

## 8. Conclusion:

# Body Politics and Political Writing

*[T]o create dangerously is also to create fearlessly, boldly embracing the public and private terrors that would silence us, then bravely moving forward even when it feels as though we are chasing or being chased by ghosts.*

*(Danticat 2010: 148)*

### 8.1 Unruly Bodies, Disobedient Subjects

Women writers of the Caribbean diaspora, especially those residing in the United States and Canada, have made a major contribution to the global emergence and wider public and scholarly recognition of Caribbean literature since at least the 1990s. Recurring themes that Caribbean diaspora, or diasporic literatures deal with are, for instance, migration, belonging, and often conflicting relations between the Caribbean and diaspora home spaces, or ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity and difference. The persistence of colonial structures of domination in social, political, and economic terms as well as gender and racial prejudices are discussed increasingly along issues relating to the body, sexuality, eroticism, or deviance. Women writers like Makeda Silvera, Ramabai Espinet, Edwidge Danticat, and Angie Cruz often return to a distinct coming-of-age genre to retrace subject formation or to navigate postmodern, postcolonial approaches of identities as multiple, decentered, anti-essentialist. The four authors reimagine Caribbean women's sense of their being in the world, while being "connected by their representation of Caribbean experiences in metropolitan locations in North America" (Page 2011: 226). They offer a kaleidoscopic portrayal of migrant experiences by means of their diverse backgrounds showing that Caribbean diaspora identities are heterogeneous, made up of multiple origins, destinations, and visions (cf. Torres-Saillant 2013: 328).

For a comparative approach of their fictional writings, I have suggested a pan-Caribbean diaspora framework: A Caribbean diaspora poetics acknowledges diverse Caribbean backgrounds, such as the Jamaican, Trinidadian, Haitian,

and Dominican, multiple diaspora experiences and routes both across the *Black Atlantic* or crossing the *Kala Pani*, and the different diaspora locations in Canada and the United States. The increasing public recognition of diaspora writers, however, often happens at the expense of the visibility of regional writers which is to say that what is recognized and labelled as Caribbean fiction is in many cases the produce of diaspora authors and the publishing industry in the North (cf. chapter 1). To avoid such confusion, building on the studies, for example, by Ferly (2012), Torres-Saillant (2013), and Machado Sáez (2015), I have suggested considering literary production of the Caribbean diaspora and the diasporic coming-of-age novel in particular as a literary tradition in itself and of its own.<sup>391</sup> This study's preference for the term Caribbean diaspora literature, on the one hand, sets it apart of a strictly-defined and outdated notion of a national literature and underlines the deterritorialized character of that particular literature and the unique feature of the Caribbean diaspora as being twice-diasporized.<sup>392</sup> And, on the other hand, proposes an alternative genre to the more controversial labels of ethnic or minority or migrant literature with which nevertheless must be engaged with in the context of a globalized literary market. I have tried to avoid such labels as metropolitan minority *Bildungsroman* (cf. Slaughter 2007: 286) or immigrant coming-of-age literature (cf. Künstler 2012) that fix these texts into a category of 'exceptional' ethnic writing as compared to a non-marked Canadian and U.S.-American mainstream literature.

The selection of the four novels, while not representative, has certainly been exemplary for the diversity of Caribbean diasporic fiction, the existence of a distinct coming-of-age genre intertwined with a likewise manifoldness of embodiment, body regimes, or body politics in the Caribbean and its diaspora that especially a feminist-engaged reading discloses.<sup>393</sup> The fictional represen-

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391 In turn, the writers who receive attention by the mainstream, e.g. prize-winning authors like Marlon James or probably even Danticat, are hardly considered in their countries of origin, in the case of James this may well be due to his openly lived homosexuality; in the case of Danticat, lower reception may be due to the language barrier and the rate of illiteracy among the Haitian population.

