



**PASSING ON OUR NARRATIVES: A LOOK INTO ANDREW SALKEY'S  
CHILDREN'S NOVELS**

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To Yasser, Abel, and Adriel  
To Yamil  
To Iris, Jose, and Adrian  
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## **Introduction: The Importance of a Regional Caribbean Literature**

Literature can be an instrument for cultural, social, and political expression among people with a shared experience. It represents the notions of aesthetics common to a group of people. It embodies ideologies, experiences, and narratives that distinguish one community from another. Furthermore, its versatility in portraying different aspects of life makes it an important mechanism for developing cultural identity among younger generations.

A region's literature takes its culture, history, and tradition and displays it for the rest of the world to appreciate. The Caribbean has created its own unique literary identity, which has been able to gather the qualities and virtues of its communities and form a canon that is distinct from the rest of the world. Because of its shared history of colonialism, Caribbean literature has struggled to establish itself as the fundamental source for our cultural, historical, and social change. Local Caribbean literature “[has been] a hidden curriculum, saddled with the stigma of inferiority” (James 164). Since its roots are in the oral tradition, it became a challenging task for writers to transfer these local narratives into the written form to preserve and widely distribute to the general public. The goal of a Caribbean literary canon is to break away from the idea instilled by colonialism that our culture is inferior in comparison with that of the Western world.

To counter colonialism, Caribbean writers have produced, with their own narratives and experiences, a literature that is endemic to the people of the region and comprises a shared identity. Through their work, which is generally aimed at adult readers, Caribbean writers reject and appropriate Western influences embedded in our culture throughout colonialism and neocolonialism; they produce unique narratives from

within rather than without their culture. This creates a chasm between the actual Caribbean experience and the perception created by colonizer narratives about the region and its people. Hernández-Ramdwar writes about how “one idea about the Caribbean was that it is a paradise with simple people living there, all loving each other, tanning and eating unlimited amounts of fruits” (78)—an idea that has been perpetuated throughout history in print as well as media today. The idea that island living is worry-free, uneventful, and an ideal destination for tourists and *expats* has influenced how the world perceives the Caribbean. It also influences the way our younger generations define their own identity in relation with the rest of the world. Being exposed to the world now more than ever through social media, young adults feel the need to cultivate a strong sense of cultural identity in relation to others. A regional literary canon becomes necessary to collect and introduce the shared experiences to the rest of the world and, most importantly, to our younger readers, who will benefit from representation that is exclusively their own.

This production of literature comes from the “passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era [and] finds its legitimate reason in the anxiety shared by native intellectuals to shrink away from Western culture in which they all risk being swamped” (Fanon 37). Breaking away from colonialist ideals of literature has been part of the decolonization process where the Caribbean community recreates its own cultural identity and also reclaims their precolonial identity. The Caribbean’s shared history, geography, and interactions with their natural landscape are not clearly represented in colonial literature without the impression of imperialism. By consequence, children of the Caribbean continue to be exposed to canonical texts of what is considered



literature, which creates unrealistic portrayals of history and lack of understanding of their own surroundings—"it can only be surmised how much ... colonial schooling contributed to this poor self-image and disrespect for regional identity" (James 168).

Through my personal experience as a student and educator in Puerto Rico, I can attest the strong presence of foreign literature that is offered to younger readers. School curricula, libraries, and bookstores offer mostly American or British literature. Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe, and Ray Bradbury are examples of what are considered academic resources for English Language Arts courses. Furthermore, education faculties at universities prepare future English language teachers by focusing mainly on Western literature. In my early college years, the English Department at the University of Puerto Rico at Humacao only offered courses to student-teachers on British and American literature. This lack of literary exposure makes it difficult for teachers to introduce their students to Caribbean writers and help them experience narratives and situations that are more in accordance with their reality. Our younger readers do not experience in literature a portrait of their own culture and history, which can lead to disinterest in reading or even disassociation with their surroundings. Furthermore, "the majority of students [graduating from] high school have not been taught to think critically...and lack a sense of history" which makes them dependent on foreign descriptions of historical moments such as slavery; "therefore, they are familiar with American images of African slavery, but are unfamiliar with similar, or worse conditions of slavery that existed in the Caribbean" (Hernandez-Ramdwar 80). Younger readers are prone to thinking that what they read about the Caribbean in Western literature are "authentic portrayals of the typical Caribbean lifestyle" (Malcolm and McKoy 3) and

need to be exposed to with authentic images of their own culture. Our students are also unacquainted with a Caribbean that is not directly connected to colonialism—this is what most, if not all, their education is based on. A Caribbean community that thrives with its own shared experiences and accomplishments is mostly nonexistent in their minds.

Few Caribbean authors have focused their writing on younger readers and have aimed their writing towards adults, ignoring the importance of cultural understanding necessary for our younger generation. Following Jamaica's independence in 1962, Andrew Salkey was perhaps one of the first major Caribbean writers to create reading material for younger readers in the region. Any postcolonial movement requires literature that reinforces cultural identity and must not neglect younger readers who will eventually have to struggle with neocolonial policies. Salkey's attempt at providing such literature for schools was "rejected by the Jamaican Ministry of Education as unsuitable for Jamaican children," but "each of [his] books [presents] a central Jamaican experience" which is parallel to the experiences of the Caribbean region (Carr 108). The idea that Western writers are progressive and are at the top of the literary hierarchy makes it impossible for local literature to thrive in their own community. One of Salkey's roles in Caribbean literature is a "desire to help cultivate a self-determined Caribbean literature without the precondition of reverence for the [Western] literary establishment" (Love 53), and for this, he emphasizes the need to "[connect] with fellow Caribbean writers... in order for Caribbean authors to succeed within the publishing infrastructure" (52). This alliance of writers has a stronger objective— "by producing their own Caribbean literature and naming it literature, these authors push back against England's narrative of cultural superiority" (63).

Salkey's writing avoids "any [Western] clichéd perceptions of the world for these perceptions come fundamentally from colonialism" (Nazareth 20). His books recreate the image of the community and its people by displaying their relationship with their natural surroundings, which affect the way society interacts with itself. Salkey believed that "there are chains on the reader's mind, [and] he knows these chains have to be broken or the reader will refuse to see" that their history is a construct developed by colonial influences (29). According to Derose, "Salkey's first task ... is to undermine the version perpetuated by the island's colonizers," and he does so by making no reference to the Western world, unless it is to indicate the imperialist acts (221). This is the responsibility that falls unto a national or regional literary canon—to present its traditions, history, and culture through the viewpoint of its people. On the other hand, Love distinguishes Salkey among many postcolonial Caribbean writers:

Salkey's novels, by contrast, articulate a more radical claim: rather than asserting equal ownership of a colonially imposed English canon, Salkey's text interrogates and challenges assumptions that shape what qualifies as canonical literature in the English language. (55)

Salkey is able to create decolonizing literature for children because it embraces the Caribbean traditions and puts our culture on center stage.

