

'In but not of the West': Caribbean histories and geographies

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The first time I came across David Nicholl's name was as a postgraduate student at my first Society of Caribbean Studies conference in 2000. Every two years, the Society administers the David Nicholls Postgraduate Prize for the best post-graduate paper submitted to it. Encouraged to enter, the thought I would have a go and was fortunate enough to be awarded it. I remember receiving the prize at the following conference a year later on a lovely sunny early evening on the veranda of Nightingale House at the University of Nottingham following the traditional rum punch reception. My feeling at the time, as well as gratitude of course and a sense of just how welcoming the Society was, but also the thoroughly interdisciplinary character of Caribbean Studies – at least judging by who was there. Moreover, previous winners of the prize were a sociologist, Mimi Sheller, and a literary scholar, Sandra Courtman. This interdisciplinary character enriches Caribbean Studies. This is not to say disciplinary differences do not matter, but these usually provide productive jumping-off points for insightful conversations about Caribbean's past, present and future, its cultures, natures and politics. Interdisciplinarity has also been a central aspect of my own work. Two months ago, I was a department of Geography at Royal Holloway – now all I am in History of the University of Warwick, where the Yesu Persaud Centre for Caribbean Studies seeks to maintain this interdisciplinary tradition.

Yet, while my own blurring of intellectual boundaries is, in part, a characteristic of features of much contemporary academic life, it is far short of that evident in the work of David Nicholls between and beyond Politics, Theology and Caribbean Studies, which manifested an 'interdisciplinarity' *avant la lettre*. This is particularly evident in his library. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to visit David Nicholls's collection books, journals, manuscript notes and other materials held here at Regent's Park College. It is fantastic collection of work in English, French and Spanish, covering not only the Caribbean (especially Haiti and the Dominican Republic) but also Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. It is also one that continues to grow by virtue of the work of the Memorial Trust. In writing this lecture, I drew on works in the collection by Walter Rodney, Eric Williams, Andre Gunder Frank, V. S. Naipaul, Sidney Mintz, Frank Moya Pons and others. It is also wonderful that the collection is kept together, along with David Nicholls's notes, marginalia and book inserts, not only as an archive to him and his work but also to interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary. In that spirit and as the full title of this lecture suggests – 'Caribbean histories and geography' – a broad interdisciplinary perspective underpins what I want to say this evening, as I will take in film, literature, history, geography in a way I hope there will be as illuminating as it might be deemed capricious.

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The first time I went to the Caribbean – to Barbados – to do research, I read Jamaica Kincaid's short book *A Small Place* published in 1988 on the plane on the way over. For those of who know this book, this might seem like an odd choice. For those of you who do not, it starts with the opening line: 'If you go to Antigua as a tourist, this is what you will see' (p. 3) and repeated refrain: 'A tourist is an ugly human being' (p. 14). In other words, *A Small Place* is amongst other things a kind of anti-tourist guide to Antigua and a passionate attack on modern tourism linking this to the island's colonial past and to plantation slavery, both by drawing parallels and by pointing to the lasting legacies of the troubling histories. One of Kincaid's primary concerns is to rail against the presumed innocence of the tourist, not only blind to, or even enjoying, the poverty and hardship they see around them, but also forgetful, perhaps wilfully so, that *they have been there before*. Not they themselves, of course, but others like them: colonists, settlers, planters. That this earlier presence had profound consequences not only locally, in Antigua, in the Caribbean, but also for the places they came from, not to mention those of the places implicated in this historical encounter – notably, of course, Africa. Needless to say, it is a striking and polemical book that stimulates, as much as it provokes. It also served to make the taxi ride from the Grantley Adams International Airport to my lodgings a rather uncomfortably, self-conscious experience.

