Caribbean Perspectives: Radical Decolonisation, Reparations and Re-Imagining the Anthropocene.

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Prologue

'Decolonise', verb: 'To make a country that was previously a colony politically independent.[1]'

If this definition is taken at face value, decolonisation in the Caribbean region seems complete. After all, by the twenty-first century, much of the area which can be described as proportionally one of the most colonised regions in the world, became independent (Heuman 2018).

'Decolonise', verb: 'To radically remove the political, economic and cultural vestiges of a colonial past'.[2]

Although touting political independence, this definition calls into question the nature of Caribbean sovereignty by analysing the lingering remnants of colonial discourses in the makeup of the Caribbean economic structure and its cultural spaces.

'Decolonise', verb: 'To radically remove the political, economic and cultural vestiges of a colonial past, with the vision of achieving epistemological and ontological freedom.'[2]

Only with the bold reimagining of economic and cultural relationships with the former imperial and colonial powers can epistemological and ontological freedom be achieved.

[1] Definition taken from: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/decolonize (Last accessed 12th November 2021)

[2] The following are my own definitions for the purpose of this report's principal argument.

Introduction

Decolonising a region with as fraught a history as the Caribbean is no easy feat. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade propelled the Caribbean into the centre of the world economy; with the wealth that European nations boast today stemming from the barbarity of slavery and the political, economic, and cultural domination of the territories thereafter (Beckles 2013). The meticulous implementation of the Chattel Slavery system and its legacy of plantation societies has created a financial structure in the Caribbean, which is dependent on external economies, vulnerable to economic shocks and undiversified by nature. The definition of the West Indies as the wealth-generating machine of the New World and the 'hub of the British Empire' (Beckles 2013: 167) proves that the creation of the Caribbean economic system was never to advance the development of the region for itself or for its peoples, but to serve its (then) imperial and colonial powers. Whether it be via the Westminster parliamentary system, Washington Consensus, all-inclusive tourism, international financial services, and primary commodity exports, it is argued that the Caribbean continues to be economically, socially, and politically structured in a way that facilitates the interests of the same metropolitan centres (Edmonds 2015). The result is a region where the survival of its economies exists in direct relation to the prosperity but also the whims of the global powers that are invested in it.

By situating the Caribbean economic system in Jason Moore's idea of the 'Capitalocene' (2017) and Kathryn Yusoff's *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (2019), it is not only possible to chart the advent of the dehumanisation of black bodies from the perspective of global capitalism, but also to pinpoint the origins of racist ideology which permeate the Western imaginary of the Caribbean region. Harnessing the tropes of the 'capitalocene' and 'a billion black anthropocenes', this report deconstructs the characterisation of the Caribbean in Western thought through the images of Nature, Woman, and Child; all things that the Western world has continually devalued and divested from what it means to be human. The careful construction, or rather deconstruction, of the region into these three categories that remain unappreciated by the West has left a legacy in the interactions between the Caribbean space

and its global partners. This report will highlight the ongoing legacy of these tropes specifically within the Caribbean Financial Sector and Tourism.

Given the systematic extraction of wealth from the West Indies through the Slave Trade to the Global North, one of the most viable ways to return this capital back to the region is through reparations. Reparations are vital for forcing previous colonial and imperial powers to reckon with their past histories of brutalisation, domination, and dehumanisation (Beckles 2013: 22). Most importantly, however, for the Caribbean region they represent an indispensable mechanism for the kinds of radical decolonisation envisaged in my opening quotations. The freedom to organise their economies in a way which is beneficial to its inhabitants. The freedom to realise ontological sovereignty. The freedom to be the bearers and creators of Caribbean epistemological thought.

Reparations, given in the form of cash impetus, debt cancellation, infrastructure development, and so on, mean that the Caribbean region can begin to diversify its limited economic structure by investing in areas outside of Tourism (CARICOM 2014). This will then lead to the opportunity to confront some of the ramifications of slavery and plantation society; namely connecting the black population back with their African ancestral homeland, recognising the Indigenous genocide and combatting the health problems which stem directly from former colonial control.

For this to be achieved, it is essential that Caribbean governments and peoples recognise that radical decolonisation will not be an easy nor smooth achievement. This report will turn to Frantz Fanon's concept of violence to postulate forms of true liberation and the creation of a new Caribbean imaginary (Fanon 1963). In a global system which was built on the violent mass forced movement of black bodies, the violent forced labour and the violent eradication of black history, the Caribbean must embody the spirit of Fanonian violence and dare to be bold in the overhauling of systems built *for* them and the implementation of others built *by* them.

‘The Capitalocene’, ‘A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None’: Where sits the Caribbean?

‘The Capitalocene’ (Moore 2017) and *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Yusoff 2019) constitute an interrogation and reimagining of the critically current notion of the ‘Anthropocene’, specifically the dominant discourse that its point of departure was the Industrial Revolution of the 1800s. The likes of Crutzen and Stoermer (2000), McNeill (2007) and Chakrabarty (2009) argue that the origins of the modern world are to be found in Britain, around the beginning of the nineteenth century (Moore 2017). According to National Geographic, the ‘Anthropocene Epoch’ is an unofficial unit of geologic time, used to describe the most recent period in Earth’s history when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet’s climate and ecosystems.[3]

Moore and Yusoff argue that the current understanding of the ‘Anthropocene’, with its advent being the Industrial Revolution and the beginning of ‘modernity’ in Great Britain, conveniently cleanses ‘commodification, imperialism, patriarchy, racism and much more’ from the Anthropocene’s point of departure (Moore 2017: 3-4). It also coalesces the human species into a homogeneous acting unit, which serves to absolve former colonial and imperial powers from the destructive chain of events they set in motion hundreds of years before, with the beginning of colonisation, the Slave Trade, and the hunger for sugar.

