

The Globalectics of Nationalism in C.L.R. James's and Michelle Cliff's Writing

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The postcolonial is not simply located in the third world. Literally rooted in the intertextuality of products from all corners of the globe, its universalist tendency is inherent in its very relationship to historical colonialism and its globe for a theater. (Ngũgĩ 55)

Globalectics is the title and guiding principle of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's recent collection of philosophical lectures on postcolonialism, globalization, and world literature. Ngũgĩ must have arrived at the kernel of globalectics decades ago. He reflects back to when he was a student entering Makerere University in 1959 and notes the external colonial pressures on his education that privileged English literature. He found himself reading F.R. Leavis' *The Great Tradition*, T.S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent," and Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (13), each arguably fundamental to a good *English education*. By 1963, Kenya was an independent nation. Ngũgĩ pairs this new postcolonial reality with his discovery of C.L.R. James, Claude McKay, Alfred Mendez, V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming, and Andrew Salkey from the Caribbean, and numerous authors from South Africa (14), who enabled him with new ways of seeing the world. He notes in particular that Achebe from Nigeria, Peter Abrahams from South Africa, and George Lamming from Barbados gave him the characters and plot "reflective of the howling winds [of change] . . . It was fiction that first gave us a theory of the colonial situation" (15). Ngũgĩ thus describes an engagement of the global environment through local national landscapes. Discussing texts and contexts, Edward Said has commented that "every utterance, no matter its singularity, has to be understood as part of something else" (134). Likewise in a Trinidadian short story, "Ballad for the New World," Lawrence Scott writes: "You see, you start telling the story about a guy and then you get to telling the story of a time, a place, a people, and a world" (328). Through the lens of Ngũgĩ's globalectics, I argue that Caribbean literature may be deemed a "World Literature" even from within the Caribbean because global contexts greatly inform C.L.R. James's and Michelle Cliff's narratives that engage questions of nationalist sentiment. For illustration purposes, I will examine excerpts from James's *The Nobbie Stories for Children and Adults* and *Letters from London* and Cliff's *The Land of Look Behind* and *No Telephone*

to Heaven. First, though, it is important to understand what it means to read globalectically.

Reading Globalectically

Reading globalectically requires a new understanding of World Literature. As it is situated in the West through narratives of description, definition, and education, World Literature is often juxtaposed with Western European and other Anglo(-American) literatures, written in dominant languages with an exclusive claim to worldliness rooted in the nation-state. Generally speaking, the West's publishing houses as well as Western literary critics continue to reinscribe these categories in their separation of national literatures, but this need not be the case. According to Ngũgĩ, "works of imagination refuse to be bound within national geographies; they leap out of nationalist prisons and find welcoming fans outside the geographic walls. But they can also encounter others who want to put them back within the walls, as if they were criminals on the loose" (58). To counter these problems of hierarchical labels and associations, Ngũgĩ's postcolonial-inspired concept of "globalectics" suggests that we view all literatures as equal players on an equal playing field of cultural knowledge:

I believe in the liberation of literature from the straightjackets of nationalism. Hence, my use of the term globalectics. Globalectics is derived from the shape of the globe. On its surface, there is no one center; any point is equally a center. As for the internal center of the globe, all points on the surface are equidistant to it—like the spokes of a bicycle wheel that meet at the hub. (8)

Ngũgĩ's formulation opens the door to multiple centers, not only geographical, but also ideological. Yet, nationalism remains a significant factor within globalectics because it serves as an antithetical force that drives globalectic principles.

When Ngũgĩ returned from Leeds University to join the English Department at the University of Nairobi in 1967, he discovered that "[t]he four and a half centuries of English national literature were still at the center of literary education. Nothing had changed" (26). Inspired by this revelation, Ngũgĩ and his colleagues wrote the letter, "On the Abolition of the English Department." The letter included a request that the word "Literature" replace "English," as well as the suggestion that a new curriculum would include "African literature and related literature" at the center, which would consequently place English literature on the periphery. Ngũgĩ states that the letter "simply questioned the cognitive process, what was central and what was ancillary and their relationship in the acquisition of knowledge in a postcolonial context. It questioned the role of the organization of knowledge in the production of the colonial and postcolonial subject"

(26). If Ngũgĩ and his colleagues could have the whole world's texts available to them, then why wouldn't they want to create a context that better served a postcolonial subject? To a postcolonial author it seems obvious to conclude: "Outside the fact of language, writers from the colonial world always assumed an extranational dimension" (Ngũgĩ 54). In a similar vein, Martiniquan Édouard Glissant asserts: "Whatever happens elsewhere has immediate repercussions here" (26). The "extranational dimension" continues to interact with the colonized, and formerly colonized, often in oppressive ways, which is why Ngũgĩ's theory of globalectics is useful to an analysis of Caribbean texts.