392 The unique feature of the Caribbean diaspora is its condition of being double diasporized. As Hall explains, the Caribbean itself constitutes a space of encounter and creolization of diverse ethnicities and cultures, such as African and Indian. Large-scale migration to the metropolitan regions mainly in North America and Europe then has created a deterritorialized Caribbean diaspora (cf. Cohen 2008; Hall 1990, 1995).

393 Agard-Jones confirms that "Caribbean feminists have been formidable advocates for attention to individual bodies, as they have shown how gendered and sexualized forms of exclusion operate in and through bodily difference. For example, M. Jacqui Alexander's seminal work on law, citizenship, and same-sex desire in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas demonstrates how the postcolonial state has used and

tation of the body and embodiment show the extent to which these are marked by colonial or postcolonial conditions and configurations of race, ethnicity, gender, and respectable sexuality. As it has turned out, the *coming-of-age novel* is among the preferred genres to elaborate on bodily development and experiences that human beings make with, through, and because of their bodies. I have argued that this genre is a concrete form and specific decolonial expression of the *novel of development* that in some respects takes up common, known generic structures but transforms certain features in other instances and departs from a more traditional *Bildungsroman* that is argued to be outdated (cf. Moretti 2000). The reading of the four novels has shown, first of all, that normative conventions of the genre may be transgressed by non-normative bodies and marginalized subjectivities and, secondly, that subject formation, necessarily so, also happens via the body.

This study is located at the intersection of literary studies, body studies, and Caribbean diaspora studies. It contributes to contemporary research on the *Bildungsroman* bringing together literary studies, gender and feminist narratology, as well as postcolonial and decolonial approaches. The four authors – with Danticat perhaps being the exception – constitute a group of writers rarely noticed in German literary studies and in the western research landscape. The selection of writers with a postcolonial and originally Anglo-, Franco-, and Hispanophone background along with the multiple diaspora approach suggested in this study is rather still unusual for the local English and American Studies departments, but it certainly proves the linguistic, cultural, and literary or artistic diversity that characterizes the field of trans-lingual, transnational Caribbean studies that are gaining increasing recognition in German research departments. This development may transcend institutional and departmental boundaries and build bridges between, for instance, English and Romance philology. It is furthermore argued for a transnational ‘extension’ and approach in literary studies that moves beyond confining categories of national literatures.

While much criticism in Caribbean literary studies has focused for a long time *either* on the African *or* Indian diaspora, the U.S. American *or* Canadian location along with *either* the Hispano-, Franco-, or Anglophone Caribbean,

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continues to use marginalized bodies to shore up its own legitimacy. Deborah A. Thomas has shown how national discourses about crisis in Jamaica have been mapped onto black women’s bodies. Patricia Mohammed’s reflections on indigenous feminist theorizing in the region has highlighted how the gendered body emerges as a key point of contention in Caribbean theorizing about postcolonial forms of equality and freedom” (186). Thomas Glave writes about the Caribbean body politics and humanity focusing on colonized black queer bodies, thus he writes against the devaluation of certain bodies.

this study has sought to unify these diverse, separate diasporic and linguistic spaces. It goes beyond a single-focused diaspora approach by including both the African-Caribbean (or Black diaspora) *and* the Indo-Caribbean diaspora. This study thus contributes to existing scholarship on fictional writing of the Caribbean and the diaspora, for example Brähler's (2013) supranational and comparative approach, Japtok's (2005) Black Atlantic sensibility, or Journey's (2009) comparative, cross-linguistically engaged reading. It has been suggested throughout a diaspora reading that does not privilege one location over the other but is aware of the specificities of both the Caribbean and the metropolitan locations in the North. Also, situating this study within the field of Caribbean diaspora studies, I propose reading the coming-of-age novel as a manifestation of a political writing.

