CARNIVAL: TRANSFORMATION, PERFORMANCE AND PLAY IN CARIBBEAN FESTIVALS

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

English

August, 2010

Nashville, Tennessee

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: RESISTANCE, PLAY AND PERFORMANCE IN CARIBBEAN CARNIVAL

> *The carnival is the people's second life, organized on the basis of laughter.*
>
> —Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* [1]

This dissertation's initial point of reference is, as is often the case with studies of the Caribbean, the presence and production of sugar in the establishment of Caribbean plantation economies. As Kathleen Balutansky notes, such plantation economies developed and thrived from the seventeenth century and "created patterns of development that were similar in Brazil, the Guyana coast, the Caribbean islands and the Caribbean coasts of Central America, Mexico, and Louisiana" (2). Sugar, as Balutanksy points out, was not just omnipresent in the region, but sought agricultural homogeneity and similar "patterns of development" although geographical and cultural homogeneity was impossible. Sugar plantation owners of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries capitalized on the tremendous worldwide demand for their product such that sugar-producing Caribbean islands became the financial epicenter of Europe's wealth.[2] At the time, sugar needed to be harvested intensively, and required a tremendous amount

[1] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (1941).

[2] Eric Williams notes in *Capitalism & Slavery* that "Britain's total trade at the end of the seventeenth century brought in a profit of £2,000,000. The plantation trade accounted for £600,000; re-export of plantation goods 120,000; European, African and Levant trade £600,000; East India trade £500,000; re-export of East India goods £180,000" (53). See also Alejandro de la Fuente: "Sugar and Slavery in Early Colonial Cuba," in *Tropical Babylons. Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680* (2004).

of labor, mainly through the importation of enslaved Africans.[3] Sugar thus became synonymous with slavery and it is impossible to examine the Caribbean sugar trade without a focus upon its relationship to human bondage. Although sugar became a centralizing economic force in the world, its repressive nature, established by demanding plantation owners, meant that sugar's African slaves often resisted sugar's clutch by way of revolts, marronage and suicide. Any reactions or resistance to slavery became a de facto resistance to sugar.[4]

While the eighteenth-century Caribbean was the center of Europe's finances, the Caribbean did not have a direct cultural connection with its colonizing powers. Although Balutanksy notes that Caribbean islands were "at the center of intense cultural exchanges," (2) such exchanges were ultimately between sugar's European-descended owners and their slaves and such relationships were, as one might expect, contentious. Further, the forced African diaspora that provided sugar's slaves was not a homogenous community that spoke the same language, but one that consisted of different tribes

[3] Williams notes that "[s]lavery in the Caribbean has been too narrowly identified with the Negro….The first instance of slave trading and slave labor developed in the New World involved, racially, not the Negro but the Indian. The Indians rapidly succumbed to the excessive labor demanded of them, the insufficient diet, the white man's diseases, and their inability to adjust themselves to the new way of life" (7, 8). Williams adds that "[i]n the New England colonies Indian slavery was unprofitable…because it was unsuited to the diversified agriculture of these colonies….The Spaniards discovered that one Negro was worth four Indians" (*Capitalism & Slavery* 9). See also Herbert Klein: "The Atlantic Slave Trade" in *Tropical Babylons. Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680* (2004).

[4] Richard Burton makes a distinction between "'resistance'—those forms of contestation of a given system that are conducted from *outside* that system, using weapons and concepts derived from a source or sources other than the system in question—and 'opposition'…those forms of contestations of a given system that are conducted from *within* that system, using weapons and concepts derived from the system itself" (6, emphases original). I will use these as default definitions in this introduction.

extracted from different locations on the African continent (see chapter one). Therein lies just one paradox of sugar's quest for homogenous production, one that arises whenever one attempts to establish cultural commonality in the Caribbean: the plantocracy who used African slave labor to produce sugar ultimately considered all labor interchangeable, whether the labor involved poor European whites, Africans, or later, indentured Asians, as was the case in Cuba and in Trinidad's post-1834 emancipation.[5] To suggest European cultural similarities across the Caribbean, even in the Anglo-Caribbean, becomes a difficult assertion since the Caribbean islands, through their individual modes of colonization, were never all ruled by any one autonomous colonial empire—the French, Dutch, British and Spanish all had economic interests. The result, if one considers the region holistically, was cultural and linguistic cacophony. As Sidney W. Mintz notes

> it is inaccurate to refer to the Caribbean as a "cultural area," if by "culture" is meant a common body of historical tradition. The very diverse origins of Caribbean populations; and the absence in most societies of any firm continuity of the culture of the colonial power have resulted in a very heterogeneous cultural picture. And yet the *societies* of the Caribbean—taking the word "society" to refer here to forms of social structure and social organization—exhibit similarities that cannot possibly be attributed to mere coincidence. It probably would be more accurate (though stylistically unwieldy) to refer to the Caribbean as a "societal area," since its component societies probably share many more social-structural features than they do cultural features." (914, 915, emphasis original)

Taking Mintz's lead, I argue that the Caribbean and its people, both those descended from slavery and those who initiated slavery, for the most part shared *societal*, rather than cultural, commonalities. Still, there were moments of cultural similarity, particularly in relation to religion. The French Catholics of Trinidad, for example, organized private,

[5] Williams notes that "[t]he immediate successor of the Indian, however, was not the Negro but the poor white. These white servants included a variety of types. Some were indentured servants, so called because, before departure from the homeland, they had signed a contract, indented by law, binding them to service for a stipulated time in return for their passage" (*Capitalism & Slavery* 9).

carnival-like masquerade balls that were similar to the carnival-like festival the Spaniards held in Cuba.[6] Still, Mintz's argument for a societal area is valid, especially since it reinforces sugar's claim as a patriarchal and homogenizing force. It is against such homogenization, as I will show in chapter one, that postemancipation carnival in Trinidad (1834) and Cuba (1866) resisted and thus moved toward cultural and ethnic egalitarianism.[7] It is within sugar's ironic ethnic divisions (yet within its economic monopoly) that I seek to piece together similarities in *enslaved* resistance, a resistance which repeated itself in post-slavery carnival. It is through the resistance against sugar's all-encompassing might via its fractious relationship with its slaves that I seek to move from Mintz's societal area to a cultural area in which, using Mintz's own definition of a cultural area as "a common body of historical tradition," I focus on the common cultural results that sugar reaped. Such a cultural area, of course, is neither all-encompassing nor representative of the Caribbean as a whole. Still, I hope to determine sufficient points of

[6] See Errol Hill's *Trinidad Carnival* (1972): "If the conditions in Trinidad were unsuited to carnival revels before the influx of French-speaking settlers [in 1783], the situation was now reversed. The new immigrants quickly established a fairly comfortable standard of living, maintained commodious country houses, and entertained themselves in varied divertissements, which were especially concentrated in the carnival season. This season lasted from Christmas to Ash Wednesday" (7, 8). Judith Bettelheim notes that "Havana's Día de Reyes celebrations came about during the 1823-1832 rule of Captain General de la Isla de Cuba, Dionisio Vives (164). Until the 1920s there were two types of carnivals in Santiago de Cuba. The first was determined by the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar. In this instance carnival was held just before Lent, which usually fell in February or March. In Santiago de Cuba this festival was called Winter Carnival and was private, and sponsored by private organizations and clubs. Interestingly, Winter Carnival was nicknamed carnival for the 'blancos Cubanos,' meaning Cubans with more Spanish than African heritage" (146).

[7] Trinidad's carnival, as a street festival, escalated when emancipated Africans (1834-1838) were allowed to participate. Cuba's Winter and Summer carnivals, which differentiated along European-descended and African-descended lines, was already established by the mid-1820s.

similarity to suggest that the resistance established before carnival proper, and continuing in contemporary carnival, affected the entire region in a similar manner.

