The Caribbean

• It's good that everything's gone, except their language, which is everything" (Derek Walcott, St. Lucian Nobel Laureate for Literature 1992, "North and South")

• See map Other Resources
Caribbean or West Indies?

- West Indies denotes the group of islands (including Guyana, which is in South America) that lies in the western half of the Atlantic Ocean, between North and South America. Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Antigua, Leeward and Windward Islands are part of the West Indies linked by cricket and the English language.

- The name "Caribbean" is named after the Caribs, one of the dominant Amerindian groups in the region at the time of European contact during the late fifteenth century.

- The term "West Indies" originates from Christopher Columbus's idea that he had landed in the Indies (then meaning all of southeast Asia, particularly India) when he had actually reached the Americas.

- http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Caribbean
The Atlantic Slave Trade

• **1450** - Spanish & Portuguese start slaving in Africa

• **1865** – Americans still smuggling slaves until the end of the Civil War (technically illegal in 1808)
• The Caribbean started to be the receiving end of British slave trade (from West Africa) in 1550s

• In 1655 Jamaica becomes English colonial territory – initially much stronger than North American colonies.

• Linguistically, Caribbean Englishes are also called Restructured Englishes (i.e. English-derived languages, creoles of the Caribbean)

• Colonial mechanism of replacement; pre-colonial population (Arawaks) wiped out and replaced by West-African "labour", i.e. slaves
The Atlantic Slave Trade

• Where to?
The Middle Passage
Number of people enslaved during this period

- **30 million** taken from their homes

- **10 million** die during capture phase

- **10 million** die during middle passage

- **10 million** survive to make it over the ocean
Christiansborg Castle, Gold Coast, 1750 (now Ghana)

Originally owned by the Danish, who then sold it to the British in 1805 when they abolished slavery. It was a main slave port.
• The Middle Passage - Tight Pack

• Higher mortality, higher profits
• The Middle Passage - Loose pack
  • Lower mortality, lower profits
• Brutal work camps, 4-5 months in Caribbean to “train” the slaves
Christopher Columbus 1451-1506
• Columbus visited five islands in the Caribbean before reaching Cuba. He named these (in order) *San Salvador, Santa Maria de la Concepcion, Fernandina, Isabela,* and *Las Islas de Arena.* The last of these has been identified (almost universally) with the modern Bahamas. The first four are in dispute.

• Most Caribbean people do not care.
... in order that they would be friendly to us-- because I recognized that they were people who would be better freed [from error] and converted to our Holy Faith by love than by force--to some of them I gave red caps, and glass beads which they put on their chests, and many other things of small value, in which they took so much pleasure and became so much our friends that it was a marvel. Later they came swimming to the ships' launches where we were and brought us parrots and cotton thread in balls and javelins and many other things, and they traded them to us for other things which we gave them, such as small glass beads and bells. In sum, they took everything and gave of what they had willingly. But it seemed to me that they were a people very poor in everything. All of them go around as naked as their mothers bore them.... And all those that I saw were young people, for none did I see of more than 30 years of age. They are very well formed, with handsome bodies and good faces.... They should be good and intelligent servants, for I see that they say very quickly everything that is said to them; and I believe that they would become Christians very easily, for it seemed to me that they had no religion." -- From "The Diary of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America, 1492-1493."
The twin experiences of slavery and the plantation system have been of fundamental importance to Caribbean history, economy and society.

Huge profits could be made from the sugar industry, which demanded both capital and a large labour force.

Slavery formed the basis of this and from early in the sixteenth century enslaved Africans were transported to the Caribbean.

The profits accumulated to white plantation society, which was typified by a narrow concentration of wealth and slaveholding in relatively few hands.
“...COFFEE, CHOCOLATE AND TEA – ALL HAD A NATURALLY BITTER TASTE. WHAT MADE THEM PALATABLE TO EUROPEANS WAS THE ADDITION OF SUGAR. WITHOUT [SLAVERY] THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO SUGAR...”

James Walvin
FOR SALE.

On Thursday the 2nd of February 1780,

25 young Congamoomee, Ashantee, and Fantees

Slaves.

Imported in the Ship Alpha, Captain John Smith,
From the Gold Coast.

