Island Literary Studies: Islandness and Decoloniality in Erna Brodber's Selected Short Stories

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Abstract

The paper explores islandness in Erna Brodber's (1940-) *The World is a High Hill: Stories about Jamaican Women* (2012)within the ambit of Island Literary Studies. Island Literary Studies focuses on the role of literature from and about islands in representing the entities marginalised in the prominent narratives of the world. I examine the conceptualisation of islandness to contextualise Brodber's text within Island Studies. I study islandness and decoloniality in Brodber's narrative, which incorporates Jamaican Creole, within Island Literary Studies. The paper aims to alter the narrative about islands and islanders, thereby contributing towards island studies that re-inscribes pre-established thought frameworks.

Keywords: Decoloniality; Islandness; Island literary studies; Island studies; Jamaican creole.

Introduction: Brodber, Jamaican fiction, and Islandness

Islands could be conceived as geographical manifestations of isolation. Island Studies as a discourse encompasses and appeals to various disciplines, including literary studies, as it focuses on the sustainable, socio-political, cultural, and economic development of islands. The works of Erna Brodber (1940-), a Jamaican writer, sociologist, and social activist, assume significance within islandness as she strives to make the people of African descent in Jamaica, the community with which she identifies herself, more visible to the world and themselves through her fiction[1]. Brodber identifies her people as the African- Jamaican people: "The people who are the descendants of people enslaved in the New World" and represented them in her literary ventures, which are majorly novels: *Jane*

and Louisa Will Soon Come Home (1980), *Myal* (1988), *Louisiana* (1994) and *The Rainmaker's Mistake* (2007) (Brodber and Cooper). She received the Caribbean and Canadian regional Commonwealth Writers' Prize for *Myal* in 1989 and Windham–Campbell Literature Prize in 2017. In this paper I use Island Studies to examine the stories in Erna Brodber's 2012 short story collection, her first collection in the genre and which incorporates linguistic creolisation and religious syncretism in the narrative, *The World is a High Hill: Stories about Jamaican Women* (2012).

Erna Brodber's short stories assume significance within island studies as she creates a metaphorical space for embracing Jamaican history and individuality by narrating the everyday events in the lives of Jamaican women of African descent across various sections of the society. The authorial choice to devise the Jamaican Creole in the main text highlights her insistence on authenticity, thereby making her community familiar and acquainted with a world where their stories find a place in the world literature and media which subsequently facilitate to alter the conversations in and about Jamaica. I examine the language creolisation and religious syncretism in Jamaica that Brodber incorporates in her fiction within the framework of island studies to evince the ideas of islandness and decoloniality.

What is Islandness?

David Weale elucidates how islandness:

> …becomes a part of your being, a part as deep as marrow, and as natural and unselfconscious as breathing. The topography and landscape of this province, that is to say, its islandness, is the source and reference point for the imagination of Islanders. It is the primal source of our communal insight and wisdom. For the island community, no less than for an individual, the failure to respect the truth about ourselves is a serious and soul-destroying failure. Any repudiation of our Islandness is, therefore, a deep and fundamental repudiation of who we are - and of our uniquely precious existence (81).

Weale observes that islandness becomes an integral and undeniable aspect of one's existence as an islander and for the conception of physical and metaphorical island spaces. Islandness is "a metaphysical sensation that derives from the heightened experience that accompanies physical isolation", i.e., the geographical, historical, and psychological conscious-

ness associated with the experience of an island (Conkling 191)[2].Islandness encompasses historical and sociological experiences, which are part of the individual's being thereby becoming "the primal source of our communal insight and wisdom" (Weale 81). Godfrey Baldacchino recommends the term islandness over insularity in Island Studies because the latter focuses on the "semantic baggage of separation and backwardness" ("The Coming of Age" 272). The choice of the term islandness can be understood as an effort toward detaching island spaces from preconceived notions of backwardness.

