

# Hybridity as a Counter-Hegemonic Discourse in Elizabeth Nunez's *Even in Paradise*

by

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## Abstract

Based on postcolonial and postmodern theories, this paper explores Hybridity as a Counter-Hegemonic Discourse in Elizabeth Nunez's *Even in Paradise*. While criticism has yet to study Nunez's work from a postcolonial perspective, *Even in Paradise* reveals two types of narrative discourse: "postmodern narrative" intertwined with "colonial narrative." The narrative is "a perfect zigzag" journey into the past to comprehend the present. Nunez resists the traditional linear narrative by using a zigzag time and space to defy Western Culture and its controlling structures. Nunez also writes against the postcolonial condition with the attribution of a dominant position in the Caribbean and African culture. Finally, Nunez, a Caribbean writer, writes in English not only to answer back to the colonial discourse but also to challenge the oppressive discourse held by men *vis-à-vis* women. Using both tenacious and strong male and female characters while searching for space and identity, she redefines the status of women in a male-dominated world. What is common to many of today's postcolonial authors is their focus on the linguistic hybridity of the national space, the importance of which must be recognized as an asset to postcolonial spaces rather than viewed as a means of dividing the country for the welfare of the ruling few. Drawing from postcolonial theories, I explore Nunez's hybridity as a counter-hegemonic discourse as an example of third space that works to reclaim a space for the subaltern voice.

**Keywords:** Elizabeth Nunez; circularity; displacement; gender; identity; narratology; linguistic hybridity; postcolonialism; postmodernism; hegemony; resistance; trans/cultural

## Introduction

They bear upon them the traces of the particular cultures, traditions, languages and histories by which they were shaped. The difference is that they are not and will never be *unified* in the old sense, because they are irrevocably the product of several interlocking histories and cultures, belong at one and the same time to several “homes” (Hall “Cultural Identity” 222)

Caribbean identity is important because it expresses the ethos of the people. To establish such identity, it is a difficult subject because there are multiple historical contributing elements. The Caribbean has many cultural roots. After the European had exterminated the indigenous population, they settled the Caribbean with people around the world and forced them to labor. Thus, people of the Caribbean have extensive backgrounds, making “identity” a problematic topic. Indeed, oppression and slavery marked the Caribbean history, which caused a long-lasting trauma in the mind of the Caribbean imagination. In fact, Caribbean identity has been the topic of many texts such as Stuart Hall’s “Negotiating Caribbean Identities” and David Scott’s “The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter.” Searching for one’s identity has been a preoccupation for many Caribbean scholars, for instance, Frantz Fanon, C. L. R. James, Sylvia Wynter, and Édouard Glissant. This identity quest gives one a sense of belonging with one’s self and with a community. Most importantly, the rich history and the previous Caribbean identities shape the postmodern sense of belonging in the twenty-first century.

I begin with these opening statements to initiate a theoretical and literary discussion. Based on colonial, postcolonial, and postmodern theories, this paper explores, *inter alia*, “Hybridity as a Counter-Hegemonic Discourse in Elizabeth Nunez’s *Even in Paradise*.” While criticism has yet to study Nunez’s work from a postcolonial perspective, *Even in Paradise* reveals two types of narrative discourse: “personal mythology” intertwined with “historical mythology.” Nunez utilizes history as a myth. The function of myth in *Even in Paradise* depends upon understanding the historical narrative in framing historical moments in the fictional narrative. In effect, the narrative proposes a radical view of many histories, used in a revisionist, subversive way to criticize history by providing alternative narratives to the historical moments that the novel explores. The narrative represents a journey into the past to comprehend the present.

The narrative structure in *Even in Paradise* is nonlinear as each chapter has a beginning/anti-beginning and an ending/open ending. As a postmodern writer, Nunez deconstructs the ideas of a fixed beginning and ending.

Indeed, Nunez subverts the chronology and presents the reader with what Brian Richardson calls a “nonlinear sequence [of events] but from which a consistent, linear story could be readily extracted” (Richardson “Time, Plot, Progression” 77). *Even in Paradise* exemplifies a work of literature with a temporal discrepancy between the historical timeline and the linear structure of the novel. Each chapter has its space, which generates a specific time.

