



Marsha Myrie Obi

THE FOURTH RESEARCH TRADITION

Lessons from the Third World in
Decolonizing Higher Education

Black Studies

Collection Editor

CHRISTOPHER MCAULEY

LIVED PLACES
PUBLISHING



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This book is for my first grandbaby. I am so sorry you will come into a world that is too unkind and unsafe. I hope you never forget I tried and I will keep trying.

Abstract

Katherine McKittrick, Christine Sharpe and Rinaldo Walcott assert that people went into the Middle Passage as African and came out Black. Blackness is a zone of death devoid of intellectual capacity, culture, and language – identity. Plantation societies are underpinned by the logics of Black death. Colonialism is made possible in the absence of human Blackness – the mass labour which accumulates the wealth of others and seeds the modern world. As a part of the project to rebuild Black humanity in the Commonwealth Caribbean, two universities were established to serve as centres of research and canonization of Caribbean culture. The Caribbean intellectual tradition, as old as the Caribbean region itself, coalesced within the new academies of the West Indies and also in diasporic spaces connected to the universities and communities. A major element of developing the Caribbean academy has been rejecting Western knowledge hegemony and disciplinary structures. I argue that this has resulted in a fourth research tradition which integrates anti-oppressive pedagogy, public intellectualism and disciplinary transgressiveness as major features of a project of reconstructing and humanizing Blackness. The fourth research tradition is yet to be unpacked by the Global North for its potential value in ‘souling’ predominantly white institutions. Breaking knowledge hegemony should be at the heart of equity, diversity, inclusion, indigeneity and accessibility work in Western universities and contemplating possibilities based on models from Commonwealth Caribbean universities that were always decolonial in their ethos, gets us closer to the goal.

Key words: fourth research tradition, decolonial universities, two-handed reading, anti-oppressive pedagogy, Caribbean Intellectual Tradition

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Learning Outcomes

- (1) To compare and contrast the connections between the Caribbean Intellectual Tradition and the Western Intellectual Tradition.
- (2) To dramatize the pervasiveness and connection between Blackness as an identity and personal and community trauma
- (3) To analyse ways that the approaches of the Caribbean Intellectual Tradition hold valuable lessons for strategies that can decolonize the Western University.
- (4) To ideate a fourth research tradition that is not based on disciplinary separatism as an a priori feature of knowledge.

Introduction

I have a love/hate relationship with Barbados. I probably will never give up on Barbados even as I ponder what it will take to move past Barbados' unique history that has made its pathologies seemingly impenetrable. Barbados is unique in its interaction with colonialism. Firstly, Barbados' position as the first landfall on a sea voyage from Africa made it an important shipping hub in the Transatlantic enterprise. Secondly, Barbados is one of the smallest single geographical spaces upon which slavery and the plantation enterprise was established. The island is flat, and its small size made the plantation and slavery enterprise brutal and complete. There were no hills for escape and the magnitude of plantations resulted in a concentrated interaction with colonizers and colonization. Thirdly, and relatedly, the British stranglehold of the Island was exacerbated by the fact that Barbados is one of the only territories that never changed hands of colonial masters. Barbados bore the imprint of British racketeering, gluttony and savagery.

Unsurprisingly, Barbados' geographical and historical experience is embedded in its culture. Hurt and subjugation run deep within not just the psyche of people but also the national imagination and relational pattern. Manipulation and gaslighting are enshrined in the way Barbadians interact to each other.

The culture is designed to be one that demands survival of the fittest – Father against daughter, mother against son, intimate partners gridlocked in toxic partnering. While I will always hold Barbados in the esteem I must because it is the land of my birth, I also refuse to join a refrain of blind praise for a little island that punches above its weight¹. Blind glorification of Barbados glosses over many of the issues that are driving the high levels of crime, family instability and government corruption that hinder the true development of a decolonial and safe society.

