

Radical Caribbean Intellectual Tradition(s)

Is there a Caribbean Intellectual tradition, a canon which can be identified by themes and ideas rather than by geographical essentialism? ...there is a corpus called Caribbean literature, there is a tradition of political thinking and activism which in the twentieth century includes the works of Marcus Garvey, C.L.R. James, George Padmore and Frantz Fanon...

[an intellectual] tradition is made up of the themes, the ideas that frame the questions asked. Think of the Western intellectual tradition. Do we study the names, Kant, Marx, Hegel, Newton, or do we grapple with their ideas and the questions they posed?

The crisis facing the radical Caribbean Intellectuals is that we have yet to think of the questions that have arisen from within the intellectual tradition.

Bogues, Anthony. (SA -1998): 29-45.

Where can we find this intellectual tradition?

- The search for an intellectual tradition is not limited to conventional academics, but can include the popular imagination
- Rastafari, has strong intellectual/philosophical underpinnings, describe by some as a folk philosophy
- Or we can look at popular music, such as reggae.

"Babylon System" – Bob Marley

We refuse to be
What you wanted us to be;
We are what we are:
That's the way (way) it's going to be. You don't know!
You can't educate I
For no equal opportunity:
(Talkin' 'bout my freedom) Talkin' 'bout my freedom,
People freedom (freedom) and liberty!
Yeah, we've been trodding on the winepress much too long:
Rebel, rebel!
Yes, we've been trodding on the winepress much too long:
Rebel, rebel!

Babylon system is the vampire, yea! (vampire)
Suckin' the children day by day, yeah!
Me say: de Babylon system is the vampire, falling empire,
Suckin' the blood of the sufferers, yea-ea-ea-ea-e-ah!
Building church and university, wo-o-oooh, yeah! -
Deceiving the people continually, yea-ea!
Me say them graduatin' thieves and murderers;
Look out now: they suckin' the blood of the sufferers (sufferers).
Yea-ea-ea! (sufferers)

Tell the children the truth;
Tell the children the truth;
Tell the children the truth right now!
Come on and tell the children the truth;
Come on and tell the children the truth.

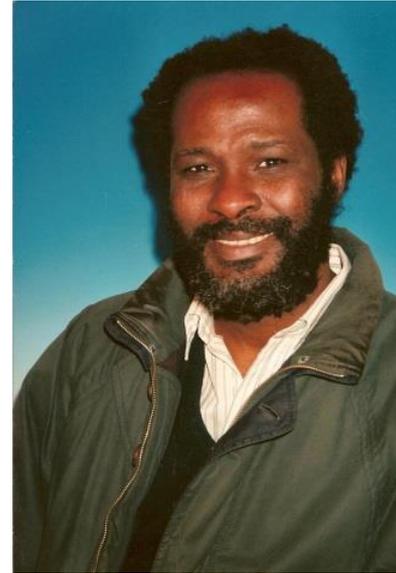
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*What if we were to extend Bogue's proposition; rather than end at Marcus Garvey, C.L.R. James, George Padmore and Frantz Fanon...to include **De Kom, Cairo, Roemer?** How might the Caribbean intellectual tradition look differently, and what do they have to say about colonisation, decolonisation and the ways in which we live the colonial afterlife in the present?*

Caribbean Intellectuals

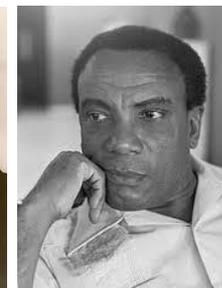
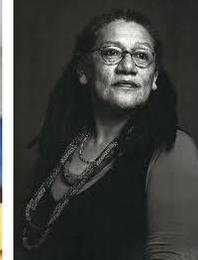
- English Caribbean:
 - Marcus Garvey;
 - Stuart Hall; C.L.R. James; George Padmore; Sylvia Wynter; E. K Brathwaith; Derek Walcott; Wilson Harris
- French Caribbean
 - Frantz Fanon; Eduard Glissant; Aime Cessaire

Dutch Caribbean Thinkers



De Kom (1898-1945), Edgar Cairo (1948-2000), Astrid Roemer (1947), Jan Arion (1936-),

Dutch Caribbean Thinkers



Responses to Colonialism and its afterlife

- The thinkers we have suggested for consideration were all responded to colonialism and/or its afterlife.
- Spanning a long period of activity from the 1920s to the present.
- How is their work (un)known?

It is important to analyze their work within broader context of critical de/anti-colonial thought in the Caribbean and elsewhere?

- With overlapping histories of activity with other Caribbean intellectuals:
 - De Kom/ James/ Padmore/ Cesaire/
- With overlapping concerns:
 - Labouring classes (in the 30s), language, Blackness, colonial relations and their afterlives.
- Yet divergent interest – Gender and Sexuality. What are the specific conditions that gave way to such concerns emerging in the Dutch context?

Is there work ‘indigenized’ as significant Dutch works?

Frantz Omar Fanon

- a Martinique-born Afro-Caribbean psychiatrist, philosopher, revolutionary, and writer whose works are influential in the fields of post-colonial studies, critical theory, and Marxism.
- July 20, 1925, Fort-de-France, Martinique

Anton De Kom: biography in context

- Born: Paramaribo, 22 February 1898
- Death: March/April/May 1945 Sandbostel (Neuengamme, Germany)
- 1920: in Haiti
- 1921-1933: In the Netherlands
- 3 Feb 1933- 22 May 1933 in Suriname
- 22 May 1933- 1944 in the Netherlands
- 1944-1945 Germany



Portret van Anton de Kom door J. A. Donker Duyvis, 1938. Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam.