*Even in Paradise* encapsulates multiple fictional and nonfictional narratives that move backward in time. Consider the paradoxical resonance on colonialism. The text has fixed sequences of events, which, I argue, disrupts the linearity of the fabula.<sup>1</sup> For instance, the story’s non-fiction narrative starts with this historical reference: “[The Savannah] was once the property of the reigning British monarch since Trinidad was among the chain of islands in the Caribbean that belonged to England after she won the battles with Spain in 1797” (Nunez 14). This colonial narrative subverts the beginning of the syuzhet, which is simply the opposite of the order of the fabula. In fact, the fictional narrative, as the postcolonial discourse, begins by depicting a tale of the patriarch Peter Ducksworth, a wealthy Trinidadian landowner of European descent.

Discourse on narrative is commonly concerned with literary fiction in which a story is related in a manner and entices the reader with its specific logic. The chronological sequence can be sliced up, interrupted, and rearranged for the narrative. Brooks states that plot—the organizing logic behind narrative—interweaves both codes and principles of narrative with the interpretation of actions and characters affecting not only our perception of them but also our understanding of the logic of events. He suggests that this “overcoding” encourages an “interrogation” of actions regarding “their point, their goal [and] their import” and posits, “plot as a part of the dynamics of reading” (18).

The structure of the novel as shown in the above analysis uncovers a linearity constantly subverted within the temporal sequence. The text has its space. In fact, the beginning of the novel is crucial because the act of reading immediately clashes with other temporal orders. Undeniably, all narrative structures, because of the notion of beginnings and endings, set up a tension between the linear and the nonlinear. It is also worth mentioning that the novel displays a technical resistance to the Western tradition by challenging the Aristotelian unities of time, space, and subject matter (Aristotle 12-13). Nunez uses various literary techniques such as foreshadowing to disrupt the linear narrative throughout the novel. In this regard, the novel depicts a counter-narrative of resistance by examining the historical narrative through the lens of fictional narrative. This intertextual narrative and the act of rewriting reflects the alternative discourse—hybridity as counter-hegemonic discourse—in postcolonial, postmodern, and feminist literature.

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<sup>1</sup> Fabula and syuzhet: The *fabula* (sometimes translated as “story”) consists of the series of events would form if chronologically arranged or (rearranged); the *syuzhet* (sometimes translated as “plot”) is the way the story is organized and told.

It is noteworthy that Nunez's literary production explores the postmodern discourses of both identity and geographical areas. The narration is an intentional, structuring activity, which, as Peter Brooks has put it, "demarcates, encloses, establishes limits, [and] orders" (4). I am not concerned with the notion of narrative as the actual telling of stories but rather with narration as a process of thought, a way of making sense of the world.

## Theoretical Discussion

Many scholars begin to view the Caribbean question through the lens of dominance and subordination. Caribbean literature denounces domination and colonialism. As Aimé Césaire says in his *Discourse on Colonialism*, "It is a new society that we must create, with the help of our brother slaves, a society rich with all the productive power of modern times, warm with all the fraternity of older days" (23). Colonialism's claimed civilizing mission, Césaire argues, is the biggest lie of Western civilization. This idea demonstrates the consciousness that the West has been responsible for the subjugation of the colonized people. Albert Memmi in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, and Frantz Fanon in his works, particularly in *The Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism* examine the dehumanizing effect of violence on the oppressor.

Colonization introduced the Eurocentrism as the epistemological system to legitimize the dominance by mean of ruling ideas. However, the desire to establish a Caribbean identity based on the anticolonial sentiment that dismantled the hegemony of the white superiority, using an Afro-Caribbean epistemology and sensitivity saw the light of the Trinidadian Black Power uprising and the civil rights movement in the United States. The 1960s and 1970s gave birth to the emergence of a certain generation to renounce the Western standards and a yearning to generate a theory of Caribbean cultural process (see Nixon). This critical, strategic intervention seems to be instrumental in shifting perspectives, shape new identities, and articulate a postcolonial epistemology to counter the Eurocentric narrative. The consciousness that seeks to subvert history and suggest a revisionist position juxtaposes the historical elements with the fictional narrative as a form of interrogation. This realization is, indeed, problematic in *Even in Paradise*.