John Baptist

Printed by Brevettto London.
“Negro village in Queen's Valley"
Sugar Workers
• When slavery ended in the British Empire in 1838, plantation owners turned to indentured servitude for inexpensive labor.

• These servants emigrated from a variety of places, including China and Portugal, though a majority came from India.

• As a result, today Indo-Caribbeans are in significant numbers in Trinidad and Tobago, and a substantial minority in Jamaica, Grenada, Barbados, and other Caribbean islands.
• From the early days of slavery, cultural clash and interbreeding formed the brutal texture of Caribbean life.

• The history of the slave trade and its social patterns made it impossible for the slaves to be unaware of the significant part language played in their continuing enslavement.

• Where possible, slaves were isolated from their common language group and sold and transported in mixed lots, as a deliberate means of limiting the possibilities of rebellion.

• This policy of language suppression was continued on the plantations in the New World. The result was that within 2 or 3 generations the only language available to the slaves for communication either amongst themselves or with the master was usually English or French.
• The former British West Indies include Anguilla, Antigua, Bahamas, Barbados, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

• Map of West Indies (see Other Resources)
• By the mid-17th century the indigenous population of Jamaica had been considerably reduced, although St Lucia, Dominica, St Vincent and Tobago still had large numbers of indigenous people.

• Indeed, on St Lucia, St Vincent and Tobago, the Caribs, one of the indigenous groups in the West Indies, managed to resist European expansion until the 18th century.
Alaskan Cruise: Dining

- What do we consider to be essential for a relaxing holiday?
- Why has gluttony become the indicator of a good holiday?
- Is tourism modern day colonialism?
- Do we travel for the spectacle, or for an actual cultural experience?
Postmodern faux opulence is the order of the day on the Norwegian Jewel.

Tsar’s Palace
The Service

• On top of the ticket price, each guest pays a $10 gratuity per day that is divided among the staff. We are also encouraged to vote (via cards dropped in boxes or online) for our favourite server, busboy, bartender, etc.

• One might think that this would lead to excessive sycophantism, but the staff was unfailingly friendly and polite.
How do we become better tourists, or preferably travelers, now that it is clear that tourism is not the “savior” for underprivileged countries?

• “When discourse of tourism promotes the preservation of the “traditional” for tourist experience it replicates colonialist tropes of Otherness and categories of privilege and poverty.”
  
  • Srilata Ravi
• Ecotourism

• Rejecting resort dynamic (https://etudescaribeenennes.revues.org/7524)

• Employing locals beyond what has been called the “modern sugar worker.” Recognizing that anti-tourism is often an expression of nationalism.

• Recognizing that colonialism is not romantic.

• Caroline is a tourist, even though she lives there.
• 1996

• Travel books, I argue, gave European reading publics a sense of ownership, entitlement and familiarity with respect to the distant parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in, and colonized. Travel books were very popular. They created a sense of curiosity, excitement, adventure, and even moral fervor about European expansionism. They were, I argue, one of the key instruments that made people “at home” in Europe feel part of a planetary project; a key instrument, in other words, in creating the “domestic subject” of empire (3).

- “Yardsticks were religion, political organization, and technology. Christian was superior to pagan, state to non-state, and the age of iron to the age of stone”

- “[Their cultures] ran counter to...biblical tradition...The drive to destroy...rebuild to Christian principles began immediately” (18-19)
Noble Savage

- A term applied in the 18th century to the native inhabitants of the new world, such as Native Canadians or inhabitants of the Caribbean.
- Philosophers, such as Jean Jacques Rousseau in his famous essay, "Social Contract," saw the noble savage as an idealized version of the European before he became civilized and corrupt.
Noble Savage

• The concept embodies the idea that without the bounds of civilization, humans are essentially good, the basis for the idea of the "noble savage" lies in the doctrine of the goodness of humans.

• Once Europeans have contact with the Other, then the Other, relentlessly trustworthy and naïve, becomes corrupt.

18th Century sketch from The Tempest: Stephano and Trinculo introduce Caliban to liquor.
Furthermore, there was the inherent assumption that the savage, recognizing his own inferiority, wanted to be a slave.

Hence, in literature such as *The Tempest* and *Robinson Crusoe*, the Caribbean native immediately pledges his allegiance to the white master (although Shakespeare plays with this, as Caliban actually pledges allegiance to “celestial liquor.”)