I start with Kincaid's fury because it seems to me that it articulates some of the same sentiments, albeit a more polemical register, as the title of my lecture. The phrase 'In but not of the West' comes from C. L. R. James (1901-1989). James was a Trinidadian historian, writer and journalist, an autodidact who was known, among other things, for his highly-influential writing on the Haitian Revolution and West Indian cricket, as a foundational figure in what we now know as Postcolonial Studies, as well as his international political activism. The phrase 'In but not of the West' is from James quoted by the Jamaican-born cultural theorist and sociologist, Stuart Hall, in his meditation on the concept of the 'post-colonial'.¹ It has also been discussed by the American sociologist, Mimi Sheller:

Although the Caribbean lies at the heart of the western hemisphere and was historically pivotal in the rise of Europe to world predominance, it has nevertheless been spatially and temporally eviscerated from the imaginary geographies of 'Western modernity'. The imagined community of the West has no space for the islands that were its origin, the horizon of its self-perception, the source of its wealth...As C. L. R. James once put it, the Caribbean is 'in but not of the West'²

James's phrase and this quotation serve as the jumping-off point for this lecture. I want to consider, then, how the Caribbean region and the people who were forced to

¹ Stuart Hall, "When was "the post-colonial"? Thinking at the limit," in *Post-colonial question: Common skies, divided horizons*, ed. Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (London: Routledge, 1995), 246.

² Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to zombies* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1.

make it their home, played a materially constitutive role in the making of the West, while at the same time this role has often been forgotten and ignored outside the region, swept under the carpet of history. In this lecture, then, I want to examine some of the things forgotten – that the Caribbean is ‘in...the West’ – and how this has happened – but ‘not of the West’. I also want to address some of the ways in which this prepositional disjuncture has been resisted by those, like C. L. R. James and Jamaica Kincaid, who have sought to reassert the central importance of the Caribbean in ‘Western’ – and, indeed, world – history. My particular focus is on the *plantation* as perhaps the central defining feature of the Caribbean’s place in modern history.

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First, let me return to C. L. R. James’s phrase: ‘in but not of the West’. At the start of the final year undergraduate course that I used to teach at Royal Holloway, I would begin with a good geographer’s question: ‘where is the Caribbean?’ Now you might wonder whether final year undergraduate geography students should already know the answer to such an apparently basic query, but it served a useful function. For a start, it helped bring home the message about the arbitrary, though no less important for that, nature of geographical boundaries and definitions. Moreover, when faced with a blank map of the southern U.S., Central America, the northern part of South America and the islands in-between, it got students thinking about definitions, whether or not to include the Bahamas or Belize, and why or why not. Now, I am sure this audience would have no difficulty with this task, but it is helpful to consider the basis on which we would include or exclude and ultimately what, if anything, is the essence of ‘Caribbean-ness’: language, or plate tectonics, knowledge or climate, cultural practice or ecology? These questions have been asked before, not least by the American anthropologist of the Caribbean and Latin America, Sidney Mintz. This was his answer:

it is inaccurate to refer to the Caribbean as a ‘cultural area’, if by ‘culture’ is meant a common body of historical tradition. The very diverse origins of Caribbean populations; the complicated history of European cultural impositions; and the absence in most such societies of any firm continuity of the culture of the colonial power have resulted in a very heterogeneous cultural picture. And yet the societies of the Caribbean...exhibit similarities that cannot possibly be attributed to mere coincidence. It probably would be accurate (though stylistically unwieldy) to refer to the Caribbean as a ‘societal area’, since its component societies probably share more social-structural features than they do cultural features.³

So if the coherence of the Caribbean region lies not in a common culture, not least because it was colonised by different European nations, what might these common and defining ‘social-structural features’ be? Well, the Cuban writer and theorist, Antonio Benítez-Rojo, gives a definitive answer:

³ Sidney W. Mintz, “The Caribbean as a socio-cultural area,” *Cahiers d’Histoire Mondiale* 9 (1966): 914-15.