Carnival is resistance, but the resistance, like the separate islands that make up the Caribbean, is fragmentary and consists of various elements. Resistance, I argue, manifests itself as violence, language (particularly creolized language), play as seen in costumed performance, play as seen by a manipulation of masks and sounds, play as seen by a manipulation of geographical space and even resistance as seen in ethnic diversity. These various forms of resistance, established as a result of sugar, are seen throughout the Caribbean.

In thinking of Caribbean carnival as a festival, it seems necessary to consider it as an event that takes place in fixed geographical spaces, that is, within the islands bounded by their respective oceans, since as much as sugar attempts economically to tether the islands together, their geographical separation, which sometimes corresponds to language differences, troubles such an easy connection. The spatial gaps that the oceans enforce create metonymic gaps within which differences and similarities reside. Caribbean carnivals occur in different geographical space(s) and in order to think of carnival as a grand regional performance that consists of contributions from various insular elements, I append Joseph Roach's understanding of celebration as a "vortex of spatially induced carnival, a center of cultural self-invention through the restoration of behavior" (28). Roach's suggestion of behavioral restoration proposes, among other things, that one may separate the historical tribal strands of diasporic Africans and their descendents which allow them to regain their African sensibilities in toto. Such a mnemonic concept deftly influences carnival; it is true that African slaves introduced various elements from their

pasts into carnival, including musical instruments and dance. But, as Roach notes, such an action depends severely upon memory and memory "works selectively, imaginatively, and often perversely [so that] surrogation rarely if ever succeeds" (2). Memory taken as a single source is thus unreliable, so while my dissertation acknowledges and utilizes surrogation and memory, it does not concentrate on it to the extent that Roach's *Cities of the Dead* (1996) does. Rather, my project concentrates on restructured memories in combination with modes of resistance in the creation of New World performances.

Performances exhibit themselves in various forms in the texts I examine, particularly, as I mention above, as seen in modes of violence. This is an unavoidable occurrence since, as Richard D.E. Burton points out, violence exists as a form of resistance that reflects what the oppressive slave economies used to discipline their slaves. These slaves resisted their often violent treatment, but more importantly, fought for the reinstatement of their humanity. Frantz Fanon famously discusses Manichaeism reaching "its logical conclusion [in which it] dehumanizes the colonized subject. In plain talk, he is reduced to the state of an animal. And consequently, when the colonist speaks of the colonized he uses zoological terms" (7).[8] In spite of such a forced transformation, Fanon is aware of the indomitable spirit of the colonized subject and notes that "[t]he colonized know all that and *roar with laughter* every time they hear themselves called an animal by the other. For they know they are not animals. And at the very moment when they discover their humanity, they begin to sharpen their weapons to secure its victory" (8, emphases mine). Carnival, in my study, laughs, along with slaves, at slaves being

[8] Fanon extends his metaphor when he notes that "[a]llusion is made to the slithery movements of the yellow race, the odors from the 'native' quarters, to the hordes, the stink, the swarming, the seething and the gesticulations. In his endeavors at description and finding the right word, the colonist refers constantly to the bestiary" (7).

consigned to bestial forms. It is for this reason—the slave's knowledge that he is, indeed, not an animal—that Fanon's focus on the colonized subject's laughter interests me. Such a notation points to the colonized subject's self-awareness of his humanity and, as a result, reveals just how ludicrous his suppression is. It is within this laughter, as my epigraph of Bakhtin's words shows, which the seeds of carnival reside. Fanon's colonized laughter suggests mental resistance before it manifests itself physically in violence. I thus consider a carnival spirit to exist in laughter's incipience as a mode of performative resistance that incorporates the *threat* of violence, but prefers to operate along the lines of mischief, trickery, misdirection and play. In this manner, because such a spirit can rapidly become either directed by rage or mischief, carnival easily operates within liminal spaces. Whereas sugar seeks unified production, carnival seeks discordance. In the unstable and destabilizing resistance that carnival produces, sugar is unable to retain its power as a fixed and unyielding source of Caribbean identity. Carnival, as a chaotic form of resistance, through its laughter, sharpens its weapons of performance and play, and although threatens their use, sometimes does not employ them, yet is still able to subvert sugar's control. Carnival, as embodied by laughter, is fragmentary and unstable.

To find commonalities or, rather, points of connection in carnival resistance in the form of play *throughout* the Caribbean, I utilize Édouard Glissant's concept of Relation as a central concept and adapt it to seemingly disparate culture and languages. Glissant's Relation eschews Caribbean homogeneity for fragmentation, and, more specifically, through the image of a rhizome, allows for a trans-Caribbean rootedness as opposed to an

absolute, or, totalitarian rootedness, which I argue that sugar seeks.[9] Glissant's rootedness burrows deeply under the Caribbean islands, into its aquatic connective amnion, and like a collection of umbilical cords connects the islands in a manner that sugar's shallow terrestrial roots may not approach. As Glissant notes, "identity is no longer completely within the root but also in Relation" (18). Language differences, for example, do not limit Glissant's relation nor do they limit my study; variances in language, as Glissant argues, "rightfully opposes the totalitarianism of any monolingual intent" (19) which sugar claims as its domain. Multilingualism becomes part of carnival's various forms of resistance.

Glissant's Relation, considered in conjunction with carnival, allows movement across regional differences in language and also allows, as Antonio Benítez-Rojo notes, cross-cultural comparisons: "[i]n this way one could compare Cuban society of the nineteenth century, by then dominated by a plantation economy, with that of Saint-Domingue in the eighteenth century, and either one of the two with that of Barbados at the end of the seventeenth century, when the expulsion of the Dutch from Brazil spread to that region the era's most advanced sugar production technology" (*The Repeating Island* 36). Modes of resistance within the plantation economy, such as marronage, the act of escaping the plantation to occupy a free, usually mountainous, space, or what Yanick Lahens defines as the attempt "to create in an out-of-reach, wild space, a counterculture opposed to that of the plantation" (160), become other elements in carnival's cultural resistance.

[9] As Glissant notes, "[t]he notion of the rhizome maintains…the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (11).

Trinidad is Carnival

Thus far I have plainly foregrounded Trinidad's carnival and hinted at it as a meme for carnival throughout the Caribbean. I have various reasons for doing this. The first is that many of the case studies I present, particularly literary texts, feature Trinidad's carnival directly, including Robert Antoni's novel *Carnival* (2005); Earl Lovelace's novel *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979); and Peter Minshall's masquerade band *River* (1983). Another vital reason for my focus on Trinidad is that the resistance that I privilege, including laughter and mischief, is particularly prominent in Trinidad's carnival and its culture. Burton, for example, does not differentiate between Trinidad's daily culture and its heightened carnival culture: "what happens during the four days of carnival in Trinidad is not *fundamentally* at variance with what happens during 360-plus days of the year" (157, emphasis original). Burton's observation is discerning. In discussing a prototypically Trinidadian cultural event—"liming"—which has been described in various forms as "the art of doing nothing," (skettel.com), to "willful idleness," to what Burton describes as "the practice, commented on by observers from the mid-nineteenth century onward, of West Indian men, particularly but not exclusively those of lower-class, African origin, of congregating in public places—barbershops, rum shops, betting shops, or street corners—for the sheer self-justifying pleasure, at once simple and complex, of being together, talking together, drinking together, and in a specific (cards, dominoes) or unspecific (joking, storytelling, boasting, verbal jousting) sense *playing* together" (160, emphasis original). Admittedly complex, Burton's sense of liming is not extravagant. Liming is a Trinidadian performance that necessarily includes