My personal story of growing up in Barbados is as textured as the national story of Barbados. I come from two families of Black pioneers, but like so many other people in Barbados, they have not done the psychological work required to emerge from the historical pain and terror embedded in Barbadian DNA. My mother lost her mother at the age of fourteen, and her father was a cruel patriarch who derived his power from his physical terror over his children and the religious respectability of being a pastor. My father's grandmother is one of the first large-scale landholding women in Barbados. My father went on to hold some of the highest offices in the civil service of Barbados, but his father was an abusive drunk who molested his daughter, much like my father molested me. One cannot truly ever hate one's land of birth or one's mother, or father for that matter – one can have deeply complicated relationship with your mother, father, or with your land of birth, but rabid hatred is inimical to the understanding of self which human existence demands. All this is the stuff that trauma is made of. It is the trauma that seeps out of the youth in Barbados and drives the current epidemic of gun crime. Intellectual endeavour has been an important salve

that has stopped me from falling into complete despair about Barbados and my personal family circumstances. It was not just about adding to an already established core of knowledge for me. It was about understanding the knowledge I was making and what had influenced and informed it. Intellectual endeavour replaced other family connections I should have had but did not.

When my mother lost her mother to an aneurysm, her wider tribe should have understood that she would need special therapy and care to become a well-adjusted woman. However, the long history of burying trauma in the Commonwealth Caribbean meant that the major concerns after my grandmother's death were practical – having a burial and finding a place for my mother to be housed. My mother moved to Canada to be with her older sister, who had settled successfully in Canada as a nurse. From the outside I am sure it seemed as though my mother had passed through the experience quite well. She migrated – a dream that many Caribbean people had and still have to find the promise of 'opportunity' and 'possibility'. My mother's support terminated with her bread-and-butter needs being taken care of. She was left without tools to reconcile not only that she lost her mother at a tender age but also that the death happened on her birthday and she would relive that loss on every single birthday she had. What was to be the one day of the year for her to celebrate herself and her life was also a memory of her greatest loss. My mother, did not find a safe outlet for her unresolved childhood issues. She put her faith and hope in my father, who was emotionally abusive and controlling. Of course, grief will always prevail, and it presents itself to us in interesting ways. When my mother had her firstborn – me – she fell into postpartum depression and refused

to touch, feed or interact with me. I don't feel like the disconnect between us ever resolved. Perhaps the most tangible thing my mother gave me is her love for books. Ironically that love has saved my life many times so perhaps she has done the ultimate job a mother is to do and kept her offspring safe, after all!

I start this book with these reflections because they aptly encapsulate the complexity of understanding Barbados specifically and the Caribbean generally. This book can be seen as a 'celebratory' reading of the Caribbean, which may seem to starkly juxtapose my last project, which focused on the colonial relics of gender relations in the Caribbean that result in deep family instability (Myrie Obi, 2025). However, both these views are the Caribbean. One is not more important than the other and the other does not negate the one. It is for this reason that I contend, to understand the Caribbean, one has to always be willing to look and then relook to make meaning and sense of the Caribbean experience. The Caribbean is bad and good, fraught and pure. I suggest the framework of *two-handed reading* as a methodology (see the methodology section below) that can help with reconciling and processing the contradiction of Caribbean. Two-handed reading allows for me and hopefully my readers to understand two projects – my last book and this one – as two sides of the same coin. The simple and complicated answer is both accounts are accurate and important descriptions of the Caribbean – like my mother's experience. Losing her mother was horrific and left unresolved, but she also got off a small rock and into the global north, where, for a myriad historical reasons, her life would presumably have had more opportunities. While my work on gender relations in the Caribbean shows an example of uncompleted

decolonization and the harm caused by bringing those ways of relations into the contemporary moment, this work highlights an example of successful decolonization through the establishment of Commonwealth Caribbean academies and approaches to research and knowledge production. Things and people are seldom either all good or all bad! That is the point – that is an important piece in the puzzle of life.