For Moore, the ‘Anthropocene’ should be reconceptualised as ‘The Capitalocene’. He argues that the turning point in human affairs began not with the arrival of the steam engine, but with the arrival of Columbus in the so-called ‘New World’ (Moore 2017: 3). The Colonial Mission

[3]As well as the dominant notion that the Anthropocene’s point of departure was the start of the Industrial Revolution of the 1800s, other critics argue that the beginning of the Anthropocene should be 1945, being the point at which humans tested the first atomic bomb, and then dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan.
Definition taken from: https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/anthropocene/ (Last Accessed 5th November 2021)

undertaken by European powers between 1450 and 1750 catalysed a new era of human relations in the web of life: the 'Age of Capital' was born. The colonising, enslaving, forced displacing, raping, pillaging, and slaughtering of black and brown peoples across the globe for the purpose of wealth accumulation through the means of sugar, human-trafficking and human bondage created epicentres of imperial power and financial might (Moore 2017:17).

Yusoff's *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (2019) is a fierce redefining of the 'Anthropocene', in which she foregrounds the history of the incalculable number of black bodies erased from the relatively 'pleasant' story of the 'Age of Man' today. The dominant narrative of the Anthropocene, she argues, is 'articulated anew as the white man's burden', it is a 'paternalism that is tied to a redemptive narrative of saving the world from harm on the account of others while maintaining the protective thick skin of innocence' (Yusoff 2019: 23). The Eurocentric interpretation of the Anthropocene (which has become by default the principal reading) attempts to expunge from its history the billion black Anthropocene accounts which form the core of its birth.

But what exactly does this mean for Caribbean Decolonisation?

If any place should be read into the Anthropocene origin story it is the Caribbean. The region symbolises fully the interpretations of 'The Capitalocene' and 'A Billion Black Anthropocenes'. As the primary site of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, the Caribbean region is where the rise of global capitalism materialises. Slavery and sugar were big business: by the 1800s, economic historians suggest that £2.5 million[4] was the annual profit for all commodity production in the British West Indies- making the Caribbean (specifically the colonised British territories) the most valuable pieces of real estate in the world (Blackburn 1997: 533-536) (Beckles 2013: 90-103). As early as 1650s, Barbados produced an annual crop valued at over £3 million (£5.8 billion in 2010) and was described as the richest spot in the New World (Beckles 2013: 87). This

[4] In the literature there are varying estimates of this figure, however Beckles (2013) spotlights the fact such estimations are most likely understatements.

economic boom could only be achieved by the abuse of Africans: between 1690 and 1807, the English alone shipped nearly three million enchained Africans (Beckles 2017: 93). Black people were turned into commodities for the purpose of profit, as we will see nature was rendered obsolete for the purpose of mapping, cataloguing, experimentation, and ultimately-profit, and the use of abject violence underscores these realities.

The very creation of the Caribbean economic system was a Western capitalist venture. The Caribbean sugar economy made possible by African slavery and black labour made the region an attractive investment opportunity for England and Europe (Beckles 2013: 101). Profits from the Caribbean endeavour singlehandedly catalysed Britain's Industrial Revolution and at the very core of Britain's imperial success as an economic superpower was nestled the Caribbean. Conveniently, although the 'West Indies mattered less' by the time Britain and other European empires became self-sustaining nations (Solow 1987: 75), colonialism kept a tight grip on the Caribbean political, economic, and social makeup. This stranglehold over the region has affected over time an erasure of the Caribbean. So much so that, although political independence took the Caribbean by storm in the mid twentieth century, the region did not undergo a radical reorientation of economic relationships nor colonial mindsets (Edmonds 2015). Seemingly, work on the plantation became work in hotels (the heavy reliance on the tourism industry as a means of economic survival mimics the plantation economy), instruction from former colonial masters became instruction from supranational organisations and the farce of the Caribbean on and as the periphery continues.

For the capitalist and colonial enterprise to reach such heights, as well as organising the Caribbean economy to function for and around the metropolitan centres, it was necessary to destroy black personhood. Violently. Moore argues that historical capitalism (like the one born out of the West Indies) is not only a social formation but also an ontological one (2017: 8). To attain maximum profits, Capitalism (and those who instrumentalise it) does with Nature as it pleases: the arrival of Europeans in the Caribbean in 1492 led to 'the mixing of previous separate biotas, such as corn, maize, potatoes, sugarcane, wheat, and domesticated animals

such as cows, rats, goats and pigs (Lewis and Maslin 2015). So, if capitalism externalises Nature for profits and colonialism is a mechanism for capitalist endeavours, then colonialism too does with its subjects as it pleases. The invasion of the Europeans saw a massive genocide in the indigenous population of the Americas and with the largest forced migration of people in the world (slavery), black bodies became things (Yusoff 2019: 73), [5] effectively effacing their humanity for the purpose of wealth accumulation. As Yusoff poignantly puts it 'their lives were embedded in every coin that changed hands, each spoonful of sugar stirred into a cup of tea, each puff of a pipe, and every bite of rice' (2019: 18).