congregation in certain *fixed* social spaces that privileges social and cultural togetherness (or what Victor Turner terms *communitas*), and a type of joking communication locally known as "ole talk," which ranges from innocuous barbs to malicious insults. Ole talk is, more importantly, a mode of play. It is also a mode of resistance and one that I distinguish from Burton's understanding of opposition because it includes a creolized language, or a mix of "standard" English with local slang.[10] Moving beyond Burton's definition, liming necessarily includes wayward and fractured conversations. More often than not, among adult males, it includes imbibing of alcohol, which often leads to a loss of faculties, and wandering storytelling. Burton describes such verbal back and forth as "the processes of self-projection and self-dramatization…in which language—power with and over words—becomes the principal instrument by which the individual affirms himself in the presence of, and over and against, others" (161). Such an action is not limited to the Caribbean, however, and as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. points out, occurs in the United States in the form of "signifyin(g)," "playing the dozens," and "rapping" (77, 99, 52). In this way, my suggestion of cultural commonalities extends throughout the Americas to include North America and Mardi Gras in New Orleans, a French-inflected carnival festival that is similar to Trinidad's.[11] Burton fortifies my point about such resistance being an alternative, or a step that precedes violence: "the appearance of anger and aggression is ultimately deceptive: the whole object of 'rapping' is precisely to *avoid* violence by sublimating it into language, to diffuse and defuse it by acting it out 'playfully,' which in the West Indian and, more broadly, Afro-American context does not

[10] If it were opposition, it would consist solely of standard uncorrupted English.

[11] Although carnival commonalities reach into the U.S. and South America, it is beyond the scope of this project to examine them.

mean any less seriously" (161, emphasis original). Liming and ole talk are daily occurrences woven into Trinidad's social fabric, but they are also separate and unique threads that weave into the tapestry of its carnival. One calypso competition, held on *Dimanche Gras,* the Sunday night before the festivals on carnival Monday and Tuesday features an "extempo" competition in which the judges give the performing calypsonian a topic and a few minutes in which to craft a melody and lyrics. Oftentimes, the result is a raucous, salacious tale that incorporates all the ribaldry and play of liming and ole talk.

Moving Past Caliban

In "Caliban's Triple Play," Houston A. Baker notes that although scholars and modern science try to discount race through the science of modern genetics, that "mere 'gross' features of hair, bone, and skin are not, in fact, discountable. In a world dramatically conditioned both by the visible and by a perduring discursive formation of 'old' (and doubtless mistaken) racial enunciative statements, such gross features always make a painfully significant difference" (185). Caliban, Shakespeare's long-suffering enslaved native islander in *The Tempest,* who is often discussed in postcolonial studies, recognizes and understands the "gross features" that Prospero assigns him, and uses Prospero's language famously to "know how to curse" Prospero in exchange (1.2.437). For Caliban, his resistance takes on obvious forms—he resents Prospero and tries to recruit Stephano and Trinculo to join him in violent revolt. In Caliban's unidirectional rage, Caliban's singularity of resistance denies him the possibility and complexity of carnival. Instead, I would like to look at a Caliban-like figure who occupies the same repressed space as Caliban but attempts a more complicated resistance. In E.L. Joseph's

Martial Law: A Musical Farce in Two Acts (1832), which scholars consider to be the first play written and produced in Trinidad, Snowball, a slave, resists his British master Callalou. There are various similarities between Snowball and Caliban: both get drunk off colonial alcohol; both threaten to impregnante a Miranda-like character represented in *Martial Law* by Callalou's nubile ward Cecil, toward whom a drunken Snowball notes "Champaigne only wine fit for genteremen. But me forgot for drink Miss Cecil health—me think she lub [love] me." Both offer resistance to their colonial masters. Whereas Caliban curses and plots violent revenge, however, Snowball rebels through play and mischief sanctioned through language and performance. During a scene in which Calallou attempts, suitably enough, to dress himself in his military finery, Snowball makes fun of him in asides. In these asides, which are comments meant only for the audience to hear, Snowball investigates not just the subtlety of Calallou's language, but a performative space of which Callalou remains unaware:

> CALALLOU: Curse the sword, he nearly tripped me up.
> SNOWBALL: Sword no know he duty yet.
> CALALLOU: I must look like the grand Turk.
> SNOWBALL: [Aside] More like one grand turkey.

In Snowball's aside there is a verbal dexterity, cleverness and insolence that he projects in a manner that Caliban cannot possess, a cleverness heightened by the fact that Snowball has a connection with the audience that Calallou does not. Calallou hears Snowball's rude comment, but is unable to decipher it:

> CALALLOU: What do you say?
> SNOWBALL: Me say you look fierce like a lion.
> CALALLOU: Where did you ever see a lion?
> SNOWBALL: 'Na Mr. Muscovado savannah, he say he haw! he haw! he haws [*imitates the braying of an ass*].
> CALALLOU: You villain, I will annihilate you. [*He draws and runs at Snowball. Cecil interposes*].

CECIL: For heaven's sake sir, what's the matter?
[*Exit Snowball laughing*]

Snowball's laughter is greater than any wound that Calallou could have inflected on himself with his sword. Not only does Snowball possess mastery of Callalou's language, but he is adept and nimble with it, and is able to use it to subvert and reflect the inhuman/animal status in which Calallou no doubt casts him. Instead, Snowball uses Calallou's language to cut Calallou down to size. Snowball represents an "Ole talker" par excellence.

In "Caliban's Triple Play," Baker further notes that in "European travel narratives, a whitemale I/Eye always narrates the landscape of invaded territories in a manner that produces self-effacing accounts of endlessly proliferating nature" (191). Calallou fits this role of the European traveler, but Snowball avoids becoming part of his self-effacing accounts. Callalou is both a Prospero-like interloper and, in his military resplendence, an exponent of colonialism. As I/Eye he admires his own splendor at the sake of his surroundings, including Snowball. But Calallou is, as the nimble Snowball reveals in Calallou's clumsiness with a sword, also an ass. Baker goes on to explain the shortcoming of the whitemale I/Eye that relates to Calallou's misunderstanding: "What never appears in such narrations," Baker notes, "is the I/Eye itself, or the indigenous inhabitants as people in functional relationship to the landscapes. Instead, as objective voice domesticates and normalizes the landscape, recording it with an eye always in the service of European 'science'" (191). For Calallou as European intruder, who is for all intents a sugar baron who "normalizes the landscape" with his cash crop, the native appears to wear a mask and to create strange sounds. Both Caliban and Snowball know this not to be the case—their images and sounds, as well as the environment's sounds, are

natural. As Caliban notes, "Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises, / Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not" (3.2.148-149). Still, both Prospero and Calallou remain doubtful. Colonial might does not suffer diversity easily. Taken together, the colonized mask and voice suggest deformity in the native. But behind the mask, and in his sounding, as Snowball proves, there is knowledge and profundity. As Baker points out, "[t]he guerrilla's deformation is made possible by his superior knowledge of the landscape and the loud assertion of possession that he makes. It is, of course, the latter—the 'hoots' of assurance that remain incomprehensible to intruders—that produce a notion (in the intruder's mind and vocabulary) of 'deformity.' An 'alien' *sound* gives birth to notions of the indigenous—say, Africans or Afro-Americans—as *deformed*" (191, emphases original). Much more assured of his sound that Caliban, who, admittedly, must also "possess Prospero's books" before he may launch a successful insurrection, Snowball is adept in mixing "standard" English with his native sounds to unbalance Calallou just as much as a sword may. Such masks and sounds offer pure resistance, as Bakhtin notes, in European carnivals: "[i]n its Romantic form the mask…acquires other meanings alien to its primitive nature; now the mask hides something, keeps a secret, deceives. Such a meaning would not be possible as long as the mask functioned within culture's organic whole….A terrible vacuum, a nothingness lurks behind it….But an inexhaustible and many-colored life can always be descried behind the mask of folk grotesque" (*Rabelais and his World* 40). This "many-colored life" operates in all forms of carnival as a default mode of resistance. It is seen in the laughter of Snowball, but also the laughter of King Zulu in New Orleans Mardi Gras, a character that Roach notes "seizes on the annual occasion of the great festive holiday of Eurocentric tradition to

make ribald fun of white folks and the stupidity of their jury-rigged constructions of race" (21). In Snowball's taunts, in his masked asides to the audience, resides the evolved Caliban whose resistance opposes rage in the form of violence and that exists in the mischievous interstices between them, and as such is able to incorporate play to achieve what, in my epigraph, Bakhtin notes as "the people's second life" (8) and thus achieve another layer of resistance that adds to carnival's complexity.[12]