How does an islander picture themselves? What is the impact of representing their islandness in literature, film, and research among islanders? Brodber recognises and encourages research on her island and island narratives. According to Brodber, fiction provides a space where she can represent her people, culture, and island. She considers the structure of short stories as an effective and accessible way to get her people "know about themselves" (Brodber and Cooper). She aspires for her islanders to be accustomed to having visibility in local and global spaces and hopes the finiteness of short stories facilitates accessibility and increased readership. As Brodber renders voices to the islanders, she aspires to carve out a space for the African Jamaican woman islander in sociological and literary research. Locating Brodber's work within the framework of island studies, an interdisciplinary field, is an effort that aligns with Brodber's aim.

The abundance of scope offered by the island space captured the attention of academics across various disciplines including geography, anthropology, sociology, literature, and developmental studies, among others. This inherent scope of the islands to cater to the interests of multiple fields led to the emergence of a separate discipline – Island Studies. Adam Grydehøj, University of Prince Edward Island, considers decolonial island studies as the future of Island Studies as it offers a direction of research that targets fields and regions that received limited attention and focuses on these regenerative dynamics of islandness across various disciplines. It does not marginalise indigenous voices while seeking to understand islands "on their own terms" (Grydehøj 1). The plurality implied in the term Island Studies supports a plurality of standpoints which in turn associates it with decoloniality. Decoloniality is often confused with postcolonialism. According to Mignolo, "post-colonial criticism and theory is a project of scholarly transformation within the academy", whereas the decoloniality moves "away and beyond the post-colonial" ("Delinking" 452). He also proposes that decoloniality is a form of "epistemic disobedience" and "epistemic de-linking" (Mignolo *The Darker Side* 119 - 23). The geographic

location of islands, oceans and their resources form the tangible, physical aspects of islandness, and a method to analyse the metaphorical aspects of islandness is to do so within literatures from islands. A coherent interpretation of islandness is achieved through its application to literature, which questions and transcends the hierarchies of the world that almost always align with the West's claim to superiority.

Brodber's short stories try to delink contemporary Caribbean life from coloniality. The decolonial nature of Brodber's stories, which must not be considered colonial amnesia, is argued as an effort to reassert individual island identity that is located within decoloniality. Brodber's characters acknowledge their colonial history but refuse to remain within the Eurocentric norms. Mignolo suggests that the "goal of decolonial thinking and doing" aims to continue "re-inscribing, embodying and dignifying those ways of living, thinking and sensing that were violently devalued or demonised by colonial, imperial and interventionist agendas" (Mignolo-*Decolonial Aesthetics* I). Adopting this theory of decolonial island studies to analyse literature offers the possibility to move beyond pre-established structures of knowledge, often conceived by the West, as continuous re-inscription is integral to the field.

Erna Brodber, Island Literary Studies, and Decoloniality

Elizabeth McMahon and Bénédicte André address the significance of literary studies within Island Studies and consider it "an integral component of island studies" (296). They observe that both oral and written literary texts provide records of experience, the habits of daily life, and the relationships of individuals and the communities to the major forces of nature, culture, and history, as these become part of cultural understanding (McMahon and André 296). The prominent historical narratives of previously colonised island societies have almost always been controlled by the West and these narratives diminish their chance to understand their histories and frame their narratives on their own terms. The silenced island consciousness plays a significant role in shaping the identity of the Jamaican islanders. Literature from islands proves to be one of the very few available options to bring out individual narratives of island societies, renders voice to marginalised narratives, and contributes to changing the perception of the world, thereby moving away from the preconceived notions about islands.

Misconceptions about island shapes and sizes as finite and controllable are significant in examining the island voices that have been historically