I think that the arrival and proliferation of the plantations is the most important historical phenomenon to have come about in the Caribbean, to the extent that if it had not occurred the islands of the region might today perhaps be miniature replicas – at least in demographic and ethnological terms – of the European nations that colonized them.⁴

We can never prove a counterfactual like the one Benítez-Rojo mentions, but without plantations, he provocatively suggests, the Caribbean might be more like tropical version of the Scilly Isles, or perhaps the Canary Islands would be a closer analogy, than the region we know today. For Benítez-Rojo, the plantation is the decisive site of Caribbean history since Europeans arrived there. For C. L. R. James, the plantation ‘is and always has been the social basis of the Caribbean system’. It was part of the ‘Caribbean trinity’ (along with diasporic populations and the old colonial system).⁵ One way of narrating the modern history of the Caribbean, by which I mean that from the Spanish arrival in 1492 onwards, then, is in terms of the proliferation and eventual decline of the plantation, especially the sugar plantation.

So what was a plantation? They were not unique to the Caribbean, though we might suggest that they were ‘perfected’ there – if such a word is deemed appropriate. There was never a singular ‘plantation’. Their ‘arrival and proliferation’ involved changes in scale of production, levels of technology and sources of labour, to mention just three things. The sugar plantations first established in Barbados in the seventeenth century, with their water, animal or wind-powered mills, were far removed from the centralised steam-powered mills of nineteenth-century Cuba. In general though, this plantation landscape was characterised by large agro-industrial enterprises using substantial amounts of land devoted to cash crop monocultural production for export to metropolitan markets, and often employing masses of unskilled, coerced labour (enslaved or indentured). The societies dominated by plantations were typically controlled by small, authoritarian elites and characterised by a hierarchical system based on race and colour. The plantation system overall was characterised by export orientation, foreign ‘metropolitan’ ownership or control, and economic, political and even psychological dependence on the ‘mother’ country.

The rise and fall of the plantations are a central theme of Caribbean history. I say this not to downplay the importance of other themes – colonialism, resistance, revolution, creolisation – nor the diverse differences between and within Caribbean societies, ecological and political, for example. Rather, we must not be blinded to the similarities of the Caribbean plantation system, which, in the evocative words of Frank Moya Pons, the historian of the Dominican Republic, was ‘a throbbing heart continuously pumping sugar and other commodities to the world market via the Atlantic, while at the same time consuming millions of lives forcefully extracted from

⁴ Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The repeating island: The Caribbean and the postmodern perspective*, trans. James Maraniss (London: Duke University Press, 1992), 38-39.

⁵ C. L. R. James, *Spheres of existence: Selected writings* (London: Allison and Busby, 1980), 153.

Africa and other parts of the world'.⁶ The plantation underlies the 'archipelagic coherence' of the Caribbean.⁷

The local consequences of the development of plantations were profound, on both individual lives, especially of the workers, as well as Caribbean populations, environments and economies. But, the consequences were not just local. Just as the capital investment came from Europe and later the U.S., so most of the profits went back to these places, to absentee planters or, later, overseas companies. The benefits to the West have been stated clearly by Caribbean scholars such as C. L. R. James and, of course, Eric Williams, the first Prime Minister of an independent Trinidad and Tobago and a Caribbean historian. Most famously in his book, *Capitalism and slavery* based on his Oxford D.Phil, Williams laid out his much-debated thesis about the role of the wealth accrued from plantations. To take just one illustrative quotation:

Britain was accumulating great wealth from the triangular trade. The increase in consumption of goods called forth by that trade inevitably drew in its train the development of the productive power of the country. This industrial expansion required finance. What man in the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century was better able to afford the ready capital than a West Indian sugar planter or a Liverpool slave trader?...[T]he investment of profits from the triangular trade in British industry...supplied part of the huge outlay for the construction of the vast plants to meet the needs of the new productive process and the new markets.⁸

'[T]here is now widespread if not universal acceptance of the "weak" form of Williams's argument, that industrialisation and commercial transformation were partly shaped by the slave-economy'.⁹ We see this contribution clearly in the landscapes of some of our great cities, like Liverpool, where I went to school, as well as in our great institutions. Indeed, the Codrington Library in All Souls College is just the most obvious local example.