Ngũgĩ reflects on Goethe's remark in 1827 that "national literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand" (44). Yet in *Globalectics*, it appears that Ngũgĩ is concerned less with a true equality of world literature—as "spokes of a bicycle wheel"—than with an organized centering of postcolonial literature, for postcolonial peoples. In response to this concern, reading globalectically "should bring into mutual impact and comprehension the local and the global, the here and there, the national and the world" (60). Thus nationalism must still be embedded in Ngũgĩ's politics of globalectics in order to express the complexity of the postcolonial experience.

If reading globalectically means thinking with a postcolonial view of the world, then this mindset is also critically bound to nationalisms (and anti-nationalisms). For instance, Ngũgĩ invokes Aimé Césaire's lucid denunciation of colonialism from *Discourse on Colonialism*. Ngũgĩ chooses to condense the moment when Césaire qualifies his assertions against colonialism in the phrase "for civilizations, exchange is oxygen." Yet Césaire goes on to ask a pertinent question: "Has colonization really *placed civilizations in contact*?" (Césaire 33). Césaire's answer to his own question is a definitive "no" (33). He is clearly thinking about the absence of a *mutually beneficial exchange*. Césaire asserts that colonization "dehumanized even the most civilized man," which he refers to as the "boomerang effect" of colonization (41). For the colonizer, this proves to be an ironic negative consequence of "cultural exchange." Surely there are other forms of cultural exchange that do not involve subordination of vast groups of people to another. Even in a "postcolonial" age, authors continue to assert the reality of this ongoing problem.

Ngũgĩ's nationalistic theory of globalectics intersects directly with James's and Cliff's work because much of their writing suggests that their reader questions ideological grand narratives that are detrimental to the (post)colonial subject. James's and Cliff's work invoke a surprising continuity in the themes of nationalism and global inequalities that span the colonial and postcolonial eras. The works of these authors "question the cognitive process" (Ngũgĩ 26) that allows the status quo of inequalities to continue. Although published recently,

James's *The Nobbie Stories for Children and Adults* and *Letters from London* were written prior to the end of colonialism during the 1930s and 1950s, while Cliff's *The Land of Look Behind* and *No Telephone to Heaven* were written in the postcolonial moment of the 1980s. Because the choice of their subjects, and subjectivities, are often greatly divergent, one may miss the incredibly similar cultural and national environments invoked by their texts. The global qualities of nation-identified authors within a region such as the Caribbean, even within the English-speaking Caribbean, cannot be overstated. To illustrate and expand on Ngũgĩ's idea of globalectics, we may view James's and Cliff's work as World Literature even within the Caribbean, where "exchange is oxygen." With a similar position to Ngũgĩ, Ghanaian artist and critic Kwame Dawes (who spent most of his childhood in Jamaica and also channels Césaire) asserts that "[t]he very concept of comparative literature is one marked by exchange, by the quite positive exercise of various cultures coming together. But these meetings are not all positive" (Dawes 292). Dawes suggests the potential for positive cultural exchange through literature despite the challenges that remain from a colonial heritage. Dawes further wants to discover a method of comparing and reading world literatures that "allows for multiple voices to dialog with each other in ways that can result in understanding and, ultimately, beauty" (297).

Just as Dawes discusses his desire for "understanding" and "beauty," Cliff in her scholarly writing makes connections to African American artists' cultural identities that reflect the global consciousness of her fiction. For instance, she asserts: "Unless the cultural relationship between African and Afro-American artists is understood, one cannot fully appreciate the tradition of Afro-American artists, nor the meaning, or levels of meaning, of particular Afro-American works of art" ("I Found God in Myself and I Loved Her" 16). Coincidentally, in this article, Cliff refers to C.L.R. James, "the Black Marxist philosopher" (17). She references James's "The Atlantic Slave Trade" when discussing the global trade routes and the Middle Passage as cultural signifiers of not just African-American artists but African heritage people everywhere (16-17). Cliff's analysis invoking Pan-Africanism and Marxist perspectives on African-American art connects her work to James's. Cliff, therefore, has already begun the dialogue that Dawes desires. I wish to examine further how the dialogue appears in less overt ways by pairing James's and Cliff's fiction with their "life writing" (including creative non-fiction and autobiography). Reading globalectically, then, I assert that Caribbean literary texts—especially from a diasporic positioning, as we shall see—stand in dialogue with each other as World Literature.