silenced by Western narratives. The imagined finiteness of islands attracts the individual to encapsulate them by human strategy, design, and desire thereby making them a popular choice of setting for fantasies and mythologies. One imagines having absolute control over a perceived finite and defined space and the desire to play God of territory becomes irresistible as very often the island geography is "too gripping" and the island image "too powerful to discard" (Baldacchino "Objects" 2). Baldacchino's notes on the perceived image and misconception of islands correspond to Patricia Kruger- Henney's observation about how Caribbean islands are represented: "Caribbean has been depicted and taught either as a highly desired place for leisure and economic opportunities for Westerners" or that they are "a locus of ongoing economic and racialized degradation precipitated by Capitalism and colonialism executed by Westerners" (87). Kruger-Henney reflects how western narratives, almost always frame Caribbean peoples as "willing, compliant, servile, passive, exploitable, disposable, poor" and "desperate for opportunities" so that they could project themselves within "a Eurocentric view of what it means to be human" (87). The preconceived notions that she records are rooted in "systemic racism of white settler colonialism" and have the formulation of "either/or" dualisms and narratives as a direct consequence. She posits the dualisms to include "desire/suppression, the West/rest, civilized/savage, white/black, outsider/insider, ordinary/exotic, and self/other" that erase "the nuance of human experience" (88). The necessity to move beyond the binaries while perceiving narratives from island spaces can be elucidated through a detailed examination of the island voices in literature.

By paving way for alternative narratives, Island Literary Studies unpacks "political discourses of domination, agency and reappropriation" and examines the association between binaries and islandness (McMahon and André 297). According to McMahon and André, binaries have a particular significance in literary studies as it functions as the organising structure of Western language and Brodber's literary works attempt to not fall into the binaries or dualisms that are rooted in the "systemic racism of white settler colonialism" (Kruger- Henney 88). Brodber uses her literature to engender a space that epistemically delinks from the coloniser-colonised binary as her characters strive to embrace their presence in a space that they convert into a place of meanings and thereby a home where their realities are accepted and where they belong. She also acknowledges the necessity of her people to read works about them by themselves and therefore aspires for a strong Jamaican women readership.Brodber's stories provide a vantage point for Jamaican literature to escape the ontological trap of Eu-

rocentric definitions of development and islandness becomes significant as Brodber's characters strive to create and define their own spaces.

Blackspace, Placeness, and Decolonial Islandness

The decolonial strand of islandness is evident in Brodber's story "Cynthia", a narrative that describes selected events in the life of Cynthia, an African Jamaican student from the University of West Indies, as it emphasises resisting the tendency to be defined by Eurocentric notions. Brodber engages the premeditated concept of normalcy in a Eurocentric world while narrating Cynthia's story and characterises her as someone who resists being defined by the criteria set by the western world:

> I was no Sophia Loren…I knew how to sew and to make my 34 by 21 by 34 look good. People liked to say that women dressed for men but with this girl child it wasn't so; I dressed for myself and I didn't get caught up in "he likes me in heels, so I wear heels." I wore heels a lot as it happened but it had nothing to do with a 'he.' (Brodber*High Hill* ch.2).

When Cynthia delinks from the Western beauty standards, which is almost always entangled with gender, and reflects islandness when she defines her identity in her terms by acknowledging her roots and her "uniquely precious existence" (Weale 81). She along with Brodber's other women protagonists highlight the significance of moving beyond the established frameworks of beauty, culture, and dignity and trying to negate or disintegrate a Eurocentric perception of their lives. Brodber's literature paves way for a deeper understanding of Jamaican islandness, complicated with its multiple colonial histories and misconstrued notions based on appearances. When Cynthia asserts that she knew how to make her body look good despite not fitting into the pre-established frameworks of beauty, it could be considered an instance of decolonialislandness as she embraces her reality and carves out a space for herself that coexists with the rest of the world. The idea of peaceful coexistence can be associated with Brodber's initiative Blackspace which encourages the people of African descent in Jamaica, to assemble and reclaim their voice and agency and focus on the nature of their islandness. An examination of the idea of place facilitates the comprehension of Blackspace as an idea.

Pete Hay observes that the word "place" is often used in Island Studies. Identity through "place" is a prominent trajectory of research in the field. Laurence Buell, a pioneer of ecocriticism, distinguishes "space" from

"place" by defining the latter as the "space to which meaning has been ascribed" and this meaning (mind, ideas, symbols) attributes distinctness and value to the space (59). He defines place as a "configuration of highly subjective, social and material dimensions, not reducible to any of these" (Buell 59). Placeness implies a physical site, affect, and "a deeply personal phenomenon founded on one's lifeworld and everyday practices" (Buell 59). I posit islandness, as a subset of placeness. Hay considers islands as "places – special places, paradigmatic places, topographies of meaning in which the qualities that construct place are dramatically distilled" (31). The qualities that construct the place are the factors that mould the space into a place by ascribing meanings to them to make them special.