Scene from Daniel Defoe’s 1719 novel *Robinson Crusoe*: Friday meets Crusoe
Noble Savage

- Although Europeans recognized these people to be human, they had no plans to treat them as equals politically or economically, and also began to speak of them as inferior socially and psychologically.
- Indeed, the notion of "the primitive" and "the savage" legitimized genocide on the one hand, and European domination on the other.
Mimicry (from your textbook)

• An increasingly important term in post-colonial theory, because it has come to describe the ambivalent relationship between colonizer and colonized. When colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to ‘mimic’ the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits.

• Rather, the result is a ‘blurred copy’ of the colonizer that can be quite threatening. This is because mimicry is never very far from mockery, since it can appear to parody whatever it mimics.

• Mimicry therefore locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, an uncertainty in its control of the behaviour of the colonized.
Mimicry (from your textbook)

• At the same time, there is ambivalence on the part of the colonial subject.

• What is originality?

• Can the art that I produce ever be considered, original, authentic?

• Will it always be considered by the Centre as second-rate, an imitation, an acknowledgement of its own inferiority?

• “You taught me language, and my profit on’t / Is, I know how to curse”

• Is the art of the Caliban consigned to angry protest, or can it be subversive?
Back to.....A Small Place

- Is this the anger we hear in Kincaid’s voice: the recognition of mimicry?
- If so, is she angry that this is the language of the colonizer, or does she know that using our language in this manner makes us really uncomfortable?
- Is she cursing like Caliban (who happens to have a way with language in The Tempest)?
- What about haggling? What are the consequences?
The Long Song

• Many critics say Kincaid comes off as too angry in the text.
• Is it possible to convey the message in a softer fashion?
• Are the rude houseguests of today any worse than the colonizing British?
• Let’s have a look at Caroline.
  • How is she described in the novel?
  • Did you see her as a stereotype—a generalized foil to the vibrancy of July and her community?
• myilibrary search: travel writing
• http://lib.myilibrary.com/ProductDetail.aspx?id=96496 328
Christianity and Colonialism

• How is faith connected to colonialism in novel?

As a Christian scholar, how did you read the depiction of the whites, and Goodwin?

Does the Christian shoulder the misgivings of a historical processs?
Missionaries of course went out with all sorts of motives, and some of them were clearly unwholesome. Yet if we were to try to separate good from bad motives, I daresay we would not, after a mountain of labor, advance the subject much beyond the molehill of stalemate. We might, for example, take a little out of the cultural imperialism bag and put it into the social-service category, and ascribe both phenomena to Western cultural conditioning. But that exercise would do little to further our understanding of the nature and consequences of cross-cultural missions.
• Most Protestant missionary agencies embarked on the immense enterprise of vernacular translation with the enthusiasm, urgency and commitment of first-timers, and they expended uncommon resources to make the vernacular dream come true. Today more than 1,800 languages have been involved in the worldwide translation movement...The importance of vernacular translation was that it brought the missionary into contact with the most intimate and intricate aspects of culture, yielding wide-ranging consequences for both missionary and native alike.
Christian Missions and the Western Guilt Complex
by Lamin Sanneh (Christian Century, April 8, 1987)

• Often the outcome of vernacular translation was that the missionary lost the position of being the expert. But the significance of translation went beyond that. Armed with a written vernacular Scripture, converts to Christianity invariably called into question the legitimacy of all schemes of foreign domination—cultural, political and religious.

• Here was an acute paradox: the vernacular Scriptures and the wider cultural and linguistic enterprise on which translation rested provided the means and occasion for arousing a sense of national pride, yet it was the missionaries—foreign agents—who were the creators of that entire process.

• I am convinced that this paradox decisively undercuts the alleged connection often drawn between missions and colonialism. Colonial rule was irreparably damaged by the consequences of vernacular translation—and often by other activities of missionaries.