The Nobbie Stories, Letters from London

Now that we understand the nuances shaping globalectics, we may view how these elements appear, first, in James's fiction and life-writing. Where Ngũgĩ argues for a center-less model of World Literature, James enacts this model in his fiction and life-writing. In *The Nobbie Stories*, James utilizes international cultural contexts to help him instruct his son about notions of democracy, freedom, and equality, and in *Letters from London*, James reverses the travelogue of the English person visiting the colonies as he describes the routine human interactions of a colonial Trinidadian in London. *The Nobbie Stories for Children and Adults* is a collection of children's tales that James wrote once a week from England and mailed to his four-year-old son Nobbie in America. The stories were written in the years following James's forced exile from the United States in 1952 during the height of the jingoistic McCarthy era. James imparts his wisdom about history, literature, politics, and current events through the allegorical tales of a special club in England, of which Nobbie is an honorary member. In these tales, James explicitly appeals to the reader's ethical understanding of democracy, which includes what James deems appropriate ways to make social change and to interpolate meaning from significant issues of the past and present. For instance, some of the Club members' discussions are clearly meant to be world history lessons for Nobbie. The titles alone suggest the historical focus of the tales, such as "The Remarkable Greeks," "Androcles and the Lion," "Michelangelo and the Statue of David," "The Round Heads and the Cavaliers." Other stories focus on more recent global events, such as "Ghana's Independence," and "Children in the Resistance" (of the Hungarian revolution). A father thus maintains weekly contact with his son, after being torn apart because of the ideological apparatus of the US nation-state and its leader's distortions of nationalism.

James probably could not fathom these developments in his personal life from the 1950s when he was writing what would also be published posthumously as *Letters from London*, a brief collection of his journalism from the 1930s. Ngũgĩ's *Globalectics* begins with the colonial's response to colonialism, as a reminder of the past and its consequences, while the whole of *Letters from London* exists within the colonial moment in which James lived. Prior to his first visit to England in 1932, James had worked out a publishing gig with the *Port of Spain Gazette* to write directly to Trinidadian people about his various interactions with the local London scene and people. He takes "A Visit to the Science and Art Museums," goes to a literary talk and discusses "The Bloomsbury Atmosphere," examines "The Houses," "The Men," and "The Women." *Letters* concludes with an essay which claims that England has "The Nucleus of a Great Civilization." James,

however, ends his letters with utter disappointment in his visit: “on the whole I was not impressed” (111). He had looked forward to his visit to London primarily because of his love and familiarity with English literature and politics (114); yet he repeats, “the average Londoner ... has not impressed me” (121). Throughout *Letters*, James talks about London from an outsider’s perspective, even if, *or because*, he is a British colonial. The history of British imperialism connects Trinidadians to Kenyans and others across the globe. Ngũgĩ asserts: “Any Kenyan of my generation will tell you that they knew many natural, historical landmarks of London they had never seen long before they knew a single street of their capital, let alone major rivers of their country” (39). In their differing narratives of global interaction, both Ngũgĩ and C.L.R. James are inheritors of an English education, which, besides shining an ideological light on English literature, also creates a myth of England.

For James, reality cannot stand up to the British empire’s false promise of a nurturing motherland; yet, throughout *Letters from London*, James is not nationalistic in the more conventional ways for 1932. For instance, he is not espousing anti-colonial rhetoric at any point. He had already written a draft of that pamphlet, which was soon-to-be published as *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, and reprinted as *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*. Nowhere in the *Letters* collection, or in *The Nobbie Stories*, do we see a comment in any way as direct and revealing as he makes in the independence-focused texts, such as *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*:

Britain will hold us down as long as she wishes. Her cruisers and aeroplanes ensure it. But a people like ours should be free to make its own failures and successes, free to gain that political wisdom and political experience which come only from the practice of political affairs. Otherwise, led as we are by a string, we remain without credit abroad and without self-respect at home, a bastard, feckless conglomeration of individuals, inspired by no common purpose, moving to no common end. (32)

James’s writing is so gracefully focused here that it would be quite difficult to free this writing “from the straightjackets of nationalism” (Ngũgĩ 8) in which it was born. And who would want to? One can almost hear it: the same comment about the residents of Ellis Island which James connects to Melville’s world of *isolatos* and sailors in *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*. James asserts that, like the sailors in Melville’s *Moby Dick*, those appealing deportation on Ellis Island, including James himself, were “federated by nothing. But they were looking for federation” (*Mariners* 154). They are not so far removed from the West Indian people he is describing here. Yet, in *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*, James concentrates on the political independence of the nation-state of Trinidad, which should be understood as different from, although related to, the nation as an imagined community. I am differentiating the governing apparatus of

the nation-state from the people's various narratives of themselves, through literature (fiction and non-fiction), existing within or parallel to that governing apparatus.