The colonial project demands a superficial bifurcation that creates binary systems and thinking. Things and people become either all good or all bad as a part of the colonial narrative. The world is classified based on difference and not the fact that as different as we may be, we are all far more human. In all my knowledge making, I reject binary approaches to any and everything. I read Caribbean complexity and I read Caribbean success. It is important to accept the complicated and unresolved issues left to be addressed within Caribbean social relations, including relations among and between neighbours, families and the political leadership with the masses (Fanon, 1967; Myrie Obi, 2025). Simultaneously, there are also personal and national stories of Caribbean success. In this book I write about the Caribbean Intellectual Tradition (CIT). The CIT is germinal to the development of a global Black (radical) Intellectual Tradition and has gifted the world with approaches such as anti-oppressive teaching and learning, critical studies as a method and analytic and transdisciplinarity as a decolonial alternative to Western approaches to establishing and understanding academies. Writing about the contribution of the CIT is a continuation of my PhD research. I still think this research is critical because it addresses an ongoing gap in

our understanding of who makes knowledge and who consumes it.

I reside between Canada and Barbados. My liminal existence extends to my relationship with the academy. I am trained within the Caribbean Intellectual Tradition, and trying to seek employment within the Western Intellectual Tradition (WIT). I feel as though my entire package is a misunderstood anomaly. My research, like that of the wider CIT is outside of the 'status quo and White privilege [and delegitimated by] scholarSHIT' (Hines, 2023). This book, by unmasking the process of developing Commonwealth Caribbean academies, encourages more recognition for diversity in knowledge systems and approaches to knowledge making worthy of tenure consideration. This book is not only useful inside ivory towers. In both Canada and Barbados, I see a Black community I can only describe as adrift. The levels of Black-on-Black male crime in Canada and Barbados is disquieting. The large scale disappearance of Black children in Canada with disregard by Canadian authorities is abhorrent. Black families in Barbados and Canada are fractured, and many Black children, like those in plantation days, are raised with one (usually female) parent². School attendance, the perceived importance of school and success in educational settings are all indicators moving in a negative direction in the Canadian and Barbadian Black communities. This state of affairs is quite different from what obtained just about sixty years ago.

Back then, Caribbean people, whether they lived in the diaspora or at home, were swept up in a nationalist intellectual moment that touched every aspect of people's lives. Groups were meeting in community-style gatherings such as Walter Rodney's

Groundings. People congregated in bookstores such as Third World in Bathurst, Toronto, for guest lectures (Myrie, 2025). As Eric Fillion shows in the book *Soundtrack to the Revolution*, the nationalist sentiments stirring the Caribbean mirrored others and connected to larger movements against subjugation and ineffective political systems globally (2025, p. 16). This disciplining of the mind muscle, not just through education as a colonial activity but as a way to contemplate and germinate Black self-determination was central to Black hope and confidence. There is a uniqueness about Caribbean anti-resistance and nationalist movements given its central place in the development of modernism and its 'significant contribution to anticolonial thought' (Kamugisha, 2024). This book is available to Black communities – both in Canada and at home – to interact with themselves not just as consumers of other people's knowledge products but as descendants of a tradition shaped out of the resistance and resilience of their ancestors' struggles. I hope it invokes curiosity and a return to community and family study about our live and possibilities beyond this current mess. I agree with Omar El Akkad that building (Black) justice and freedom is a muscle that must be exercised (p. 167). Self-, family and community study are vital training. The Black community must urgently return to it.

Sixty years is far removed for many people. While I was connected to the nationalist moment in the Caribbean by direct stories from mentors themselves connected to the moment by first-hand involvement, those memories are becoming lost to younger generations through physical and memory death. While some of the methods of nationalist organizing have been documented in books such as Walter Rodney's *Groundings*

with My Brothers, Natanya Duncan's *An Efficient Womanhood*, Carole Boyce Davies' *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* or Alissa Trotz's *The Point is to Change the World: Selected Writings of Andiaqe*: I believe there is still a gap in the literature about the Caribbean's contribution to building decolonial and post-colonial approaches to knowledge making and academic endeavour. My primary focus in this book is to examine how what started as a grassroots intellectual movement came to underpin the development of two academies in the Commonwealth Caribbean and a teaching and research tradition that focuses on challenging the harm of embedded racism within knowledge systems, research, and education as a colonial tool. During graduate school, I recognized that one of the major features of the CIT was its non-adherence to Western disciplinary divisions. My curiosity led to my PhD thesis which is one of the first graduate research products to take up the intellectual history of the Commonwealth Caribbean (Hinds, 2021). Where my PhD research focused on linguistics, this book is an expansion that moves beyond my findings about Caribbean linguistics to contemplate a wider intellectual history that is transdisciplinary. In place of the disciplinary limitation of my PhD research, in this book I contemplate knowledge hegemony, its germinal importance to colonization and how Caribbean approaches to knowledge making challenge knowledge hegemony.