After the successful manipulation of the Caribbean economic system to centre around Western interests and the destruction of black Caribbean ontology, the last piece in securing Western hegemony was the erasure of Caribbean epistemological sovereignty. There is a clear causality, then, between the economic domination of the Caribbean and the eradication of black Caribbean ontology and epistemology, specifically within the context of the 'Anthropocene'. For there to even be the story of the 'Anthropocene' in the Western understanding of this phenomenon, countless black and indigenous bodies were disregarded in the pursuit of conspicuous capitalism. Without them, there would be no 'Age of Man'. Despite this fact, white academic spaces have conveniently erased the dehumanisation of these subjects, and, as Brand says 'it never occurs to them that they live on the cumulative hurt of others', furthermore 'they want to start the clock of social justice only when they arrive' (2001: 82). More than just expunging the Caribbean from the Anthropocene origin stories, Western financial epistemic centres tend to diminish the role of the region in the global financial ecosystem, casting the Caribbean once again to the periphery. As Don Marshall asserts, the historical role that the Caribbean played in warehousing trade, and as circuits of merchant capital co-producing capital infrastructures across the inter-imperial field remains evacuated from history and contemporary accounts of the growth of global finance (2009: 179).

[5] Yusoff here draws upon Césaire's notion of "Colonisation= thingification" (Césaire 1972)

As well as understating the indispensable role the Caribbean played in the development of the global financial system, the colonial project inscribed a dependence which stunted the development of Caribbean epistemological thought. Norman Girvan argued that in the early years of independence, Caribbean development struggled because of 'epistemic dependence' caused by economic dependence, which saw regional elites rely on imported concepts and theories, in an attempt to solve Caribbean problems (1971a: 7). Economist Lloyd Best contended 'our economic minds were still epistemologically colonised' (Thomas 2016: 220). The adoption of neo-liberalist and capitalist ideologies and the adoption of tourism, which were principles and suggestions emanating from Western financial centres, are examples of such colonisation.

Reading the Caribbean into the Anthropocene origin story, and indeed positioning the region at its core, portrays clearly why a Radical Decolonisation is imperative. Being the site of the burgeoning of global capitalism has left lasting ruptures, fissures and gaps in Caribbean history and identity, as the capitalist colonial mission stole epistemological and ontological sovereignty from the hands of the black bodies it brutalised. Sadly, the legacy of this brutalisation is so entrenched in the Caribbean imaginary that these economic, epistemological, and ontological cracks still exist today. Glissant, in *Discours Antillais*, laments that the inhumanity of the colonial agenda has led to a kind of 'non-history' because of the many fractures and disruptions that capitalism left in its wake (1997: 223-4). Therefore, situating the Caribbean at the centre of the Anthropocene discourse is the first step in re-dressing the 'non-history' created by the capitalist and colonial mission. The frameworks provided by Moore and Yusoff start to amend the erasure of the Caribbean, its peoples and its indisputable importance in the history and creation of the New World. A Radical Decolonisation for the Caribbean brings the opportunity and freedom to decide its own ontological makeup. As Kincaid says: 'Even if I really came from people who were living like monkeys in trees, it was better to be that than what happened to me, what I became after I met you' (1988: 37).

They Say 'Tax Havens', we say 'Offshore Financial Centres': The Caribbean in International Finance[6]

The Caribbean region seems to be a persistent thorn in the side of the Western financial system, which refuses to admit as such. The vilification of the Caribbean offshore financial market is evidence of the Western refusal to remove its fingers from the Caribbean pie. By attempting to continually control the tax policies of sovereign jurisdictions, the international financial market (concentrated in metropolitan centres) continues its assault on Caribbean political, economic, ontological, and epistemological decolonisation.

The origins of Caribbean OFCs were once again born out of Western greed. Vanessa Ogle assert that the early Caribbean 'tax haven' (emerging in the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands and British Virgin Islands in the 1950s and 1960s and later spread to the rest of the British West Indies) developed because the white local elite wanted to protect their ill-gotten colonial spoils in the face of a rapidly decolonising British empire (Ogle 2020). However, by the time neo-liberal policies and globalisation swept through the world, newly independent (and most importantly, sovereign) Caribbean nations embraced tax competitiveness intending to generate income for much needed Caribbean development. Indeed, the early OFCs allowed for employment creation, the earning of taxation revenue for the host government and the acquisition of foreign exchange (Sheldon, Jordan 2017: 7). By dealing in financial services, some economists estimate that, if all the different offshore financial services are considered, a total of US$9000 billion resides in or passes through the Caribbean (Marshall 2007: 932).

Once again, as the Caribbean creeps into the centre of the global economic system, all attempts are made to regulate its growth. Since 1998, CARICOM members, who had begun to utilise tax competitive measures to attract much needed foreign investments, found themselves clashing with the OECD, whose thirst for free-market economies did not extend to free enterprise and

[6] From this point 'Offshore Financial Centres' will be referred as OFCs.

open-market competition in the area of taxation (Vaughn 2002: 8). [7] Under the guise of tackling international money-laundering and penalising tax evasion, supranational organisations, such as the OECD, FAFT, and the EU published and continue to publish reports which demonise CARICOM countries as 'tax havens' which participate in 'harmful tax practices' (Vaughn: 11-12). It is not only reports which tarnish the reputation of the Caribbean in the eyes of global finance, but also the blacklists which accompany them. In 2000, the OECD issued its 'List of Uncooperative Tax Havens', which included 15 CARICOM member states. As expected, the economies of those states took a nosedive as companies were now unwilling to do business in jurisdictions burdened with negative overtones (Vaughn 2002: 33). To protect their economies and hold on to their very thin piece of the global finance pie, the CARICOM states capitulated, agreed to OECD demands and two years later all 15 islands were removed from the blacklist.