James does, however, have some moments in *Letters from London* that may clearly be viewed as connected to his ideologies of nationalism and Marxism. For instance, Kenneth Ramchand notes that James's letter "The Nucleus of a Great Civilization" is "a great putdown of the English" (xxiv); "The nucleus of a great civilization was not London. It was ordinary people like the people of his island. Like the people of Nelson" (xxviii-xxix). The language used here, "ordinary people," is notable because it is direct code for James's Marxist focus on the workers of the world, which would include those in Port of Spain and in Nelson, rather than those in London, a symbol for the colonial administration. In this specific context, Ramchand is referring to James's discussion of a whole town of approximately forty-thousand people who went on strike to boycott the local cinema. James discovered that a few years prior to his arrival, in the town of Nelson, the theater owners began to reduce the wages of the cinema operators (123-124). The owners transferred the operators to another town that only offered lower wages, and the replacement position went to an operator who would accept a lowered wage in Nelson. The result was that the whole town went on strike for days on behalf of the operators, and the cinema went out of business (123-124):

Whereupon local people took over, and the theaters again began to be filled. It was magnificent and it was war. I confessed I was thrilled to the bone when I heard it. I could forgive England all the vulgarity and all the depressing disappointment of London for the magnificent spirit of these north country working people. As long as that is the stuff of which they are made, then indeed Britons never, never shall be slaves. (124-125)

James thus gives his overview of the spirit of the English people in Nelson. The charged current of rebellion in Nelson stokes James's eternal flame of a global class-consciousness, which is also at the heart of his anti-colonial critique in *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*.

In *The Nobbie Stories*, James's intervention with nationalism is also unusual because he is not writing on behalf of a nation, or independence as he does in *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*. Yet the nationalism in *The Nobbie Stories* is not so far removed from James's earlier text because he writes on behalf of individuals who form significant groups on the periphery of national ideological boundaries. As part of a "globalectic imagination," James also contests "the narrative of a mainstream versus a colonial periphery" (Ngũgĩ 51). These individuals do not constitute the easily recognized group memberships of people within national boundaries. Instead James culls together a diverse array to form a "Club." The recurring characters Good Boongko and Bad Boo-boo-loo appear

throughout the tales, and serve as examples for Nobbie. Another recurring character is Big Bruno, who is the Chairman of the Club (a likeness to James himself). The Club is rounded out with Peter the Painter, Nicholas the Worker, Philbert and Flibert (the two fleas), Lizzie the Lizard, Leo the Lion, Storky the Stork, Tweet-Tweet the Bird, and even Moby Dick and Mighty Mouse. The Club members are representative of something greater than the sum of its parts, an inclusive group of insiders, marginalized, citizens and non-citizens, human and non-human: the sum of its parts, a multitude, which creates a nation.

James's ethics for Nobbie are clear throughout the stories. The tales include both implicit and explicit references to the Golden Rule, general politeness in discussions, the utilitarian philosophy of doing what is right for the greatest number of people, the appropriateness of war when necessary, and justifiable revolutions. Yet the nationalism in much of James's *Nobbie Stories* is implicit. James's nationalism is the kind of counter-hegemonic move taken for granted by the dominant ideologies, which place him in such a position, especially if we understand that the dialectic of the privileged class, in a national ideological regime, takes into account the "counterideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it" (Appadurai 36). *The Nobbie Stories* are too light-hearted to delve deeply into these concerns, mainly because James is writing stories for his young son. However, we shouldn't mistake that first and foremost James is always being true to himself in the ideological engagement with the content of the stories. We view the same James in the stories as we have surveyed, for instance, in *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*, and *Beyond a Boundary*. James understands that the "consequences of nationalism include the illusion of homogeneity (Connor 118-142), which is perhaps why he has such a diverse cast of characters in the Club, each offering their views on the given subjects of the stories, each with particular gifts to enable the Club as a group, with a positive group identity, even in the midst of various nonsensical scenarios, such as the playful confusion about the difference between "serial" and "cereal" in the first story. Other stories include real-world formidable challenges, such as the threat of bombs, war, and state sovereignty.

By reading *The Nobbie Stories* we may learn about the difference between what is a republic and what is not a republic, notably in the story "Michelangelo and the Statue of David," which makes global connections while focusing on national sovereignty. Nicholas the Worker explains to Good Boongko and Bad Boo-boo-loo:

We have a club, and in that club, Big Bruno is the chairman, and he conducts the meetings; he is the leader, and we listen to him, but Big Bruno cannot tell us to do what he wants us to do if we do not want to do it. Every member of the club can say what he likes in a meeting. Big Bruno has to listen and then we all decide what we want to do after everybody has said what he wants to say. That is a

republic ... So what is not a republic? Sometimes, ... there is a nice club and everybody likes it, but the president gets a lot of police and bad men with guns and then he doesn't allow anybody to say anything, and he says what must be done, and everybody has to do it. (13)

James connects these basic concepts of a republic later in the story to reveal a historical connection to the grand purpose of Michelangelo's Statue of David because it embodies a symbolic act of rebellion, alluding to the classic story of David beating Goliath. The creation of the symbolic statue itself incited rebellion in Michelangelo's day, at least as James explains it (14). The sensitivities of the Florence statue's symbolic gesture against Rome and other possible invaders (such as the Medici clan) explain the statue's draw to this very day. As the namesake of David stands up to oppression anywhere, so the statue has been copied and is available in numerous locations around the world to serve as an inspiration and a reminder about the possibilities one has to stand up to oppression (14). James invokes Michelangelo's David to teach Nobbie a lesson about individual artistic endeavors that connect with national sovereignty and human rights with global implications.