This book should be useful to (Black) instructors, especially in the diaspora but also at home, to understand the philosophical underpinnings of the Caribbean challenge to white, Western, harmful research and educational structures. I hope they find

validation and pride in reading this account. Approaches to teaching and learning that reimagine education, research and knowledge endeavours removed from colonization are often classified as anti-oppressive pedagogies and research methodology. Although the terms are often used, they are seldom explicitly defined. Anti-oppressive pedagogies/research methods were developed by equity-seeking intellectuals during the post-World War anti-colonial, global moment. Anti-oppressive pedagogy/research methods are a commitment to three tenets as the foundations that enable teaching/learning and research: critical thinking as the primary goal of education/research; using assessment and higher education structures to include and uplift, not exclude/remove; and creating educational/research spaces that challenge white supremacy and hegemonic/patriarchal structures to create safe spaces for Black, Indigenous, and queer + joy, love and belonging. Anti-oppressive educators/researchers do not strive to be experts or to be removed from those they research/teach/engage. Rather, the goal is community co-creation of meaning and mutual, shared benefit. Anti-oppressive educators/researchers can lead but also be led by those whose lives they represent and impact through teaching and research. I hope the book can also be used by allies and others within Western universities to better understand knowledge systems beyond the Western intellectual tradition. The system of tenure that we are all chasing now was not set down upon a mountain on tablets. It is an extension of colonial/capitalist/patriarchal systems that uphold themselves through erasing any kind of knowledge and ways of being that scrutinize the status quo.

Methodological notes

This book uses qualitative/conceptual methodology to make a contribution to available intellectual history about the Caribbean. Intellectual history, according to Peter Gordon, is closely related to 'philosophy, political theory, cultural history and sociology' (2012, p. 3). Put differently, intellectual history is a transdisciplinary endeavour and I believe that is a primary reason it works as a methodological approach to framing an investigation of the CIT. The CIT is transdisciplinary, and this is a feature I say more about in Chapter 1. Gordon defines intellectual history as '...the study of intellectuals, ideas, and intellectual patterns overtime' (2012, p. 1). He differentiates between the 'history of ideas' and 'intellectual history' with the former focused on analysing how ideas morphs over a historical period while the latter is concerned with how ideas are shaped by factors beyond academic conditions:

...intellectual history resists the Platonist expectation that an ideas can be defined in the absence of the world, and it tends instead to regard ideas as historically conditioned features of the world which are best understood within some larger context, whether it be the context of social struggle and institutional change, intellectual biography (individual or collective), or some larger context of cultural or linguistic dispositions... (2012, p. 2)

Intellectual history not only interrogates ideas themselves but also individuals involved in generating ideas; the institutions which facilitate their work and the societies in which their work is situated: '...the history of intellectuals is indeed a significant dimension of intellectual history. One can approach the history

of intellectuals in a variety of ways, amongst which perhaps the most prominent are: biographical, institutional, and social-structural' (Gordon, 2012, p. 12). Understanding the output of the tradition is not possible without a general understanding of the resistance of Black people in the periods of Emancipation (late 1800s) and later Black power and nationalist movements (between 1930 and 1979). The experience of social death³ which created Blackness in the Caribbean changed the meaning of every political and social idea, the ferment of those ideas and how the CIT developed in response to these changes. Intellectual history thus unlocks the potential to embody research by tethering it to community and community struggles rather than knowledge being 'free-floating' or value-free.