The present study emphasizes the importance of reading *Even in Paradise* as a historical myth. Relying on critical analysis framed through postcolonial and postmodernism discourses, I argue that the capacity of counter-hegemonic discourse as a counter-myth of empowerment is particular to postcolonial and postmodern literature, which narrates different forms of resistance and representation. I am indebted to Michel Foucault's conception of "discourse" which has become an essential notion in postcolonial and feminist studies. He defines the term in *The Archeology of Knowledge* "as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of declarations, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements" (80). This statement suggests that Foucault considers the "discourse" as a means of connection between two different statements. This idea exists within and in-between statements, which leads to a creation of power structures between power/knowledge.

An in-depth analysis of *Even in Paradise* reveals a complex narrative that deconstructs the power dynamics as a response to the various forces, which position the characters in the text to interrogate their “personal mythology” intertwined with “historical mythology.” This process of interrogation positions the narrative with alternative myths, considered as both alternative histories and revision. Interestingly, Nunez’s use of Caribbean indigenous’s history/mythology evokes questions about authority and representation that are difficult to ignore. This idea of knowledge – history or mythology – signifies what Michel Foucault calls systematic knowledge construction, which leads to a construction of power structures. Foucault, who challenges the epistemological cultural reality, argues that nobody is free to apply his/her power as there is a power outside us, which controls our lives and that even truth “is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses...” (*Power* 131). Foucault’s ideas on power and discourse play a significant role in postcolonial theories.

As a subversive strategy, rewriting history implies a deconstruction of the text with the process of introducing a new discourse. The narrator states the following Trinidadian vernacular, “*Too-tool-bay, [...] Mout’ open, ’tory jump out*” (21). These sayings illustrate a counter-narrative that rewrites the history of the colonized Caribbeans, and in doing so, reveals the history of resistance and violence. Ironically, Peter Ducksworth uttered these expressions as [H]e considered himself a Trinidadian, a Caribbean man, someone who could be completely at home in any of the English-Speaking Caribbean Islands. Like the English families who had made the islands their home for generations. He spoke with his hands—very un-English expressive movements punctuating the rise and fall of his Trinidadian lilt. (16) This narrative reflects on the past of the postcolonial of the Caribbean and calls the reader’s attention to the existence of different histories and traditions. This longing to keep the culture alive denotes an aspiration to question the colonial values and representation of postcolonial identity. In fact, Derrida would call this strategy *différance* as the narrative acquires another dimension. The narrative in *Even in Paradise* illustrates the problem of cultural erasure and appropriation, which means that Western, non-indigenous history is written to serve the colonizer’s interests and, thus, dismisses the colonized people. Nunez’s narrative reveals an alternative narrative that disrupts the official historical narrative and brings to the fore what has been previously concealed—the victims of colonization.

Many Caribbean writers such as Elizabeth Nunez and George Lamming,<sup>2</sup> use the language of the colonizer to resist British hegemony. Nunez subverts the English language by mixing it with Caribbean languages and cultures. In fact, her use of language is far from being neutral or innocent; it is a powerful tool for representation. As Albert Memmi explains, “[...] in the colonizer’s supreme ambition, he [the colonized] should exist only as a function of the needs of the colonizer, i.e., be transformed into pure colonized” (86). Nunez works to overcome a discourse that denies the colonized subjects the right to participate in defining the terms of their relationship with the colonizers, but that also aims to dehumanize by putting words of savagery into the mouths of the colonized.

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<sup>2</sup> See George Lamming, *Sovereignty of the Imagination, Language and the Politics of Ethnicity - Conversations III* (Berkley, House of Nehesi Publishers, 2009).

Significantly to this analysis, Black writers and critics capture the “black consciousness” by focusing on issues of race relations. Cornel West in his book *Race Matters* points out the underlying problem of “race” for blacks: “Our truncated public discussions of race suppress the best of who and what we are as a people because they fail to confront the complexity of the issue in a candid and critical manner” (2). He criticizes the fact that whites see blacks as a “problem people” (2), that they are still viewed as an “Other” and that “the burden falls on blacks to do all the ‘cultural’ and ‘moral’ work necessary for healthy race relations” (3). Some critics can argue that black writing and white reading can contribute to the improvement of both these notions.