Putting the Fragments Together

In his Nobel prize-winning lecture, Derek Walcott, the St. Lucian poet and playwright, discusses his attendance of an open-air performance of *Ramleela,* "the epic dramatization of the Hindu epic the *Ramayana*," in Trinidad (*The Antilles* 1). Felicity is the village where the performance takes place. Walcott notes that Felicity is "a village on the edge of the Caroni plain, the wide central plain that still grows sugar and to which indentured cane cutters were brought after emancipation so the small population of Felicity is East Indian" (*The Antilles* 1). Walcott's noting of the ethnic make-up of the village, as well as sugar's continual presence in the Caribbean, highlights the role of East Indians as indentured laborers in Trinidad, the less-discussed form of bondage that sugar

[12] The mask is something that has always been a part of carnival, as Bakhtin notes: "Even more important is the theme of the mask, the most complex theme of folk culture. The mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to oneself. The mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nickname. It contains the playful element of life; it is based on a peculiar interrelation of reality and image, characteristic of the most ancient rituals and spectacles. Of course it would be impossible to exhaust the intricate multiform symbolism of the mask. Let us point out that such manifestations as parodies, caricatures, grimaces, eccentric postures, and comic gestures are per se derived from the mask. It reveals the essence of the grotesque" (39, 40).

production enforced on the island. I also consider Walcott's linking of sugar to East Indians as another strand of resistance to what sugar once sought as clear-cut ethnic divisions of black and white. Felicity's East Indians complicate sugar's quest for easy mercantile dominance; it differs from African bondage both in terms of form and place of origin. At first Felicity and its performance seems to exist as its own separate entity in terms of production, apart from other Trinidadian exhibitions. As such, there is no need for Walcott to note Felicity's distance from Trinidad's capital, Port of Spain, or that the village is not a major hub of Trinidad's traditional carnival costumes or performances.

Although the Ramayana is not explicitly related to carnival, it operates as a *sui generis* Caribbean performance that acknowledges a South Asian heritage through its imported East Indian population in the same way that the French masquerade balls that evolve into Trinidad's carnival were imported from France. No matter how similar to its South Asian origins, however, no Trinidadian performance of Ramleela is *precisely* identical to its South Asian original. In this way, whether or not the Ramleela is consciously a part of carnival, because it is a part of a performance in a society that values carnival, which is already a mish-mash of remembered heritages and performances from various nations, Felicity's performance of Ramleela is already an accessory to Trinidad's carnival. Earlier I noted Burton's suggestion that rather than carnival being a separate performance onto itself, it is instead a heightened reflection of the daily Trinidadian society in which it exists. Expanding upon this concept, Burton argues that "[c]arnival is…less…a ritual of reversal than…a 'ritual of intensification' in which the forces that govern 'ordinary' life are expressed with a particular salience, clarity, and eloquence" (157). In the same way I view this production of Ramleela as an example of

'ordinary life,' an aspect of the social and cultural fabric endemic to Felicity and to all of Trinidad as well.

I contend that the inclusion of Ramleela adds another element to a festival already made up of fragments of other heritages and modes of performance. This concept works in collaboration with Walcott's estimation of Caribbean poetry:

> Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of its original shape. It is such a love that reassembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars. This gathering of broken pieces is the care and pain of the Antilles, and if the pieces are disparate, ill fitting, they contain more pain than their original sculpture, those icons and sacred vessels taken for granted in their ancestral places. Antillean art is this restoration of our shattered histories, our shards of vocabulary, our archipelago becoming a synonym for pieces broken off from the original continent. (*The Antilles* 8, 9)

In the restoration of Antillean art, of which I read carnival as a product, through its "restoration of …shattered histories," the new whole is greater than the sum of its parts. By this I mean that the resultant carnival, which exists in, and consists of, the individual fragments of other performances and modes of resistance, including Ramleela and the French private masquerade balls in which the manumitted slaves participated, as well as ole talk, and liming, also exists in the gaps where the fragments are rejoined and causes some overlap between the performances. Such a concept aligns with the idea of creolization, which Édouard Glissant determines as a way "of forming a complex mix" (89). Creolization, Glissant points out, "opens onto a broader ethnocultural realm, from the Antilles to the Indian Ocean" (89). Such creolization in the Caribbean attempts to deliver various aspects of the world into the Caribbean. Trinidad, and its carnival, Walcott's argument suggests, represents a fragment of a culturally disjointed Caribbean. I understand, of course, that Trinidad *cannot* represent all of the Caribbean. It does,

however, have many commonalities with many of the other Caribbean islands on which I focus both historically and culturally. While Trinidad is not the overt center of this study, I oftentimes revert to its carnival as a default because its carnival is still thriving in the twenty-first century. It has a larger international following and influence than Barbados' Cropover festival. It takes place on a larger scale than Haiti's carnival in the small town of Jacmel. It has a longer history than Guyana's Mashramani. It has a longer period without interruption than Cuba's Día de Reyes (Day of Kings), whose dates of celebration were shifted to coincide with the 1959 revolution.[13] Still, Trinidad's carnival remains a fragment, a piece of Caribbean carnival as a whole and the Caribbean's attempt to interact with all other Caribbean festivals.

Carnival Resistance in Caribbean Literature

Snowball's playful verbal antics are diffused throughout this dissertation particularly in the manner in which his asides create a specific space between him and Calallou that manufactures space for play. In chapter one I look at the historical origins of carnival in Trinidad, and as a point of comparison, Cuba's Día de Reyes. Both festivals are based on plantation slavery and feature forms of inversion as resistance, particularly Cuba's participants and its slaves who switch roles with the slaveowners for a day. I examine the Haitian revolution (1891-1904) as seen in Alejo Carpentier's novel *The Kingdom of This World* (1949) in which the slave Makandal, who escapes his servitude and poisons the slaveowners' food sources before he is captured and executed, uses the stump of his amputated arm to create distance between him and his executioners that

[13] See Judith Bettelheim's *Cuban Festivals* (2001).

leads to years of unrest and revolution. Makandal's fellow slaves, who witness his execution, use this resistant space created by his actions as a site of play and as inspiration for continued resistance. Carpentier's novel directly addresses Haitian (then Saint Domingue) history, but as William Luis notes, Caribbean history as well: "The success of the Haitian rebellion, which created a vacuum in the world sugar market that Cuba filled, precipitated this growth. As a result of sugar, the Cuban census indicates that the number of slaves grew along with the number of all colored people" (4). Because it so directly challenges Caribbean slavery, *The Kingdom of the World* sets the tone for resistance throughout this work and allows a cross-cultural comparison with all the other works I examine in the chapter. As Luis points out, "[b]y questioning the slavery system, the narrations inevitably complemented other historical events which undermined the power of sugar and slavery, in particular those surrounding the rebellion in Saint Domingue (1791) and the Aponte Conspiracy in Cuba (1812), two movements intending to create a power space for blacks within their respective countries" (2, 3). This "power space for blacks" shows up again in Tomás Alea's Gutiérrez's film *La Últime Cena* (1976) in which slaves stage a revolt in which one of them, Sebastián, evades capture although the slavemaster tries to suppress him through mutilation.