Gordon's explanation of intellectual history broadens the traditional definition.⁴ The broadened definition is useful in the case of the CIT given its disparate nodes of input. As Paget Henry explains, the output of the CIT is 'the work of ministers, doctors, lawyers, historians, economists, political activists, creative writers, and philosophers all working together' (2000, p. 7). Stefan Collini notes that intellectual history can be written by a non-historian (2016 p. 15). Intellectual history provides the expansiveness to follow the CIT through its natural formation rather than to make it fit obtuse disciplinary expectations.

The Caribbean society after legal emancipation and again during the nationalist movement (1930–1979) was going through a period of struggle for self-definition, self-pride and self-governance. Since the Caribbean society had been created by a set of logics that underpinned Black dehumanization and

social death, a new intellectual project was required to facilitate the building of a different kind of Caribbean society where Black people could have dignity. These kinds of analyses are within the purview of the broad definition of intellectual history. Reflection and documentation of intellectual processes are important to the continuation of any civilization. If readers want more after they engage with this work, they hopefully are encouraged to dig deeper into the Caribbean canon, including Paget Henry's *Caliban's Reason*; Dennis Benn's *The Caribbean: An Intellectual History 1774–2003*; Aaron Kamugisha's *History Beyond Coloniality: Citizenship and Freedom in the Caribbean Intellectual Tradition*; or Gordon Lewis' *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought: The Historical Evolution of Caribbean Society in its Ideological Aspects 1492–1900*.

During my PhD research, my main method of data collection was interviewing. I sat with architects of Caribbean linguistics between January 2010 and December 2014. I return to that corpus of data, not as a student constrained by the whip of my committee but as a public intellectual who is keen to stay connected to the true purpose of the Caribbean intellectual tradition for three major reasons. First, I am colossally proud of the work of the CIT, and I want to add to the documentation and discussions of it and its usefulness. Also, as a Caribbean intellectual practising in the Canadian space, I feel like my work and my portfolio are misunderstood. The Western Intellectual approach to knowledge making is not the only way to practise knowledge construction and making people aware of that is important especially in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) where Black scholarship is seen not to “fit” with the white culture of the

college or department' (Hines, 2023, p. 48). Third, the corpus of data I collected for my thesis was not exhausted. I believe that there is as much research waste as there is food waste or clothing waste in a capitalist world. All waste is environmentally detrimental- academics behave as if they are not contributing to the environmental crisis of super storage engines that need acres of land for their foot prints and millions of gallons of water to cool them. They behave as though the 'high rate journals' good for career advancement are actually being read and used in solving the world's wicked problems. I do not buy brand name as a part of my capitalist resistance. I also do not consume brand name research. I reuse all things I come to possess – including data sets. Researchers should be looking for sustainable and value-added ways to use research products as much as all of us are called to question and improve our consumption habits. To introduce the reader to the depth and value of data I collected, I include a scrapbook section in this book. The Western intellectual tradition encourages knowledge makers to view themselves as experts who interpret the voices and experiences of others. I reject that approach to knowledge making and see myself rather as a person who uses the tools of synthesis and documentation to encourage people to curate their own stories.

For organizational purposes I use the development of linguistics in the Caribbean as an entry point, but this book is meant to be unbounded in its argument. It can be applied to any discipline and the organization of knowledge making both inside and outside of university spaces. Where there is a need to discuss knowledge development in a way that makes a disciplinary example useful, I use the discipline of linguistics. There are

two reasons I retain linguistics as a referent. First, language is a primary tool used in humanities and social science research/education. Philosophical thoughts or outcomes of a complex experiment are all communicated and written in English. Thus, it makes sense that at the crucible of the intellectual decolonization project in the Caribbean would be a reclamation of language. Second, it is purely for ease, as this work expands my PhD thesis, which focused on the development of linguistics in the Commonwealth Caribbean, and this is a corpus of literature with which I am familiar. I encourage readers to get curious about their own disciplines, community organizing or whatever endeavour. Question how or if things change as ideas move across different epistemological and geographical regions of the world. Outside of the academy, we can get curious about many things, including how feminism has impacted grassroots organizing in Black communities or how Black music is embedded in anti-colonial or nationalist movements across the world.

