IX Conclusion

What follows, then, from the insight that we might be able to look at relationalities in colonial literatures from a new perspective? What can we learn from the findings of a comparative viewpoint, in connection with research on transfer processes, and to what extent can these findings, which relate to a specific region in a particular period of time, be connected with today's theoretical debates?

My research has centered on processes of transfer. What I have looked at were not static conditions but developments, changes, and interconnections. The supporting characters were writers, ethnologists, editors, but also itinerant tinkerwomen. We could add many, many more. Transfers in conceptions of society[1] brought up the question of how to deal, on the one hand, with experiences of revolution—especially the Haitian Revolution—and, on the other, with the gradual process of abolition, in this case British abolition: what was transferred, and from where and to where? I was concerned not with defining a national identity nor emphasizing a transnational dimension in the sense of competing cultures, but rather with the ways in which the actors in a variety of situations deal with and reshape more or less hegemonic cultural models. I was not interested in starting from predetermined entities or categories but wanted, instead, to begin with problems and questions that would arise from the analytical process itself, because they were themselves understood as part of an ongoing dynamic transformation. I tried to avoid prescribed models or globally defined constructions of nation, society, culture, or religion: these would have been inadequate to the colonial context. In addition, I was able to address the question of theoretical transfer: at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Caribbean has become a privileged site for the production of a Latin American and Caribbean cultural theory. And it has become increasingly clear that even theories that are oriented towards the present have a focus, if not in fact their central focus, in the nineteenth century. Benítez Rojo, for instance, already vividly pointed out the connection between creolization and the plantation: "Well then, what relationships do I see between the plantations and creolization? Naturally, first, a relationship of cause and effect; without one we would not have the other. But I also see other relationships" (*La isla* 396; not present in English translation).[2]

1 On this complex topic, on a more general level, compare the insights on political, economic, and sociocultural cultural transfers in Lüsebrink, *Interkulturelle Kommunikation* 152–153.

2 "Bien, entonces, ¿qué relaciones veo entre plantación y criollización? Naturalemente, en primer término, una relación de causa y efecto; sin una no tendríamos la otra. Pero también veo otras relaciones."

This existential reference backwards towards the colonial experiences of the nineteenth century can be traced all the way through to Khal Torabully and the theory of coolitude, which transcends the essentialisms of earlier discourses of *Créolité*.

The point of combining a comparatist approach with the research on transfers was to direct the focus to the interdependency and mutual conditionality of the planes of investigation. While it was the Caribbean islands that formed the point of intersection, the impression of symmetry that was produced, at first glance, by the intersection of viewpoints turned out to be mostly illusory. The closer up the view on the historical contexts, the clearer the asymmetries appeared. And yet that is precisely where we find the power of the intersectional approach.

In comparing the texts of the French-speaking Caribbean with those of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, two different constellations can be seen: a bipolar axis, with the colony and the mother country at either end; and a multilateral web of relationships with multiple axes, especially colony to center and colony to other (ex-)colonies. The tight interlacing of literature and scholarly discourses about the colonial Other, which appeared especially in the French sphere of influence, is connected to the fact that the nineteenth-century Caribbean literary class were important figures in the knowledge production of the mother country. Just as the multirelational interconnectedness of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean intellectual world formed the basis for a trans-area literature, so too was the accompanying cultural emancipation from the mother country a precondition for political disentanglement.

The first central question had to do with the positioning of the colonial status quo: how the writers appropriated European discourses, and which ones they chose, how they asserted the cultural identity of their own islands of origin, and in what way they thereby reflected the potential contradiction between emancipation and intellectual obligation. The political positions taken in literature proved to be quite unambiguous. In the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, with a few exceptions such as that of the Countess of Merlin, they went in a clear direction: people were for abolition and independence. In the French-speaking Caribbean, it was different. There were contrary positions that could be determined with respect to the question of abolition. On the one hand, there were the abolitionists: Levilloux, Chapus, Bonneville, and Agricole; on the other, there were the advocates of slavery: the white *Békés* Prévost de Sansac, Eyma, Maynard de Queilhe, and Rosemond. And yet, while the question of abolition caused differences of opinion before 1848, the writers were nevertheless all united in staying closely connected to France.

Novels from the French Antilles are frequently highly political in their subject matter: philanthropists need to be convinced to give up on any form of abolition; the existing colonial discourses are reaffirmed. In the Spanish texts, on the other hand, there are anti-colonial attitudes to be found, attitudes that could also be considered to fall into the category of epistemological postcolonialism. It is true that here and there—for instance in Galván's novel *Enriquillo*—a latent sympathy can be observed toward Spain, the world power, with its great minds Columbus and Las Casas. But unlike with the literary examples from the French Caribbean, this does not stop the protagonists from rebelling, which must be seen as an anticipation of the freedom struggles and wars of independence against the colonial power of Spain.