Salkey's novels provide younger readers a better understanding of the Caribbean experience by portraying events, whether they occur through nature or human actions, that are part of a collective narrative throughout the region. His writing appeals to the sense of community and the interactions between all generations to preserve our social and cultural singularity. His books bring oral traditions to written form thus preserving

cultural aspects of our storytelling and making it accessible to younger readers that are sometimes unaware of these traditions.

These books include a variety of folk-based materials... Salkey is a forerunner in trying to approximate the spontaneity of the live storyteller in print form. He does this by mixing Creole with Standard English, not only for the speech of his characters, but also for the portrayal of the narrator. (James 166)

Salkey also transfers this duty of preserving oral tradition to his adult characters that are responsible for passing on their experiences to the child characters throughout the novels' plot.

Through the literary analysis and discussion of Salkey's novels—*Hurricane* (1964), *Earthquake* (1965), *Drought* (1966), *Riot* (1967), and *Joey Tyson* (1974)—we begin to understand how people within the Caribbean are affected by circumstances and experiences, and also create a transnational history which unites the region. Although the settings in the novels do not deviate from Jamaica, he writes in a manner to which the rest of the Caribbean can relate. Salkey's novels enable young readers to “sense for themselves the presence of a defining history” (Carr 101) and bring together the Caribbean community. Salkey reconstructs the Caribbean for the benefit of younger readers by exposing neocolonial conditions, its engagement with history, and the natural environments that are constantly shaping communities and cultural identities. These novels are important instruments to break away from the alienating Western perspective and begin exposing younger readers to their own Caribbean reality.

## Chapter I

### *Joey Tyson: A Look into Our Social Movements*

The Caribbean has its share of political instability and social activism, which comes from its long history under colonial imperialism and neocolonialism. The region has many distinguished individuals that have dedicated their lives to confront the political powers that have exploited its people and land. For this reason, Caribbean literature is often compelled to represent these movements because they are an intricate part of our community and how they have changed or transformed our society.

In Salkey's *Joey Tyson* (1974) we are introduced to a fictionalized version of the character of Walter Rodney, who was expelled from Jamaica in 1968. Walter Rodney was a Guyanese scholar and activist who became a voice for the black Caribbean community. Rodney questioned the relationship between class and race in the Caribbean and challenged the assumptions about African history in the Caribbean that were Western-centered. He became a University of the West Indies professor in Jamaica and joined the movement against the socio-economic and political oppression against the black community. As a Marxist, he advocated for working-class people and other marginalized groups that were often neglected in social movements. On October 15, 1968, Rodney was banned by the Jamaican Government and declared *persona non grata*. This sparked what are known as the Rodney Riots, protests held primarily by the students of the University of the West Indies and marginalized groups such as poor and working-class communities and Rastafarians (Walter Rodney Foundation). According to Dupuy, Rodney's radical views and involvement in political struggles in Jamaica led the government to label him as a "communist" who engaged in subversive activities and

advocated violent revolution (108). This negative characterization of social leaders is a common strategy to diminish the value of social movements in the public's opinion, which leads to a diminished understanding of their actions among the community.

The narrative of *Joey Tyson* is a common historical reality that occurs in the Caribbean. Anticolonial sentiments prevail in most Caribbean nations, with many prominent figures leading social movements among different social groups. Younger readers need to be versed in their history to understand the importance of these movements and the people behind them. While schools commonly teach the social uprising of North America or Europe, our own local movements are not portrayed in such a considerable and serious manner.

*Joey Tyson* centers around Walter Rodney's exile from Jamaica in 1968 and the student riots surrounding the event. The main character is Joey Tyson, a student—narrating from his perspective the events in the novel. Young readers will find Joey Tyson relatable, especially because there is an absence of important figures like Walter Rodney. Joey is described as an admirer of Dr. Buxton—Walter Rodney's fictionalized representation. He is raised by socially conscious parents and is introduced in the book while having a conversation with his friends about the events of Dr. Buxton's exile. He is accused by his friend of being “follow-fashion” and “spending [his] time imitating [his] father and all the politics” he talks about (18). Joey and his friends represent our younger generation who are trying to find their place in the current socio-political circumstances by listening and observing and forming their own ideas about what affects their communities and how they can become part of the wave calling for social change.

The postcolonial struggles that affect the Caribbean are mentioned early in the story by Joey's father, Mr. Tyson. He is discussing the recent events and emphasizes the struggles of the working class under neocolonial rule "because the government is under orders from over yonder to keep the island for sale for things that Dr. Buxton self could wreck and deprive the over yonder people them of" (22). Mr. Tyson perfectly describes how neocolonialism works an ordeal that the region is still undergoing today.

Like f'we labour for free, Mr. Tyson said. Like marching off with the bauxite and the land. Like making easy, profiteering investments. Like concerning all the markets to sell their goods. Like flooding the island with every Gawd thing they make and want to fling on top of us, as they like. Like arranging to get any amount of Jamaican things for little or nothing. Like making us sell ourselves cheap, day in, day out, year in, year out. (22)

Mr. Tyson is openly explaining the effects of neocolonialism on the island. This is a simple way for younger readers to understand the struggles their community faces and why there are times when common folk have to stand against the government. Salkey is even more direct in naming the neocolonial powers when he writes, "it's American orders we got to follow, in this country, nowadays, ever since the Englishman pull out. . . this business with Dr. Buxton looks as though somebody in the government is taking telephone orders from America" (23). This parallels the conditions that affect all Caribbean nations, which makes this an important book to expose our younger readers to because it represents various social movements around the Caribbean and recognizes the imperial powers that are affecting the region.

*Joey Tyson* depicts an intimate picture of student movements, which our youth regularly see and experience. The narrative is told through the experience of Joey, his mother and father, and his grandparents, which shows how our generations are connected within our history. It is important for younger readers to better understand local social unrest because it can help them dismantle the idea that our culture and history are less important within the global framework.

The events in the book mirror incidents that occur throughout the Caribbean. In Puerto Rico, the University of Puerto Rico has been the stage for civil unrest multiple times since its foundation. A very similar situation occurred in 1947 when Pedro Albizu Campos, after eleven years' absence from the island and incarceration in federal prison, was denied the use of the Teatro Universitario. Students led a mass protest and raised the Puerto Rican flag, which was illegal at the time. Similar to the novel, the University Chancellor, Jaime Benítez, ordered the police presence on campus to prevent students from raising the Puerto Rican flag. This event led to the expulsion or suspension of many students and faculty members (Alfaro, *Pulso Estudiantil*). This is just one of many examples in which our university students have stood up against the government in power. Our younger readers are unfamiliar with previous student movements, unless they become involved with current efforts or learn about them in the news. Having these events portrayed in literature grants them the importance they warrant to become normalized and socially accepted and would serve as a reference point for future efforts.

*Joey Tyson* describes the confrontation between police and students almost identical to what has occurred during local student strikes. Salkey begins by describing



how students “protest by locking the university gates” (27) and continues to describe every detail about the police force that is sent to deal with peaceful protesters.

Armed with pistols, rifles, tear gas canisters and bombs and batons, a detachment of police, standing three-deep, had confronted the marchers.

