’harmonie et la paix.“ He then goes on to declare Haiti “France noire”[4], whatever he may mean by that. While such lyrical outpourings sound almost reannexionist (Napoleon and the former slaveholders, against whom the ancestors had risen up, are portrayed as nothing less than traitors who betrayed genuine French principles and integrity), early Haitian literature, in the form of shorter stories and poems that were efforts to reflect and overcome the violence suffered during the revolutionary period, is much more

confrontational and almost bellicose. What was, in this context, the role of the large-scale Haitian historiography projects launched by the Haitian state at the same time that literature underwent a process of consolidation[5]? In the course of these cultural endeavors, which aimed at gaining acceptance by the western countries, and at proving the equality of black and white by means of cultural accomplishments, all manifestations of African culture still meaningful in Haiti were dismissed as being backward. What was the relevance of Francophilia to this exclusively black context, which is unique in the Caribbean? It is possible to speak, in this case, of a culturalization of the criteria of distinction, which on the other islands were racial and essentialist? Does French culture take the place of (white) skin color?

1.3. Multirelationality

In contrast to the Franco-Caribbean writers, the intellectuals of the Spanish Caribbean apparently became completely disenchanted with the center of their colonial culture. Thus, the novelist and polemic Tanco mocks the “epigonism” of Spanish literature of his time [6], and thereby reveals the impact of the cultural (self-)marginalization of Spain on its colonial territories. Writers like him did not want to become epigones of the epigones, but rather tended to let go of their center as a primary cultural point of reference. Literature is thus levitating within the spheres of influence of the various cultural centers of gravity, basically opening up to these centers. For the multirelationality hypothesis to be tenable, we need to provide evidence of influences from non-Spanish cultures, and of an exchange of ideas with these cultures. French culture doubtlessly had an impact on the literature of the Spanish Caribbean, even though only few writers lived in Paris. Yet the Cuban author Heredia advised his compatriots to read not only French (mainly Romanticist) literature, but also works from Great Britain and the United States. He translated the works of Byron, and particularly recommended the reading of Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage to his compatriots. Was it the romantic theme (a journey) and Byron’s “rootlessness” that made many Spanish-speaking writers of the Caribbean view his fate as akin to their own experience of “writing between the worlds”? From the United States, Heredia wrote letters and articles in which he expressed his admiration for Washington, the American people, and the Revolutionary War, which he called a “courageous feat”. [7] Is the American Revolution a possible model for the islands of the Caribbean? If yes, what importance was attached to the slavery issue, its neglect during the Revolution, and its role in the latent conflict between the Union and the Southern Confederacy? Is the literature of North America, in its search for new means of expression and an identity of its own, as well as in its efforts to distance itself from English literature, a source of inspiration for Caribbean writers? The early popularity of the historical novel, and the recourse to pre-colonial Indian civilizations in order to develop a national mythology – found, for example, in historical novels à la Cooper –, reveal amazing similarities to the literature of the Caribbean. [8] These similarities did also pertain to the Spanish-language literatures of the Latin American mainland, for which the Hispano-Caribbean writers did not need any translation (or interlingual reception). What exchange of ideas did exist between authors such as Bello, Fernandez de Lizardi, Sarmiento, Altamirano, or Echeverría, particularly as some writers of the Spanish Caribbean lived in exile in Latin America? Is it possible that the cultural exchange, maintained with the Subcontinent in a common language, filled the vacuum left by the mother country? What was the intra-Caribbean exchange between the islands like, as well as the exchange between the two parts of Hispaniola Island, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, which was occupied by Haiti for twenty-two years (1822-1844)?

Interestingly, a penchant for the historical novel, and the recourse to a mythic heritage from the pre-Columbian native population, can also be observed in the works of Franco-Caribbean

writers such as Coussin, whose *Eugène de Cerceil ou les Caraïbes* was published as early as in 1824, that is, just one year after Cooper's first Leatherstocking Tale, *The Pioneers* (1823), and much earlier than the best-selling novels by Dumas (père). Yet a fleeting glance at the titles already reveals the close relationship with historiography and ethnography claimed particularly by Franco-Caribbean literature. With their exuberant descriptions of nature, the writers draw on Chateaubriand, and thus model themselves on genuinely literary examples, yet it seems reasonable to assume that there was a dialogue with the emergent French ethnology as early as in the 1820s and 1830s. When the writers take an external perspective in the titles of their works, this indicates that the primary recipients of their writings are located in the mother country: *Outre-mer* (Maynard), *Description de l'île de Martinique* (Sansac), *Les créoles ou la vie aux Antilles* (Levilloux), etc. To what degree can this literature be interpreted as autoexoticism? And what is, in contrast, the situation regarding the "black" autobiographies (Agricole und Manzano)?