Chapter two looks at staged Caribbean theater as one that takes into account British theater but moves past it by implementing other theatrical strands such as Japanese Noh. This chapter focuses particularly on the use of mimetic or visible jails on stage as a metaphor for the repressive nature of colonialism. It examines St. Lucian playwright Derek Walcott's play *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1977) as a claim for a new Caribbean theater that acknowledges its British heritage, but that uses Japanese Noh

theater to form its own *sui generis* Caribbean theater. I argue that such a theater embraces Walcott's concept of reassembled fragments that go into defining carnival. Resistance here takes the form of appropriating and reconfiguring colonial forms.

Chapter three analyzes the interaction of carnival and colonialism through the concept of prostheses. The connection of prostheses to the concept of fragmentation is evident. The broken and mutilated slave body seeks an artificial appendage to reform his body and to renew its fragmented form. Although the prostheses are originally intended to occupy the gaps left in the mutilated slaves' bodies and psyches to reform them into wholes, these prostheses sometimes overcompensate for the original losses and attempt to overtake the bodies that they were supposed to support. Resistance in this case becomes localized within the body as it opposes its new addition. I examine this type of resistance directly in Robert Antoni's novel *Carnival* and Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979). I also examine this concept in Peter Minshall's Trinidadian carnival band *River* (1983). In examining River and its carnival king Mancrab, I suggest that the band's masqueraders resist the legacy of colonialism through play and performance.

Chapter four examines anthropology's attempt to categorize carnival and other forms of Caribbean culture such as social and communal interactions. I argue that, as a defense mechanism, as well as a form of resistance, native people such as Guyana's Wapisiana elide such categorization through ventriloquism and misdirection. I also examine such elusion and elision in Pauline Melville's Guyanese novel *The Ventriloquist's Tale* (1997), Paule Marshall's novel *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969) which is set on a fictional Barbadian island, and Wilson Harris' Guyanese novel *Carnival* (1985). Harris' novel extends carnival to an abstract concept that exists in

the imagination. Such an imagined carnival becomes important because it moves away from the limitations of geographical space and the fragments that the separate islands create. As Simon Gikandi notes, "enslaved blacks could lay claim to the New World through a creative use of the social spaces in which they were imprisoned" (13). It is this enslaved creativity that goes into carnival and that I dissect, but Harris, in his novel moves past such limitations. Harris' creativity is a move to recapture what Gikandi terms "imprisoned social spaces" that exist in the mind (14). Such creativity, for the slave, and for carnival, is a grasp for freedom and agency, and it achieves all of this through a move from the physical to the mental. For various scholars, including Edward Brathwaite and Simon Gikandi, such creativity resides in creolization and its manifest forms, including language, ethnicity and culture. Carnival does not disregard creolization, it participates in it. Both carnival and creolization contend with the fragmentation that results from the Trans-Atlantic journey from Africa to the New World. The difference between the two lies in moments of joy. Gikandi, for example, does not make much allowance for such moments when he speaks of "the despair of Caribbean modernist literature" in the quest for "[a]n integrated discourse of self" (18). Gikandi seems unable to fathom the creation of playful space of resistance for the slave's haunted past. Such a move, however, is necessary to understand fully all aspects of carnival and Harris seems to come closest to such a complex understanding of carnival as something that includes the fragmented bodies and psyches of slaves as well as trickery and mischief. Harris seeks to reconstruct a form that is similar to Walcott's reconstruction of shattered fragments. As Harris notes, "the word chasm is adopted…to imply that within the gulfs that divide cultures—gulfs which some societies seek to bypass the logic of an institutional self-division of humanity

or by the practice of ethnic cleansing—there exists, I feel, a storage of creative possibility that, once tapped, may energize the unfinished genesis of the imagination. In that energy eclipsed bridges and potential bridges exist between divorced or separated or closed orders and worlds" (25, 26). Harris' work investigates these chasms and explores the concepts that go into organizing carnival and the idea of carnival throughout the Caribbean. As such, it examines various forms of texts that highlight Caribbean fragmentation, play or performance. He envisions a carnival borne from the fractures created by sugar and, as Walcott suggests, one that becomes stronger because of it.

CHAPTER II

CARIBBEAN CARNIVAL: FROM SOCIAL EUROPEAN FESTIVAL TO POSTSLAVERY CULTURAL EVENT

> *The people of Trinidad and Tobago are devoted to their Carnival. It is possible that they would be better employed studying Shakespeare, listening to classical music or taking physical culture in order to improve the health of the community. They don't. They play Carnival, spend time and money on it. That is what they want to do. With the jump that all our affairs are taking, Carnival expanded until the old organizers had to be cast aside.*
>
> —C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary*[14]

In *Four Years' Residence in the West Indies During the Years 1826, 1827, 1828 and 1829 by the Son of a Military Officer* (1833), Frederic Bayley publishes a letter from his friend, English traveler Bryan Edwards, that analyzes Trinidad's carnival festivities of 1827[15]:

> I wish, Bayley, you had been here in the time of the carnival; you have no idea of the gaiety of the place in that season. Ovid's Metamorphoses were nothing compared to the changes that took place in the persons of the Catholics of Trinidad. High and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, all found masking suits for the carnival. A party of ladies, having converted themselves into a party of brigands, assailed me in my quarters and nearly frightened me out of my wits. I was going to cut and run when Ensign _____ who was with me, not knowing the joke, and thinking there were so many devils come to take him before his time, drew his sword….(214)

Edwards' view of Trinidad is comparative but also self-reflexive: the mention of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* identifies him as someone familiar with the Western literary canon, as

[14] C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, p. 242.

[15] Caribbean carnival is a street festival where masqueraders don costumes, sometimes individually, sometimes in groups, and parade through the streets to the accompaniment of music.

well as someone savvy enough to connect the transformations found in Ovid with those in carnival. His association of carnival with Catholicism suggests the festival's religious origins—implied in this connection, although less overtly than his comparison with *Metamorphoses*, is the transubstantiation that lies at the heart of Catholic mass: the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. In other words, Edwards' account proclaims just as much about his education as it does about Trinidad's carnival. Beyond this, it announces Edwards' itinerancy and his limited exposure to the society and the festival—because he is not an expert on typical carnival transformations, he is startled by the women dressed as brigands. He is an outsider who records what he sees and filters it through his own experiences.

In anthropological terms, he is a participant/observer, in which a visitor participates in the lives of the natives of a community and records his observations, a methodology that Jean Jackson terms "the hallmark of traditional anthropological field research" where a major benefit is that such an immersion "results in the fieldworker becoming less intrusive, less of a stranger, and thus [gaining] trust and tolerance…of members of the community" (348). An unintentional anthropological document, Edwards' letter avoids dialogic interaction with the natives.[16] When juxtaposed with a passage from C.L.R. James' *Beyond a Boundary* (1963), a text that adopts the British sport of cricket and injects it with a West Indian passion so that it becomes a part of West Indian culture, Edwards' monological stance toward Trinidad's carnival becomes even more apparent. I read James' passage, which serves as this chapter's epigraph, not as a

[16] I do not mean to suggest that anthropological documents need necessarily include a native's point of view, only that in this specific case any native input in Edwards' experience is already marginalized and co-opted by his own experiences by dint of the narrative being Edwards'.

retort to Edwards' letter so much as a post-independence document that contrasts with a pre-emancipation archive. James' passage, published in 1963, one year after Trinidad gained independence from Britain, serves as a corollary that evolves past Edwards' limited observations. James' invocation of Shakespeare reveals his own familiarity with the western canon as Edwards' invocation of Ovid does. Although James uses a similar rhetoric as Edwards does at the start of his passage, whereby he distances himself from Trinidadians with the use of the third person—"the *people* of Trinidad"; "*they* would be better employed"; "*they* don't"—he finally associates himself with them with his use of the word "our." Simply put, James, as a native Trinidadian, sees carnival through a greater number of dimensions than does Edwards, including the point of view of a resident; he participates with the natives and considers himself part of their community. As a native, James recognizes the importance of carnival as a cultural event; his indulgence of carnival is the "physical culture [that] improve[s] the health of their community." James' use of the word "jump," for example, hints at the local colloquialism for carnival, a "jump up." The "old organizers" to whom he refers may be seen as nostalgic souls who value traditional carnival and resist its continuous evolution. By distancing himself from a high level of authority, James distances himself from the cultural power brokers who tend to manipulate a "national" festival rather than participate in it. This is not to say that James' being a native to Trinidad places him in a position that Edwards may not approach. Edwards may achieve such credence with the passage of more time among the people and in participation in their daily lives, since, with the passage of time comes belief in a culture where one may eventually assume, as James Clifford suggests, "the voice of a culture" (48).