The 1998 to 2002 OECD reports and blacklists were the beginning of the attack on Caribbean offshore financial markets and the onslaught did not stop there. As recently as December 2017, the European Union issued a list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes and countries had until December 2018 to comply (Yearwood 2020: 516). The jurisdictions affected in the Caribbean region passed economic substance laws by 1st January 2019. The effect of the constant sanctioning and black-listing on Caribbean economic sovereignty is two-fold. Firstly, the region is unable to use tax competitiveness and 'international investment facilitation' as legitimate sources of income. Also, achieving economic prosperity with offshore financial activity, is dependent on the whims of the former imperial and colonial powers which wield considerable influence in these supranational organisations. Secondly, they erode the fiscal sovereignty of Caribbean states to set their own tax and economic policies. When the blacklists are published (notably from outside of the Caribbean basin and firmly inside the metropolitan centres), the affected Caribbean states have no choice but to amend their fiscal laws and policies or else face international ostracisation.

[7] CARICOM is an abbreviation of 'Caribbean Community' and refers to a group of 15 Caribbean nations and dependencies.
Taken from: https://globaledge.msu.edu/trade-blocs/caricom/memo (Last accessed 11th November 2021)

Ontologically, the 'tax haven' and 'offshore financial centre' debate is crippling to the Caribbean region. Scholars such as Don Marshall (2007, 2009) have already provided a robust analysis on how the Caribbean region has been orientalised, naturalised, and feminised in this discourse of international tax practices in an attempt to de-legitimise the seriousness of the Caribbean offshore financial market and place the Caribbean back in the position of 'other', back to the periphery. Marshall contends that in the Caribbean offshore debate, 'the fundamental imaginative act at work is the motif of the rational, Western form at variance with the exotic, anachronistic 'other'. Furthermore, he asserts, 'not unlike encounters in the colonial past, the Caribbean and Pacific OFCs have been cast simultaneously as 'perverse negations' and temptations to be resisted' (2009: 424). The interpretation that this report wishes to advance is the Western insistence to treat the Caribbean as Child. Like a Mother, incensed with the persistent disobedience of her child, the OECD and various other supranational organisations undergo several stages in an attempt to reign in Caribbean 'bad behaviour'. The initial listing of Caribbean countries in reports which identify them as naughty jurisdictions is the warning. The blacklisting that accompanies is the punishment. The eventual removal of the Caribbean states after they 'fall in line' is the reward. This interpretation of the Caribbean as Child becomes evident when looking at the conversation which surrounds the Caribbean, its financial markets and the efforts of the global North to curtail 'tax haven' behaviour. There is talk of 'crackdowns', 'tackling' and 'destroying' Caribbean tax havens.[8] It is a conversation with is steeped in punitive language, conjuring images of slave masters cracking their whips and children being berated.

This infantilisation of the Caribbean is effected to not only reinforce Western hegemony (the relationship between the isles and the metropolitan centres is one of 'Mother country' and colony) but also to obscure the fact that the Caribbean has historically been and continues to be a player on the world stage of global finance.

[8] These direct quotes are taken from various articles. https://nearshoreamericas.com/global-minimum-tax-caribbean-tax-havens/ , https://www.cnbc.com/2021/07/16/oecd-tax-reform-g-20s-crackdown-may-create-a-new-kind-of-tax-haven.html , https://www.businessinsider.com/g20-finance-chiefs-sign-off-on-tax-haven-crackdown-2021-7?IR=T , https://apnews.com/article/883122dd1573415e91818430bf3856e2 (Last Accessed 11th November 2021).

The infantilisation of the Caribbean is reinforced with the dominant rhetoric that the region needs the likes of the OECD and other transnational organisations to protect itself from being exploited by greedy Western elites, hellbent on dodging their tax duties in their own countries: *Treasure Islands: Tax Havens and the Men who Stole the World* (Shaxson 2011) advances such viewpoint. This discourse is highly problematic as it assumes that Caribbean governments are unable to implement sound fiscal policies to advance their own economies. It also advances the notion of the Western world as saviour and protector, hiding behind its 'thick skin of innocence' (Yusoff 2019: 23), conveniently erasing the very existence for 'tax havenry' in the Caribbean in the first instance. Additionally, the fact that 'many Caribbean countries were encouraged by the international community to go into the offshore financial sector services' is once again obscured from the prevailing narrative (Ronald Sanders quoted in Vaughn 2002: 30). The simultaneous infantilisation and denigration of the Caribbean in terms of its offshore financial sector is a weapon used by financial jurisdictions in the global North to shift blame and conceal their own hypocrisies: one only has to look at the tax policies of the US state of Delaware and the fact that more dirty money passes through places like New York and London everyday than in all the countries in the Caribbean (Former Prime Minister of Barbados Owen Arthur quoted in Vaughn 2002: 39).