### ***Even in Paradise as a Hybrid Narrative***

Nunez entwines a Shakespearean tale of patriarch Peter Duckworth, a wealthy Trinidadian landowner of European descent who divides his Barbados estate among his three daughters, Glynis, Rebecca, and Corinne, with a twist of events that ends *Even in Paradise* differently compared to *King Lear*'s. Nunez invents a new writing form depicting the indignation, the bitterness, and the misery of the Caribbean people caused by colonial exploitation. This new literature is the voice of individuals searching to establish a cultural identity. In fact, Nunez's work informs the reader by the very idea that literature is not only a poetic invention but also a standard of ideology. She seeks to subvert the relationship with the colonizer by writing in the English language in such a way as to allow the Western reader to acquaint his or herself with colonized culture. In other words, Caribbean writers using English compel us to consider the political necessity of the colonial subjects to appropriate the language of the empire to respond back and write their national narratives. In a sense, the writers “say” in English not to “be” English. Nunez articulates the significance of the impact of the colonial experience on the Caribbean people and ultimately offers an interpretation of a multicultural Caribbean.

When the narrator Émile Baxter, who is black, meets Corinne Duckworth, he is 16, and she is 12, but it is love at first sight. Peter Duckworth considers Corinne his “favorite child, the youngest of three daughters, the apple of his eye” (12). However, after a near-death experience, Peter leaves Trinidad for Barbados. The Trinidadians, however, see Duckworth's move as an effort to “find white husbands for his daughters” (33). It is not until Émile Baxter arrives at the University of the West Indies, when his Lebanese best friend, Albert Glazal, proposes to Corinne's eldest sister, Glynis, that he meets Corinne again.

On the night of Glynis's engagement party, Peter gives his land away to his three daughters. He gave Corinne the extravagant mansion and its grounds—but can only take possession after Duckworth's death. Interestingly, Glynis hatches a plan to evict her father from his house and turn the land into a real estate development. What follows is an epic tale of family betrayal and manipulation with juxtaposed characters. *Even in Paradise* uses the plot structure of William Shakespeare's classic story of *King Lear*, which explores politics, class, race, and privilege in the Caribbean.

The use of the language of the colonizer as a means of literary expression raises questions regarding the attitude of Caribbean writers *vis-à-vis* European languages. Is it possible for any language to express perfectly any culture? In the context of a multilingual environment, is there interference between the oral tradition, the mother tongue, and the written language. The interference of languages implies that in this linguistic universe different systems become interdependent. In this way, the language of “Others” and the language of the colonizer become another language. It is hard for a monolinguist to decode the hybrid messages because his/her universe is a monoculture, which excludes other referential universes. In this situation, the bilingual reader grasps the literary and cultural significance of such hybrid literature fully.

The notion of hybridity plays a major role in postcolonial studies of Caribbean literature written in English, French, and Spanish. It is at the same time a cultural hybridity and a language hybrid form. Consistent with Ashcroft, “Hybridity [...] is the primary characteristic of all post-colonial texts whatever their source” (182). There is, in fact, a mixture of languages in novels of postcolonial literature in general. In effect, the use of native terms, whether individual lexical items or whole chunks of discourse such as proverbs and sayings, cracks open the boundaries of language and offers countless tremendous possibilities for the writer to mix linguistic and cultural codes. Thus, the Caribbean writer creates a third voice, which is a voice that provides us an English syntax charged with a Caribbean idiom. The Caribbean vernacular undermines the authority of the English language, and the Caribbean form of storytelling disrupts the authority of the Western narrative. Therefore, the use of any language in a multicultural text is not only a linguistic or textual manifestation but also serves often as a vehicle for a specific culture and tradition.

## **Hybridity as a Counter-Discourse**

Since the 1970s, the firm emergence of black intellectuals has initiated a crucial change in the field of African-American and Caribbean studies, which still affects the literary production of today. The black movement and the women’s movement preceded and accompanied the development of literature, revealing the interdependence between socio-political changes and modifications in literature. The ethnic groups, thus, resist assimilation into a rather homogenous American society but insist on the preservation of their individuality. Despite more tolerance and a pluralistic attitude, the gap between white and black persists.

