

In sum, *Writing After Postcolonialism: Francophone North African Literature in Transition* provides uniquely focused lenses in narrative activity-in-narrative and the literary-in-literature through which Hiddleston explores literary and democratic transitions in the Maghreb. Ultimately, and most importantly, the study leads back through its own viewfinder to an affirmation of the literary imagination. As such, it has a broad and vital implication: it will remind students and researchers, specialists and non-specialists alike of why writing and the literary imagination are indissociable from the human experience and as such compelling objects of study.

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Lisa Tomlinson. *The African-Jamaican Aesthetic: Cultural Retention and Transformation Across Borders*. Amsterdam: Brill/Rodopi, 2017. Pp. 210. ISBN: 9789004338005.

This monograph is a remarkable and timely extension of previous works on the African-Jamaican aesthetic, such as Edward Kamau Brathwaite's *Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica* (1970) and Mervyn Alleyne's *Africa: Roots of Jamaican Culture* (1996). The book also builds on Carolyn Cooper's *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the 'Vulgar' Body of Jamaican Popular Culture* (1995) and *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large* (2004), and on Hugh Hodges's *Soon Come: Jamaican Spirituality, Jamaican Poetics* (2008), to argue that there is such a thing as an indigenous African-Jamaican aesthetic even as it transforms across geographical borders.

Lisa Tomlinson makes clear that it is not her "intention to 'fix' or homogenize Jamaican literature and culture as they are expressed in the diaspora," but rather to assert "that a close examination of Jamaican literary productions reveals both a persistent continuity of African and Caribbean aesthetic modes and a dialogue with local and diasporic realities" (70). This is no mean feat, considering the plurality of ideologies, philosophies, and religions in Jamaica. Moreover, she incorporates into her work anticolonial discourse, pan-Africanism, black feminism, and diasporic studies. Tomlinson focuses on Jamaican-Canadian and

Jamaican-British diasporas, specifically in Toronto and London. She also extends her analysis to Francophone and Hispanophone literatures across the Caribbean and to Anglophone diasporic literatures in the US. The study challenges previous scholarship in many ways and, even if readers do not agree with the author's arguments, this book will compel them to revisit and rethink commonly held assumptions.

As the introduction indicates, this monograph is resistant to black diasporic scholarship privileging Eurocentric discourse. Instead, Tomlinson uses marginalized interdisciplinary frameworks in order to focus on local, embodied and anticolonial forms of knowledge, including Jamaican Patwa, folk culture, and a Rastafarian sensibility. Furthermore, she analyses the intersections of race, gender, and class in the immigrants' predicament in their adopted country. Instead of providing a sociological reading of the diasporic works under scrutiny, Tomlinson seeks to delineate a cultural aesthetic.

The first chapter opens with a rather surprising personal account of the author growing up as a Jamaican-Canadian in Canada. Rather than detracting from the book's intentions, this section demonstrates the importance of the Jamaican oral tradition in rectifying the cultural alienation that the children of the Jamaican diaspora can experience when the education system of their adopted country fails to represent them and their reality. Tomlinson then proceeds with a scholarly study of Jamaican work songs and proverbs, thus recharting orality's "trajectory in the genesis of a national literature" (3). In performing this task, the author disagrees with Paul Gilroy's proposition in *The Black Atlantic* (1993) that slavery is "the crucial moment defining North American black experience" (9). Tomlinson instead claims that "in the case of Jamaican music, it is crucial to recognise the African indigenous foundations upon which it is built" (9). After reconceptualising the foundations of the Jamaican oral tradition, Tomlinson examines the transformation it underwent when Jamaican men started working on the Panama Canal, an experience that led to "the notion of 'America'" as "a shared diasporic space" (10). The songs reflect these people's new environment while reflecting upon the old and serving as an "economic and political critique" (10).