Places acquire much of their permanence as well as much of their distinctive character from "the collective activities of people who dwell there", argues David Harvey (310). He posits that it is the people who occupy the space "who shape the land through their activities and who build institutions and social relationships within a bounded domain" (Harvey 310). The ability of a place to retain "a certain configuration through time" and the permanence a place acquires through the collective activity of the people are the preconditions that Harvey stipulates to ascribe integrity to a place (Hay 14). Blackspace mirrors the process of creating spaces that displace the narrative and perceptions that are imposed on them. The people in her community meet in the hope that their discussions among themselves would help them to determine what social action they should take considering self-definition, beyond the globally prescribed sets of binaries, as a priority. Blackspace is the manifestation of her idea to create and claim spaces for the Afro- Caribbean people in the countries to which their "forefathers were brought" and into which they "were legally emancipated" (Brodber "Re-engineering Blackspace" 72).Brodber, in an interview with Keisha Abraham, opines:

> I think that there is a lot we need to talk about, and I think we should stand up and look at things through our perspective. I don't think that has been done because we're rather embarrassed to have a perspective, or we feel that we don't have a perspective because people tell us all the time that we don't, or people behave as if we don't. (Abraham and Brodber 32)

Jamaican islandness experienced in Blackspace can be attributed to integrity as the inhabitants, who unlearn the western perception and learn to re-inscribe their perception about themselves, preserve the cultural and linguistic configuration through their way of life that is deeply rooted in

their ethnicity. Blackspace acquires integrity also because of the distinctive character it acquires through the collective activities of the African Jamaican people. It offers a space of hope and meaning, a place, where the Jamaican people are accepted without any judgements. Brodber's fiction could be considered an attempt to expand the comfortable place beyond the Blackspace. Her work could pave way for more ethnocentric narratives that break free from the Eurocentric narratives from islands and previously colonised nations. "The experientially-derived identity and culture-nature symbiosis" that is attributed to a space with integrity can be linked with Brodber'sBlackspace and her fictional spaces (Hay 33).

Brodber's fictional characters almost always mirror her thoughts and her idea regarding Blackspace in their immediate spaces. Blackspace functions as a vehicle for decoloniality and her stories manifest a space where the Jamaican woman's story is narrated by herself, thereby increasing authentic Jamaican presence in literature. Brodber envisions the meetings of the people of African origin in Woodside, Jamaica as an opportunity to encourage conversations about themselves to have "holistic notions of location and identity" about their land and culture as opposed to what is projected as theirs by the globalised world (Brunhes 160 - 61). Her stories emphasise "the nuances of human experience" as an individual community (Kruger- Henney 87). Brodber's stories primarily encourage narrations about the African Jamaican woman islander and her living conditions, thereby mirroring the aims of Blackspace in her narrative.

Brodber raises the issue of the limited representation of people of African origin in the popular media in "Lilieth" which was set in 1960s. Lilieth, the protagonist who studied English Literature, was absorbed in the love stories in *Autumn Love* (1913) and *An Affair to Remember* (1957) and except for the "ill-starred" love in *Carmen Jones* (1954), and "the little bit" that was shown of Sidney Poitier and Diahann Carroll in *Paris Blues* (1961), she was not familiar to seeing stars of her skin colour on screen(Brodber*High Hill* ch.4). The social situation led her to a mindset where, when she found the prospect of falling in love, she could not picture herself as the star in her story. The decolonial nature of Brodber's narrative is pronounced because the predominant tone is not that of blaming the historical events that led her to this juncture, but about addressing the necessity to create spaces where women and men of her colour can move beyond physical and metaphysical bondedness. The creation of such spaces requires a sense of self-embracement from the Jamaicans and Brodber wishes to achieve this aim through her stories. The place in the context of this story becomes metaphorical and the individual becomes the island that must be

recognized by itself first.