They blocked the progress of the march and waited. (28)

This imagery brings readers an impression of how the government tries to silence the student protesters by treating them like terrorists and criminals. The militarization of police forces is part of our postcolonial Caribbean. Younger readers can relate to what occurs during student demonstrations and to break away from the negative perceptions that surround such movements when they have already been presented with the idea through literature. Salkey provides younger readers with the necessary instruments to understand the consequences of postcolonialism on the community and how they can fight against the government that does not hold their best interest at heart. In comparison, students from the University of Puerto Rico regularly protest the colonial regime of the United States government. Since the early 1900s, the students at the university have been at the forefront in fighting social injustice. These encounters have led to the abusive use of the militarized police force against students, prompted by the central government, which has always tried to maintain control of the affairs of the university. These actions of control resemble the scenes in *Joey Tyson* when the Minister of Home Affairs mentions that “the university needs a strong man, somebody who knows the time of day politically, somebody who won’t embarrass the government” (74), in other words, someone who will appease local and foreign government and control public education.

Salkey describes a common experience with acts of looting and destruction of property, thought as a “natural consequence” for the ban of Dr. Buxton, and the government’s reaction to this is to “call out the army to assist the police” (50). The government demonizes protesters and the destruction of property in order to continue to be on good terms with their investors because “the attacks on property are the first signs of the coming lack of trust, lack of credibility, because of our so-called lack of social and political stability” (51). The need to control the masses and to appease the imperial governments, and later institutions of global capitalism, is a common experience among Caribbean nations. Government often uses protesters and activists as scapegoats to maintain the status quo.

During the 2017 May Day protest in Puerto Rico, Nina Droz Franco, then a student at University of Puerto Rico Bayamón Campus, was the only person incarcerated on federal charges for allegedly trying to burn down Banco Popular’s headquarters, the main banking institution in Puerto Rico. It was widely discussed and agreed that this was an act of retaliation by the local and federal government to make an example of her against the May Day protests led by the working class which have been pervasive every year in the island but have grown considerably in size in recent years of deepening crisis. Her incarceration was deemed a political act, as was her inhumane treatment during her nearly three-year sentence served at a federal prison (Droz, *El Nuevo Dia*). Salkey depicts similar actions in the character of Dr. Buxton. Walter Rodney’s expulsion is in retaliation against the Black Power movement that had advanced in the Caribbean, as well as his work as a socialist organizer in working-class Jamaican communities. Previous movements of social unrest had taken place; however, “Walter Rodney came to be seen

by the Jamaican government as the individual who could possibly bring coherence to the movement and make it a force” (Lewis 44). The government maintains control of the masses by breaking apart social movements and enhancing individualism among its citizens. Salkey describes this through the character of Mr. Tyson when he explains to Joey that the government will put the blame on protesters to thwart public opinion.

So, watch them find some excuse or the other, the nearest thing they can pick on. And, who you think they going use it on, son? The same people you saw marching, this afternoon. The out-o’-work, poor, ordinary Kingstonians like us, and the students. (59)

It is imperative that younger readers are exposed to the dynamic between social movements and governments that prevails in the Caribbean, to recognize commonalities between countries in the region. Books that are part of the reading list of our educational system are generally based on imperialistic ideals and do not address the issues centered around neocolonial politics.

Salkey also focuses on considering the Caribbean as a region that has its own unique socio-political experiences. Joey Tyson’s family are no strangers to social unrest and tyrannical governments. His grandmother explains their experiences in Cuba under Machado and Batista and how they endured extreme violence on behalf of the government. Gran’ Ma Tyson explains to Joey that she feels uneasy with having students protesting because she is well-aware that “there’s always more, plenty more violence, on the other side...and they have it all organize’ and powerful to use it against the young people” (54). Furthermore, Joey tells his father how he learned in school that Cuba is a communist country and therefore there is more freedom in Jamaica than in Cuba. To this,

Mr. Tyson responds that teachers “need enlightenment” to be able to address what constitutes a tyrannical government (60). The educational system does not encourage social-political topics in their curricula. This is also because of the lack of Caribbean literature that presents these problems from a regional point of view. Mr. Tyson mentions that “when you think about where we all come from, who we are, sort of, and how we all have one set o’ history and one set o’ suffering, caused by the same, identical set o’ people who still throwing licks into us,” and in doing so he is referring to the Caribbean as a region that has a shared history. In the same passage, he describes how a strong sense of nationalism is considered dangerous because it divides the Caribbean community and breaks the necessary bonds needed for a united front against imperial overreach. He continues to ascertain that, because of geographical obstacles, the Caribbean needs to come together to avoid “outside people to stick and rob in broad day light” (61)—an indication of neocolonialism in the Caribbean. Furthermore, Salkey also references the lack of economic growth in the islands which is directly tied to the control foreign companies exercise.

They’re selling out the Island cheap, every day, without any of us knowing what’s what. They get their fat cut and to hell with the rest of us and the resources of the country. The figures speak for themselves, as clear as day. Eighty-three cents out of every dollar earned from the bauxite industry go to Canada, while seventeen cents go to Jamaica...(83)

Moreover, local governments must maintain control of the opinion of the public in order to guarantee foreign governments and companies with a vested interest in the region of the stability of the nation. After the protests, the Jamaican government issues a report

about the damages which is used by CIA operatives to harm the integrity of the students and demoralize citizens.

Typical targets for the quick hit, short span kind of thing we've seen in most underdeveloped countries with screwy student protest, in part backed by unorganized fringe mass urban support. All the usual targets: their own public utilities, and the more visible US and Canadian property and investments in-puts. Small cost, I suppose for getting rid of Buxton. (110)

Local news outlets are used as a weapon to influence public opinion. The rhetoric is comparable to that created during more recent protests. The media depicts an image of civil unrest that affects the status quo of a "civilized" society and distorts reality for ratings and advertising, which in effect demonizes protesters. Mr. Tyson's death, which takes place during a struggle with a police officer while he was defending Joey is reduced to a man resisting arrest and looting by the Jamaican daily newspaper.

*The Gleaner* also had it that the city had been gripped by widespread vandalism, perpetrated by roving gangs of hooligans; one death had been reported: that of a looter who had resisted arrest and attacked the police. (110)

This demeans Mr. Tyson and everything that occurred that night is reduced to simply one violent act, and at the same time, it justifies police brutality because he had "resisted arrest." These tactics have become common approaches by government to thwart the positive support of protests by the rest of the community.

Salkey also writes about the importance of education to counteract neocolonialism in the Caribbean. Joey's mother, Mrs. Tyson, mentions that Dr. Buxton did not teach in

the university for students to find good paying jobs— “he was spreading revolution.” Joey defends Dr. Buxton because he understands that they were learning about their historical circumstances, which is unknown to the masses (67). Throughout the Caribbean, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social movements have been initiated by students or the working class. Salkey continuously refers to students as the leaders of the revolution throughout the novel, thus giving our younger readers their rightful place in history. These movements become “a catalyst in the process of linking campus and community” (Lewis 44) because these students come from all parts of the country. He also describes how revolution is portrayed as negative, and students become scapegoats whom the government continuously blames for the violence that, in reality, is initiated by a government that ignores its people for far too long.