The study also concentrates on the way songs and proverbs have shaped women's literature. As Tomlinson explains, the early songs sung by enslaved women, unlike those sung by their male counterparts, were not recorded for posterity, as they were performed in private. However,

women's later songs about their experiences of working as street vendors have been recorded. In her discussion, Tomlinson engages with existing criticism, first disagreeing with Martha Beckwith's claim in *Jamaican Proverbs* (1925) that these proverbs are only about "poverty, hunger and injury and want. Love is not celebrated nor is heroism or beauty" (15). She then leans on Carolyn Cooper's argument in *Noises in the Blood* to outline the humour involved in expressing hardships. To demonstrate the breadth of themes in women's poetry, Tomlinson analyses Louise Bennett's proverbs and focuses on Bennett's and Afua Cooper's use of storytelling figures such as Anancy and the duppy.

Chapter two deals with the ways in which Claude McKay and Una Marson incorporate African-Jamaican knowledges, pan-Africanism, and anti-colonialism into their work. While examining McKay's poetry and *Banana Bottom* (1933), Tomlinson argues this novel confirms Frantz Fanon's observation in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) that "an artistic renaissance must often be preceded by deep research into the pre-existing local culture" (31–32). Through McKay's use of Patwa and his portrayal of Bitá, Tomlinson demonstrates how this is undertaken: "Bitá's journey represents the possibility of (re)searching and (re)connecting with the folk cultures of black Jamaicans as a path to indigenous self-identity" (33). Turning to Una Marson's work, Tomlinson underlines the importance of Patwa and African American vernacular. In addition, she argues that Marson's pan-Africanism is influenced by Marcus Garvey, African American jazz and blues. Marson's pocomania, Tomlinson contends, does not constitute an "authentic" link to Africa. Rather, it works as an archive of repressed African traditions. Tomlinson thus suggests that African-influenced religions become "living archives" (55). The last section in this chapter suggests that similar practices later resurged in the Rastafari and reggae style developed by dub poets Matabaruka and Mikey Smith.

Chapter three specifically explores dub poetry in Canada and the UK. In this section, Tomlinson argues against what she perceives as the ahistoricisation of the "continuity of the Afro-Caribbean aesthetic and culture" (69–70) in Rinaldo Walcott's *Black Like Who? Writing Black Canada* (1997). She also posits that Gilroy's valorisation of cultural exchanges in *The Black Atlantic* undermines "the locality and indigeneity of cultures that are so central to an anticolonial framework" (70). Tomlinson further examines the way in which Toronto-based Lillian Allen and Afua Cooper foreground reggae and dancehall in their work. In this regard, Tomlinson maintains

that re-imagining Jamaican dancehall offers an example of “de-territorialization” (75). She also explores these writers’ engagement with African-Caribbean religions. Similarly, in the UK, religion also features prominently in the works of Linton Kwesi Johnson and Benjamin Zephaniah. Although Tomlinson acknowledges that Kwesi Johnson’s aesthetic is not inherently religious, she demonstrates that he does depict the importance of black spirituality in the lives of the African-Caribbean diaspora, while employing language from Rastafari. Tomlinson further emphasises his reliance on Patwa as well as his depiction of violence against South Africans. She thus likens Kwesi Johnson to Walter Rodney, who applied pan-African tenants to other ethnic and radicalised groups. Zephaniah, she asserts, “employs Rastafarian political and spiritual discourse” (99) to “envision a promised land free of racial oppression” (101).

Chapter four examines how women’s dub poetry reflects the intersections of race, gender, and class. To this end, Tomlinson discusses Afua Cooper, Ahdri Zhina Mandiela and Lillian Allen in Canada, and Jean ‘Binta’ Breeze in the UK. Male dub poets, she explains, have maintained close ties with black-nationalist and pan-Africanist discourse. Female poets, she contends, approach the lives of African-Jamaican women in the Caribbean and the diaspora from a black feminist and anti-colonialist perspective. As Tomlinson indicates, these writers allude to male artists such as Langston Hughes and Bob Marley in order to voice a gendered experience in the diaspora. Yet again, she emphasises the presence of African spirituality and folklore in their texts. Significantly, she argues that Claude McKay’s works do explore intersections of gender and race, which has been given little attention in the critical literature on his work.