I think that anyone interested in the Caribbean Intellectual tradition and gifts it may contain for decolonizing Western approaches to knowledge making should also be willing to employ two-handed reading:

Two hand reading is engaged. It is an approach to rereading history and available material. It is reading beyond a mechanical process – a book in hand becomes time travel. With a pencils, sticky notes and highlighters reading becomes healing. It is not reading to cite a passage or prove a point but pensive and supplicant reading. Two hand reading refutes binary ways of knowing and understanding the world. Two hand reading creates

enough space for multiple approaches to gender performances, political performances and the wider human existence – to want to explore living in ways that do not demand an outcome of right or wrong. Two hand reading is important because asking what is necessarily and naturally the other side of the knowledge already available – what is missing for the most complete view possible, encourages makes openness and flexibility. The approach to working through life becomes grappling with what is and not what we dream. Complexity does not become bad or a ‘spoke in the wheel’. It is expected and patience and grace to work through complexity becomes a valued life skill (Myrie Obi, 2025, p. 8).

It is valuable that Loveless framed the importance of listening and speaking into new research practises but I contend that there is something missing (p. 22). I believe that ethical listening and speaking arise from ethical reading. Two-handed reading is ethical reading. Two-handed reading seeks to reshape the ethics of the academy from being an administrative research formality that can be achieved by research that is harmful to people and upholding of colonial logics. Two-handed reading is a process of self-discipline and an investment in the **process** of knowledge making. It eschews research for career advancement. It is reading for humility and grace and new world making. It is about revealing your own culture to the world and signalling that voyeurism is colonial and not research. Two-handed reading is a *technology* of ethico-erotic (research) forms (Loveless, p. 28).

The CIT is not perfect. It is a human creation, and inherently there are contradictions which we explore more in Chapter 1. The fact

that the CIT has blind spots and contradictions does not make it any less valuable to this moment in historical time. It is a tradition germinated out of the worst human atrocity ever unleashed and one very well placed to envision a world beyond our current one- we urgently need a world beyond our current one.

Intellectual traditions, history and romanticism

Knowledge hegemony is a requirement for colonial domination. Thus, although there are academies several years older than those associated with the 1600s global colonial creep, knowledge production was whittled down and carefully curated as a function of colonizing and 'civilizing' savage regions of the world. The Western intellectual tradition was and still is the centre of colonization. As Deborah Thomas aptly puts it:

British imperialism was not merely a system of economic exploitation and political domination but also one of cultural control that attempted to socialize colonial populations into accepting the moral and cultural superiority of Englishness. The British colonial state throughout the West Indies and elsewhere legitimated its rule by transforming space and linking hierarchies of education and status to color, class, culture, and gender (Thomas, 2004, p. 4).

In the CC, it was especially easy for colonizers to pass off knowledge production and preservation as a white endeavour given the decimation of autochthonous populations and dehumanization of the Africans brought to the region. Eden in the CC was the arrival of the first slave ship. God, his father and son were white

men. With the introduction of new people and cultures in the fifteenth century, the territories of the CC became host cultures without hosts. The murder/separation of the CC autochthonous people and those brought to the territories as a part of imperialism and colonialism did not allow for a seamless continuity between past and current epistemologies in the CC. However, this rupture does not mean that there were/are no schemas of knowing in existence in the Caribbean or that what has emerged is Western.

The epistemology in existence is not just the sum of borrowings from dominant colonial cultures but an admixture commonly referred to as 'Creole.'⁵ There is always continuity and discontinuity in the development of ideas. This recognition is especially true in understanding Creole epistemologies because they are sites of acceptance, rejection and recreations of ideas, epistemologies and theory. Aaron Kamugisha evokes some of the most cogent and helpful Caribbean writings on the meaning of tradition and modernity and the complicated and two-handed way that they must be read in the context of the Caribbean experience (Kamugisha, 2019, pp. 17–20).

The 1492 navigational error which landed early colonizers in the Americas and geographically close regions forever changed the historical path of several lands and people both in the Western European nations and the 'New World' nations that were colonized. Over the next two centuries, significant trade grew between the Western countries and the new discoveries, specifically America and the Caribbean. The wealth created by the trade resulted in a 'new class' fermenting in Western countries.