At the end of the novel, Salkey deals with the importance of civil unrest and social-political movements that are specific to the Caribbean region. Gran’ Ma Tyson’s thoughts linger on how the events that led up to her son’s death will be forgotten. Joey, on the other hand, “knew that politics would continue, and become nearer the kind his father had always talked about and hoped for” (114). Through his father’s actions and words, he had learned the importance of change that his community needed. Therein lies the importance of such narratives and their contribution to the literary canon in the region. These events should be celebrated in written format and provided to younger readers who will encounter such experiences because they will have an established idea of the struggles within their community and understand their importance to social justice.

## Chapter II

### ***Riot: Rising in the Caribbean***

In *Riot* (1967), Andrew Salkey also focuses on social movements in Jamaica. The narrative develops from the perspective of a young boy named Gerald, who, along with his friends Shifty, Shanks, and Fu Manchu, are lured into a political movement of the working class. Both *Joey Tyson* and *Riot* are narratives that aim for younger readers to develop their own sense of understanding about political topics that are oftentimes neglected by adults. They are also fundamental to raise awareness in young readers about the social realities that they will encounter across the Caribbean.

*Riot* makes reference to a period in time when Jamaica and many other British Caribbean colonies suffered through economic hardships and political upheaval that led to many years of riots and social unrest. From 1934 to 1939, during the Great Depression and at the beginning of WWII, the British Caribbean colonies experienced strikes and riots which highlighted inequalities among the working poor class and changed the political environment in the colonies. The biggest uprising occurred from 1937 to 1939 in Jamaica, which resulted in 46 deaths. Jamaica, a dominantly agrarian society, had a combination of problems: wage reductions, unemployment, and disparity in land ownership. This caused local farmers to join the many worker movements that were already taking place (Enacademic.com).

Alexander Bustamante, a labor leader during 1938 and Jamaica's first Prime Minister in 1962, described the conditions that the poor and working class endured, such as high unemployment rates, food shortages and lack of basic services, including poor attendance in school. Salkey's *Riot* focuses on how "people are driven to desperate measures, and the suppressed have nothing to lose but their servitude" (Padmore), and

the narrative represents the men and women that were part of these movements. These experiences were common throughout the entire Caribbean, which led to various movements from working class groups to elicit social and political change. Salkey's recording of events are accessible to young readers who need to become better acquainted with their history and the shared experiences that bring them closer to the rest of the Caribbean, and to see themselves as participants in their own countries' civic life and histories.

*Riot* begins with everyone anxious because foundry workers—Gerald's father included—are expecting an answer on negotiations with the Board in their efforts to unionize. Martin Manson, Gerald's father, is one of the workers that has become a labor leader in the negotiations. Apprehensively, Martin decides to warn the Board that they are willing to strike and make their concerns known to the public.

Suddenly he remembered that he ought to make some sort of an approach to the management concerning the intention of the foundry workers to stage a token sympathy strike to register their protest against the failure at Broome and to warn the foundry Board that they intended to draw further attention to their own working conditions and wages and general discontent. (22)

Management replies that they will not negotiate and will not honor the requests of the workers. This is a serious personal blow to Martin because he has knowledge of the living conditions of other worker families. His environment reminds him of the need to improve worker conditions, including an increase on salaries to better their prospects of life.



On the way, he passed through familiar working-class back alleys with their bleached, ramshackle frontages; he stared at the clusters of defeated, poverty stricken people lining the dusty front yards, at the unemployed men and their brooding wives, standing and leaning about the place, at the older men and women with their arms folded in resignation and their eyes lowered hopelessly; and he stood and watched the ragged children improvising their noisy regattas with paper boats in the narrow, fetid gutters. (23)

This imagery provides insight into the circumstances of working-class families that make do with what little they have. The sense of hopelessness in their faces, their demeanor, the way they walk about aimlessly is a sign of surrender. For Martin, this is the reason he is trying to organize workers—for the future generations in his community.

Salkey personifies the riot, becoming a living and ever-expanding element in the story. The characters interact with the riot starting with Alexander Crossman, Martin's partner in the union, caught in the crossfire when it all began. The image of "his white suit...soiled and crushed" gives us an understanding of the eruption that took place among workers and management (29). The situation worsens when the Broome factory begins to burn, and people begin to die. Most people are afraid of the riot spreading like a plague and for it to contaminate everything it encounters. We are privy to Miriam's thoughts on the matter:

She was convinced that the rioting was bound to spread to Kingston. It would occur in bursts at first, then it would become intensified in a given

area and spread out in a concentrated stream, to Cross Roads, Half Way Tree, and into Upper Saint Andrew. She was very worried suddenly. (33)

The atmosphere of the city changes when the riot begins. Gerald and his friends are watching closely how the riot affects people's actions and are afraid of the violence that may erupt at any moment because there is a feeling of restlessness around them. In the morning, the image is of agitation and of a city that has begun to awaken to new uprisings.

The west end of Kingston, at that hour, was a simmering city within a city, with small groups of men getting awake with seething planless hopes for the day, with the old brand-mark of exploitation and abuse burning on their foreheads and along their limbs, with resentment and anger gnawing at their patience and sullen resignation: men dispossessed but moving towards a formless, leaderless revolt. (39)

As the day progresses more riots randomly take place, wreaking havoc within the community. Gerald encounters these men and women and observes them from above the trees with his friends. This gives Gerald a point of view of being one among the crowd but not involved in the action. They become observers of what happens across town, and as children, they view the landscape differently from the people below. They follow the rioters throughout town witnessing their outrage against everything that crosses their path. The riots become so uncontrolled that the British Army Regiment is called to "restore order" (95). As in *Joey Tyson*, Salkey emphasizes the abuse of power used by the government and the influence of empire that affects Caribbean communities.

Martin and Crossman's attempts at unionizing the workers was crushed by the urgency to rebel against the injustices committed against them in the workplace. They had become a leaderless, yet determined, group. Gerald and the other children observed what was happening around them and decided to mimic the adults by developing their own plan in reaction to the riots. The children are inspired by the actions of the adults, but they carry out their rebellious acts which go unnoticed, as if they are merely at play when they are thinking critically about the behavior of the adults.

Amidst the chaos, Martin and Crossman continue to try and unionize the workers to take control of the situation. They have organized emergency meetings among the men and are getting ready to welcome larger crowds of workers. The novel focuses on the nature of protests and how violence is a predicted outcome because it originates from desperation and anger from those who have endured injustice. Crossman explains to the children who are curious of the development of the riots across Kingston that violence is expected, but it is not "violence for the sake of violence," but a "protest against the existing misery and bad conditions generally for the working people all over the country" (60). The children feel the need to be included in the conversations and to understand adult situations because they are also affected by them. Salkey furnishes younger readers with a mechanism to better understand these social and political events that adults rather not explain because they are deemed incapable of understanding or are kept ignorant under the guise of protection. Literature creates in young readers awareness of these events and helps them understand the root of these movements, making them cognizant of their community.