Presupposing an inextricable link of body and literary genre, the purpose of this study has been to investigate the extent to which the coming-of-age novel constitutes a writing of the body. Since the genre's prime focus is on subject formation in distinct social contexts, we can move on from the central premise that there is a fundamental relationship between the body and society or the collective, and body and the self (cf. Howson 2013: 11). The Caribbean diasporic coming-of-age novels I have analyzed in the preceding chapters discuss individual lived experience, communal development, as well as mechanisms of social inclusion and exclusion that either support or inhibit personal development within seemingly predetermined power structures.<sup>394</sup> Each writer places under scrutiny normative models of citizenship while also reflecting on the status as immigrant as well as on questions of belonging to foreground issues of class, race, and gender. Some of the formal and content-related features that I have identified in the second chapter are fluid genre boundaries, the productive use of non-standard language, a preoccupation with the past and remembrance, a trigger moment, retrospection and fragmentation, circularity and diasporic routes, as well as corporeal development and embodied subjectification.

The body has not succumbed to a mere object of investigation. The politics of body and genre is pointedly summarized by Rishoi: "By focusing on adolescence, by definition a time of rebellion and resistance, and by foregrounding contradictory desires and discourses, the coming-of-age narrative provides a

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394 The counter-discourses the novels re-construct, and to a certain degree encourage to build, are directed against hegemonic discourses of white supremacy, Black nationalism, Creole elitism, economic and sexual exploitation, and patriarchal control of the female body. They criticize the dominance of white middle-class feminism that is often ignorant of its own race and class biases and privilege.

congenial form for women writers to successfully question the power of dominant ideologies to construct their lives” (Rishoi 2003: 9). Caribbean diasporic women writers offer a critical evaluation of as well the political conditions in the Caribbean and the situation of migrants. Their creative, literary investigations of women-centered, multi-generational histories, as especially Espinet suggests, add these hidden stories to the collective knowledge.

The analytical chapters have dealt with Makeda Silvera’s *The Heart Does Not Bend*, Ramabai Espinet’s *The Swinging Bridge*, Edwidge Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, and Angie Cruz’ *Soledad*. These diasporic coming-of-age novels share not only the generic aspect, how they develop a coming of age narrative but also the respective foci on the body and embodied identity. In their own particular ways, they imagine and conceptualize the body as site of resistance and oppression while elaborating on questions of subjectivity and agency. On her way to self-actualization each of the young women alternates between a deep sense of confusion, denial, and even self-hatred to acceptance and embracing her perceived difference.

In yet diverse ways, the novels juxtapose the genre with the body. All four novels reconstruct the coming-of-age process via the body which is accomplished by the narration and often explicit description of physical changes and representation of bodily transformation. Angie Cruz, for instance articulates in her fruit metaphors a symbolic corporeal dissolution and aging of the body, her comatose state and re-awakening. The protagonist Mona of Espinet’s novel notices her own reluctance and shyness by the loss of hair on her once tough arms that for her have signified determination. The transgressive sexualized body in Silvera’s text can be interpreted as allegory of the transgression of the genre: the queer body queers the genre convention of the normative *Bildungsroman*. Danticat’s protagonist moves through various stages of bodily pain in her way to self-actualization and healing.

In terms of colonized and colonizing bodies, the coming-of-age genre is productively used in a writing of marginalized bodies, it is a visualization and a recuperation of these bodies. Moreover, my analysis of the four novels proves the argument made by Mehta who contends that Caribbean fiction “focus[es] on the body as a dialectical site of traumatic experience and knowledge [...] to demonstrate how diasporic bodies are complex entities in-formation” (2009: 2). These diasporic bodies, at times, challenge hegemonic body politics and ethnic concepts, such as middle-class respectability in Silvera’s novel (chapter 4) or Canadian multiculturalism and Trinidadian creolization that are unaccommodating of Indian-Caribbean identity in Espinet’s novel (chapter 5). The novels, as I have shown, depict women characters whose bodies are ‘discursive-

ly unmade' and need to be put together in their attempts to 'come off clean' of the constraints imposed on the women's body (leading to body shame). Cruz's and Danticat's novels (chapter 6 and 7), in particular, introduce two mother figures who relive a traumatizing past of sexual violence that their bodies are unable to forget – in both cases their experience of motherhood is inextricably linked to this inability. Both women carry out drastic measures to overcome terrifying memories – in order to relieve themselves from the terror that haunts them, ultimately reclaiming their bodies. Thus the authors' writing of the body documents healing as life-long, life-giving, sometimes even life-ending process in which the body matter figures as palimpsest on and in which lived experience is stored, never erased entirely. This 'bodily knowledge' comes to constitute an essential part of our being.