No better means to cultivate the inferiority complex of a race than these history lessons exclusively dedicated to the naming and praising of the sons of another people. It took a long time before I had freed myself completely from the obsession that a negro must always and unconditionally be the inferior of every white man ... No people can fully mature that maintains an inferiority complex as a hereditary defect. For that reason this book attempts to raise the self-respect of the Surinamers and to prove the inaccuracy of the peace intentions of the Dutch at the time of slavery.

Questions of the Proletarian

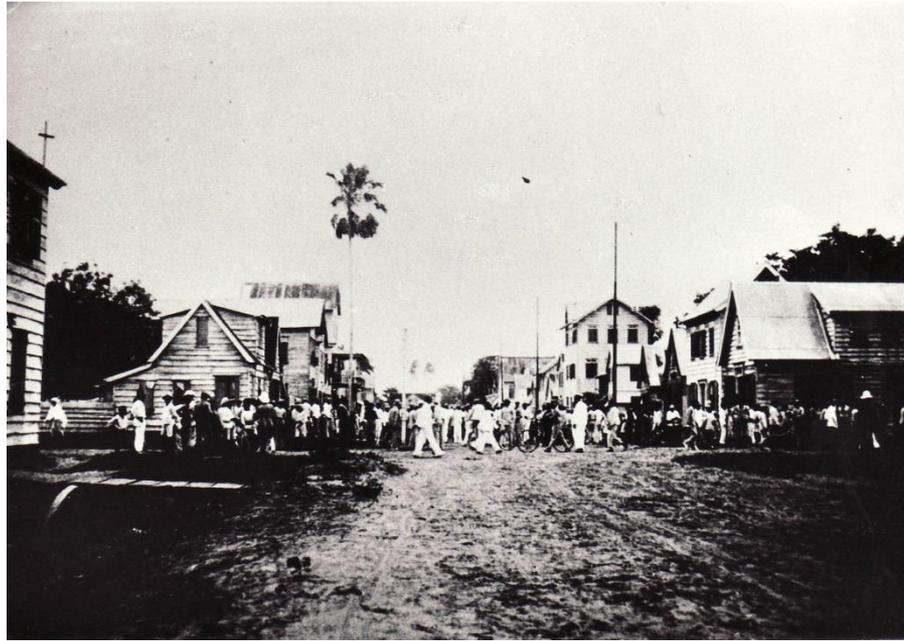
“We want to prove only one thing: colored fellow countrymen, you are slaves, you will remain living in poverty and misery, as long as you do not trust your own proletarian unity. We cannot be saved with an incidental plot of land, a spade or a plough provided on credit. A great plan of national reconstruction is needed, a plan directed at collective enterprises”

“From the lit-up streets of the distant inner city, the strains of music drift across. It is to the sound of hot jazz (Negroes are good enough to entertain their masters with spirited music) that many white people drown their sorrows. Here in the slums, where the proletariat live, it is still and dark. In dingy, cave-like hovels measuring twelve foot by twelve, the colored families lie fast asleep exhausted from the toil of the previous day and awaiting the next. Not all of them are lucky enough to have a roof over their heads.”

Communist activist & Anti-Colonialist: Context I

- 1920-1933: (communist) social activist & anti-colonialist
- Context: Dutch colonial exploitation, economic crisis, unemployment
- Connections with Communists & Indonesian Nationalists in the Netherlands
- In NL: contributor of *The Communist Guide*
- Public speeches against Dutch Colonialism & exploitation of Workers
- Propagandist of the League Against Imperialism/International Red Help
- Under surveillance of the Dutch Intelligence Service
- 1932: Classified as 'communist agitator' by secretary of Colonies De Graaff
- 1933: activist in Suriname
- 1933: crowd gathered at de Kom's home
- De Kom arrested: accused of attempting to overthrow colonial administration
- Crowd moves to police station, demanding his release
- Expelled to the Netherlands
- 1934: De Kom publishes *We Slaves of Suriname*
- Fierce critique of Dutch colonialism and its legacies of exploitation

'Disturbance in the West': 1931-1933



Anti-colonialist & Anti-fascist: context II

- Persona Non-Grata Colony (Suriname) & Motherland (the Netherlands)
- Ideological orientation: difficulty finding Job
- Price of Resistance: Family in Poverty & Depression (1930's)
- World War II: 10 May 1940 Germany occupies the Netherlands
- Disenfranchisement and Genocide on Jewish Citizens
- July 1941- August 1944: De Kom member of resistance against Germany
- Articles in illegal press *De Vonk/Courier*
- Fierce critic of German occupation and anti-semitism
- Developing ideas of 'new constitutional order' (internal self rule)
- Proponent of Indonesian independence
- August 1944: arrested by 'Grüne Polizei', deported to Germany
- March/April/May 1945: Death (Sandbostel) Neuengamme, Germany

How is De Kom known and remembered?

- Late recognition
- Indicative of broader phenomenon
- Experiences & contributions 'colonials' WWII:
- Largely silenced
- How does this knowledge and cultural formation connect to definitions of the Dutch nation?
- Complex picture





<http://standbeelden.vanderkroegt.net>