Edwards clearly has not yet developed such a localized voice. While the first half of the letter reveals much about his background and education, the second half unveils telling information about him as a *visitor* and shows that the letter's true focus is Edwards' *relationship* to the festival rather than an understanding of the festival as a localized communal event. Still, while the letter's first half underscores Edwards' role as an observer, the second half reveals his unwitting participation: he moves from someone *apart* from the masquerade to someone who becomes *a party* to its performance. That Edwards' observations begin as comparative but end as declarative, while remaining virtually culturally ignorant, points to his limited knowledge of carnival's origins, as well as carnival's continuous evolution as an annual cultural event. The festival, which derived from the French-Catholics who immigrated to the island at the behest of the Spanish crown in the nineteenth century, repeats annually. If Edwards had experienced it but once before he would have been familiar with both brigands and devils, costumed characters that remain staples of Trinidad's carnival even in the twenty-first century. All of this is not to limit the worth of Edwards' observations but only to underscore carnival's structure and the difficulty in easily delimiting it.

Edwards' passage unwittingly freezes a very significant period of Trinidad's history in time: the period just before the abolition of slavery. While the English, who were in charge of the island at the time of Edwards' writing in 1827, outlawed the slave trade in 1807, and slavery in Trinidad in 1833, they only fully emancipated Trinidad's slaves in 1838.[17] The freed slaves, by slow degrees, began to participate in Trinidad's

[17] Eric Williams, in *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* (1963), notes that the British government, while passing the law of emancipation on August 1, 1833, deferred its implementation until 1840, and the period was subsequently shortened to August 1,

annual carnival when it took to the streets, adding elements of their various African heritages such as stickfighting. Not only did the emancipated slaves start to participate, they eventually co-opted carnival in the eyes of the Europeans, who led a push for the governmental eradication of carnival as a whole. The celebration was meant for Europeans and creolized Europeans; it originated as a refined social event. To have former field laborers participate in a festival that was, in a manner of speaking, already somewhat debauched, only compounded the heresy.

Between 1840 and 1848, Trinidad's French Creoles began to withdraw from the street festival they helped institute because of the large Afro-Creole presence. By 1843, the carnival was limited to two days, and, in 1881, there were the Canboulay riots in which the police clashed on the streets with mainly Afro-Creole celebrants. 1883 brought an ordinance to ban African-influenced music from the streets as well as to limit the street carnival which was run, for the most part, by Afro-Creoles (Riggio 32). The festival survived these attacks, however, and became a creolized festival that morphed into the fully-developed, cosmopolitan, annual street festival that continues—and continues to evolve—to this day. Edwards, who may have intended his letter to be only a personal correspondence, instead creates a diegesis. He captures and records a significant cultural event as an ethnographer would; his words serve as an anthropological document that certifies Trinidad's carnival as a cultural representation.

While the voice in the text is solely Edwards', as I have suggested through my comparison with James, it seems fair to suggest that inclusion of the ladies' voices would have revealed a more complete and complex interpretation of the festival. Edwards'

1838. Between 1833 and 1838 the slaves were "apprentices" "required to work under specified conditions and for stipulated wages for their former masters" (87).

account—and, of course, I use his snippet as synecdoche for more extensive texts that assume similar foreigner/observer/participant positions—is useful as archival material. It serves as a repository of historical information, and as such, it is a vital document for the production of both native and non-native creative texts. Edwards' passage, and anthropological texts like it, participates in both the history and mythology of Trinidad's carnival.[18] Edwards' voice, although restrictive with regards to the native voice, becomes a thread in the tapestry of carnival's mythology and a strand woven into later texts written about carnival.

Read as a historical and myth-making document culled from his personal experiences, Edwards' letter reveals vital details about carnival as a cultural event, especially as a festival that encourages the transformation of identities. While Edwards' observations of Trinidad's carnival seems experientially unassailable, there is one observation that stands out as erroneous because it is likely historically inaccurate: "[h]igh and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, all found masking suits for the carnival." This is a curious assertion because it is almost certainly an anachronism. In 1827, there was no vast economic or educational separation among the plantocracy; they were all "high," "rich" and "learned" in the same manner and did not go out of their way to include those who were not so in their masquerade balls. Beyond that, carnival festivities in Trinidad were not cosmopolitan—the participants were all European, or creolized Europeans.

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[18] As Vera Kutzinski reminds us in *Against the American Grain. Myth and History in William Carlos Williams, Jay Wright, and Nicolás Guillén* (1987), "[m]yths, in the broadest sense, are storehouses of cultural values and beliefs, which serve as paradigms for the interpretation of historical 'facts.' Myths, in short, are the foundations of a culture's identity" (5).

Even in 1881, more than forty-five years after the emancipation of Trinidad's slaves in 1833, segregation, or at least ethnic delineation, was exacting, as seen in this memorandum by ex-chief of police L.M. Fraser to Trinidad's governor at the time: "It is necessary to observe that in those days the population of the Colony was divided into the following categories: Whites, Free Persons of Colour, Indians and Slaves." Fraser adds that "[t]he Free Persons of Colour were subjected to very stringent Regulations and although not forbidden to mask, were yet compelled to keep to themselves and never presumed to join in the amusements of the privileged class. The Indians kept entirely aloof, and the slaves except as onlookers, or by special favour when required to take part, had no share in the Carnival *which was confined exclusively to the upper class of the community*" (10, quoted in Hill, emphases mine). Fraser's unabashed rhetoric, specifically his separation of the carnival participants along lines of ethnicity, reveals where Edwards' occludes. The "Indians" to whom Fraser refers are recently-landed indentured immigrants brought in after emancipation when freed slaves refused to continue to work in the sugar cane fields.[19] That "the free persons of color" were kept

[19] The first indentured laborers from India arrived in Trinidad in 1845. There were several problems that emancipation put forth for the freed slaves that led to their refusal to continue to work on the plantations. Chief among them was that after the Emancipation Bill of 1833, "the slave planters, and not the slaves, were paid by the British Government the sum of £20 million compensation" (82). Williams notes that after slavery, "land ownership was to be retained in white hands and it was to be made as difficult as possible for black people to own land (87)." The British government thus wanted Trinidad to continue to be a plantation system rather than a series of small farms (87). These last two factors resulted in the slaves "object[ing] violently" to the period of apprenticeship, and their "refus[al] to believe that they had not been freed outright" (87, 88). Williams continues: "[t]hus August 1, 1834, faced the colony of Trinidad with its greatest social crisis until June 19, 1937. The half-emancipated slaves marched into Port-of-Spain from all parts of the island, wending their way to Government House to inform the Governor that they had resolved to strike. The Governor sought to remonstrate with them. They abused him, laughed at him, hooted him, and behaved in what the *Gazette*

apart almost assuredly insists that the slaves who, one must remember, were supposed to be emancipated by this time, were non-participants in carnival. What stands out in this account, and it is something to which I will return repeatedly in this study, is that Fraser consciously casts the slaves in the role of the onlooker or audience. Nominally manumitted, the slaves are definitively forbidden from play and are allowed to observe but not to participate. They are confined to the margins and as the years pass this quest becomes, in part, one to achieve participation.