The younger characters in the novel are very involved in the events of the narrative. When the meetings begin, Gerald and his friends hide among the trees to observe the men below. They are watching in awe the numbers of the protesters and how Martin and Crossman are at the center of them. As expected, the police are also at the meeting looking “collectively anxious, as if they were on the verge of some kind of anticipated offensive action” (67). As in *Joey Tyson*, the role of the police in *Riot* is of punishment and violence. Crossman is eventually apprehended by the police without cause, and when Martin challenges the police and questions why they are holding him, they acknowledge that they have not pressed charges and admit he is being held “for ‘im own good an’ for everybody else” (84). This is a stereotypical description of the acts of retaliation by the government when there is civil unrest, and Salkey reminds us of this in his work. This is part of the pervasive experience shared in the Caribbean that is highlighted in his work so that the knowledge gets passed on to younger readers for future reference about events and the manner in which they are depicted in the media.

The government follows common practices and enacts a curfew under the pretext of community safety. Curfews are established to control the masses and to gain advantage on the workers and their demonstrations. The atmosphere is almost warlike.

Kingston was graveyard silent. The only movements in the streets were the smooth, almost silken, cruising patrols of the police transport and the throbbing scurrying of army trucks and fire-engines whose bells and sirens had been silenced. (111)

This tactic is followed by the manipulation the media uses to ensure a more controlled reaction to the riots and the community’s opinions of the workers. It also emphasizes how

the government's efforts are solely responsible for the "considerable calm in the corporate area" and how the "rioters have disappeared from the streets" (112).

Salkey also comments on the opposing concepts of *words* against *action* in relation to social demonstrations. As previously mentioned, the riots begin before Martin and Crossman are able to organize the union that they had been previously working on. Some of the workers accuse them of wanting to "organize the down-an'-out" and "cash in on the 'appenin'" (53). Even Fu, Gerald's friend, accuses Crossman of being "another word-merchant" because all he wants to do is to talk to the executives and the police (69). On the other hand, Martin and Crossman are worried that violence will detract from their efforts and hopes of unionizing which they believe is the only way to help their fellow workers. Using child characters to explain and simplify social problems is an important part of these narratives. Young readers can understand these issues better when they are revealed through a child's consciousness.

Gerald and his friends all become quite aware of what all this rioting and protesting entails. They become conscious observers and even step in to protect their families and inform them of what is happening around them. They are not dismissed because they are children by their parents or by any of the adults in the book. They are acknowledged and heard, an important message Salkey tackles in his books. While everyone feels confined by the curfew, Gerald has a moment of freedom.

He felt independent, adult and excitedly free. His excitement quickly faded into a sobering sensation of serenity as he realized that he was alone and unobserved. He could do exactly as he wanted. He could walk

anywhere in the backyard, do anything within reason, and nobody would reprimand him. (133)

Salkey's child characters have highly complex thoughts about issues that affect the community. There is a strong connection with the events around them, and they are marked by the experience. In addition, the father-son relationship between Gerald and his father also brings insight into how children relate to other adults. Since his father began organizing the worker's union, Gerald "became inquisitive of his father," and "it made him grow even closer to the reality of what life meant outside his own sheltered world" (133). This is an important aspect in creating culturally sensitive literature for our younger readers. Gerald's constant conversations with his father help him understand the events that he is experiencing. This narrative helps them understand the world around them from their own unique perspective.

While Martin is questioning the "usefulness of the riots" (143), Gerald and his friends are, for the first time, seeing the overwhelming poverty of the working class in Kingston when they are with Big Man, one of the many workers to have partaken in the riots. The children have a better understanding to the reasons why the riots turned violent. While Big Man recognizes that a "Union is a start for those who workin'," he also acknowledges that "wha' we really need is a proper country, with people who will look after people" (148). The riots are not only by and for the workers—they are communal reaction to oppression, and governments that responds to external influences.

The novel is narrated in the third-person, but it is through Gerald that the story takes shape. He is immersed in the different conflicts throughout Kingston. Even when he

accompanies his father, Martin, to get Crossman out of jail, he sees the police officer and humanizes him despite the circumstances.

Quite suddenly, Gerald told himself that he liked the man; there was something ‘all right’ about him; he was indeed ‘as ugly as sin,’ but he looked like someone he’d meet outside in the street, not really like a ‘big-time, high-powered’ policeman who’d arrest you and ‘throw away the key’ or anything like that; he was funny, and nice too, in sort of old-fashioned ‘country com to town’ way. (159)

Children in the Caribbean often “experience feelings of invisibility or misrepresentations in texts” (Malcolm 5), which makes Salkey’s novels important for younger readers who benefit from a literary source which contains “cultural sensitivity and authenticity” and also “represents historical elements and cultural details” and connects texts with “issues of social change and justice” (1). Younger readers desperately need literature and other culture models representative of the social changes occurring at the moments and that is distinctive to the region. Nazareth mentions the need for our literature to not be labeled simply as “protest literature,” but that Caribbean writers should “incorporate the element of protest into a larger framework” (4) that allows for a broader, more genuine look at how our community implements social change. These social circumstances are not properly presented in Western literature or are completely absent from the literary works children are exposed to in Puerto Rico’s public education system. Salkey’s works function as a mechanism to inspire our younger generations to become involved in the changes that are taking place around them or, at the least, understand that our history is unique from the rest of the world.

### Chapter III

#### **History, Nature, and Culture: *Hurricane, Earthquake, and Drought***

The Caribbean has had its share of disasters throughout its entire history. These natural events have been known to transform culture, economy, and history. It is a shared experience among the islands, which is why Salkey devotes three of his children's books to educate and reveal the Caribbean experience during these natural disasters that destroy both life and property in our communities and complicate our already precarious existence, but that also reinforce kinship among people. Our relationship with nature is a common theme in Salkey's novels and poetry "because the past is imprinted on the topography of the island, to which [he] makes explicit his perception that the past is always present" (Derose 235). Younger readers also need to be given a more realistic portrait of our natural environment because, in the Western literature they consume, it is not rightfully presented.

Salkey creates child characters at the forefront of these narratives, rendering these books important for younger readers because they deal with situations that they will eventually need to learn to handle in their community. Children are given Western literature dealing with experiences that are not their own, which has a negative effect on how they process natural events. This also affects the development of their reading comprehension skills because they are exposed to texts that are incomprehensible to them when trying to use their previous cultural and historical knowledge. The Caribbean encompasses "similar vegetation, similar landscapes, similar rhythms of life, and similar products [that made these] societies sisters of experience" (Schwartz 385) that can be approached through literature and shared throughout the Caribbean community. Salkey's



books focus on this sense of community and the child characters are devoted to finding a solution to these problems as much as the adults in the stories.