This characterisation of the Caribbean as Child also has epistemological ramifications. Although the Caribbean region has 'captured a sizeable share of the world's (captive) insurance market' (Marshall 2007: 932), the region is almost never given a seat at the table when it comes to global taxation. The international regime of financial governance is principally organised around the G-7 most industrialised countries, the IMF, the World Bank, the OECD, the Bank for International Settlements and the EU (Marshall 2007: 928). These seats of Western epistemic power do not include the Caribbean region in the shaping of the rules and methodologies which would ensure fair and effective regulation and preserve the sovereignty rights of independent tax states (Marshall 2009: 179). Epistemologically, the rendering of the Caribbean as Child is vivid: in matters of international finance, the Caribbean region waits for either instruction or scolding. As the adage goes, it is seen and most definitely not heard.

The G-7 recently voted to implement a global minimum tax rate of 15%, along the premise that it will force companies to pay their fair share of tax and bring an end to the lucrative 'tax haven' business. The suggestion has now been adopted by 136 countries, including Caribbean islands engaged in the offshore financial sector.[9] Although the minutiae of the proposal are yet to be ironed out, this could spell trouble for the region. Once again, left out of initial deliberations of the proposal, Caribbean states signed up after the fact, contending that it was better to have a seat at the table. However, sitting at the table does not guarantee having a voice at it. Through the lens of the global tax financial market, the colonial mindset of disciplining and punishing of the Caribbean reappears. However, in this day and age, when the West enjoys economic prosperity and are the seats of epistemic might, why does it still keep such a tight grasp on the region? Perhaps loosening its vice grip will reveal the farce of the Mother/Child dichotomy forcing the world to acknowledge who really birthed whom.

The Tourism Trap

Seemingly, there is no Caribbean without tourism. The image of the island paradise, nothing but sun, sea and sand are now the selling points of the region and sadly, the representations of the contemporary Caribbean imaginary. However, without reconceiving the Caribbean tourism complex, there is no Radical Decolonisation for the region either. Continued reliance on the tourism model as a means of economic liberation and advancement is a sure-fire way of prolonging Caribbean epistemological and ontological stagnation.

The Caribbean Tourism industry is currently indispensable to the region's survival. Tourism accounted for 13.9% of the region's GDP and 15.2% of total employment in 2019, making it the sub-region with the highest economic contribution from tourism in the world (ECLAC 2020a).

[9] Taken from: https://www.reuters.com/business/finance/what-is-global-minimum-tax-deal-what-will-it-mean-2021-10-08/ (Last accessed: 9th November 2021)

For some individual island states, tourism is literally their bread and butter. In Barbados, tourism makes a 25% contribution to the gross national income, in Antigua and Barbuda, 27%, the Bahamas and St Lucia, 28% (Caribbean Development Bank, 2017). The industry directly supports over 800,000 jobs and generates US$35.5 billion in revenue for the region (Caribbean Tourism Organisation 2017). As evidenced above, the tourism sector is one of the principal economic activities on the islands and an essential source of job opportunities, livelihood and (alleged) inclusive growth.

This dependence on a single financial sector, no matter how robust, is a trap, and the Caribbean region has succumbed to it. Primarily, the tourism industry relies on foreign nationals for sustenance, making it vulnerable to external global financial shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic is one such crisis which exposed the weakness of the dependency on tourism as an economic model. According to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), the Caribbean region saw a 65.5% drop in foreign arrivals in 2020. Furthermore, the CTO maintained that 'this low period was characterised by empty hotels and restaurants, deserted attractions, shut borders, laid-off workers, grounded airlines and crippled cruise lines' (CTO: 2021). For Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba and St Lucia where 90%, 84.3% and 78.1% of its workforce respectively (WTTC 2019) is employed in the travel and tourism sector, a halt to 'business as usual' such as the one presented by the COVID-19 pandemic is a question of poverty for the local inhabitants.

It is not simply changes to the world's financial ecosystem which renders tourism an unsustainable developmental mechanism for the Caribbean, but also the fact that much of the 'wealth' generated by the tourism industry escapes from the shores of the region and washes up in the coffers of foreign-owned businesses in metropolitan centres. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, some 80% of the region's travel and tourism revenue likely leaks out of the local economy (Bresler 2020). The tourism leakage phenomenon occurs due to the all-inclusive resorts and cruise travel which dominate the Caribbean tourism complex. Vacation packages funnel money into airlines, cruise lines, chain resorts, and other large, foreign-owned companies (Bresler 2020). Even if resorts do hire local workers, a

damaging percentage of supplies are imported: Edmund Barlett, Jamaica's tourism minister in 2018 asserted that Jamaica leaks 30% of its revenue in imports alone.

The adoption of tourism as a sound means of economic development and liberation for the Caribbean islands, at the onset of constitutional independence in 1960s, came from the Western economic tradition and represented an 'epistemic dependence' on the behalf of Caribbean governments. Just like promoting the offshore financial sector as a means of cash impetus for the Caribbean islands, multilateral lending agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations Development Agency promoted tourism as a viable economic and social development tool for 'third world countries' (Sealy 2018: 3). This 'advice' came at a time when metropolitan centres were promoting capitalist and neo-liberalist ideologies, which were geared towards a more outward-oriented approach to economic development and were founded on the principles of free and open markets. Such principles allowed the prominence of transnational conglomerates to be the real winners with regards to the Caribbean tourism complex through the 'tourism leakage' phenomenon. Thus, tourism represents to the Caribbean what sugar was centuries ago: a monocrop controlled by foreigners and a few local elites (Sealy 2018: 3). Epistemologically, tourism epitomises what economist Llyod Best calls the 're-inscription of the sugar plantation economy' (Thomas 2016: 129). The industry and its selling points of sun, sea and sand (the governing images of the Caribbean imaginary) are not epistemic initiatives born out of the region itself, but the imaginations of the Western imperial mind.