The decolonial framework of thought recognises the significance of presences despite their visibility and power in society. When Brodber's work observes a couple's interaction in her residential space, she emphasises the significance of detecting presences and acknowledging them. Brodber narrates an occasion where Arthur, the affluent boyfriend, cannot comprehend how the Kishwana's family, who are economically weaker, survives in a single-roomed house that is only as big as the room Arthur occupied alone. He is confused as to how one could walk over her siblings who are asleep on the ground without disturbing them as he is not familiar with interactions in a small space. After a prolonged period of interaction with Kishwana, Arthur attempts to sleep in an apartment with her on the ground and him on the bed to completely comprehend the situation in which she grew up. When Arthur succeeds to manoeuvre his way in the dark without disturbing Kishwana, she believes that he has begun to comprehend the dynamics of living in a confined space and has become sensitive to the presence of other entities. Brodber, through Kishwana, proposes the quality of being aware of presences as an inherent trait associated with islandness by associating it with the geographic finiteness of Kishwana's space.

The plot of "Kishwana" conveys the importance of respecting the presences and spaces despite their cultural and political differences to the global readership. Kishwana's actions reinstate Philip Conkling's theories on islandness that indicate how islandness becomes part of one's being that is "as deep as marrow" that would ultimately become "as natural and unselfconscious as breathing", which is the key source of "communal insight and wisdom" (81). Here, Brodber is exploring the sense of metaphorical islandness that is experienced within the island space. Brodber's narrative that incorporates Jamaican Patois which encourages readers to embrace and be familiar with their inherent realities and thereby their Jamaican islandness, that necessitates self-definition for the African Jamaican woman islander, and that highlights the significance of presences within the concept of metaphorical islandness can be considered as instances of epistemically delinking from the attributes imposed on her people by the Western narrative.

Brodber's narrative addresses the intense self-reflectiveness in the islander by incorporating Jamaican Creole, an aspect of Jamaican culture that is one of the main consequences of the change Jamaica's colonial period engendered. Her narrative becomes quintessentially African Jamaican by in-

corporating Jamaican Creole, a reflection of complex Jamaican history and its physical islandness that engenders change[3]. Brodber's use of Jamaican Creole is a key step in embracing islandness as she weaves it into the fabric of her narrative. The incorporation of creole in Brodber's narrative is significant as it acknowledges voices from previously marginalised spaces without being appropriated into more acceptable forms of language. It is also signified as an instance of decolonialislandness that delinks her stories from the global norm mostly determined by Western frameworks.

Jamaican Creole is the product of language contact between Africans and English speakers, due to Creolisation under conditions of slavery.Jamaican Patois is an English-lexified Creole, a language of ethnic identification primarily spoken in Jamaica and by large numbers of Jamaican emigrants in urban Britain and North America. Standard Jamaican English has been the official language of the Jamaican government and is used for almost all documented forms of communication. As Jamaican Creole was the language of African descendants, according to the statistical studies, there has been a constant struggle between the two forms of English ever since the colonial period. The divide in language stratified the society into "the wealthy, lighter-complexioned minority upper class (who) had access to better education and upward mobility" and "the poor, dark complexioned masses were deprived of access to education beyond the basic level, and therefore trapped in a cycle of poverty" (Nero 4-5). Beverley Bryan, a Jamaican educationist, suggests how the duality of language in Jamaican society is hence understood as something that is internalised in its functioning. The internalising of the duality makes code-switching possible. Bryan defines code-switching as "the use of two languages in the same conversational turn" (48). The Jamaican Creole (JC) and the Standard Jamaican English (SJE) together formed a post- Creole continuum and Bryan observes its existence and code-switching as a necessity in Jamaican society as talking only in SJE or JC does not facilitate ease of communication (48).