• How is Christianity depicted in the novel?
• Calvin College sociologist Kurt Ver Beek surveyed U.S. missionaries who built homes in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch in 1998. After coming down from a post-trip “high,” the short-termers did not evince much change in their lives. Only 16% reported “significant positive impact,” including in prayer, friendships and financial giving. Then Mr. Ver Beek surveyed those whose homes were rebuilt by missionaries and those whose homes were rebuilt by local nongovernmental organizations. He found that there was “little or no difference” in the spiritual response of the beneficiaries.
• Missionaries of course went out with all sorts of motives, and some of them were clearly unwholesome. Yet if we were to try to separate good from bad motives, I daresay we would not, after a mountain of labor, advance the subject much beyond the molehill of stalemate. We might, for example, take a little out of the cultural imperialism bag and put it into the social-service category, and ascribe both phenomena to Western cultural conditioning. But that exercise would do little to further our understanding of the nature and consequences of cross-cultural missions.
Nation Language and Music of the Caribbean
Take 10 minutes to Read Braithwaite’s Nation Language

• Why were languages other than English suppressed?
• Why does Edward Braithwaite say in “Nation Language” that standardized English is inadequate for describing the Caribbean experience?
• How can nation language lead a country culturally?
• If you have your laptop, also read this summary of Braithwaite.

[Braithwaite]
Key Concepts

Shared Colonial Experiences

- Filtered through local circumstances, negotiated in particular contexts, entered into at different historical moments, and interpreted in diverse ways.
Language

*Shared Colonial Experiences*

- Filtered through local circumstances, negotiated in particular contexts, entered into at different historical moments, and interpreted in diverse ways.

- **Caribbean English** is a broad term for the dialects of the English language spoken in the Caribbean, most countries on the Caribbean coast of Central America, and Guyana.

- In the Caribbean, there is a great deal of variation in the way English is spoken. Scholars generally agree that although the dialects themselves vary significantly in each of these countries, they all have roots in 17th-century English and African languages.
Creole Language

- **Creole** language is a language that originates as a nativized pidgin language.
- A **pidgin** is a simplified language that develops as a means of communication between two or more groups that do not have a language in common in situations such as trade or forced labour.
- Caribbean English is influenced by the English-based Creole varieties spoken, but they are not the same language.
Creole Language

- The term Creole was first used in the 16th century in Latin America to distinguish the offspring of European settlers from those born elsewhere and from Native Americans.
- In colonial America, the term originally applied to any American-born descendant of a non-native person.
- The term—a French word believed to come from the Spanish criollo, which means “native”—has since acquired varying meanings in different regions and periods of history.
Creole Language

• In the Caribbean, the word *Creole* is used to identify descendants of any European settlers.
• In many circumstances, this meant that the Creoles neither identified with their African heritages, nor were considered to be racially and socially equal to their European ancestry.
• Many believed that their mixed ancestry made them mentally unstable (see Bertha in Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*).
Key Concepts

**Creolization**
- The process of mixing African and European peoples, cultures, and languages, via colonialism, creating the Creole cultures of the Caribbean

**Syncretism and Hybrid**
- The process of mixing cultural elements and creating a new, resultant, product (the hybrid)
Caribbean Languages

- **Creoles** (West-African + Indo-European features): Papiamentu
- (Portuguese-based), Jamaican English Creole, Haitian Creole
- French
- **Caribbean Amerindian languages**: (Arawak/Taino), Maya
- (mainland Belize)
- **Indo-European languages**: (Danish), Dutch (The Netherlands Antilles), English (Barbados, Jamaica, Bahamas, Puerto Rico), French (Haiti, Guadeloupe, Martinique), Spanish (Cuba, Puerto Rico)
- **Continuum** from standard varieties of European languages to
- local creoles
Caribbean Languages

• **Grammar**: close to mainstream English, except for questions (declarative statements with rising intonation, e.g. You are coming?)

• **Vocabulary**
  
  • Local extensions of general words, e.g. tall hair for long hair (Jamaica)
  
  • Local words: catspraddle (to fall ungracefully; Trinidad)
  
  • Loans from French creole, e.g. macafouchette (leftovers, Trinidad)
  
  • Loans from local Spanish e.g. fruutapang (breadfruit, Jamaica)
  
  • Words from West African languages, e.g. bakra (a white person)
  
  • Loan translations from West African languages, e.g. sweet mouth (flattery, flatterer)
Caribbean Languages

- **Language attitudes: On "stoosh-ness"

- "I can write perfect English, but den you cyann' talk perfect English to Jamaicans, dey say you stoosh...

- English sound too decent. When you curse in [English], you sound stoosh. Cyann' curse in English, man! People will laugh after you and say, "She stoosh, eenh?"