The last chapter focuses exclusively on novels. When dealing with McKay’s *Home to Harlem* (1937), Tomlinson points out that Harlem became a transnational and black cross-cultural dynamic space during the Harlem Renaissance. Instead of analysing McKay’s depictions of African Americans, which have been the main focus of much critical discourse so far, Tomlinson outlines the ways in which the Haitian Ray shares his knowledge of Caribbean history and cultures, as well as of pan-African and anticolonial discourses, with the African American character, Jake.

Tomlinson then turns to work by women novelists, namely Makeda Silvera’s *The Heart Does Not Bend* (2003) in Canada and Joan Riley’s *The Unbelonging* (1985) in the UK. She examines how these authors aesthetically integrate proverbs, dialogue in Patwa, and religion into their fiction.

For both writers, remembering does not entail nostalgia, as the Caribbean is a site of lived experience rather than a mythic one. Nonetheless, Tomlinson maintains that romanticising Jamaica can prove helpful when faced with racism and isolation. The decision to place these two texts in conversation may at first appear rather strange, given the eighteen-year span between their respective publication; however, she connects these works by stressing that they are both dealing with sexual taboos (Silvera with lesbianism, and Riley with incest and rape).

The limitations of only comparing one novel by one female writer in two different geographical spaces and time periods are somewhat rectified in the conclusion, in which Tomlinson discusses Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000). She sheds light on how Smith's inclusion of other ethnicities links her to other Jamaicans who also adopted a transcultural viewpoint. According to Tomlinson, Smith belongs to the Jamaican aesthetic as her predecessor Louise Bennett did before her. What is more, Tomlinson's formulation of the African Jamaican aesthetic is a useful analytical tool for further scholarly research on other Jamaican diasporic writers.

Undoubtedly, Lisa Tomlinson's *The African-Jamaican Aesthetic* will become a crucial text for students and scholars working on Jamaican literature. Thanks to the author's inclusion of such literary artists as Haitian American Edwidge Danticat, Trinidadian Merle Hodge, and African Americans Toni Morrison and Zora Neale Hurston, this monograph will familiarise readers with the similarities, differences, and cultural exchanges between black women's writing in the Americas more generally. In addition, Tomlinson's meticulous exploration of Claude McKay's work will prove of interest for specialists. Perhaps most importantly, it will compellingly assert McKay's importance in understanding African-Jamaican literature.

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Stephanos Stephanides and Stavros Karayanni, eds.
***Vernacular Worlds, Cosmopolitan Imagination*. Leiden**
and Boston: Brill/Rodopi, 2015. Pp. 230 + xxvi. ISBN:
9789004300644.

It has become customary these days when holding conferences under the umbrella of the Association of Commonwealth Languages and Literatures Studies (ACLALS), to unsettle the concept of the Commonwealth from its traditional geo-political moorings and centre-periphery framings: one way is through a re/positioning of culture and literary tradition as agents for change. The editors of this collection of essays, Stephanos Stephanides and Stavros Karayanni, aim to do this by asking how “post-colonial” commonwealth literature mediates between two informing categories—the cosmopolitan imagination and vernacular worlds (with their attendant tensions and synergies)—and what forces make cultural products circulate around either one or the other. In an introduction that comprises a web of theoretical mediation, poetic voices, and intercultural connective tissue, Stephanides and Karayanni, poets as well as critics, elide geopolitics with geopoetics in seeking new discourses for reimagining the island space of Cyprus. Cyprus was the location of the ACLALS Conference held in 2010, from which the essays in this volume are largely drawn, “an ostensibly minor” (xii) island where “culture and language appear caught between the nation state that nationalises and territorialises” and the various global flows—of immigrants, of finance and capital, of cultures and languages.

In laying down references for their search for “a new poetics of the imaginary and imagined” (xii) that might contribute to the re-formation of a World Literature from the diverse perspectives of contemporary Cypriot culture, Stephanides and Karayanni use terms like “transculturalisation,” “cultural translatability,” “incorporation,” “dispersion,” and “border