Supplying highly-desired consumer products for European markets, especially sweet, calorific sugar, the plantations of the Caribbean generated wealth for individuals, families and nations, giving the region a strategic importance. It is partly because of the wealth generated by Caribbean plantations that the region became the site of international rivalry and warfare between European nations, particular the central protagonists during the long eighteenth century – the whale, Britain, and the elephant, France. Islands like Martinique changed hands several times in the course

⁶ Frank Moya Pons, *History of the Caribbean: Plantations, trade, and war in the Atlantic world* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2007), x-xi.

⁷ Barry W. Higman, *A concise history of the Caribbean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5.

⁸ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and slavery*, New ed. (London: André Deutsch, 1964, new edition), 98.

⁹ Nicholas Draper, *The price of emancipation: Slave-ownership, compensation and British society at the end of slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 11.

of the wars between the two. These are just instances of why the Caribbean was firmly 'in...the West' as C. L. R. James put it, and as 'historically pivotal in the rise of Europe to world predominance' as Mimi Sheller has it. Yet, this role is not often acknowledged, rather the Caribbean is often seen as an exotic and marginal region, as 'not of the West'. So how has this happened? How has the Caribbean region been 'eviscerated from the imaginary geographies of "Western modernity"?' as Sheller puts it.

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Perhaps 'the West' forgot? In the British case, for example, with the passing of the height of a sugar plantation system in the eighteenth century, the West Indies came to be remembered as the site for an act of untrammelled imperial benevolence, that being the abolition of slavery and, prior to that, the abolition of the slave trade, rather than as a source of wealth and power. It is no coincidence that Eric Williams was developing his thesis about the around the centenary of emancipation in the British West Indies, when there were plenty of British historians, above all the Oxford historian, Reginald Coupland, who used this anniversary to applaud Britain's selfless imperial motives. Perhaps rather like in 2007, when the bicentenary of the British abolition of its slave trade was used by some to mark British virtue, rather than to reflect on the two centuries of perfected slave trading that had come *before*, the centenary of emancipation in 1938 was for many in Britain a moment to remember British benevolence *towards* the West Indies and, simultaneously, to forget the constitutive role of the West Indies in British history. As a result, to the extent that the pre-emancipation British West Indies was thought of in popular culture and beyond, it was as a place of cruelty and suffering – something ended by the British – rather than creation, the creation of British wealth. Perhaps the Trinidadian author, V. S. Naipaul, captures this sense well with his infamous line that 'nothing was created in the West Indies'.¹⁰

The process of forgetting also relates to the changing economic relationship between Europe and North America, and the Caribbean. As the agricultural importance of the Caribbean declined over time, especially in the smaller islands, new economic activities were pursued. One of these was, of course, tourism. Tourism began to emerge in the region after the mid nineteenth century, especially from 1870, though it was not until after the Second World War that it really took off. The early growth is interesting. My first doctoral student to have successfully completed a PhD, Anyaa Anim-Addo – and I might also add the most recent recipient of the David Nicholls Postgraduate Prize – wrote her thesis on the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, a British-based steamship company that served the Caribbean from 1842, and extended operations into South America in 1851. Charged with carrying the mail, but also seeking to profit from the transport of high value goods and increasingly passengers, the Company played an important part in the development of the trans-Atlantic tourist trade. Interestingly, that it had to carry the mail and thus meet a strict and repetitious schedule, flitting from place to place barely stopped furnished a peculiar sort of tourist experience that would, I think, be very familiar to cruise ship visitors to the region today.

¹⁰ V. S. Naipaul, *The middle passage* (London: Readers Union, 1963), 29.