I do not mean for poor Edwards to serve as a literary straw man and for his words to represent the lone example of an anthropological text regarding Caribbean carnival as a nineteenth-century segregated cultural event. Similar kinds of participant/observer documents that marginalize the participation of natives, either in the recording of their voices or in their roles as participants in carnival, are seen in personal recordings of carnival throughout the Caribbean in the nineteenth century, including the following case, in Cuba. In Fernando Ortiz's essay "The Afro-Cuban Festival 'Day of the Kings'," he notes several records of personal observations that parallel Edwards', including one by Pérez Zamora in 1866:

> On the 'Day of the Kings' in Havana, dear readers, your pockets must be continually open. Do you know why? To give…should you go to a café, should you sit down to rest on the bench of some public promenade, should you enter the home of a friend or one who is not of your acquaintance, you will be accosted by negroes, adults and children of both sexes, coming up to you, insistent and importune in asking for the popular gift: '*El aquinaldo! El aguinaldo!'* That is the term which will sound incessantly in your ear; that is the sacrosanct word you will always be hearing, whether in the seclusion of a study or in the squares and streets. (quoted in Ortiz, 10, emphasis original)

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recorded as a most outrageous manner. Many of them were arrested, and seventeen of the most prominent ringleaders were condemned to stripes and hard labor" (88).

While this passage is dissimilar from Edwards' in tone—it has a more strident and opinionated narrator and contains less costumed masqueraders, added to the fact that Zamora distinguishes "negroes" as participants as compared to the creolized Europeans in Edwards' experience, its similarities warrant comparison, particularly in how the narrator chooses to include and, to a certain extent, exclude himself in the text, and the type of voice that he grants the "negroes." Like Edwards' letter, Zamora's is not merely an observational text, but necessarily, if one reads it as an anthropological document, translational as well.[20] What limits these documents as anthropological texts is that the narrators describe their roles in relation to carnival performances but also try—in vain—to distance themselves from the performers, even though, when the events are transcribed, they are necessarily complicit with the performers on the page because of the close interactions. Zamora wants to remain apart, but again, like Edwards, he is made an unwilling participant to the performance. Like Edwards in his quarters, this narrator is accosted in both public and what he believes to be private spaces—whether he is "in some public promenade," "the home of a friend," or "in the seclusion of a study," he is accessible to masqueraders. In both Edwards' and Zamora's account, the bottom line is the same. During carnival, the private is made public when marginalized masqueraders strive to invert the traditional status quo. When these events are committed to a written

[20] I realize that the idea of "translation" is a multivalent critical term, especially in postcolonial thought, but I utilize it here as a means of conversion of observances into text such as when James Clifford notes that "[i]n analyzing this complex transformation one must bear in mind the fact that ethnography is, from beginning to end, enmeshed in writing. This writing includes, minimally, a translation of experience into textual form" (25).

archive, even if the voices of the performers are suppressed, their performances dissolve extant boundaries even further.

Kristen Hastrup notes that "fieldwork has to be transformed into text. The practice of anthropology implies a writing of ethnography from a particular standpoint of knowing and interpreting—in time" (16).[21] Hastrup goes on to acknowledge anthropology's generic limitations: "It is not for anthropology, however, to recast biographies and social histories in full, or for that matter to retell local stories. That is far more convincingly done by those who live them. The hallmark of anthropology is to experience the force of detail in practical life and to recast it in a theoretical mode that transcends it. Life has to be recreated in a separate language in order to be comprehended" (21, 22). Hastrup gives credence to foreigners retelling local stories by her mention of the passage of time in a community by non-natives who inhabit such spaces and participate fully in their communal events. Edwards' passage works as an anthropological text *because* he refracts his observations of Trinidad's carnival, at least partly through his English sensibilities, with the result being a text written by an Englishman for Englishmen. Edwards' observations are limited because he is a foreigner who has not spent sufficient time among the natives. What further limits Edwards' passage as a pure anthropological document is that not only is he not native to the island, but he is not overly familiar with the festival. His passage may still be read as an ethnographer's report, but a distanced one because of the lack of the length of time he has spent in the society.

[21] See Kristen Hastrup, *A Passage to Anthropology: Between Experience and Theory* (1995). James Clifford argues similarly in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (1988) that "…[o]ne must bear in mind the fact that ethnography is, from beginning to end, enmeshed in writing. This writing includes, minimally, a translation of experience into textual form" (25).

Part of what limits the foreign perspective further, as seen thus far in Edwards' and Zamora's accounts, is not just their not "[experiencing] the force of detail in practical life" over time, as Hastrup encourages but, as a result, in not leaving space in their written translations for more expansive interpretations. Once they have committed their observations to paper, Edwards' and Zamora's interpretations shift from a one-dimensional participant/observer methodology to necessarily include what Wolfgang Iser describes as *reading*, whereby interpretation, or "the reader's transformation of signals sent out by the text," becomes important in the text's purpose (3). At this point, the relationship is no longer solely between the writer and the event, as participant/observer, but between the *reader* and the text as well. The author's perspective continues to bear weight but the reader also now plays a role. As Iser notes, "the reader finds that he is dealing not only with the characteristics in the novel but also with an author who interposes himself as a mediator between the story and the reader" (19). James, in eventually using "our," for example, allows for such a possibility because he does not position himself, as author of the text, as its sole arbiter—he allows the natives to participate by his rhetorical participation with them. Edwards, in his well-meaning but narrow-minded text, does not, and Zamora, in his vitriolic diatribe, refuses. If they had, then their texts, like James', would allow for Iser's claim for greater indeterminacy and greater interpretive possibilities: "Instead of offering the reader a single and consistent perspective, through which he is supposed to look on the events narrated, the author provides him with a bundle of multiple viewpoints, the center of which is continuously shifted. These comments thus open a certain free play for evaluation, and permit new gaps to arise in the text. They now no longer live in the recounted narrative, but between

the narrative and the various ways of judging it. They can only be removed, then, while or when judgment is passed on the existing process already described" (19, 20). Iser's words, particularly his image of multiple viewpoints, offer a bridge between Hastrup's "force of living" and the interpretation of the transcribed observations from such living.

In the accounts I have given, I propose that the missing native voices in Edwards' text, and the "seen but not heard" "negro" voices in Zamora's, offer a fuller understanding of the translated textual experiences and, as a result, a fuller understanding by the reader of the events. According to Iser, "the indeterminate elements of literary prose—represents the most important link between texts and reader. It is the switch that activates the reader in using his own ideas in order to fulfill the intention of the text" (43). Utilizing Iser's concepts, a reader may view the ignored voice of the native in Edwards' passage as necessary in fulfilling the text's intention, particularly the ex-slaves who are forbidden from participation and are rendered essentially invisible. In using Iser's ideas to interpret Zamora's passage, the "negroes" do not just want money; they clamor for egalitarian interaction—they desire Zamora's participation, not his charity. It is the natives in both texts, either via their invisibility or through their firmly carved-out roles, who become the indeterminate elements when the events are translated into texts.