### *Hurricane*

One of the most intense experiences for many people in the Caribbean is having to suffer through a high category hurricane, which many of us will experience more than once in our lifetime. Schwartz describes that “the great storms may provide another tool for understanding the societies of the region, and that like slavery or imperialism, the hurricanes have been a determining force in the patterns of the region’s story” (384). Salkey’s *Hurricane* (1964) provides a detailed description of surviving a hurricane in Jamaica as narrated by a boy named Joe. The children are the main characters, and they are experiencing the natural world from their own perspective. These events shape the region physically, economically, and culturally, and “are both the most environmentally and culturally definitive and the most resistant to neoliberal strategies of containment” (McDougal 17). These disasters reveal the inequality that exists in the Caribbean and are worsened by “disaster capitalism,” which Salkey references in the novel. Every hardship and affliction that is brought by neoliberal policies to the region is amplified by this uncontrollable force of nature.

The main character in this novel is Joe, who begins his day in an ordinary manner, but as the day goes by, he listens to his parents’ conversation about the need to prepare for the coming storm. Their plans to visit their grandmother are postponed until further notice, which alerts him to something serious is about to happen in the island. The markets of Carib Street are empty when Joe goes to meet his friends. The children do not feel the anxiety that the storm generates in adults. Joe only focuses on his father’s

reaction, for he “knew that [he] was expecting [him] to help with the precautions which the radio announcer had talked about,” although he “had not actually heard them” (21).

In this book, Salkey focuses on the influence foreign popular culture has on Caribbean children and their perception of reality and in particular the role of international cinema in Jamaica. Joe uses cowboy and old western references to deal with his emotions to the chaos that is unfolding in front of him.

At that moment, I really felt like letting her [Mary] have it straight between the eyes from where I was standing, but I reckoned that a sheriff can't be a Law Man and a Bad Man all at the same time; besides, Mary's a girl who had just come in on a Wells Fargo stage-coach. I had to be a real sheriff and take care of her. (24)

The children in the Caribbean are influenced by foreign culture because that is what they are exposed to through colonialism and globalization. This exposure renders them incapable to deal with their own Caribbean experiences and circumstances. Throughout the book, Joe's imagination runs amok with American westerns trying to manage the situation and control of his emotions. During his western reenactment, “giant flashes of lightning began streaking across the sky” bringing him back to his Caribbean reality (40).

The book also focuses on how children are accustomed to the way adults handle situations but still wish to be included. Joe watched his father *enviously* when he was preparing the home for the coming of the storm. His father took control and handled every aspect of the preparations, but Joe watched closely and read his father's gestures and understood what his father felt.

He looked tired and worried. At that moment, I knew that he was thinking about our safety, Mama's, Mary's, and mine. I knew he would blame himself if anything happened to us. But Papa must realize that a thing like a hurricane is bigger, in every way, than an ordinary human being?—this I had to ask myself when I'd thought a little more about his tired and worried look. (29)

Although Salkey never gives an exact age for his characters, we can speculate that Joe is 10 to 12 years old, yet his logic and reasoning when observing the adults around him are complex, and the reader can infer that adults tend to underestimate the children. Younger readers yearn for characters such as Joe in books such as *Hurricane* to fully understand their value in their community.

Joe's character is also that of a very sensitive child. During the storm, he “[begins] to think about the boys” and how they are confronting the storm (62). Joe describes how his mother becomes protective of the children's feelings and emotions—and the community—throughout the storm.

I like the way Mama behaves. It's as though the hurricane is attacking her personally. She makes you believe that it's the wind and rain versus herself and Papa. At times you'd believe it was really a battle of wits between them and them alone. As a matter of fact, Mama's attitude makes you feel that the hurricane has nothing to do with you as such. (66)

Joe feels emboldened by the way his mother faces the storm. He feels protected from the elements while in his home surrounded by family. Thus, like many children, he looks up to his parents and feels protected under emergency situations.

Younger readers find Joe a relatable character because of the way he perceives his surroundings. Joe regards his home to be a safe, strong structure as a “big, broad-shouldered man” (35)—a safe place that protects him from any external forces. When the hurricane arrives, Joe feels safe inside his home because “whatever it is, it can’t hurt [them]” (54). Children are sometimes unaware about the magnitude of the dangers to which they are susceptible. This highlights even more the importance of introducing younger readers to a Caribbean narrative that will prepare them for the experiences that are unique to the region.

Salkey uses the children’s dreams to expand the narrative. Joe has a dream about all the people around him standing in the eye of the storm acting and behaving as if it were a regular day. In this dream, he sees his mother “sewing an enormous flag of some unknown country” (89) which spreads over his mother, the sewing machine, and across the floor. This image of this “unknown country” engulfing the people during the destruction and chaos of the storm reminds the reader that the Caribbean is still under a neocolonial rule from foreign governments, and hurricanes, like many other natural disasters, can be used by local neoliberal governments “to seek help, employing the condition of the islands and the sentiment of the inhabitants as justifications” to allow foreign intervention with aid or charity that sometimes does not reach the people in the community (Schwartz 400). In addition, imperialist nations have a reputation of mishandling these natural disasters in the Caribbean and elsewhere. In 2017, Puerto Rico was hit by Hurricane María causing widespread devastation never before seen by this generation. The US government’s response was deficient, similar to their handling of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 where “the recovery of the [government] left the surviving

residents angry as well as traumatized,” and “the cause of the government’s failure also came into focus” (McDougall 10). “Disaster capitalism” is something that deeply affects the Caribbean when a “great part of billions of dollars dedicated to reconstruction efforts are being spent on Non-government Organizations instead” (Menard 50). Under neocolonialism, exploitation of natural disasters is almost inevitable.

At the end of the novel, Salkey portrays a father-son moment when they both go outside to explore the damage left in the wake of the hurricane. The destruction is great and devastating for Kingston; however, the people begin organizing amidst the chaos around them, and, almost immediately, some businesses reopen. The illustration at the end of the book by William Papas of a woman clerk contains a sign that reads “open as usual.” The idea is of a community that rebuilds itself even from such a harsh blow. Joe and his father look at their community still “standing brazenly and undamaged before [them]... as it always is, big, broad, and solid” (115). For the Caribbean, “storms [create] a natural division of seasons and time and helped to mark memory and the pace of life” (Schwartz 396), which helps us prepare as a community. Younger readers would benefit from accurate representation in literature of this shared Caribbean experience with natural disasters and neoliberal governments because it reinforces that their struggles are valid.

### *Earthquake*

Earthquakes are also prominent in the Caribbean experience in relation to their natural environment. Throughout the years, strong earthquakes have affected different Caribbean nations—most recently, here in Puerto Rico in January 2020 when a 6.4 earthquake affected the island greatly. Although earthquakes are common in the region, younger generations have not experienced them, which makes them an unknown event

for some members of the community. *Earthquake* (1965) is a novel that deals with how the older generations struggle to share their experiences with younger members of the community so that they are able to deal with events that are oftentimes completely a mystery to them. This highlights the importance for the younger generations to have access to a literature that is representative of their own cultural and natural experiences, which is why artists in the community have a responsibility “to express themselves during difficult times, to share their objections to various forms of injustices, so they may unsilence what has been silenced, and imagine the unimaginable” (Clitandre 105).