What the literary production of the Spanish and French Antilles share is that the Haitian paradigm takes up surprisingly little space. In spite of a few differences between the two colonial spheres, both of the colonial literary fields contribute to a cementing of Western discourses of modernity. The often complex structure of space and movement in texts about, and especially from, Haiti (for example d'Alaux's articles, but also a novel such as Bergeaud's *Stella*), indicates that the multirelationality of the new Haitian society has far-reaching spatial implications. The texts represent colonial independence insofar as they illustrate how the young country of Haiti consolidates the connection between external and internal relationality. At the same time, individual spaces often turn out to be very immobile. This may have to do with Haiti's problematic self-understanding, which vehemently defends its political independence while at the same time proclaiming its cultural dependence on the former mother country, a combination that is made particularly clear in Massillon Coicou's poems. While Haiti is an exception in every way, not only in the Caribbean but in the entire Western hemisphere, representative novels of the French- and Spanish-speaking colonial spheres communicate other stagings of space or in some cases perspectives on movement—this can already be seen from the titles of the novels. They often reflect the view from the metropolis, as for instance in the *Description de l'île de Martinique* (Description of the island of Martinique): an affirmation of the colonial status quo echoes the one-dimensional colonial gaze. In contrast, in *La peregrinación de Bayoán*, the focus is on the moment of movement.

The antithesis between nature and culture is more clearly polarized in the literatures of the French Caribbean than in the Spanish texts. This corresponds to the different functions that the island topos takes on in the two colonial literatures: in the French Antilles, the island is often identified with exile and isolation (regardless of the fact that the literary class, the plantation-owning oligarchy, voluntarily chose to settle there), while in the Spanish Caribbean this

identification barely appears. Because the individual islands are usually only "tolerated," as way stations, in the French Antilles, they are also part of an in-between that is symptomatic of writing in and about the nineteenth-century Caribbean.

In spite of the many differences between French and Spanish colonialism, however, there are also revealing commonalities to be found. The literary class of France's (former) Caribbean colonies and the writers in the Spanish colonies both orient themselves mainly towards French Romanticism. Certain texts caught on in particular, including those of Hugo, Lamartine, and Chateaubriand. Even though it would be far wide of the mark to reduce the Caribbean's rich literary tradition to this interpretation, it still must be mentioned that the imitation of models and ideas from the colonies' mother country, often in the form of plagiarism, can never be identical to the so-called original. The process of translation —the repetition within a different context—necessarily creates a gap in what is assumed to be the original, often at the expense of aesthetic believability.

The literary production of the colonies, therefore, is not necessarily oriented towards their respective mother countries. French colonialism's political and cultural gravitational force was far more formative and effective than was the Spanish model, which can also be seen in the transoceanic comparison of the paradigms of conviviality and relationality in Victor Hugo's Atlantic texts and Pierre Loti's Pacific texts. With the exception of Haiti, there is a clear connection between cultural and political dependence on France as the mother country. Accordingly, in some of the novels of the French-speaking Caribbean, the literary staging of a binary opposition between metropolis and colony is extremely effective. The literary efforts anticipate the political events, namely a rather marginal independence movement that is ultimately unsuccessful. Even though, given the special situation of the Creole upper class in Latin America and the Caribbean in the nineteenth century, postcolonial theorization[3] can only be of limited use, one could say, broadly, that in the case of the French-speaking Caribbean, the intensive reception of literature from the mother country creates a "consensus" between the colonizer and the colonized that then cements French cultural hegemony. This nexus of culture and politics has the opposite effect on the colonial relationship of the Spanish Caribbean—which explains the rather violent detachment of the Spanish colonies from the mother country.[4] For the Spanish colonies,

3 On this topic, see Lüsebrink's extremely constructive discussion and productive critique of some postcolonial studies that have fallen into the trap of looking at "hybrid writing styles" from "all-too abstract and trendily theoretical perspectives" (*Interkulturelle Kommunikation* 175).
4 This is assuming a cultural theory that grants cultural hegemony the decisive role in legitimizing the relations of power.

the intensive reception of French literature already means a cultural emancipation, whereas for the French colonies, it only perpetuates their relationship of dependence: the cultural acceptance of the mother country and the dependence on their own mother country legitimizes the continuation of their political subordination.