James's globalectics in *The Nobbie Stories* appear on the surface simply to be intertextual references drawn from global contexts; this assessment would be correct but incomplete. We should be mindful of the significance of James's rhetorical context for writing *The Nobbie Stories*, embedded as it was in the global elements of nationalism. The main context for James's writing *The Nobbie Stories* is the desire to maintain contact with his son across the Atlantic Ocean. One reason for this great distance originates in the ideological apparatus of McCarthyism in the USA, which forced James to leave the States. He chose to move back to England where he stood out like a sore thumb in his colonizer's land, a place where people knew surprisingly little about West Indians. Looking back to his first visit to England in the 1930s, James notes in *Beyond a Boundary* that one evening he was preparing for a speech in Nelson, and "a very friendly little boy came up to me, sat on my knee and asked me where was my spear" (117). James and the famous cricketer Learie Constantine were evidently the first middle-class black men in Nelson, and on display. James suggests the significance of this exhibition:

Apart from someone collecting refuse in an old pushcart, Learie and I were the only coloured men in Nelson. That meant that wherever you went (and you had to go somewhere) and whatever you did (and you had to do something) you were automatically under observation. ... We could not get rid of the feeling that whatever we did would be judged as representative of the habits and standards of millions of people at home. (124)

Thus trapped within a cultural panoptic gaze, James wanted his audience to "understand that West Indians were a Westernized people" (118). James was therefore marginalized in the 1930s in England because of his appearance as a black man and a colonial West Indian,

and forced to leave the USA in the 1950s because of his writings on socialism and communism. With these nationalistic circumstances in mind, James appeals to his son's understanding of democracy, equality, and forming a group identity that supports itself through the righteous equality of its membership.

James's counter-ideological move, his "alter-national" writing, is parallel to Ngũgĩ's concept of "globelectics," based on the concept of the globe, where "there is no one center; any point is equally a center" (Ngũgĩ 8). James's Club is represented as a microcosm of a nation, not unlike his own analysis of Melville's mariners as a microcosm of the world we live in. As the Club understands, as James understands, every voice counts, every vote counts, initial disagreements can bring about fruitful learning experiences about shared values and differences with global implications, and the revolution of national affiliation, of identity, and consequently of physical materiality, can start with just one person. No pressure, Nobbie.

The Land of Look Behind, No Telephone to Heaven

James was not alone in his task when considering *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*. While the publication of the text was an achievement, it was not a unique argument from within the West Indies. We may also view the rise of nationalistic anticolonial writing and speech from Jamaica, from Norman Manley, among others. Manley was a labor leader and one of the founding fathers of Jamaican independence. In 1938, Manley stated,

We believe that the people must consciously believe in themselves and their own destiny and must do so with pride and with confidence and with the determination to win equality with the rest of mankind—an equality in terms of humanity which irrespective of power and wealth, can be measured by the growing values of civilisation and culture. (Quoted in Nettleford xii)

Both Trinidad and Jamaica obtained independence in 1962, but questions remain: What happens after independence of the nation-state? How does the globelectics of nationalism likewise evolve in postcolonial literature?

Michelle Cliff's work explores what happens only twenty years post-independence. Her work engages themes that invoke global referents in national identities, which are relatable to those in James's earlier writing. In *The Land of Look Behind*, Cliff comments on how elements of global and historical contexts inform her writing, elements similar to those that would have affected James's writing. For instance, concerning her upbringing with a split "Afro-Saxon" cultural heritage, she feels perfectly comfortable asserting: "Jamaica is a place halfway between Africa and England" (12), with all the ideological colonial implications which that statement may suggest. For Cliff, Jamaica is a

complex geo-political space that is “contested, intersecting, and uncertain, clearly shaped by power relations and human intents” (Bennett 257). Upon considering her graduate education in England, Cliff asserts: “It is a long way from the court of Urbino to Nanny the Coromanty Warrior” (*The Land of Look Behind* 13). Here Cliff expresses the difference between a significant moment of Western European Renaissance and the Jamaican Maroon leader and warrior woman, one of Jamaica’s official National Heroes. This juxtaposition drops the in-between space that Jamaica occupies in the previous example, and Cliff’s identity dialectic is now moored to the status of opposition or antithesis.