In 2010, Haiti experienced a catastrophic earthquake that devastated the nation. Its reconstruction became a commodity to the rest of the world. Disaster capitalism created a situation in which many foreign governments and companies added to their wealth by exploiting the Haitian community. The attention from the rest of the world was unavoidable, but all the funding and charity did not have the impact that Haiti needed to thrive. This brings us to another important impact that literature has on communities—reconstruction.

Reconstruction will not be solely a question of money and technical means, and aid, but will happen first of all through the reconstruction of the self, the collective, and the common imaginative memory of the disaster. Finding the new words in the chaos of the world to make it inhabitable—never in Haiti has the responsibility been so great for artists, poets, painters, and musicians. (Le Bris 34)

Caribbean writers have a responsibility to not only present realistic portraits, but also to help reconstruct and rebuild communities by sharing their struggles, reveal inequalities, and expose the realities and that occur especially during natural disasters.

Salkey narrates the story of three siblings and their experience with an earthquake in Jamaica. Ricky, Polly, and Doug are staying with their grandparents when the island is hit by an earthquake. They are constantly playing make-believe together outside. This activity, as it is described, represents the manner children's play is used to interact with the environment and community around them.

Early in the story, Ricky feels "the mound raised itself to meet his hands; and there was a shifting, jerking sensation under his feet" (13). This moment foreshadows the ending of the book. When the children go back home, they share with their Gran'ma what they had just experienced, which she admits is something common in the area and directs the children to ask their Gran'pa about it. Gran'pa initially evades their questions, but a second tremor "[forces] Gran'pa's hand: he could no longer be evasive" (27). However, he only alludes to the Jamaican earthquake of 1907 but does not give them any details. The reader can infer that it was a traumatic event for the grandfather during his childhood. The novel highlights the importance of knowledge passed on from generation to generation. Awareness of our shared experience helps us interact with our environment.

The grandparents also do not want to frighten the children by retelling their story of the earthquake of 1907.

Certain stories, and we know quite a few of them, do sound as though they might happen all over again, don't they, in exactly the same nightmarish

way they first occurred? He [Gran' pa] smiled nervously, embarrassed at his admission. (30)

Gran'pa is not only foreshadowing the events in the story, but also displays how natural disasters affect the community. To this Gran'ma answers that she "can't seem to remember when [they] weren't sharing things" (31), which is a reflection on the importance of telling stories of the past to the younger generations in order to create a sense of inheriting the wisdom necessary to better understand these events.

Salkey writes a very particular character for this story—Marcus, the Rastafarian. He easily relates to the children and has long conversations with them. One of the ideas he reveals to the children is the idea of the "African motherland," which Marcus believes is "where [they] all started off and it is were [they] must get back to" (40). This is a part of the narrative that seems unique to Jamaica, but it also relates to the connection that the Caribbean in general has to Africa. It is a clean break from a tradition rooted in Western culture. Salkey also relates the image of the Rastafarians through the character of Gran'pa. When the children mention Marcus to their grandparents, Gran'pa seems to have a different perspective.

They're all right by themselves, like most people are... They've chosen a special way of living their lives, different from ours, with their own plans and that sort of thing. They know what they want. And like everybody else, they think they're going about getting in the only way they know how. (46)

Unlike most people that described Rastafarians as "extremely poor because they refused to take any form of regular employment [or] they lived from hand to mouth," (38) he



humanizes Marcus and believes him to be “impressive and wise” (53). Salkey uses this wide array of characters for a broader understanding of the local culture. Representations such as this are important for younger readers to connect with their local culture and community.

When the children have a dangerous encounter with the earthquake, Gran’pa finally decides to narrate his entire experience with the earthquake of 1907. He tells it from his perspective as a child, making it easy for the children to understand. He describes the ruins that were created and the many deaths that it brought because of the “side effects of the catastrophe” (89). The book portrays the adults trying to protect the children’s feelings and shelter them from experiences because Gran’pa realized “that by exposing them to the true horror of his report, he had pushed them one step nearer to the harsh realities of the adult world” (93). He ignores that it is inevitable that the children will experience these events on their own because it is part of their connection to their environment. The value is in the passing of knowledge from one generation to another so that they are able to cope with their environment. Throughout the narrative, the children are playing make-believe in which they live in an arid terrain or a small, deserted island. These images of alienation from their realities is something that comes up frequently when they play. Children are able to use play to interact with their environments in a way that is safe and comfortable for them. When adults share their own experiences with children, they are passing down a communal knowledge that helps younger generations understand and manage their surroundings.

### *Drought*

Salkey wrote another important narrative about the impact of natural disasters in the communities throughout the Caribbean, *Drought* (1966). The region experiences drought due to the well-known phenomenon *El Niño*, which manifests itself in the Pacific, but with devastating effects in our region. This current of warm ocean water results in a pattern of very little rain which causes drought among the islands (CIMH). Salkey's novel helps younger readers to understand the effects of long-term droughts in the Caribbean region and how the community must come together to survive without relying on outside help that usually does not arrive or is insufficient.

*Drought* has child characters that are experiencing this natural event and observing how adults react to these situations. What makes this one distinct from the two previous Salkey novels is how Seth Stone and his friends Benjie, Doubly Ugly, Man Boy, and Mango Head, decide to intervene and solve the problem brought on by the drought in their community. A poor community, Nain, is hit by an extended drought, and the community members try to solve the problems themselves because the government is unreliable. Since it is an agricultural community, the drought affects Nain greatly, including its market and food supply.

The market in Nain sets the atmosphere of the people in the community. It is a place where the community comes together, and because of the drought, there is a different mood among its people.

Apart from the usual sprinkling of higglers and outside vendors, very few of the stallholders were there; those who were, were there purely because they wanted to pass the time of afternoon with their trading acquaintances

and friend, hoping to hear something that might take their minds off the shadow of the drought hanging over them, to hear, perhaps, anything consoling. (35)

The effects of the drought have begun taking a toll on some of the farmers in the area. The image of “very few stallholders” foreshadows the seriousness of the situation.

Salkey portends the decisive role the community must adopt to survive this drought using the children as examples. Seth and Benjie are at the market and decide to spend their time hand wrestling. They lie on the floor and begin their match. Gradually, the people in the market begin to gather around them and urging them on and giving them advice on techniques on how to win. The tenacity shown by the children and the townspeople is what will later help them overcome the drought.

The drought that had “not yet come...[was] already taking its toll” (47) on the community. For the children, however, “the drought was something to be played away in the days and dreamed out of existence in the nights” (51). Similar to the rest of his work, Salkey contrasts the reaction of the adults with that of the children and how they become increasingly aware and involved in solving the problems in the village. They devise a “game” to bring back the rain to the town. Bringing attention to Caribbean culture and traditions, Salkey describes the game similar to the ritual of placing items in a shrine. While bringing offerings to the shrine, which transforms throughout the narrative, the children begin digging for water.