- "Yuh gat to larn yuh, yuh own language, you know…

- Abee (=we) na waan dem Englishman teaching an

- ting da no mo, man. Dem ting da mus' done."
Dub Poetry

- Unlike traditional poetry, dub poetry emphasizes **sound** (repetition, rhyme, and word play) rather than **sense** (imagery, metaphor, simile) to convey themes of social (in)justice.

- When examining the linguistic characteristics of Caribbean poetry, particularly oral or performance poetry, it is impossible to separate language from rhythm.

- While the ability of dialect to express the complex emotions and subtleties of poetry had been routinely questioned, it was only after the 1970s that the concept of 'orality' in poetry began to be given credence, and Brathwaite's concept of nation language began to be explored.
In “The Occasion for Speaking,” George Lamming says those from the Caribbean feel like exiles. Why?

What is the *idea* of England? Is it similar Marlow’s *idea* in *Heart of Darkness*?

What are the three important events in Caribbean history, and how do they affect culture?
Language and the Critics (Readings)

• In “The Muse of History” Derek Walcott claims that history has created a culture of servitude and pathos. Is this an agreement with A Small Place?
• How has the slave narrative affected culture?
• How does Walcott reconcile history at the end of the essay?
Caribbean Poetry

• As Caribbean critic Ayanna Gillian remarks, “for Braithwaite, the shape of this passion in the Anglophone Caribbean was not so much English itself but language; not just the broken English of the slaves and their descendants but the rhythm, cadence and sensibility particular to the region.

• It was the mode of expression, the turn of phrase, the colour of metaphor; it was a prism of English and the submerged ancestral languages of Africa, a sound that attempted to define the historical, cultural and linguistic space of the Caribbean.

• It is this particular concept of nation language that we see employed by these poets with the central purpose of revolution, affirmation and healing.

• However, what oral poets seek to do by making art out of ordinary, common language, is to legitimize what had been denied and to affirm identity in the face of rootlesness.”

• Is this what we see in The Long Song? What is the function of language?
Caribbean Poetry

• Let’s turn to Michael Smith
• “Mi Cyaan Believe It”
• Mi Cyann Believe It (translated)
Key Concepts

**Musical Reception**

- Under colonialism, local Caribbean music was for the slave and underprivileged class, scorned by the ruling class.
- Today, the music is received openly in a global market, especially reggae.
Musical Styles

• Modern calypso (or kaiso) was invented in Trinidad, but its influence has spread out to infect all of the Caribbean.

• Each island has well-respected, major calypsonians and national pride for the musicians runs high. Many people believe that calypso is about jumping up and dancing at carnivals, that the form is devoted to entertainment.

• True calypso is a very serious form of social commentary. The calypsonians address everything from politics to violence to the conditions of island life, although the attacks are often framed through subtle satire.

• Harry Belafonte is a famous American singer of Jamaican descent.
Musical Styles

- The roots of reggae music are based in Jamaica. This indigenous music grew from ska (think RHCP), which had elements of American R&B and Caribbean styles.
- It also drew from folk music, Pocomania church music, Jonkanoo fife and drum bands, adaptations of quadrilles, plantation work songs, and a form called mento.
Key Concepts

Identity

- Creole, hybrid forms that emerged under colonialism are today symbols of national identity

Tourism

- Caribbean music has become globalized. Caribbean immigrants bring their music where they go, while tourists to the Caribbean purchase the cultural products and disseminate them
Key Concepts

Class and Cultural Politics

• During the colonial era, the government and its elites feared and banned musical forms that roused the masses

• In the 20th century, singers, especially calypso singers in Trinidad and reggae singers in Jamaica, use their vocal genres to criticize government policies and politicians
“Congo Man,” by The Mighty Sparrow

- The ensemble includes a horn line, upright bass, guitar, and percussion.
- Reflects the modern calypso sound, but the “call-and-response” aspects are rooted in African work songs.
- Sparrow’s lyrics politics in the 1950s were critical of the Trinidadian government’s failure to follow election promises.
- He also liked to mock the western view of the Caribbean life.
Questions

• With which globalized forms of Caribbean music are you most familiar, and how have you had access to them?

• Can we think of any other music and cultural syncretisms than those found in the Caribbean?

• Where are they? What were their influencing cultures?