In *No Telephone to Heaven*, Clare Savage’s path to personal and national consciousness is informed by, and parallel to, what Cliff offers in her autobiographical writing. In *No Telephone to Heaven*, the narrative backtracks from the 1980s into the early 60s and 70s. The story is a sequel to the novel *Abeng*, and is narrated mostly through the eyes of Clare Savage who seems to have found herself in a peculiar place riding on the back of a truck with local rebels. The novel is a series of reflections by Clare on how she came to be “one” with the rebels. *No Telephone to Heaven* is an exceptional fictional representation of the consequences of colonialism on contemporary peoples and cultures. Yet Cliff’s life-writing is just as powerful. *The Land of Look Behind* was written close to the same time as *No Telephone*, and occasionally on the same subjects as those in the novel. In both instances, Cliff questions the status quo of national consciousness. *No Telephone to Heaven* contains overt and sometimes graphically explicit commentaries on race, extreme violence and classism in Kingston, Jamaica, and violence and racism in the USA and England, as well as the protagonist’s personal struggle to find her place in the world. Finally, the novel contains what I refer to as the globalectics of nationalism, which take place in multiple scenes throughout the novel. We may view two particular moments for illustration. The scenes surrounding Clare’s arrival in England serve as one example, and Clare’s involvement back in Jamaica with rebels and their fight against representatives from the global media serves as a second example.

Like C.L.R. James and Ngũgĩ, both Cliff and Clare suffer similar consequences of a British colonial education. Like Cliff, Clare leaves America to attend graduate school in England, “choosing London with the logic of a Creole. This was the mother-country” (109). Clare finds herself in Notting Hill, visiting an outdoor market, considering buying a badge with the “Cross of Lorraine” and the word “*Résistez*” (112). Her mind free-associates back to St Catherine’s school in Jamaica and the teachings of St. Joan, in the “house of Arc.” In this brief moment of the text, like so many other moments, global intertextualities have taken hold. Clare moves away from the badge, and like an echo from a former life, a woman with “tribal scars cutting diagonally across her

cheeks” appears beside her to view the display items (112). Nothing more is mentioned about this woman, but she remains there beneath the surface of Clare’s psyche.

For Clare, this unnamed woman is a global connection to the history of British imperialism, a connection that for some reason she was not quite ready to make. Soon enough, however, she finds herself reading *Jane Eyre*, astounded by how her mind could follow along, sympathetic to the orphan: “Was she not heroic Jane? Betrayed? Left to wander? ... No my girl, try Bertha. Wild-maned Bertha” (116). Clare’s act of asserting her collective identity, as a revelation of difference, is a definitive moment of crisis for her. Cliff writes: “To imagine I am the sister of Bertha Rochester. We are the remainders of slavery” (*The Land of Look Behind* 41). Slavery itself is an enterprise of global proportions: “The West Indian islands became the hub of the British Empire, of immense importance to the grandeur and prosperity of England. It was the Negro slaves who made these sugar colonies the most precious colonies ever recorded in the whole annals of imperialism” (Williams 52). The consequences of slavery compounded by the history of colonialism are here illustrated in the life of Clare Savage. As Clare affiliates herself now with her African-Jamaican cultural heritage, and as global contexts enable a national consciousness, she cannot have an *un*-revelation. The only alternative for Clare would be a denial, or a concealment or loss of cultural memory, the arch-antagonist of much Caribbean literature.

Clare can now question her identity and re-envision her place in the imagined community of the British Empire. Soon after this revelation, Clare’s British friend Liz from graduate school discusses the conservative anti-immigrant National Front marches they had just witnessed when she states: “you’re hardly the sort they were ranting on about” (139). Yet, as Ania Loomba suggests, “English nationalism relied upon cultural distinctions which demarcated Europeans from blacks, or even the English from Italians or Irish people; conversely, these cultural distinctions rationalized an aggressive nationalism that fueled England’s overseas expansion” (65). For some in England, these cultural distinctions are firmly entrenched, so that even after formal colonization has ended, the outward displays of resistance to change manifest in such ideological spectacles as the National Front marches. So Clare responds to Liz’s comment by saying: “I’m not sure I should want ... ah, exclusion”; “You mean I’m presentable. That I’m somehow lower down the tree, higher up the scale, whatever” (139). Clare’s choice to identify with her African heritage goes against the grain of English nationalism that may have made life easier for a person who could pass for white. She may no longer be “choosing London with the logic of a creole” (109) because this identity formulation has become a more complicated reality for Clare. She now affiliates with the counter-slogans against the National Front the next day: “we are here because you were there” (137). This line bursts forth

as a postcolonial commentary, for instance, while it also serves well as globalectic reasoning. Reading this line globalectically, one “should bring into mutual impact and comprehension the local and the global, the here and there, the national and the world” (Ngũgĩ 60). In some instances, like this one, a globalectic reading would be virtually the same as a postcolonial analysis. This momentous counter-slogan helps explain the existence of Bertha in Edward Rochester’s life in *Jane Eyre*, and further validates Clare’s identification with Bertha Mason.