While the children are actively pursuing ways to bring back the rain, the adults are making decisions on how to deal with the drought. The community was divided on what course to take. Some members of the community wanted to seek help from the

government, while others wanted to “depend on [their] own wisdom” (65). The children address the problem in a more organized and logical form than the adults.

The children continued their “play” and begin digging a water hole as they try to connect with nature. Double, one of Seth’s friends, is pessimistic about the outcome of their shrine and rituals because he feels as though they caused Gran’pa Sands’ death (70). Children observe their surroundings and try to come up with explanations for the natural events they do not understand. They “were inclined to think that the drought had created an unseen evil in Nain” (74). The children became superstitious at the sudden death of Gran’pa Sands and Benji’s mother, that they decide to put an end to the rituals and the digging because they believed they were responsible. Seth and his friends become very critical of the situation and modify their “game” as needed. They begin with childlike ideas, which evolve to more complex thoughts on the situation.

The new game was infinitely less complicated than the last one, more direct and more organized, and its aim, its desired objective, seemed less illogical and fairly easy to achieve; and as Man Boy reasoned: water has been known to bubble up from the bowels of the earth, if the digger digs in the right spot long enough and deep enough. (102)

The children become aware for the need of a solution for the drought, so they become even more determined to solve the problem. When they finally find water in their hole, Seth decides that they should keep their “game” quiet “because wha’ is serious work for us won’t be serious work to them”—“they’ll say that [they] been followin’ the Devil” (111). The children are aware that the adults would never understand their reasons for conjuring spirits for the good of the community. Salkey considers children to be critical

thinkers and problem solvers with much to contribute to the community, which is why presenting them their culture through books written for and about them is fundamental to Caribbean society.

When the adults begin digging the water hole, they find themselves in front of the boys' altar and offerings, which they treat with reverence. Like the children, the adults feel that finding the well is a spiritual endeavor. However, the drought continued to affect the community to the point that "Seth [went] to bed hungry" (114).

The rain finally came on "the first day of October," and the people danced and celebrated with jubilation (116). At the end of the book, Seth, Man Boy, Benjie, Double Ugly, and Mango Head are seen walking from the direction of their sacred altar. The boys join the celebration with the knowledge of what brought the rain to Nain. The reader may infer that the boys feel somewhat responsible for the coming of the rain through their spiritual connection to the land and to their departed family members.

*Drought* is a novel that focuses on the collective efforts of the community. Children as well as the adults are connected to their surroundings and understand the need to find local solutions for local problems. This form of literature helps younger readers relate to their community because they are given narratives that they are able to consider their own.

## **Conclusion**

### **Bringing Salkey into Our Literary Present**

Salkey focuses on a national Jamaican children's literature; however, these are narratives that have become part of the shared experiences of the entire Caribbean region. Caribbean writers and publishers should have a sense of urgency to create and publish literature for our younger readers that can exist beyond the influence of imported mass media. The literature that comprises our Caribbean literary canon promotes decolonization. Derose explains that "if Caribbean literature [is] always a reaction to the literary products of Europe, it would always be in some way dependent upon it" (220), which is what Salkey accomplishes in his writing—to disengage from Eurocentric influences. Younger readers can relate to his novels and also learn about cultural references that are sometimes not represented in the media and art they are regularly exposed to.

There are two major themes in Salkey's books: community advocacy and the effect of natural environments and how they affect the culture, society, and economy. His books are a saga of Caribbean culture and experiences that focus on a Caribbean that exists regardless of foreign powers. Salkey believed that in order to "lay claim to a national culture," the community, especially younger readers, must study and "[undo] the devaluation of [Caribbean] culture which occurred during colonization" (Derose 214). The purpose of a canon is not merely to preserve the written expressions of a community, it also functions as a teaching device that will abolish colonial mentality and unite the Caribbean as an international community.

In *Joey Tyson* and *Riot*, Salkey focuses on the social movements that are part of the Caribbean and are related to the power that foreign nations hold on the region through neocolonialism. These narratives are not Eurocentric because they are focusing on the communities wanting “to create original forms of government and solutions to their problems” (Sanz 9), which is an important process necessary to gain “a regional consciousness [that] takes new urgency to counterbalance the effects of globalization” (3)—there is strength in unity in the Caribbean. These topics should be introduced in texts for younger readers, as Salkey has done, because, as with his main characters, children are conscious of what occurs in their community and social changes affect them with the same intensity as it does adults. Fanon argues that a “national consciousness will both disrupt literary styles and themes, and also create a completely new public” (47)—this is the function of a Caribbean regional literary canon.

Salkey’s books about natural phenomena in the Caribbean can have an immense impact on our younger readers since these experiences shape our culture, history, and even our economy. We have seen how Caribbean countries are battered by storms and earthquakes, and the first measures of aid come from their neighboring nations, yet they are affected greatly by disaster capitalism that comes from neocolonialist practices. This unity between Caribbean nations is obscured by foreign conflicts that bombard the media, which is not focused on aiding the local community—something that was experienced after Hurricane María in Puerto Rico in 2017 and after the earthquake in Haiti of 2010. Younger readers need to see themselves and their communities represented as they face these natural disasters, which brings the community together in response to these catastrophes.

A literature from within has the ability to collect the experiences of our region and present it, not only to the world, but to our own people. Literature is an individual's artistic expression, but it also functions as a vessel for our ideas, emotions, and experiences. While each Caribbean nation has a unique identity, our shared experiences benefit us in creating a larger, united community, which enables us to identify our place in the world. Our younger readers will gain knowledge and cultural understanding of themselves and their regional community if we provide them with literature that will focus on their cultural, historical, and social needs. For this to happen, governments and educational institutions must advocate for literature that is being or has been created with our identity and experience in mind. Local higher education institutions must also focus on course offerings that are Caribbean-centric for the students in general, but also for student-teachers specifically. These are the first steps in reimagining a literary canon that does not center solely around academia but seen as a regional patrimony that is shared among individuals throughout all of society and the Caribbean region. Salkey's books are part of that notion that our experiences and identity can be presented in literature and given a place of prominence rather than prioritizing Western literary canon. Foreign literature does not originate from within our cultural understanding, and when foreign literature tries to describe our landscapes or narrate our stories, it is usually based on their Eurocentrism, which leads to stereotyping and cultural misrepresentation. Our narratives should be based on our authentic forms of representation that come from within the region.

Andrew Salkey's dedication in all five books is "To Eliot and Jason"—his children, which proves he is mindful of the importance of leaving a cultural legacy to the



younger generations that connects them to their own history and identity. At a time when Caribbean literature was rapidly emerging, Salkey thought about passing on the Caribbean experience to our younger readers. In his own words, the first duty of a “novelist is to tell an interesting story about people and incidents... to the best of his ability... whatever happens afterwards, whatever his story and his characters trigger off later on is usually pure magic, and long may that continue to be so” (Salkey “Problems” 129). This is exactly what is needed today, for literature to “trigger a pure magic” in our younger readers, so they might be better acquainted with a lush history filled with authentic forms of representation.

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