The grand bourgeois, or the nouveau riche, as they became known, started to shape the cultural and intellectual spaces of the societies in which they lived by using their money to fund expeditions. As they colonized, they also collected information on 'new' cultures and lands. Romanticism emerged as a challenge to Enlightenment ways of thinking toward the end of the eighteenth century. Where Enlightenment focused on tradition and classical knowledge, Romantics deviated from tradition, thereby solidifying their new political and social position.

Romanticism placed a premium on the experience of the individual and sought to break ties with classical and received notions of culture and art. Pieter Seuren believes that archaeology and linguistics were two areas of study which resulted directly from the rise in Romanticism (1998, p. 52). The prominence of linguistics was not by accident. It had become a discipline associated with high culture, 'great' societies and knowledge making. Göran Malmqvist is unable to provide a date for the commencement of linguistic study in China, although he notes the end of the first important period, the Qin, as 221 BC (Cardona, 1994, p. 2). In India, linguistic study was inextricably tied to religion (p. 25). Arabic linguistics starts with a religious focus but that changes over time (Fleish, 1994, pp. 171–2). Thus, linguistics became important as Romantics sought to build a tradition bigger and better than those they needed to overshadow to gain imperial supremacy. As Edward Said writes, '... power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging is very important to culture and imperialism and constitutes one of the major connections between them' (Said, 1993, p. xiii).

Therefore, to decolonize knowledge, a priori 'correctness' of the Western intellectual tradition must be smote. Western knowledge must take place as being only one of several intellectual cultures. The examples of Chinese, Indian and Arabic-based linguistics help to show that knowledge making has always been varied and complex enterprise and there are several traditions older than Western ones. The contemporary university is nothing more than an entity created out of a particular political moment – the same one that give rise to racial capitalism.

The Africans dispersed across the world, forced to work on plantations, and Indigenous inhabitants encountered by colonists became subjects of study. Their dehumanization and their languages and cultures were derided as being primitive and savage in the Janus project of knowledge creation and colonial expansion. The pejorative categorization of non-Western cultures, built up as a part of the support mechanism of colonialism and imperialism, survived throughout the domination of European imperial controllers in colonial spaces. The Second World War and the weakening of traditional imperial overlords resulted in the rise of nationalism and independence movements in former colonial holds. A systematic challenge⁶ was mounted to reshape perceptions about the culture and language of former colonial spaces, including the Commonwealth Caribbean.

Notes on the Caribbean

Monoliths are a figment of colonial imagination. There are very few aspects of human existence that fit seamlessly into the simplified labels and classifications (Torres-Saillant, 2006, pp. 1, 6). The Caribbean is certainly an example of a complicated, multi-defined

space which has been oversimplified by frontier logics and colonial enterprise. It was formed by conquer and conquest played out over prized possessions of overseas colonial powers. Different colonial masters approached colonization differently. While France, for example, depended heavily on assimilation as their approach to colony building, the English developed entirely different rules that demarcated their Caribbean territories as sites of subhuman, brutish and deprived people (Césaire, 2025, p. 18). The multiplicity of colonial masters and their patterns of plantation/society development have left a pluri-cultural, multi-racial, linguistically complex region.

Silvio Torres-Saillant outlines the Caribbean as ‘an archipelago shooting out of the Gulf of Mexico plus the coastal regions of South America, “from Colombia to the Guyanas and the riverine zones of Central America, in so far as those parts of the mainland were the homes of people engaged from time to time in activities which linked their lives with those of the people of the islands”’ (2006, p. 12). Franklin Knight’s definition calls attention to the Dutch remnants in the Caribbean and also the inclusion of Puerto Rico, which is not geographically encapsulated in the United States of America (2012, pp. ix, x). I agree with broad categorizations of the Caribbean, but given the vastness and diversity in the region, this book obviously cannot cover the entire region. Thus, this book is about the Commonwealth Caribbean subregion.

The intellectual development of the broad Caribbean is nuanced, and dealing with smaller, interconnected subregions enhances feasibility of a project and also guards against overgeneralizations. Christoph Mullerleile explains that ‘the Commonwealth