Further, in this scene, the globalectics of nationalism in England presents itself as an example of Ngũgĩ’s notion of “poor theory” (2-3). Poor theory makes globalectics and any other theoretical lens virtually moot; it is the idea that some fiction needs no additional theoretical model or template for making meaning because it speaks its ideological approach in the barest terms for the audience to grasp (2-3). Indeed, for an audience that understands even an inkling of the history of British Imperialism, the statement “we are here because you were there” sums up quite well the globalectics of nationalism. Even though C.L.R. James also lived the reality of the slogan, he could not have stated it better. The phrase illustrates how so many current residents of England, and their ancestors, are and were very much a part of the British Empire, yet still one significant step removed from the hegemonic powers that create the culture of the imagined community of the English nation.

My second main example of Cliff’s globalectics stems from Clare Savage’s return to Jamaica and her involvement with the rebels, and their quarrel with the global film industry. It appears that Cliff, like James, is concerned with the challenges of nation building in the Caribbean. Rex Nettleford suggests that “the Caribbean experience is ... a pursuit of life complete with the contradictions of the bitter with the sweet, great hope and much travail. It should not then be made the cause for flight despite the push of Third World dross or the pull of metropolitan luster” (Nettleford 230). It seems that Clare must live out these “contradictions” through the novel. Cliff takes Clare from her family’s move to the USA as a child to graduate school in London, with a brief additional moment of meandering in Europe, finally back home to Jamaica to be aligned with the distinctly local and national contradictions that Rex Nettleford suggests.

Clare’s “great hope” and “travail” lead her back home to Jamaica. Toward the end of the novel, Clare’s dear friend Harry/Harriet leads her to join a militant group that wears US Army surplus clothing (188-196). Clare decides to support the group by letting them stay on her grandmother’s land in the hills of Akwampong, and they support themselves by living off the land, and growing ganja and trading it for weapons. They soon decide to fight against the pillaging of their heritage by an international film company that is creating a contemporary narrative of the revolutionary Jamaican heroes Nanny of the Maroons and Cudjoe (199-208). The Western narrative of events

for the film has the two actors “exchanging phrases of love in the screenwriter’s version of *Coromantee*” (206). Even with just a glance at the film crew at work, we may surmise that the significant history of resistance and revolution seems destined to be turned into something more akin to a pulp romance.

The production company is a symbol of global media that may horribly misrepresent a history of a people. Clare’s new companions have decided to wreak havoc on the filming, but they are astonished when they have been sold out. The question remains: “Who had been the *quashee*?” (Cliff 208). Clare appears to die in the chaos of machine gun fire and helicopter rotors. Clare, who had finally found her way back home to Jamaica, and had become a history teacher, still felt duty-bound to aid these rebels, and even join them on this final quest. In the interview Clare has with the rebel leader prior to joining their group, Clare’s mother’s words seemed to haunt her and thus enable the choice of joining them. Clare states: “I returned to this island to mend ... to bury ... my mother. ... I returned to this island because there was nowhere else ... I could live no longer in borrowed countries, on borrowed time” (192-93). She further explains, “my mother told me to help my people” (196). Clare’s final moments must be a revelation to the audience as an assertion of personal and national loyalty, one that valiantly claims “an identity she was taught to despise.” Throughout the novel, Clare searches for the reasons why she has chosen to join this group, and wonders why they have accepted her as one of their own. After Clare’s abrupt ending, we should consider how:

With its moral face, nationalism looks past the bodies to see national character, whereas with its militarist face, it sees the sacrifice of bodies in battle as revealing the national spirit. The martyr or patriotic soldier is thus for nationalism too the paradigmatic figure for how the body is made to disappear and leave behind only an index to a higher plane. (Hardt and Negri 34)

But a higher plane to what place? Clare and her friends, with the exception of Harry/Harriett, are dead, while the film crew “wait[s] for this to pass” (207). The film crew will have a brief break, and then continue filming. The rebels are part of the national spirit of Jamaica, fulfilling Norman Manley’s quest for Jamaicans to believe in themselves and make their own destiny to achieve equality with the world (Nettleford xii). In Cliff’s particularly negative vision of the global/national dialectic, the narrative suggests the continuing necessity of resistance to external forces, such as the US film industry.

While the leaders of the Jamaican nation-state have allowed for a foreign film crew to use its landscape to tell a Jamaican narrative of origins, a mixture of the outliers and activists of society are left to stand up for themselves against the problematic representations within the film. Then they must also deal with the problematic assumptions of the foreigners about how they may treat the locals during the filming. The rebels were doing something similar to what Ngũgĩ and his

colleagues in the English Department did when they wrote the “Letter on the Abolishment of the English Department”; the rebels were questioning “the role of the organization of knowledge in the production of the colonial and postcolonial subject” (Ngũgĩ 26). With these global connections in mind, we may also better understand why Ngũgĩ and his colleagues were so harshly treated by the establishment wanting to maintain the status quo. Ngũgĩ has been imprisoned and threatened because of his stand against oppression, and Clare Savage died for her values.