2. Places of Writing Outside the Caribbean: Paris as a Privileged Center of Colonial Dynamics

Edward Said, in his classic "Culture and Imperialism"[9], raises the question of the hegemonial tendencies that are conveyed through literature and art, and thus carried into the colonial space. He is mainly concerned with images and forms of representation that relate to the alterity of the non-European territories and their inhabitants, and develop a gravitational force that integrates this "Other". This is achieved by propagating eurocentric categories and values, which position the Other inside and at the same time outside of itself, and define its place in society. Thus, domination is culturally legitimized – biopolitics whose power and potential for consensus are even more enhanced by the cultural filter. Even though Said's primary focus is on English literature and its role in the stabilization of the Empire, he also cites some examples of the – completely different – influence exerted by French culture on the colonial space. On the one hand, he refers to the omnipresent interpretations of Napoleon in the literature, where the Corsican ancestry and physiognomy of the commander and emperor are exotically stylized; Napoleon thus emerges as a positive role model that, according to Said, could develop a special cohesive power, particularly among the colored population of the overseas territories. On the other hand, he refers to the masterly skill with which the literature makes use of the academic discourses about the Orient and Africa; thanks to literature, the scholarly established knowledge about the culturally and ethnically Other gained a broad impact – an impact that otherwise would have been unimaginable, given the separation of disciplines in Britain. Said's concern may be justified, and his findings may be insightful; yet the (potential) recipients of these hegemonial discourses appear only implicitly as marginal figures in his writing, and they continue to be mere objects. Within the scope of our project, the question will rather be how both sides were active as participants within mutual processes that established cultural hegemony. In that context, the hispanophone literature of the 19th century indeed seems to prove Said right regarding his hypothesis that art and science form the "foundation of the empire", a foundation that – if removed – would cause the empire to collapse, at least in the longer term. After all, this is exactly what happened to the colonies of Spain.

The complexity of a functioning cultural hegemony becomes apparent from its ability to integrate resistance, even within the center of the colonial power itself. The integrative Napoleon character described by Said has its counterpart in the complex, multiply refracted character of Toussaint Louverture, the Haitian fighter for independence, in Lamartine's abolitionist drama of the same title. Lamartine stylizes Toussaint as an agent of his own anti-Bonapartism and his disapproval of slavery, yet in doing so he creates a black Napoleon,

“who personifies all the positive qualities attributed to the white man [Napoleon] by the latter’s apologists.”[10] While this is just a small element within a much more global hegemonial discourse, it is nevertheless even reflected and reproduced, as an almost non-verbal form of representation, by the act of resistance itself. These dialectics of power become even more obvious when the colored protagonists of emancipatorily oriented Franco-Caribbean novels seek their salvation in patriotism, and look upon the mother country as the only guarantor of recognition and equal rights – probably for good reason, because despite all criticism of “schoelcherisme” it is more than doubtful that slavery would have been permanently abolished if it had not been for the longtime support by prominent abolitionist circles in France, which centered around intellectuals like Lamartine, Bissette, Schoelcher, E. Arago, L. Blanc, Montalembert, Tocqueville, etc., or if the February Revolution had not occurred. Yet the stability of the power system rooted in cultural hegemony manifests itself in the very flexibility of that system: The right to compensation granted to the “expropriated” slaveholders immediately established a new (capitalist) basis for the exploitation of the (black) lower classes. Misery was no longer the result of skin color, but of material destitution and lack of educational opportunities.[11]

Yet the focus shall not be primarily on the (flexible) stability of the global whole, but on the dynamic microstructures of interchange and circulation. Evidence of patterns of reception in the Caribbean is provided by the local cultural production itself, and facilitates a specific access to the texts and mediators that have proven to be relevant to the specific colonial space (the Caribbean). In this context, results are already available that enable us to study the respective forms of representation in the mother country. These include 1) those writers and works that met with a particularly intense reception in the colonial space, or were even treated in colonial literature; 2) the immediate contacts between the actors themselves; 3) the multi-disciplinary interchange referred to by Said when he emphasizes the close ties between literature and science in post-Napoleonic France.