Brodber uses both Standard Jamaican English (SJE) and Jamaican Creole (JC) throughout her fiction. This literary technique that Brodber adopts, which depicts the language continuum that is often adopted in Jamaica, is a crucial step in her text embracing islandness as it reflects the "communal insight and wisdom" of the African Jamaican community by mirroring their everyday language variant, the formation of which can be considered a decolonial instance of taking the remnants of the past and making it their own (Weale 81). Brodber's authorial choice to devise the Jamaican Creole in the main text focuses on making her community familiar and

acquainted with their stories that find a place in world literature and media. In that scenario, her choice would alter the conversations among and about African Jamaican people. In "Kishwana," Brodber uses language as a marker of segregation based on class and social status. The story narrates how a boy, Arthur, falls in love with Kishwana, whose family is less affluent. The language spoken by their mothers demarcates the class and status distinction that is prevalent in their society. When Arthur's family communicates in SJE, Kishwana's mother uses Jamaican Creole: "You know sey bad to bad mi nah vote for nobody else but you, so you nuh need worry 'bout that…" (Brodber*High Hill* ch.3). When the tone of the conversation moves from cordial to agitated, the creole becomes more prominent. The difference in the spoken dialect is used as a marker of class and power in other stories as well. Code-switching can also be observed in the conversation between Kishwana's mother and her estranged husband, who has climbed up the social ladder through his political participation. By using creole in a fictional work, which is published and marketed across the world primarily online and has a local and global readership, Brodber uses fiction as a platform to increase the representation and acceptability for the inherent Jamaican islandness.

The short stories by Brodber reflect the impact of Rastafari in the Jamaican society. Rastafari Movement is an Afro- Jamaican religious movement that blends Pan-Africanism of Marcus Garvey with Christianity[4]. The religious and social movement developed in Jamaica during the 1930s. The Afro-Centric ideology is considered to be a reaction to against their British Colonizers. Ethiopianism, a South African religious movement that originated as a reaction against the white control towards the end of the nineteenth century, also influenced the Rastafari movement. The movement that faced backlashes in the 1950s, regained its importance in the 1960s and 1970s through the popularity of musicians, including Bob Marley, who were Rasta-inspired.

The respect that the Jamaicans have for their ethnicity and their expertise in syncretising the factors that are their own and foreign to produce a palpable form of religion and way of life can be attributed to the inherent resourcefulness of islanders. Parallels can be drawn between Jamaican Creole and religious syncretism in terms their methods of formation and sustenance. Erna Brodber's short stories, "Beverley" and "Cynthia" address how the movement is well integrated to the Jamaican lives. The Rastafari references that Brodber makes about Cathy, a Jamaican woman of African ethnicity, in "Beverley" highlight its impact on the Jamaican culture:

> Cathy would be a model, a face of Jamaica.A kind of pre-Rasta model. Around her there would be a seminar about the Rastas in Jamaica; there would be Rastafarian music and food and of course what everybody wanted to know – a lecture on the Rastafarian woman. Was she subjugated as so many studies said? The social studies departments of the universities, the fledging Rastafarian community in Toronto and even the middle-class Jamaican Canadians who normally wanted to run away from Rastas, would come out to these lectures, if only to dispute the significance of Rastas in the culture. (Brodber*High Hill* ch.1)

When Brodber attributes the qualities of "having a voice" and "untrained, yet with clear potential" to Cathy, she is indirectly them to Rastafari, a movement that embraced, and subsequently globalised, the cultural, religious, and musical aspects of Afro-Jamaican ethnicity (ch.1). The incorporation of the Jamaican Creole and the Rastafari in the stories substantiates her expertise in the method of syncretism which I propose as a tenet of islandness.

It is important to realize that while Brodber attempts to find a niche for the Jamaicans of African ethnicity in the metaphorical realm of literature as a precursor to the aspired social progress in the transnational picture, she does not glorify her people. The self-embracement characteristic of decoloniality and islandness entails confronting social issues for the progress of the Jamaican society. In "Suzette" she problematizes the casual nature with which the society accepts teenage pregnancy in many of these short stories:

> My boss who has studied Jamaican women say that we see pregnancy like a bucket of water perched precariously on a ledge under which we must pass and we simply expect the bucket of water to fall on us, that means that we expect to be pregnant whether we want to or not and do precious little to avoid it (Brodber*High Hill* ch.8).