## 8.2 Writing is Political

With respect to the literary production in the Caribbean and the diaspora and its reflection of the persisting structures of colonial inequality that define not only the Caribbean region itself but are a global phenomenon, one of the leading Caribbean critics and philosophers, Sylvia Wynter, claims, "[t]o write at all was and is [...] a revolutionary act. Any criticism that does not start from this very real recognition is invalid" (1996: 31). At the core of this statement lies the presumption that literary criticism needs to be aware of the historical context from which Caribbean literature has emerged as well as the political, activist, socio-critical purpose of such literature; that the creative writing that emerges from a (post-)colonial condition and diasporic, deterritorialized situation is if not revolutionary then at least political. Despite the cautionary advice by Machado Sáez that "a concurrent danger lies in being perceived as telling these stories in an overtly political fashion" (2015: 3),<sup>395</sup> in what remains, I would like to ponder on the aspect of the political in Caribbean diasporic women's writing. The question to ask is not whether it is political at all. The answer to that would repeat but the obvious. The more interesting questions to address are rather *what* is political about it, what makes Caribbean diasporic women's writing *essentially* (and strategically so?) political? What is the specific context

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395 "Academic readers privilege texts that they see uncovering lost and/or marginal cultural histories, while also expecting that this act of recovery is political" (Machado Sáez 2015: 26).

out of which this form of a political or politically engaged writing has emerged and what has the genre form of the coming of age to do with this?

The political already starts with the selection of the texts. The creation of the corpus brings with it conscious decisions – and it happens based on certain, sometimes even preconceived criteria regarding the text form and style, its content, and/or its context or even the author's biography which make some novels more suitable for analysis than others. We can speak of a politic of selection and exclusion (or inclusion in more positive terms) that comes with canon formation and the labelling or categorization of fictional writing, and that is just as well behind this doctoral thesis. The selected novels themselves are political because of the social, cultural work they perform and the didactic function they fulfil. When discussing the political, I mean that author and novel are concerned with marginalized postcolonial histories and marginalized identities (as in ethnic or sexual), it has to do with a criticism of social power relations and the persistence of structures of inequality.

Considering literary writing as political brings with it a certain understanding of a dialogical relation between *fiction* and *reality*. Clearly, this is not supposed to mean that what we have here and what we find in the four novels I have selected is a mimetic reproduction and representation of the aforementioned reality in the novels. Rather, it is a form of literary world making – in the sense of Aristotelian *poiesis* – that follows certain genre criteria and realist conventions but has its own rules. A cultural studies approach to literature, suggesting a context-oriented close reading, implies that fiction forms not in isolation, in a vacuum detached from its surrounding but is very much influenced by and in interaction with its context; it is world informing. From a reader's perspective, this opens alternative ways of seeing, constructing, and understanding the world (and/or world politics) or even a supposed reality. It expands subjective world view and has the potential to raise awareness. In this respect, the coming-of-age novel narrated retrospectively from an adult's point-of-view works particularly well. In addition to the adult perspective, it includes the worldview of the child, creating distance, adding an external view on the adult world, and different modes of judging the grown-up world. The naïve and partial perception of the world through the eyes of the child may also be a narrative strategy to speak uncomfortable truths without being subjected to cultural forces and social conventions. In doing so lies the possibility of semantic shifts and widening. Yet the narration of the socialization at least depicts precisely those societal limitations on adolescent and adult women and politics of body control – thereby locating them in their social frame and constantly commenting on their significance.