Tourism continued to grow as plantation agriculture declined in importance across the region as a whole. Now, tourism is a particular sort of industry in that it trades, to a considerable extent, in images – especially images of people and places. Thus, in the context of the rise of tourism, the Caribbean was re-imagined as a salubrious tropical place, a paradise, a real Garden of Eden. Hence, a region that in the eighteenth, and to some extent nineteenth centuries, had represented a leading technological edge in the global economy, as well as a place of back-breaking, coerced labour, was gradually re-cast as a simple, quaint place. The preceding chapter of history – of the ‘arrival and proliferation’ of plantations – was written out in the touristic imagination, as was the importance of the region to the rise of the West. Consider the following:

Here, for the first time, was the tropical beach! How often, from childhood, I had tried to picture it from Kingsley’s vivid descriptions of the histories of the early explorers. There were the cocoa-nut palms, with clusters of green cocoa-nuts growing all along the sea-line out of the soft white sand, with beautiful rainbow colours in the water as it moved lazily backwards and forwards, glittering in the brilliant sunlight.¹¹

The rise of such thinking about the Caribbean has facilitated the writing out of the region from the story of ‘the West’, in that today the public perception is as a tourist paradise, rather than one that occupied an important place in the rise of the West. Thus, the Caribbean has been rendered as a timeless, tropical playground, outside the narratives of progress that characterise the modern West. It is significant here that the model of sun, sea and sand is de-historicising and while this represents not the only form of tourism in the region, even alternatives like ecotourism promote an engagement with a timeless landscape rather than the past. Indeed, we do not in the Caribbean have the same kind of heritage tourism that is beginning, albeit in difficult ways, to emerge in the American South. The Caribbean is rendered a tropical playground rather than formerly integral part of a wider proto-global economy.

There are also a broader reasons for this evisceration of the Caribbean from the history of ‘the West’, one being the way in which the West and its constituent societies tell the story of their – of our – own history. Although things have moved on and the days of the rise of European civilisation are perhaps behind us, not least because the world is changing around us, there remains a sense of how the rise of the West was a self-contained story. This is, of course, a much wider argument about the role of empire, trade and colonies that I can only touch on here. Part of it arises from certain ways of thinking about economic history, especially as evident in so called ‘modernization theory’. The work of the American economist and advisor to President Lyndon B. Johnson, Walt Rostow, is exemplary here, especially his ‘stages of growth’ theory. This is what’s so angered Jamaica Kincaid. When discussing the reading habits of her imagined tourist, she writes:

You have brought your own books with you, and among them is one of those new books about economic history, one of those books

¹¹ E. A. Hastings Jay (1900), quoted in Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*: 63.

explaining how the West (meaning Europe and North America after its conquest and settlement by Europeans) got rich: the West got [p. 10] rich not from the free (free - in this case meaning got-for-nothing) and then undervalued labour, for generations, of the people like me you see walking around you in Antigua but from the ingenuity of small shopkeepers in Sheffield and Yorkshire and Lancashire, or wherever; and what a great part the invention of the wristwatch played in it, for there was nothing noble-minded men could not do when they discovered they could slap time on their wrists just like that (isn't that the last straw; for not only did we have to suffer the unspeakableness of slavery, but the satisfaction to be had from "We made you bastards rich" is taken away, too), and so you needn't let that slightly funny feeling you have from time to time about exploitation, oppression, domination develop into a full-fledged unease, discomfort; you could ruin your holiday¹²

In some ways, Rostow's model, or rather the broader forms of thinking that lie behind it, with its self-contained, autonomous societies, each racing towards the same finishing line of 'high mass consumption', is exemplary of the meaning in James's quotation in that it eviscerates the constitutive role that the Caribbean – and indeed other places – played in the rise of the West.

So, I have suggested a number of reasons that help explain why the Caribbean has come to be understood as 'in but not of the west' – because it has been seen as a site of imperial benevolence in the British case, because it has been aestheticised and de-historicised in the context of tourism, and because of a more general tendency to tell the history of the West and its constituent societies as a self-contained story. All of these are amongst the causes of that writing out of the Caribbean from the histories of the West.

What of the consequences? These are broad and beyond this lecture. They include ways of relating to the region and its people in ways that are deliberately promoted in the writing and images of tourism. Perhaps the relatively marginal role that Caribbean Studies holds in comparison with other forms of various studies is another symptom. What I want to do, however, is to consider some of the ways that this evisceration has been challenged, in other words how the argument has been made that the Caribbean *is* 'in' *and* 'of the West' and thus played a constitutive role in there of making of the modern of West.