The simplicity and directness in the narrative that Brodber uses to present the crude and complex issues associated with the impacts of the lack of awareness about sex highlights Brodber's determination to be heard and to be noticed. The protagonist, in her teenage days gets pregnant by an Indian neighbour who abused her sexually for a prolonged period of time. Around the same time, she is raped by her classmate who purposely barges into the toilet while she is masturbating. Until late into adulthood

she is made to believe that the Indian neighbour was educating her, and her classmate was merely helping her.

The ignorance of Suzette and the negligence of her mother, who does not realize that her daughter is pregnant until she gives birth to her son, alarms the reader. Brodber makes her reader more uncomfortable when Suzette advances her narration in a casual tone and conveys how her son has grown into a cruel teenager who habitually steals and raped a girl next door. Suzette believes that the justice who heard the case might have been influenced by the neighbours who blamed the girl who was raped for having "asked for it", as the boy escapes with minor punishment (Brodber*High Hill* ch.8). Brodber is using the fictional medium to address the ignorance and negligence surrounding teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse, and patriarchy in her society. The honesty that is seen Brodber's narrative style while she talks about the aspects of her ethnicity that she is takes pride in is internalised in "Suzette" as well. The acceptance of the self that is associated with decoloniality and islandness is evident in her narration when she confronts the issues of her community.

Conclusion

Island Literary Studies contribute to "the sphere of the decolonial projects" that changes the global designs and de-designs established frameworks (Mignolo "On Pluriversality" xii-xiii). *The World is a High Hill: Stories about Jamaican Women* (2012), which encapsulates the language creolisation and decoloniality in Jamaica, assumes significance within the trope of Island Studies as it captures Jamaican islandness that signify the relevance of islands and individual narratives in re-inscribing pre-established frameworks of thought. The status of Jamaicans as islanders, as depicted in Erna Brodber's stories, leads to an examination of their geographical consciousness. The geographical finiteness of the islands reflects the island consciousness that has been historically silenced by narratives of the West. The silenced and experienced island consciousness plays a significant role in shaping the identity of the Jamaican islanders. Brodber's efforts in realistically depicting the African Jamaican woman islander in the short stories are posited as a significant contribution to Island Literary Studies.

Through the paper, I address the physicality and sociological conditions of the Jamaican island space as well as the conceived metaphorical islandness while examining Brodber's fiction. By defying the established frameworks, being defined on their own terms, and emphasising the necessity to acknowledge presences, Brodber's characters embrace their islandness.

Island Literary Studies can initiate the opening of more island spaces from across the world to a global readership. Brodber's work facilitates a re-inscription of what is perceived as normal and acceptable. Increased research interest in the concept of islandness leads to a scenario where it becomes an instrument to examine the experiences which acknowledge and accommodate the presences and experiences of any marginalised entity or community. The future of Island Studies and Island Literary Studies, with its aim to re-inscribe the perceived understanding of the world, includes trajectories including Anthropocene Island studies along with its decolonial strand. Island Studies, with its inherent inclusivity, tolerance, and accommodability, functions as a discipline that facilitates the recognition of voices almost always unheard in the dominant narratives of the world.

Notes:

[1] In an interview by Carolyn Cooper, Erna Brodber mentions: "My people are the African Jamaican people. The people who are the descendants of Africans enslaved in the New World. Those of us who are very rarely portrayed in books or films and therefore don't really know very much about ourselves nor have we been talking about ourselves." (Brodber and Cooper).

[2] Philip Conkling, the founder of the Island Institute in Maine, ascribes the credit of popularising, if not coining, the word "islandness" to John Fowles through his novel The Magus (1965)and through his essay On Islands (1978).

[3] Here Brodber is continuing the tradition followed by twentieth-century Jamaican writers in English literature, including Claude McKay, Mutabaruka, and Marlon James, of incorporating Jamaican creole into their narrative.

[4] Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887 -1940), was the founder of Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (1914).

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