What resonates with the assumption of a political impetus of Caribbean diasporic literature or a politically engaged writing is a kind of *littérature engagée*, which however departs from the moral, ideological sense that one would find in Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism, but still also rejecting the credo of an *art for art's sake*. Rather, this literature is emphasizing, taking seriously, and aesthetically engaging with the intersection of literature, politics, social movements, and the body. The writers, in some way or another, display a commitment to a feminist activist agenda and identity politics. Espinet writes against the absence of indentured women from India from the official archival record; Cruz writes to create space where Dominican American identity can exist. Silvera's politically-engaged fiction in line with her non-fictional work has generated important stimuli for Black Canadian feminism as well as anti-racism in Canada.<sup>396</sup>

Danticat most explicitly engages with a politically engaged writing in *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work* (2010). Borrowing the title from Albert Camus's lecture "Create Dangerously" (1957), she expands the idea of a *littérature engagée* to Caribbean migrant literature, including as well its reading practice. Danticat refers to Camus in her interpretation of the term suggesting "that it is creating as a revolt against silence, creating when both the creation and the reception, the writing and the reading, are dangerous undertakings, disobedience to a directive" (Danticat 2010: 11). She develops this idea against a very precise context of the Haitian dictatorship and censorship when both writing and reading was life threatening, for a society in desperate need of art that would sustain them. "They needed art that could convince them that they would not die [...]. They needed to be convinced that words could still be spoken, that stories could still be told and passed on" (ibid.: 8). For Danticat, in accordance with Camus, and I would argue for the other three writers selected here just as well, the political lies in literature's function of necessary resistance to totalitarian structures or structures of oppression as well as in its potential to provide readers with hope. As the contexts have shifted from post-colonial dictatorships to the vulnerability of the migrant body, her writing does not lose its critical engagement. The "immigrant artist [...]" inevitably ponders the deaths that brought her here, along with the deaths that keep her here, the

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396 Amy Kebe, too, is cautious to read Silvera's work (and Black Canadian women's writing in general) only in aesthetic terms, while pointing out that the personal indeed is political and that Silvera indeed fuses "politics and poetics in her work" (Kebe 2008: 278). She argues that "Silvera exposes interlinked factors of patriarchy, racism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and ethnocentrism [and homophobia] that collide with Black women's lives often negatively defining who they are and their place in society" (ibid.: 273).

deaths from hunger and executions and cataclysmic devastation at home, the deaths from paralyzing chagrin in exile, and the other small, daily deaths in between” (ibid.: 17).

Literary scholar and author of fiction Ifeona Fulani, too, describes the literature by Caribbean women writers located in the diaspora in North America as inherently political. She attributes their political agenda first of all to the context of voicelessness and non-representation out of which Caribbean women writers have emerged and emancipated themselves. By this she means the silencing of their voices by the “master discourse” (2015: 64): the Western literary canon and tradition, by the literary critic, the publishing industry, as well as the lack of publishing opportunities. The commodification of literature and commercialized market demands for multicultural literature apparently do not consider the literary output by Black authors or an existing market for their writing as relevant (cf. ibid.: 64-66).<sup>397</sup> Publishers and editors then usually squeeze in literary works in recognizable, reductive multicultural categories.<sup>398</sup> Because Caribbean literature is pushed to the margins by and of the North American publishing industry, according to Fulani, this “necessitates a *politics of engagement* on the part of the Caribbean writer who seeks publication” (ibid.: 70; emphasis added). Against this context, “the question of identity, often posed by editors in terms of marketing and market niche, will come to haunt the exiled Caribbean woman writer” and “once she enters the U.S. publishing arena, [she] will inevitably have to contend with ideas and responses shaped by prevailing discourses on gender, race, writing, and difference, in addition to historical race-based prejudices and assumptions about black people and writing” (Fulani 2015: 70). Consequently, the Caribbean women writer “must negotiate textually with her audience as well as politically, within the industry” (ibid.: 78); her response to the market conditions is a distinct *politics of style* and strategic *literary anancyism*.<sup>399</sup> Writers of the diaspora like Danticat or Jamaica

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397 Black writing is often considered as too autobiographical, too limited on individual lived experience. It is “too frequently judged to be lacking in the ‘universality’ that, allegedly, would make our fiction appealing to a nonblack audience and therefore profitable to publishers” (Fulani 2005: 71).