Creole writing was the expression of a perpetual in-betweenness, an inner conflict, which on the one hand led to a creative stasis, limited by conservative structures of thought, but on the other hand could also be highly productive. Tellingly, the literary texts of the French and Spanish Caribbean share the characteristic that attributions of nation, *patrie*, and exile are often ambiguous. These denominations do not follow clear criteria but change to fit various situations. The nation as a reference point becomes exceedingly problematic. It is not so much the nation that is staged in literature but in fact its fragility that becomes the crux of the writing, and here, in fact, we find one of the central motifs in the colonial reshaping of discourses and models from the mother country. This kind of literary representation seems particularly surprising for the nineteenth century. At any rate, it certainly calls Doris Sommer's thesis of foundational fictions into question: there can be no question here of a clear articulation of the national through allegorical procedures that could be seen as analogous to the phenomena of the contemporary European national movements. And thus, it is no coincidence that the toolkit of the *histoire croisée*, which was developed in the social sciences, is existentially enriched by this intensive consideration of literary texts. Literature can allow that specific situation of the in-between to be shown and experienced in a way that cannot happen anywhere else. And thus, literature is the privileged site of knowledge circulation: one could never do justice to the complexity of the texts if they were forced into identity-based categories; it is only the dazzling dimensions of the in-between that are capable of grasping this multilayer intricacy. They are supplemented by the paratextual material—thus, long forewords, as well as letters and newspaper articles, were particularly popular ways for nineteenth-century Caribbean writers to position themselves.

Skin color is an omnipresent theme. Whiteness is the necessary precondition for superiority and power; in fact, it is often even the criterion for belonging to the human race. Sugar and (non-white) skin color can be seen as the two basic pillars of (anti-)slavery debates between the metropolis and the colonial projection, and become part of a discourse about strategies for appropriating "foreign things." Nothing can sound more essentialist than such attributions. Where is there room, here, for ambiguities or even transfers? And yet it is in the very determination of skin color that the greatest uncertainties are expressed. After all, the attribution of whiteness is anything but clear-cut, and this is a constant

theme in the literary texts. Thus, for instance, one topic is the difficulty of how to treat the freed slaves and mulattos after the Haitian Revolution. There is no longer any consensus about what to call them. They are no longer black, but they are also not white. In a play, even important representatives of the upper classes, who would otherwise be accorded interpretive sovereignty, can only react in stutters. The clear attributions of skin color that no one would even have dreamed of questioning in prerevolutionary times seem not to work anymore, in the very context in which skin color continues to be given legal meaning, possibly even the decisive legal meaning. It becomes clearer here than almost anywhere else that what used to be fixed points have now become movable. The core essentialist domain becomes one of the most important fields for fluctuations and the changing dynamics of discursive power.

If we widen our focus from the world of the Caribbean islands to the Caribbean periphery, and consider the "black" French-speaking center that is New Orleans, we find another intersection point for the most diverse transfer processes, for instance when Joseph Colastin Rousseau clearly demonstrates how the bands of the Creole layer are constituted through a hybrid or relational experience (Duplantier 155). Like the Creole upper class in Martinique and Guadeloupe, New Orleans's free people of color position themselves in the in-between: they express disorientation and a deep-seated uncertainty about their position between worlds. And in this context, the colonial connection to the (former) mother country, France, remains the most important force, even after decades of disentanglement. French colonialism is so strong that it develops a great attraction even in spite of (or in fact because of) the experience of the in-between and the accompanying feeling of weakness.

In general, the nineteenth century's geographic and ethnological societies are seen as important lobbyists for French imperialism. Insofar as we can even speak of a division into disciplines in the first half of the nineteenth century, we can say that the ethnologically oriented institutions, in particular, are highly complex and multifaceted. The *Revues des Colonies* occupies a singular position. This journal, edited by men of color, cultivates a language that is already demystifying attributions of identity in the nineteenth century. Nothing can make the questionable nature of a politics of identity clearer than the paradox of the literature of those men of color in 1834. The in-betweenness of a man of color who, like the mulatto writer Cyrille Bissette, takes on that position "officially" is nothing more than a product of colonialism and reaches ahead into our present-day world of global and transcultural enmeshments.

The expression "setting into relationship (and into motion) through comparison" (*durch Vergleich in Beziehung [und in Bewegung] setzen*; Ette, *Alexander von*