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The first thing to say is that Caribbean scholars and activists have been seeking to make this argument for some time. I have already mentioned the work of C. L. R. James and Eric Williams. Operating in a different register, Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* can be seen in a similar light, as representing an attempt to unsettle the tourist's innocent pleasure, who forgets that they have been there before. One of the ways that she does this is by drawing parallels between the training of labour for the Caribbean hospitality sector and the provision of labour for sugar plantations in

¹² Jamaica Kincaid, *A small place* (New York: Plume, 1988), 9-10.

earlier times. Alongside, her insistence that slavery and emancipation continue to haunt the society, she talks of the Hotel Training School, 'a school that teaches Antiguans how to be good servants, how to be a good nobody, which is what a servant it'.¹³

Drawing parallels between plantations and hotels, particularly of the all-inclusive variety, are a staple of such rhetoric. They also characterise some academic work. Consider, for example, the work of the geographer of tourism, David Weaver. In a nice coincidence, Weaver published an article in the same year as Kincaid's *A Small Place* and also about Antigua. In it, he stressed the similarities between tourism and agriculture:

[S]imilarities include the dominant role of expatriate investment capital as well as ownership and management, the seasonal nature of employment, the need for a large component of unskilled local labour, the reliance upon a narrow range of markets, and the responsiveness of each activity to external rather than local needs.¹⁴

While lacking Kincaid's polemical tone, I do not think it is too much of a stretch to see the parallels between Weaver and Kincaid.

Similar linkages are exploited in the US director, Stephanie Black's documentary film *Life and debt* (2001), which interweaves passages from Kincaid's *A small place* to examine and critique the impact of the processes and policies of globalization on Jamaica. While Black plays with some rather clichéd images of overweight American tourists in contrast with scenes of violence and poverty in urban Jamaica, more interesting is the parallel she makes with other sites of economic activity on the island. One segment, for example, focuses on the export-processing zones on that. Rather like the all inclusive hotels, these are enclave spaces carved out from the societies in which they sit. Black's film was released in 2001 and it is worth noting how things have changed since then. One is the cheaper labour the availability of cheap labour in Central America has seen some EPZs migrate. Another concerns the securitisation of commerce and movements especially in the 10 years after the attacks of 9/11 which has seen the expansion of the United States borders into these export-processing zones, so that they effect become the frontline of American security far from the homeland.

Life and debt (2001), with its emphasis on the tensions between political independence and economic dependency, is very much a film of the anti-globalization movement, released before 9/11. And yet with its use of Jamaica Kincaid's *A small place* and how it evokes that book's polemical historical imagination, it is also a film about the shadow cast by the plantation and its present-day successors, such as the all-inclusive hotel and the export-processing zone – were profit is extracted to the cost of local labour.

¹³ Ibid., 55.

¹⁴ David Weaver, "The evolution of a 'plantation' tourism landscape on the Caribbean island of Antigua," *Tijdschrift Voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 79, no. 5 (1988): 320.

Such a perspective finds its intellectual manifestation in so-called dependency theory, a powerful and enduring approach to economic history with a particular association with the Caribbean - and Latin America. Along with its variants and refinements - the 'structural school' and 'world systems theory', for example - the underlying concept in dependency theory was that western industrial capitalism developed and flourished because it was able to command the resources of the non-industrialized world. This command of resources occurred through both formal colonialism and more recent forms of neo-colonialism. Eric Williams' *Capitalism and slavery* was, of course, a clear example of dependency theory, albeit before that term was used. The Guyanese Pan-Africanist, Walter Rodney, and others developed these propositions for other places. In the Caribbean, the 'plantation school' economists like Lloyd Best took Williams' ideas forward to consider the forms of neo-colonialism perpetuated by western finance capital in the postwar period. They have argued that the plantation economy survived the end of formal imperialism to continue a dependency on the tropical regions - the Caribbean at least - not only economically, but also politically and psychologically. Such thinking was a direct response to modernization theories of economic history, as seen in atomism of Rostow's 'stages of growth', in that they sought to reassert the importance of the Caribbean and other 'non-Western' places to the rise of 'the West'.