When it comes to tourism, the ontological liberation of the Caribbean person is ensnared in its trap. Tourism has often been referred to as the 'new plantocracy' (Beckles 1990), 'Plantation tourism' (Weaver 1988) or apartheid tourism (Elliot & Neitotti 2009) due to its structural similarities to the plantation economies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Sealy 2018: 3). On both the sugar plantations and the contemporary tourism plantation structure, capitalism's ontological praxis, Cheap Nature, is fully exposed. Cheap Nature is the ontological damaging of capitalism's victims (Moore 2017: 7-8). The 'Cheapening' as Moore calls it is

twofold. On the one hand, Cheap Nature works to reduce the price of labour. On the other, it works to cheapen in the English-language sense of the word; that is to treat as unworthy of dignity and respect. Moore explains that the both accounts of 'Cheapening' work in tandem to render the work of many humans but also of animals, soils, forests, and all manner of extra human nature invisible (2017: 7).

The slave labour which manned the sugar plantations saw enslaved Africans reduced to commodities. Their 'price' so-to-speak was valued on the work they could produce rather than actual personhood. The Caribbean tourism complex mirrors the African erasure of ontological sovereignty on sugar plantations, by rendering the price of black labour cheap: of the 800,000 jobs that tourism provides in the region, many of these are seasonal and very low-paid (Wong 2015: 11). In addition, money that may be generated by internationally funded projects fails to reach locals: only 15% of the Chinese funded Baha May construction project in the Bahamas found its way to local labourers (Kennedy 2018). As well as the material cheapness of slave labour, the very identity of the Caribbean person is cheapened too. Slave laws dictated that African bodies were property and not people. Just as the slave 'became interned in a metamorphosis from human entity to a market one' (Wynter quoted in Yusoff 2019: 27), so too does the tourism worker. Sun, sea and sand are not the only things on sale in the Caribbean tourist market- souls are too.

The Independent recently published an article which chronicles an Johnny Greene's time in Antigua[10]. The first line quotes Jamaica Kincaid's essay 'A Small Place' (1998): 'Antigua is beautiful. Antigua is too beautiful'. What the author fails to acknowledge is the fact that 'A Small Place' is not a love letter to Antigua's picture-postcard beauty as he frames it, but a biting commentary on the tourism industry and a lashing critique of tourists, like the author, themselves. This manipulative ventriloquising of Kincaid's words is testament to the fundamental problem of the Caribbean tourism trap. The economic dependence of the region

[10] Taken from https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/antigua-caribbean-covid-bar-investment-b1900546.html (Last Accessed 12th November 2021)

on metropolitan centres and their inhabitants for economic sustenance, allows the perpetuation of old colonial tropes. So, between the 'golden beaches and lazy living', Barbuda being the 'sleepier sister', the 'idyllic natural riches', the 'sense of paradise', the 'beautiful chaos' of carnival season and the 'stupid, enormous fun' to be had on the island, Antigua is naturalised, feminised and infantilised once more. Without a comprehensive restructuring of the tourism industry, Radical Decolonisation is not promised and the conceptualisation of the Caribbean imaginary rests in the Western imperial charge.

Radical Decolonisation and Reparations: What does one mean for the other?

The Caribbean reparations movement has been defined as 'a moral, legal and political response to the crime against humanity committed during the European imperial project- specifically the genocide committed against the native population and the trading and enslavement of enchained African bodies' (Beckles 2013: 211). However, for the sorts of Radical Decolonisation that this report envisages, the Caribbean reparations endeavour must constitute more than a mere 'response'. Fanon asserts that 'decolonisation is always a violent phenomenon' (1967: 27). For him, there is no complete liberation, without the complete and utter obliteration of the vestiges (political, economic, epistemological and ontological) of the colonial past. Therefore reparations, as the primary mechanism for facilitating a radical decolonisation in the region, must be instilled with a symbolic violence which corresponds to the violence that former imperial and colonial forces used to destroy Caribbean political, economic, ontological and epistemological sovereignty.

Ingraining Fanon's concept of violence in the contemporary reparations movement is not to advocate for the colonisation and enslavement of former colonial powers: after all, an eye for and eye makes the whole world blind. Moreover, Fanon already warned that the colonial project dehumanises its subjects as well as the colonisers themselves. However, the implementation of racialised capitalism in the Caribbean was violent. The colonisation of the

territories thereafter, cut-throat. The epistemic erasure and bastardisation of the region from accounts of the 'Anthropocene' and global economy, deliberate. There is an urgency and intensity in a Fanonian response which underscores violence as being essential in the Caribbean reparations endeavour, as a necessary response to what this report has revealed by situating the region within the contexts of Moore and Yusoff; a calculated and systematic task of excising the Caribbean epistemological and ontological thought. This report will now locate the CARICOM Ten Point Plan for Reparatory Justice within the framework of Radical Decolonisation and a fresh 21st-century reading of Fanonian violence to demonstrate how reparations can not only lead to economic sovereignty for the region, but also the construction of a new Caribbean Imaginary.