In the Caribbean, language was not just a means of communication, or way by which Europe exerted its power; it was also a form of rebellion. While the imported people were learning the English language, they were developing other languages underground. It was to the advantage of the Europeans that these people were unable to communicate with each other, because there was less risk of revolt; therefore, the colonizers underestimated the people of the Caribbean, allowing them to develop their underground languages secretly. They could incorporate their languages with others, creating a fragmentation of languages and fundamentally formed new languages; thus, there is a multitude of languages and dialects spoken today, such as the creoles, which are layered by a mix of Spanish, French and English languages.

There is, in fact, a mixture of languages in novels of postcolonial literature in general. Essentially, the use of native terms, whether individual lexical items or whole chunks of discourse such as proverbs and sayings cracks open the boundaries of language and offers multiple possibilities for the writer to mix linguistic and cultural codes. Nunez incorporates Arabic, Spanish, and Eastern Caribbean terms in the novel: “[T]aqiyah; Rabid; Obzokee...” [Denying one’s culture; Mad; Awkward...]³ (52; 53; 87). The incorporation of lingua-franca and Creole words and expressions in an English sentence structure makes it hybrid or bilingual. This experimentation with language, such as word play and code switching thanks to Nunez’s bicultural condition, results in a hybrid narration. Hence, the Trinidadian writer creates a third voice, which is a voice that provides us an English syntax charged with a local idiom. This notion of hybridity illustrates Homi K. Bhabha’s theory of “in-between spaces” (2). The novel traces various characters’ hybrid roots to a mosaic, rich ancestry.

The counter-hegemonic discourse resides in the non-dominative knowledge that is revealed through the linguistic hybridity. In accordance with Bhabha, the burden of culture lies in the “Third Space of enunciation” (54), which is located at the horizon of difference. Bhabha explains:

It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, *rehistoricized* and *read anew*. (55; emphasis added)

The native vernacular undermines the authority of the English language, and the indigenous form of storytelling based on oral tradition disrupts the authority of the Western narrative. Therefore, the use of any language in a multicultural text is not only a linguistic or textual manifestation but also often serves as a means for a specific culture and tradition. *Even in Paradise* depicts a vivid representation of the indigenous cultures/communities speaking languages other than Standard English. This linguistic phenomenon bestows the importance of cultural consciousness and heritage.

Postcolonial identity, merely belonging to a national identity, is no longer a sufficient condition for *re-presentation*. The existence of a different discourse highlights the existence of class and cultural differences among the characters. Nunez depicts a different representation of difference and identity through inclusion/exclusion, interiority/exteriority, and, particularly, transnational spaces/imagined transnational spaces. The reader learns through the narrator about Émile’s preoccupations: “I never found out what had happened in my father’s past that caused him to give me a copy of the film *The Battle of Algiers*.... Now I understand fully his intent and the values he wished to impart to me. *Know the price people are willing to pay for freedom*, he one said” (Nunez 319-20).

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<sup>3</sup> All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.



It is evident that Émile peels back the layers of the past. Nunez redefines the writing space by moving from one space to another without any frontier. Indeed, *Even in Paradise* differs from her earlier novels as the story is set in various islands of the Caribbean. To use a Deleuzian term, there is a conscious movement of deterritorialization about a controlled, national space established by the “law” of the father or the nation (Gilles et al 51-52).<sup>4</sup> The term deterritorialization is more about thought and territorial placing, between internal and external exile, the notions of immigration, hybridity, and diaspora. It is through the varied experiences of Émile’s journey that ultimately decides to accept the multiple, often vague, notions of self and community. This form of nationalized exclusion of “otherness” and its imposed silence on men and women throughout history as well as the breaking marked by women’s coming to writing, a field historically reserved for men and/or the elite, acquire a problematic dimension, and an ambivalent sense of responsibility in the colonial and postcolonial context.

The national space provides a subordinate role and control by the dominant order of discourse. We have discovered that the notion of national borders can result in the forming of a community outside the geographical consideration. In this regard, Nunez rejects a conception of identity that is characterized by an exclusive uniqueness. In fact, the transnational space offers an alternative discourse that unquestionably has the possibility to escape the control of the nation-state. In this respect, the narrative reveals the ambiguity of the Caribbean identity. The narrator asserts, “The islands were just coming out of decades of slavery and colonialism. Years of saying yes to massa [master], years of being taught that massa [master] was superior to us” (Nunez 99). The rendering of the postcolonial pasts exposes how post-coloniality disrupts identity in contemporary literature.