Humboldt 152),[5] which has been cited several times in this study, has shown the productivity of its interpretive power on several levels. The comparative approach, paying particular attention to transfer processes, provides new understandings about the connection between culture and imperialism, and—and this is the decisive factor—sensitizes us to the category of the in-between, which literature is singularly able to communicate. But this in-between is not simply a (problematic) spatial location that weakens the actors in their social, cultural, and political positioning, but it can also release productive forces. From 1860 on, utterances on this topic can be heard in the Spanish Caribbean: while even earlier, the thinking of Hostos, Betances, and Maceo was characterized by discourses of difference, now, however, unlike in earlier texts, they are productively implemented. Maceo's *Caribeanidad* is intended to dissolve difference. It is significant that this idea, as a utopia very much in line with Hostos's thinking, extends beyond the Caribbean archipelago. Hostos's emphasis on the geostrategic position of the Caribbean archipelago anticipates hemispheric constructions of America. It is not for nothing that some of the places where this writing happens are also in Central America: Hostos writes from Panama, "in the isthmus," and Maceo from Guaynava, the "first Cuban colony" in what is now Costa Rica. Further pleas follow from both of them, from New York. This transterritorial dimension, for which I could give countless more examples, is admittedly (given the times) not free of racist elements, but it projects a new "testing ground for conviviality" (*Erprobungsraum von Zusammenleben*; Ette, "Literaturwissenschaft" 27) that has a prospective dimension to it. Gaztambide Géigel pointed out, correctly, in the particular context of the intellectuals mentioned here, that starting in 1860, with the emergence of the discourse of *Caribeanidad* and the project of a Caribbean confederation, it was no longer the postulations of identity that were in the foreground but rather a movement toward solidarity. I do not want to go into the evaluative character of Géigel's concept of solidarity, but putting that aside, in his research on the Caribbean, we can see the shift from identity to a focus on what can be neutrally formulated as conviviality. The ideas of such people as Hostos and Betances, which are then also substantially enriched by the Haitian Atenor Firmin, are ahead of their times, both spatially—in trans-area dimensions, by substituting a history of movement for the history of space—and on the level of ethnological constellations, which provide an argument for the focus on conviviality and thus declare clear classifications of skin color to be obsolete.

5 See also the connection between "comparing and understanding" (*Vergleichen und Verstehen*; Lüsebrink, *Interkulturelle Kommunikation* 33).

The recognition that it is precisely the category of the in-between that is of central significance for the understanding of nineteenth-century Caribbean literatures would not have been possible using the analytical toolkit of the concept of identity. An inductive approach, focusing on transfers of various dimensions—which is why, in the preface to the chapter on the in-between, I added the note that I had consciously avoided any typologizing—revealed in retrospect that the issue is always a negotiation of conviviality, which is central to the most varying forms of cultural representation. While this is mostly expressed in a programmatic way in the ethnological journals, in the sense of new norms of knowledge about conviviality, the potential in literary texts expresses itself on the level of an interplay between the representations of both forms and norms of knowledge about conviviality.

This way of reading these texts was based on Ottmar Ette's paradigmatic works on knowledge about conviviality (*ZusammenLebensWissen*). The present-day context for these is the international debates over alternatives to concepts based on identity. Thus Paul Gilroy, for instance, in 2004, talks about conviviality as a programmatic concept. Arjun Appadurai, building on that in a lecture in Berlin in 2009 in which he asks about a politics of dialogue, points out three kinds of so-called risk dialogues. Insofar as dialogue represents an important tool for questions of conviviality, there are three related risks to consider: first, the risk of not understanding each other; second, the risk of understanding too much; and third, the risk of exposing too much or too little about existing internal differences that might exist inside each of the two sides, partners, or groups involved in the dialogue. In order to be effective, a dialogue cannot address everything. Agreement is always limited, and the risk of an inflated understanding is always present. Because complete understanding always remains an illusion, there is a serious danger in the elimination of fundamental difference and the creation of false universalisms—of an excess of understanding. In every dialogue, all of the participants bring their own tensions and contradictions to the table. There can be no productive negotiation with the "Other" if there are not also negotiations with the "self." This brings up the question of representation.

Within his concept of creolization, Glissant (as I stated in the introduction) emphasizes the affirmation of the unpredictability that is inherent to any process of creolization. Are these not exactly the questions that are explicitly discussed in the Caribbean in the nineteenth century? While the literary texts of such writers as Eyma and Maynard de Queilhe primarily address forms of knowledge about conviviality, and the dialogues of their protagonists are often destined to fail because they usually succumb to the danger of understanding too well who is even allowed to call themselves human, the texts of someone like Bissette

in the *Revue des Colonies* show how an affirmation of the unpredictable can take on programmatic forms of a conviviality in a global French-speaking diaspora. Discussions of racism have always been characteristic of the nineteenth century. Without including Caribbean literatures, which have always also been "literatures-without-a-fixed-abode" (cf. Ette, "Literaturen ohne festen Wohnsitz"; Ette, *Writing-between-Worlds*), significant dimensions of an experientially tested conviviality would be missing.

The paradigms of Caribbean research in literary and cultural theory in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries had crucial precursors in the nineteenth century. Thus the texts of Hostos, Maceo, and Betances, with their conceptions of the Caribbean, for example, anticipate Édouard Glissant's universal ideas (Glissant, *Tout-monde*; see also Gewecke, "Les Antilles"). To close with the words of that Martinican writer and theorist, it is a matter of a "prophetic vision of the past."