Justin Ram, Director of Economics at the Caribbean Development Bank stated that the Caribbean could become the poorest region in the world by 2050 (Dorway 2020).[11] This represents a stark difference from the West Indies previously described as the 'wealth generating machine of the New World' (Beckles 2013: 167). By looking at the Caribbean Tourism complex and the Offshore Financial sector, this report has already evidenced some of the damaging economic legacies of the colonial regime: namely undiversified economies, vulnerability to external global shocks and dependence on international financial markets. High debt to GDP ratios stemming from the lack of access to insufficient capital are also legacies of colonialism, as the pressure of development has driven governments to carry the burden of public employment and social policies designed to confront colonial legacies (CARICOM 2014). In 2015, the OECD predicted that nearly three quarters of small states with unsustainable levels of debt would be Caribbean countries (OECD et al 2019: 186). 2021 statistics show that Suriname has a debt to GDP ratio of 157.4%, Barbados 143%, Antigua and Barbuda 111.8%, Jamaica 95.5% and so on. The call for debt cancellation as iterated in the CARICOM Ten Point Plan for Reparatory Justice needs to be answered, now more than ever.

[11] Taken from: https://www.newsamericasnow.com/caribbean-business-saving-the-caribbean-one-island-at-a-time/ (Last accessed 12th November 2021)

If the Caribbean's call for economic reparations is to embrace the Fanonian spirit of violence, Caribbean governments should consider demanding cash capital as well as asking former colonial countries to participate in 'economic development'. The reasoning for this is simple. The extraction of wealth from the Caribbean did not occur through economic 'developmental' means; Britain was built from financial investment in the slave and sugar trade. The sugar and slave business model were 'cash-in-hand', which European governments and other participating entities then used to build 'their modern foundations' (Beckles 2013: 165). To evidence this further, the last British slave owning cohort were given a £20 million as a cash pay-out to apologise for aborting the property rights of citizens, the last payment of which was dispensed as recently as 2015 (Beckles 2013: 143) (Manjapra 2018). French slave owners also received 90 million gold francs from Haiti (Beckles 2013: 214). [12] In order to 'immiserate poverty and economic impotence in the contemporary Caribbean' (Clegg 2014: 435), as well as debt cancellation and reparations through the form of economic development, Caribbean governments should be bold and follow in the stead of President Aristide of Haiti who, in 2004, made a formal request to the French government for the repatriation of US$21 billion. Simply stating: 'We are asking for the money that belongs to us' (Beckles 2013: 214).

Radical Decolonisation and the quest for reparations are a virtuous cycle, especially in the pursuit of Caribbean epistemological and ontological sovereignty. It is only when we analyse the CARICOM Ten Point Plan through the theoretical lens of Radical Decolonisation does this fact become illuminated. By outlining the path towards reconciliation, truth and justice for the victims and the descendants of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the colonial mission, the importance of the Caribbean Anthropocene account becomes clear. The Caribbean reparations endeavour uncovers the role of the region in the creation of the New World (albeit to its detriment) and advocate for substantial compensation. Therefore, the continuing erasure of the Caribbean from the account of the Anthropocene becomes noticeably more difficult and farcical.

[12] Date taken from: https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/29/slavery-abolition-compensation-when-will-britain-face-up-to-its-crimes-against-humanity (Last accessed 12th November 2021)

As well as ‘decolonisation being a historical process’, Fanon also tells us that it ‘sets out to change the order of the world’: it is ‘a programme of complete disorder’ (Fanon 1967: 27). A radical epistemological decolonisation for the Caribbean means a complete disordering (or rather re-ordering) of the Anthropocene origin story. This report has portrayed how Western epistemological centres have eliminated not only the contribution of the Caribbean region to the making of the Western world and but also the barbarity which spurred this creation in a desperate attempt to maintain Western hegemony. However, if a radical decolonisation is at first a ‘historical process’, the very nature of re-centring the Caribbean in Anthropocenic accounts can be deemed as a success in the quest of Caribbean epistemological decolonisation. This re-centring of the Caribbean in the story of the Anthropocene also ‘changes the order of the world’ as the region now becomes the site through which we understand, measure and set about repairing the consequences of the Anthropocene. *Britain’s Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide* by Hilary Beckles (2013) is an outstanding example of both epistemological decolonisation through the centring of Caribbean Anthropocene accounts and repairing the damage done by Western partisan interpretations of the Anthropocene through decolonising the traditional epistemological framing of the ‘Age of Man’. This report advances *Britain’s Black Debt* by situating Beckles’ accounts of Caribbean genocide firmly in Anthropocene discourse, amounting to a robust re-conception of the Anthropocene and history of the New World.

For the region, this ‘complete disordering’ of the traditional (read Western) chronicling of the Anthropocene means that the CARICOM Ten Point Plan through its demands of reparations is engaging with the tenets of radical decolonisation. The Ten Point Plan demands reparations for implementing an Indigenous Peoples Development Program, which seeks to rehabilitate the descendants of the Caribbean native population effaced by colonial brutality and for the development of cultural institutions that provoke within the consciousness of the Caribbean population an understanding of their indispensable role in world history. In doing so, the Ten

Point Plan simultaneously redresses epistemological erasure and secures compensation for the damage of the Anthropocene itself.