Clare’s values find support in how Cliff depicts the ethical questions related to the film company and the rebels. In a bar scene just prior to the end of the novel, we see the film producer and director make astoundingly derogatory comments about the local people: “Jamaicans will do anything for a buck ... where could you find people demonstrating, burning tires, blocking roads, and then accepting tips from tourists to let them pass?” (202-03). The director’s sad but reasonable response is “just about anywhere, I expect.” But the producer does not think so, thus problematically voicing a local cultural indicator specific to Jamaicans. With a common reference to the scaling of cultural and national hierarchies, the director states: “Just be grateful this isn’t Haiti” (202). This director and producer are the type of people who work without regard to the consequences of their narratives, perhaps because they are so loosely attached to them. It is these types of people—who create narratives about a people, a place, and a world—that the rebels find to be representative of Babylon. The rebels apparently have clear ideas about what constitutes an ethical approach to the national narrative, as they had asked Clare: “Under what circumstances would you kill another human being?” (Cliff 190). Their ethical approach does not grant a foreign film company *carte blanche* to tell Jamaican stories to the world. In this instance, “the people are now the very principle of ‘dialectical reorganization.’ ... The changed political and historical site of enunciation transforms the meanings of the colonial inheritance into the liberatory signs of a free people of the future” (Bhabha 38). We should thus understand the purpose of the rebel group as fitting into the nationalist endeavor to live in freedom from the weights of external pressures of global media, economics, technologies, and tourism. If the rebels’ narratives of themselves and Jamaica constitute one of globalectics’ “spokes of a bicycle wheel that meet at the hub” (Ngũgĩ 8), then their narrative is not being granted a spoke of equal length to that of the global media. The wheel of the imagination, and of World Literature, cannot turn smoothly with this uneven and unequal playing field. Ngũgĩ calls for the equality of world narratives, but this is not resolved in James’s or Cliff’s writing, except for the fact of their writing, which seems to have a subtle conversation about resistance and representation.

Conclusions

To view James's and Cliff's work through a globalectic lens, one should realize that this lens reveals that James's and Cliff's narratives incorporate little actual equality, and mostly just the striving toward it. The global/national dialectic of James's and Cliff's writing provide great insights into the utter lack of equality between the global West and "the rest," which highlights the gravity and need for representation and recognition. Ngũgĩ's desire for a literary landscape, on which "there is no one center; any point is equally a center" (8), remains a reasonable and hopeful ethical approach. Yet, so far, it is also a utopian fantasy because cultural nationalism, along with the brute enforcement of economics and capitalism, have remained forces to be reckoned with, even despite the "metropolitan luster" (Nettleford 230) of globalization and its theories. Ngũgĩ's *Globalectics*, however, still provides a useful lens for understanding global contexts of cultural nationalism. Reading globalectically the fiction and life-writing from authors of different Caribbean nations speaking from a diasporic platform allows us to view the world in those literatures through the complexity of identity and identity politics. This exploration has only considered two Anglophone authors; so there is obviously much more to view on the subject of Caribbean literature as World Literature even from within the Caribbean.

National cultural references in literature by authors from any nation may create and maintain a strong sense of national affiliation to their respective imagined communities through the use of global intertextuality. Viewing the world through a postcolonial lens, the historical and contemporary problem of cultural exchange remains one of the challenges of cultural nationalism and identity. We should also understand one of our own purposes for this critical engagement.¹

By reading globalectically, we may better understand how national identities are created and formed through empowerment built on resistance to oppressive external forces. James's *Letters* is something more than a reversal of the English travel narrative. It is a subterfuge, an analysis of a fetish for all things English, making the English themselves the exoticized objects of national affiliation. The critique of the Nelson affair is global in scope because it is rooted in James's Marxist ideology; dismissing the fact of differences between colonized and colonizer, James's letter ends as an exposition focused on behalf of the "workers of the world." While including significant global references in his tales, James's *Nobbie Stories* tiptoe around his deportation from the USA, thus creating for Nobbie an allegorical alternative to the harsh realities of the real world's national communities, one that could exist anywhere, including the USA and England. The ending to Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* reminds us that the power to have a voice in this world and tell one's own story,

whether that be personal or national, must be a continual act of rebellion. To understand these tensions between local and global priorities in James's and Cliff's work is just a beginning for understanding the globalectics of nationalism.

Notes

1. Somewhat parallel to Ngũgĩ's "globalectics" concept but with a focus on higher education, Spivak argues, "an imagination trained in the play of language(s) may undo the truth-claims of national identity, thus unmooring the cultural nationalism that disguises the workings of the state" (50). In order to achieve this "unmooring," Spivak suggests, "higher education in the humanities should be strengthened so that the literary imagination can continue to de-transcendentalize the nation and shore up the redistributive powers of the regionalist state in the face of global priorities" (58).

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