2.1. Types of Reception

French Romanticism has witnessed a particularly intense reception in the Caribbean. This holds especially true for writers like Lamartine, Chateaubriand, and Hugo, who explicitly concerned themselves with themes and motifs relating to the New World in general, and sometimes also to the Caribbean in particular. Apart from the classics, there are references to the Bucolic poetry of the early or pre-Romantic era of the late 18th century, and, of course, again and again to Rousseau, whose influence on the Caribbean writers can hardly be overrated. So far, five patterns of reception can roughly be distinguished, which primarily relate to French Romanticism:

1. Explicit reception of French Romanticism as an unfiltered glorification of the French cultural nation (main exponent: Poiré)
2. The reception of French Romanticism is reflected in the reading habits of the protagonists regarding narrative texts (mainly reading of works of Lamartine or Chateaubriand)
3. Implicit reception of social-revolutionary Romanticism (mainly modelled on the works of Victor Hugo)
4. Modelling on the perception of the other, as expressed in the works of French Romanticists, in order to define the perception of the self (Autoexoticism)
5. Romantic descriptions of nature, modelled on writers like Chateaubriand.

How do the texts of French Romanticists – particularly those who deal with the New World – contribute to the legitimization of domination? Or, as Said put it: What “mould of ideas [ethics] and conditioned reflexes” was provided, in which the society of the empire was cast? Or, more precisely: How did these writers implicitly (and often unintentionally) imbue dominance with a meaning that met with the consent of the intellectuals in the Caribbean? The patterns of reception, adaptation, and transformation serve as points of departure for a new look at the known texts[12], whose mastery and elegance Said’s center-oriented approach apparently failed to grasp. Yet despite the enormous differences between the British and French models of rulership, which Hannah Arendt aptly pins down to the “dispute [about principles] as to the rights of an Englishman versus the [universalist] human rights”[13], Said’s way of looking at (imperial) concepts of space and cartographies[14] is insightful. The comparison with England is all the more important as the territorial rivalry for the Caribbean islands (mainly at the turn between the 18th and 19th centuries) also found expression in an ideological rivalry, where each of the two colonial powers tried to come up with a more tenable justification of colonialist claims to power – certainly a major driving factor leading to the abolition of slavery in the British possessions in 1833/34. Yet Said is primarily concerned with the justification of colonial dominance and expansion before the domestic public, while the current project also looks at the integration of the colonial subjects themselves. The reference to an order willed by God and maintained by Europeans, found in a crude form in the writings of Carlyle, is only of marginal importance in the much more secular French texts. Nevertheless, they carry European ideas of a locus amoenus (or utopos) into the world of the colonies, as is exemplified by the works of Chateaubriand and late Bucolic poetry with its romanticizing descriptions of nature. Thus, they put that colonial world into a new frame of reference, transcended it, and imbued it with a new meaning, which seems to have been eagerly absorbed and adopted by 19th-century Latin American literature as a whole, no matter how social-revolutionary that literature may have purported to be.[15]

2.2. Romanticist Networks in Paris

Paris was the central intellectual hub where the francophone writers from the (former) Caribbean colonies met representatives of the culture and sciences of their mother country. That interchange gave birth to knowledge and ideas, which in turn circulated within the networks. What personal literary and political contacts did exist, and what were they like? Interestingly, Hugo, for example, seems to have been friends with writers as different as Levilloux and Maynard.[16] What multi-discipline contacts were established with activists from political advocacy groups, such as the abolitionist Société des amis des noirs, on the one hand, and representatives of the apologetical-racist Club Massiac on the other? How hermetical, open, or involved with each other were these circles where writers featured prominently, circles that must have been in a constant and multifaceted process of interchange with the colonies – interconnections that for lack of research can only be surmised? (Up to now, there is only solid evidence of connections between the anti-abolitionists and the Cercle de l’Hermine on Martinique.)[17] How did the experiences made in the host country find expression in Caribbean literature? How did the immediate exchange of ideas influence the relationship of the writers to their mother country? What impact did it have on the way they perceived and positioned their country of origin? And what expression did these micro-discourses find in literature? Did the few actors from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean participate to any extent in that French social network, even though hardly any of them lived in Paris for any length of time?