398 In the course of the ‘multiculturalization’ of the literary field, the recognition of new market segments defined along ethnic categories “has resulted in a demand from publishers for texts, and therefore writers, bearing hyphenated American identities, which in turn has resulted in the demand for texts that are ‘representative’ and ‘authentic’” (Fulani 2005: 71-72).

399 She uses style “to denote the collective characteristics of writing and written presentation including language, diction and linguistic pattern, cadence, and thought structure. In English literary studies, style is usually distinguished from content; however, this separation is not typical in Caribbean writing, in which con-

Kindcaid, who neither establishes belonging to the U.S. nor confesses attachment to her Antiguan nationality, have developed different strategies to gain literary success. Danticat easily shifts between identities, being accommodated easily in the U.S.-American mainstream, multiculturally as Haitian-American, or 'simply' Haitian. With her writing, that usually engages with the politics and histories of Haiti and her adopted home the United States, she reaches across cultures and creates intimacy by provoking sadness, empathy, and compassion (cf. *ibid.*: 76-77).

The question that remains is – and this still needs further research to be answered adequately – what is the relation of the political impetus of Caribbean diasporic women's writing on the one side and multicultural politics, the consumer, and market demands on the other side? Both Machado Sáez (2015) and McGurl (2009) detect an intimate relation constructed between text and reader as consumer. McGurl speaks about "an intensely personal relation to literary value" (16), while Machado Sáez contends that intimacy functions "as an accessible commodity that is part and parcel of the reading experience" (5). Here, I would argue that the coming-of-age genre works particularly well especially in the ways it directs, maybe even manipulates readers' sympathy (see chapter 6).

Ethnic minority literatures, like Caribbean writing in Canada and the United States, are politicized, also in economic terms, in a way other, non-ethnic or ethnically 'unmarked' (white), U.S. American or Canadian literature is usually not. These literatures are more often than not read and measured against the ways ethnicity, identity, and multicultural politics are represented, 'applied,' and eventually categorizable and marketable. Authors, like Zadie Smith and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie point out the pressure of representation and being looked at as cultural translator of their respective communities – or even continent (as is the case for Adichie) – which limits the range of topics to engage with as well as the aesthetic choices made by the writer (cf. chapter 1). "The high cultural pluralist writer is additionally called upon to speak from the point of view of one or another hyphenated population, synthesizing the particularity of the ethnic – or analogously marked – voice with the elevated idiom of literary modernism" (McGurl 2009: 57). When talking about the political of the literature of Caribbean diasporic fiction, we need to address the politics of the

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tent – Caribbean subjectivity and experience – is communicated in a style that is the product of that subjectivity and that experience" (Fulani 2005: 69-70). Anancy the spider is a trickster figure in African diaspora folk tradition, characterized by its wit, intelligence, and transgression. By employing this shape-shifting figure, Fulani refers to the African diaspora but also the Caribbean context of colonial history and domination that Caribbean writing maybe out of necessity needs to engage with and has thus developed a resistant attitude.

literary field, the publishing industry but also the (academic) background and demands of the readership. This influences the choices writers make in terms of content and style.