In *Even in Paradise*, the characters exist in-between spaces. The narrator states, “He [Cumberbatch] was biracial. His skin was brown, his nose flat and wide, his eyes narrow and slanted, his hair curly and yet spiked in places as though the straight hair from his Chinese ancestors was in a battle with his African roots” (189). The narrative progression reveals the complexity of the Caribbean identity. The reader learns paradoxical details about the narrator that “[he] had relatives in Martinique” (163). Also, the last part of the novel in which Émile denarrates the beginning narrative about his identity. Toward the end of the novel, the narrative uncovers paradoxical details about almost all the multilayered character/identities’ past and present.

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<sup>4</sup> The “law of the father” is what Jacques Lacan terms the “symbolic father” and “the name of the father” representing laws, control, and knowledge. See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2002) 445-448. The father or the nation represents the figure of the oppressor through restrictions and prohibitions and the nation associated with Barbados whose purpose is to marginalize men and women through traditions, political discourse, or through what Louis Althusser call “ideological state apparatus.” See Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001) 127-186.

## Postcolonial: Rethinking Race and Gender

Many Caribbean women writers reflect on the gender issues through their portrayal of man/woman relationship in their writing.<sup>5</sup> Women are depicted as childbearing, and their roles are confined to their familial role. It is evident that the male domination does not allow women to thrive freely. Nunez views the representation of gender as a cultural construct.

By clearing a space for the subaltern<sup>6</sup> voice, Nunez, as a woman author, writing in English differs from her male counterpart authors such as Sam Selvon and V. S. Naipaul. Nunez uses the English language not only to answer back to the colonial discourse but also the discourse held by men *vis-à-vis* women and the oppressive inferior condition of women. In *Even in Paradise*, Nunez uses displaced, yet tough and strong female characters while searching for space and identity for her narrative to enrich the reader's comprehension. After Duckworth commands his daughter Corinne to obey him, she responds, "I am an adult. A woman. I am expected to keep my word when I give it" (235). Nunez fills the socio-cultural and intellectual void that often results from the patriarchal norms of the Western society. Also, she redefines the status of women in a male-dominated world.

*Even in Paradise* depicts the journey of Émile, Robert, and Albert juxtaposed to Duckworth's three daughters. Curiously, the male characters are surrounded by strong female characters. It is interesting to note that Rebecca disappears from the narrative. However, she reappears as a shadow behind her older sister Glynis who later betrays both sisters. She cheated on Rebecca's husband Robert and tried to influence her father to disinherit Corinne. Glynis tries to engage Corinne into her scheme to get their father out of his house and into a brand-new apartment to fulfill her dream with her husband, Albert. However, Corinne disagrees with the plan and goes against her two sisters' word. Corinne appears honest and sincere compared to her two eldest sisters Rebecca and Glynis. In fact, Corinne evokes feelings and speaks with her heart and mind. She tells her father that "[Her] sisters have husbands. Rebecca does, and Glynis will have a husband soon. They must love their husbands, and when [she has] a husband, [she] will love him too" (148-149). Corinne is not only a little girl growing up maturely, but she is growing into a young lady.

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<sup>5</sup> See Julia Alvarez, *In the Time of Butterflies* (Chapel Hill, NC.: Algonquin Books, 2010); Michelle Cliff, *Abeng* (New York: Plume, 1995); Merle Collins, *Lady in a Boat* (Leeds, UK.: Peepal Tree Press, 2003); Edwidge Danticat, *The Farming of the Bones* (New York: Penguin, 1998); Shani Mootoo, *Cereus Blooms at Night* (New York: Grove Press, 2009); and Patricia Powell, *The Pagoda* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Spivak uses the term "subaltern" in her analysis of colonial and post-colonial texts. She uses the Marxist notion of class as a model of subalternity, and emphasizes that the subaltern is not a positive or concrete identity based on interest or desire, but it is a formation, on the model of a nation, rather than a family. It is crucial to remember that "identity" is always produced as a subject-effect in relation to other positions.