2.3. The New World and New Ways of Organizing Knowledge: Ethnology, Historiography

Ethnology, which was formally established as a discipline in France at the beginning of the 19th century, and during that early phase of its existence launched into a productivity that has hitherto gone largely unnoticed, played a key role in the exchange of ideas with the New World and its inhabitants. After all, new knowledge, and accordingly new ideas relating to the Other, were generated precisely at that interface, and contributed to shaping the European image of humankind, as well as – in the long term – to the claim to world domination that would reach its fatal culmination during the phase of the scramble for Africa. Further research is needed to determine the extent to which the debates led by “scholarly” and “literary” ethnologists, both in the mother country and between the mother country and its colony, are related to early race theories of the French nobility, as promoted, for example, by le Boulainvillier, and/or to imperialist theories about the inequality of the races. Yet it is striking that even the abolitionist-minded intellectuals of the Caribbean make use of these categories as if they were the most natural thing in the world – categories that since Buffon did not only reflect common taxonomies, but also defined the legal framework of the colonial social hierarchies (including slavery) within which the actors moved in their everyday lives.[18] The scholarly disciplines (above all, ethnology and historiography, but also geography and archaeology), still in a process of consolidation during the first half of the 19th century (before the foundation of large institutions like the Société and École d’Anthropologie de Paris, and of the *Revue historique* in the 1850s-1870s), were stylistically close to the literary world in their ethnographic portrayals of the New World; this holds particularly true for literary travelogues. Clear classifications of the writings of that period, and distinctions between them, are thus hardly possible, unlike in the case of Humboldt. Dialogue and transfer, both between science and art and between the producers of knowledge in the mother country and in the colonies, should thus not be viewed as one-way flows, but as a reciprocal process, despite the powerful radiance of French culture. Like nowhere else, the lasting success of the French mission civilisatrice, as well as the flexibility and absorbency of the hegemonial system, become evident in ethnology, which itself already a response to the exotic and increasingly romanticizing interest of the French educated strata in the differentness of the overseas regions and its inhabitants, an interest that had begun to deepen in the 18th century.[19] Moreover, ethnology professionalized the exchange of ideas without yet completely abandoning the heritage and aspirations of the polymaths of the Age of Enlightenment.[20]

Just like travel literature, ethnology seems to have fostered the literary reception of Caribbean writers in their respective mother countries. This holds true for the reception of Hispano-Caribbean literature more than for that of Franco-Caribbean literature, because the former features a more pronounced problematization of the inner tension between the self and the other, and a more inventive identity outline, even though (and exactly because) the mother country Spain itself was far from matching up to the French mother country when it came to the development of new systems of knowledge. What was the interrelationship between literature and ethnology like? Who was used as a source by whom, and how can lines be drawn, given the ethnological self-conception frequently displayed by the writers? What was the part of Spanish-language literature of the Caribbean in this interchange with the emergent discipline?

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Endnotes

[1] Cf. Ette 2005:123-124.

[2] Cf. Benítez Rojo 1998:15f.

[3] Cf. Reinstädler 2006:115-116.

[4] Massillon Coicou 1870:113-117.

[5] Thomas Madiou: Histoire d'Haïti. 1847-48. Beaubrun Ardouin: Etudes sur l'histoire d'Haïti, 1853-1860. Emile Nau: Histoire des caciques d'Haïti.

[6] Wogatzke 2006:100.

[7] Heredia 1980:192-193.

[8] Cf. Fluck 1997:84-165.

[9] Said 1993.

[10] Middelani 1996:115.

[11] Cf. Nicolas 1996:117; see also Reinstädler 2006:216.

[12] Cf. Neumann and Warning 2003:7-16.

[13] Arendt 1995:385-404.

[14] Cf. Said 1993:149.

[15] Cf. Wolfgang Iser 1993.

[16] Cf. Toumson 1979:69.

[17] Cf. Dorigny and Gainot 1998.

[18] Cf. also Poirier 1969:21-32, Kaschuba 2003:17-111; see also Garber and Thoma 2004.

[19] Cf. Riedel 1994:114-115.

[20] Thoma 2006.