What is the function of Caribbean diasporic writing at the intersection of multiculturalism and globalization? How do the publishing market, reading public, and writer engage with each other? Machado Sáez' *Market Aesthetics* is illuminating on the political dimension of the specificities of Caribbean diaspora literature with regard to the specific conditions and marketing mechanisms of the literary field it is situated in. Genre choices, too, intersect with the demands of the literary market. Machado Sáez finds that "the global English book market and its commodification of ethnicity produce writerly anxieties about reader reception, and these concerns are encoded in the novel's form and content" (2015: 1).<sup>400</sup> Fulani's *politics of style* resonates with a *market aesthetics* suggested by Machado Sáez for whom Caribbean historical fiction functions as a "form of capital circulating in a global market" (ibid.). From this standpoint, she investigates the role of the diaspora writer and the responsibility attached to a global position(ality) which goes hand in hand with a pedagogical agenda the writer has and her assumed role as ethnic or cultural informant or representative.

The pedagogical impulse and ethical imperative of diasporic fiction, in part, are a response to the demands of a literary market that is influenced by the academic sphere (to which the writer often belongs) and readership as well as university curricula (by, for instance, gender, queer, or postcolonial studies) and, according to McGurl, university creative writing programs. Perceiving of literary fiction as consumer good that circulates globally, as Machado Sáez does (drawing as well from the works by Simon Gikandi and Arjun Appadurai), the danger lies in the delocalization and decontextualization of that good. At this point, the political task of the writer and political value of the work intersect with the pedagogical strategies to "convey historical context to the reader" (Machado Sáez 2015: 20) executed by the writer and implemented in her work: "Caribbean diasporic writers see the dehistoricized condition of the contemporary public sphere as providing a gap of context that they are positioned to fill in. [...] The pedagogical tool of historical fiction aims to teach readers to see evidence of the Caribbean's centrality to the formation of American, Canadian, and European politics and culture" (ibid.). The coming-of-age novel achieves a similar goal. And the political lies exactly in this "postcolonial ethical impera-

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400 Machado Sáez suggests a similar sociological approach to literature as does McGurl in *The Program Era* (2009). Her specific focus on Caribbean diasporic historical fiction, however, is better suited for my study and the selected corpus.

tive as encouraging the reader to think critically about the intersections of empire, migration, and globalization” (ibid.: 27-28). And here I wish to add that a focus on body politics as suggested by the Caribbean diasporic coming-of-age novel, likewise, critically brings into view the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship.<sup>401</sup>

The label of *Caribbean diasporic* describes, takes into consideration, and acknowledges the historical context of migration and deterritorialization as well as the material history and colonial continuity of inequality, of discrimination and racism. Urgent political questions that will continue to be addressed by women writers of the Caribbean diaspora are those that pertain to gender, racial, and sexual issues; these are also those political issues that, following Machado Sáez, relate to the “workings of globalization, addressing the fragmentation of identity, the decentering of nationalist discourses, the hybridization of culture, and the interconnectedness of global economies” (2015: 14).

We may thus contend that transnational movements and transcultural exchange in our globalized world have engendered transgressions and transformations of the intersectional patterns of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and so forth. These are aestheticized, negotiated, and ultimately redefined in particular in literature, arts, and popular culture. The body as a multidimensional site for the construction of society as well as bodily norms and beauty ideals which are basically socio-culturally constructed are taken up by artists who make use of the body as resisting matter and as medium of resistance. They thereby disclose how certain bodies have been made sites of oppression through heteropatriarchal and neocolonial hegemonies. The bodies written in these texts function as social, cultural, as well as historical document of these mechanisms of power, exclusion, and denial, offering simultaneously a powerful imaginary on political discourses of our time.

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401 Mimi Sheller introduces the term erotic agency in reference to the intersection of body, sexuality, and citizenship in the postcolonial contexts of Jamaica and Haiti. Erotic agency describes how “freedom is exercised and enacted as a complex set of embodied relations in diverse contexts of activation – bodies not simply marked by race, sex, and class [...], but active inter-embodiments that bring different bodies to the social (and political) surface through their intimate relations to each other in both private and public encounters” (2012: 17).