The flip-side of dependency theory's central argument - that the West rose by extracting wealth from places it has perhaps rather forgotten about - is that the West 'owes' something in return. This is the perspective that underlies much of the reparations campaigns in this country and elsewhere, especially in the USA, that peaked in the 1990s and at the start of the following decade. In a sense, these campaigns represent the public articulation of the sort of economic and historical ideas that underpinned the ideas of Eric Williams. While such arguments are often made with reference to the *descendants* of enslaved people, they can and have also be made in relation to the countries themselves. Whatever you think of reparations claims, or how likely they might be to succeed, they represent a reversal of that flow of wealth that was pumped, historically, by the plantation.

Another more public manifestation of the same impulse to relocate the Caribbean in the histories of 'the West' can be seen in the efforts made to re-forge linkages long forgotten. The current interest from bodies like English Heritage in exploring the collections of the great buildings they manage is I think exemplary here. I have in mind the work of colleagues like Susanne Seymour and Sheryllyne Haggerty at Nottingham University, who have undertaken a project on 'The Slavery Connections of English Heritage Properties'. This forms part of English Heritage's scheme to conduct case study research into the slavery linkages of four of its sites: Bolsover Castle, Brodsworth Hall, Marble Hill House and Northington Grange. A central theme running through their work and this broader field, it seems to me, is an effort to reconnect the histories of great houses over here with great houses over there in the Caribbean. One thinks, for example, Westerhall estate in Dumfries and Westerhall estate in Grenada, both owned by the Johnston and Pulteney families, or perhaps, in a different way, Codrington College, Barbados and Codrington Library, Oxford. Such work, in so doing, offers a powerful and publically comprehensible way of challenging the evisceration of the Caribbean.

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Let me bring things to a close. At the end of his recent survey of Caribbean history, the Australian historian Barry Higman offers a simple, tripartite typology to describe the different phases through which the Caribbean has been drawn into relations with the wider world:

[T]he sea-crossing technologies – canoe, caravel, and container ship – serve as symbols of the main periods of Caribbean history. The last – the container ship – defines a short period, the last fifty years. The caravel stands for a period ten times as long, the 500 years from 1492. The canoe accounts for another multiple of ten, the previous 5,000 years or more. Each of these vessels carried with them whole cultures, representing an increasingly global cargo¹⁵

My focus in this lecture has been that second, 500-year phase, as well as its more contemporary echoes. For many Caribbean writers, artists and academics, it has been the caravel's dark 'cousin', the slave ship, that is the paradigmatic figure of the Caribbean's violent modernity, recurring in poetry, film and literature as a haunting presence. Its equivalent in the Caribbean itself, rather than in the Atlantic, is of course the plantation – a space of forced labour, hardship and loss, but also one – despite what Naipaul said – where things *were* created: commodities and fortunes, certainly, but also music, languages, cultural practices and traditions.

If the caravel has been superseded by the container ship, and here I might also add the cruise ship, so the terrestrial plantation finds its present-day equivalents in the export-processing zone and the all-inclusive hotel. Indeed, for scholars like Frank Moya Pons and Antonio Benítez-Rojo, the plantation and its successors are a key to understanding the Caribbean histories and geographies as a whole. I am inclined to agree, for seems to me that the plantation was not only central to so much of Caribbean history, though not all of course, but that it also serves as a kind of symbol for the Caribbean state itself, an island or continental enclave, as well as, perhaps, the Caribbean as a whole, a place shaped by, and dependent on, external forces – though not determined by them and never passive in the face of these forces. Moreover, if the plantation was at the heart of the Caribbean's material contribution of the West, *in how the Caribbean was 'in...the West'*, and if this has been commonly forgotten, *such that it is not 'of the West'*, then it is by recalling its successors, its alter egos and its shades, that its writing out of history can be challenged.

Thank you.

¹⁵ Higman, *A concise history of the Caribbean*: 327.