Émile's relationship with Corinne appears to be ambivalent initially as Émile did not want to disclose his love relationship to Mr. Duckworth. He states that "English blood ran in Duckworth's veins, but, as he often said to me, he was 'a true Trini.' But there was the Miranda test. Would he object to his daughter marrying a black man, having children with a black man?" (249). Nunez portrays Émile as a person who does possess an independent identity. He clearly depends on Corinne for support.

In contrast to Émile and Corinne who end up marrying and in love, Albert and Glynis, the story's other couple, accounts for a great couple that has big dreams and out of touch with the reality. Glynis married Albert, who is of Lebanese descent, with rigid family values. Albert entered the relationship based on love. He was blinded and sided with Glynis's manipulations to conquer her sister's heritage and invest Albert's family fortune to continue the colonial legacy. As a transnational woman, she succeeds in acquiring power in a foreign country. Although the narrative uncovers her identity as an opportunist who does not love Albert, the narrative progression reveals that she only married him for his money. In this regard, Françoise Lionnet affirms, "Dominant systems are more likely to absorb and make like themselves numerically or culturally 'weaker' elements. However, even then, the 'inferior' or subaltern elements contribute to the evolution of the hegemonic system by producing resistances and counterdiscourses" (9). On the one hand, as a European female, Glynis has rediscovered her agency and with it gives voice to the Eurocentric heritage. It is fascinating to discover in the last chapter of the novel how the narrative discourse takes a different turn with an act of denarration. Glynis and Rebecca's husband Douglas turn against Albert's heritage as an Arab. The text states, "'I warned Glynis not to trust him.' He sniffed the wine in his glass with a grating air of superiority" (314). This denarration reveals significant parts of the story that have not yet occurred, but that soon will emerge in greater detail. This narrative technique is primarily a postmodern narrative device.

On the other hand, Corinne's journey led her to refocus her priorities and desires. As an independent spirit, she links her identity to the Caribbean cultures and sensitivities. She used her agency as the postcolonial female voice to denounce through her writing against oppression. Corinne writes in an essay, "*Most of them—the ones you see on the postcards, with the white sand, and impossibly blue water—are inaccessible to the people who have lived here for generations*" (207). Corinne's sense of justice and free spirit collide with her family. It becomes apparent that nobody can change Corinne's love for the indigenous culture. In fact, Corinne embodies the Afrocentric heritage.

In this last part of the novel, Nunez brings together the postcolonial critique and her disruption of male privilege. She also exemplifies Corinne with ultimate determination, who struggles against all the odds to establish herself in a foreign country. She is in search for her individuality and sense of freedom with the desire to fulfill her dream with Émile. The narrative ends with Corinne's willingness to embrace the Caribbean culture and the dedication to promoting its Arts and culture.

## Conclusion

*Even in Paradise* exemplifies the complexity of the Caribbean identity. While colonization redefined the Caribbean society, the cultural encounter does not always happen in a positive way. Nunez illustrates the world full of contradictions and possibilities where all cultures can thrive. She captures in a subtle way the day-to-day experiences of every man and women that differ from the old colonial strategies of domination and control. It is problematic in the sense that she depicts characters from the Caribbean, particularly the educated Trinidadians with a dominant discourse regardless of their hybrid culture and diversity. This postcolonial response to the cultural hybridity creates an awareness of the Caribbean roots and the actual meaning of agency.

Regarding postcolonial, postmodern, and feminist theories, this study examines the hybridity as the Caribbean reality with the revision of Western epistemology. For Elizabeth Nunez, the Caribbean agency as a narrative defines the plot of the text, revising, and reworking its power. By juxtaposing Glynis's ambition to exploit the Caribbean against Corinne's hybrid cultural narrative, Nunez explores the Euro-American/Caribbean ideological influence on identity formation. Given this context, *Even in Paradise* focuses on colonial resistance toward ethnic, racial, and gender oppression and Caribbean agency by deconstructing its ideological power. She frames her counter-hegemonic discourse of empowerment to frame her vision of postmodern fiction with a concern for narrating the symbolism of the transnational narrative.

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