'Decolonisation is the veritable creation of new men' (Fanon 1967: 28). Since colonialism dehumanised black bodies and turned them into commodities, it is only logical that Radical Decolonisation reasserts humanity into the Caribbean imaginary. As well as ontologically separating black bodies from humanity, colonialism physically separated the African person from their original self.

The colonial project in the Caribbean, specifically the movement of black bodies across the Atlantic Ocean and labour on the sugar plantations can only be described as 'hell on earth' (Beckles 2013: 90). The back-breaking work and physical removal from their ancestral homeland affected the corporeal ontology of millions of Black Africans. The Ten Point Project lists both Repatriation and the Caribbean Public Health crisis as areas for reparatory justice, through the physical liberation of the body. Over 10 million African were stolen from their homes and forcefully transported to the Caribbean as part of the Chattel Slavery system and as the property of European merchants (CARICOM 2014). The fact that 'the plantation does not contain all that is planted' (Brathwaite 1975: 5) and that those descendants of those slaves who left the shores of West Africa live in the wake of Slavery (Sharpe 2016) explains ontological desire to return. Having been disconnected physically, mentally, linguistically and culturally from their ancestral homeland a means of achieving Caribbean radical decolonisation is through the physical return 'home'. 'The Year of Return' (2019) hosted by Ghana commemorated the 400th anniversary of since the first enslaved African left its coastline. However, the Ten Point Plan advocates for the establishment of an internationally recognised Repatriation programme that allows for a physical resettlement and re-integration on African soil.

Given that the colonial project which was spurred on by historical capitalism rendered black bodies 'cheap' (Moore 2017: 7), Radical Decolonisation reaffirms value and worth into the Caribbean ontological makeup. The CARICOM Ten Point Plan champions reparations for an

African Knowledge Programme, illiteracy eradication and psychological rehabilitation. These three tenets of the case for reparatory justice constitute a reinfusion of worth' into the Caribbean imaginary and combat the 'cheapening' of the black body, an ontological praxis created by the colonial project to extract maximum wealth without acknowledging these people as human. By re-instilling a sense of belonging, a sense of self before the status as slave, turning the tide on illiteracy (which reinforced the Western imaginary as itself as rational 'Man') and addressing widespread generational trauma, the Caribbean imaginary reverses its 'social death' (quoted by Patterson in Moore 2017: 11).The Caribbean person becomes steps into ontological sovereignty as it shirks off Capitalism's governing conceit of treating individuals cheaply and thus, unworthy of humanity (Moore 2017: 11).

It is in and through violence that the colonised man finds his freedom (Fanon 1967: 68). The pursuit of Radical Decolonisation through the means of reparations has no other choice but to be violent. Despite the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the colonisation of the Caribbean territories being the incarnation of man's inhumanity to man' and one of the grossest examples of a crime against humanity (Beckles 2013: 11), Caribbean governments and peoples have not been offered so much as an apology for their plight. Hollow 'statements of regret' and flat-out denial of the illegality of slavery have followed the Caribbean reparations endeavour. The world understands the concept of reparations, however: Germany was made to pay for its role in the Holocaust. Maybe, as skin becomes darker, noses broader and hair kinkier, the enthusiasm for social justice dissipates. It is for that reason Caribbean quest for reparations, and as a result total liberation remains unrelenting. After all, violence will only yield when confronted with greater violence (Fanon 1967: 48).

Conclusion

It has been the dominant story that the world was born out of the West. And it is true. Just not the Western world we are taught to herald as beginning the 'Age of Man'. In this way, interpretations of imperial and colonial powers as the 'Mother' of the Caribbean region quickly

reveal themselves as farcical and an act of Caribbean erasure. The Chattel slavery experience, a destructive lovechild of the Western imperial mind, constituted a physical death for millions of Africans. The colonisation of the Caribbean region, the lust for sugar and the forced plantation labour slaughtered black and brown personhood. Re-imagining the story of the Anthropocene highlights that the Caribbean birthed modern society as we know it. Without the Caribbean region and the wealth tirelessly acquired from it, Europe would have never experienced such splendour.

In A Small Place (1988), Jamaica Kincaid says of her island, Antigua and Barbuda, that 'there is no big historical moment to compare the way they are now to the way they used to be. No Industrial Revolution, no revolution of any kind, no Age of Anything' (78). By reading Kincaid's analysis of Antigua as a microcosm for the wider Caribbean, I must resituate her words knowing that all attempts were made to diminish the role the Caribbean played in the making of modernity. Quite simply, the Caribbean *is* the 'big historical moment': from out of this tiny archipelago, empires were built, the finance to catalyse the Industrial Revolution of the European world was procured, slave revolts for Afro-Caribbean freedom were executed and emancipation was wrestled from the hands of oppressors. The Caribbean is the Age of Everything.

To position the Caribbean basin at the centre of the 'Anthropocene' story is not to disregard the dehumanisation and assault on black and brown personhood that the capitalist, colonial venture undertook but to foreground a holistic interpretation of the Caribbean imaginary. However, centring the Caribbean is not enough. The Caribbean imaginary deserves a Radical Decolonisation. A decolonisation carried out through the means of a conscientious and unrelenting quest for reparations. A decolonisation which births an irrevocable political, economic, ontological and epistemological liberation for the Caribbean region and its people.

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