I do not see Iser's concept of reading as being limited to written texts, but as a method that may be directed toward various forms of interpretation, including films, novels, and songs. In such novels, it is the narrator's various choices that decide the indeterminate elements. In films, it is the director's choice of shots, narrative, and editing that do so. In calypso, the indigenous form of music that developed with Trinidad's post-

emancipation carnival, it is the pithy combination of music, lyrics, and performance that allows for the transformation and interpretation of the text's signals.

Manipulating the Jump-up—Methodology

In 1972, there was a polio epidemic in Trinidad that forced the cancellation of that year's carnival celebrations which were to take place on the Monday and Tuesday preceding Ash Wednesday on February 16. Because of pressure from various sectors, including the population at large and financiers and bandleaders who had invested much money in the celebration, the government made an exception and allowed carnival to take place in May after the Easter holiday on April 2. [22] Ironically, inclement weather disrupted the festival, and although this deterred some masqueraders, it did not cancel the festivities.

Lord Kitchener (Aldwyn Roberts 1922-2000), one of Trinidad's most prominent calypsonians, who had won the road march on ten different occasions, sang about the incident in a calypso called "Rain-o-Rama." The composition was so popular that it won the road march in the carnival of 1973.[23] In the first verse, Kitchener lays out the general populace's unease with carnival's possible cancellation:

> Well they moan,
> And they fuss,
> And they say we want we fête,
> And they 'buse,
> And they cuss,
> And they say this is a threat,
> Yes they damn and they blast,

[22] It would be a fair estimation that Trinidad's very parochial population would not have stood for carnival taking place before Easter during the traditional period of fasting.
[23] The road march is the most popular song of Trinidad's carnival season, and the one played by the most number of bands on the streets when they cross the judges' stages.

And they say we hope it ain't true,
They wouldn' dare to cancel we jump-up, 1972.

Kitchener's lyrics tread the same rhetorical ground as James' passage—he distances himself from the people with the use of the third person plural "they," but his use of the first person plural, "we," salvages him from complete separation. As a musician, Kitchener is different from the rest of the revelers, but he is not separate from them. This first verse not only lays out the concerns of the population but, in referring to carnival with the colloquial "jump-up"—which, I suggest, C.L.R. James implicitly does in his passage—and stamping the date as 1972, Kitchener also creates a time capsule. The calypsonian, who had a tremendous stutter when he spoke, was able to marshal the feelings of an entire populace when he sang. Kitchener also named his property, which sits on a hill in a working class neighborhood in Trinidad, after the calypso. As a calypsonian, and a *popular* calyspsonian, Kitchener was both a voice of the people and a historiographer—in the last verse he addresses the power brokers of the country and the possibility that they had enough wherewithal to cancel carnival: "One or two big-shots say / That it is impertinent / To suggest they should play carnival after they Lent / Well the crowd start to bawl / They ain't know what they talkin' 'bout / Why the so-and-so hypocrites don't shut up dey mouth?" Kitchener slyly works his verbal ability to his advantage. This is the last verse of the song, and, by bringing in the "big-shots," whose authority has been subverted by carnival's non-cancellation, Kitchener, like carnival, gets the last word. He noticeably does not use "we" to associate himself with the carnival masqueraders as he had done earlier, but the suggestion is there—both as a calypsonian, and as a part of the people, he rebuffs authority. It seems that both C.L.R. James and Kitchener, who are ambassadors of Trinidad's carnival and its population have, as

Hastrup writes, "seriously investigated the lived-in space." They inhabit carnival's experiential space, what Hastrup terms a "world" that, she notes, is "not solely an ideational space, but one that is made up of people and actions" (17). They are able to move seamlessly between observation and performance with the result that there are greater interpretive possibilities in their words.

Is Kitchener's work, then, more or less of an anthropological text than Edwards' letter? Kitchener is a mythmaker who, although he embodies the motives of the population, is also an artist, and art, as Clifford argues, is firmly allied with culture: "Culture, even without a capital *c*, strains toward aesthetic form and autonomy" (232). Kitchener's lyrics, melody, and arrangement embody Trinidad's small *c* culture, whereby "this culture with a small *c* orders phenomena in ways that privilege the coherent, balanced, and 'authentic' aspects of shared life" (232, emphasis original). Kitchener's capturing of the crowd's emotions in a calypso during a season when "carnival was to be canceled" achieves an authenticity that Edwards' letter cannot approach. This is part of my argument: that creative works that focus on performance, particularly written works, are able to occupy the written goal of anthropology, and by investigating a culture's lived space, and thus translating a living culture onto the page, they also achieve the same experiential "lived-in" quality that an anthropologist does before committing his experiences to paper. It is an effect that is easier to achieve by someone who participates in the community and allows for the natives' contribution because it allows for indeterminacy. The indeterminacy that comes with written accounts, and with performances as well, plays an integral role in my interpretations of both written texts and lived performances. As Iser argues, the texts, and, for my purposes, performances as

well, provide a "bundle of viewpoints" that create gaps that, when complicated by additional voices or viewpoints, even if they were quoted viewpoints of the natives, allow the "free play of evaluation."

In this dissertation, I investigate the gaps that texts and performances create.[24] I plumb the intersection of written and performed history, anthropology and myth, in order to understand carnival as a Caribbean cultural event. While novels that inhabit lived-in spaces will be my main source of study, I also consider other aspects of performance in carnival, such as plays, films and the song lyrics associated with the festival. I examine works that were produced in and span the late 1950s and 1960s, the period of independence for many Anglo-Caribbean countries. My study, however, is not limited by language. Where necessary, comparisons between Hispanophone and Francophone islands will be included, especially if they participate in carnivalized behavior in plantation environments in the nineteenth century. The result is a seeming hodgepodge of eras and settings—the texts occupy various periods of time, from the plantations of the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, to the slums of postcolonial twentieth century. I hope for carnivalized performances to anchor and justify these seemingly wayward choices. The works I use highlight performances and how these performances act as living embodiments of culture. Through examination and analysis of carnival, texts that feature carnival and carnival performances I will show how these various modes of expression pinpoint the Caribbean populations' perception of culture through performance.

[24] Without intending to sound capricious, performance itself is an indeterminate concept and means different things in different disciplines. For the moment, Marvin Carlson's definition of performance as a subset of behavior that assumes a responsibility to an audience, works well.

By now, readers will discern that figures of slaves play a major role in my dissertation. They will continue to do so. This is because they embody indeterminacy through their marginalization and their virtual invisibility in European accounts of carnival. The second major reason for their prominence is that because of their marginalized status, their peripheral, occupied spaces serve as "lived-in" yet invisible spaces that add another layer of indeterminacy.

This idea of a living or "lived-in" culture to which I subscribe is based partly on Hastrup's work but also comes from Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope as a "time-space" where neither time nor space takes particular precedence. It is a fictional space where stories occur.[25] For carnival in the Caribbean, this time-space tends to be the streets. Hence, when Kitchener, in his chorus for "Rain-O-Rama," sings about the relationship of the masqueraders to their carnival, the streets play a major role:

> Mama, when they hear they go get dey carnival,
> All masqueraders on heed,
> Well they didn't care if it was official,
> But they start turning beast on the street,
> And they start to jump around,
> And they start to tumble down,
> And they fall down on the ground,
> If you see how they play,
> But what was so comical,
> In the midst of bacchanal,
> Rain fall and wash out 'mas in May.

Kitchener captures the ideal of transformation associated with carnival when he notes that the performers transformed into "beast[s] on the street," and this image, juxtaposed with his proclamation of "if you see how they play," links back to carnival's close association

[25] Bakhtin writes, "[i]n the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (84).

with Catholicism and the ability to transform. According to Emile Benveniste, there is a "deep-seated relationship" between religion and play: "The sacred presupposes a reality, that of the divine; through ritual, the faithful are introduced to a separate world, more real than the true world. Play, on the contrary, can be unhesitatingly distinguished from the real. The sacred may be seen as pertaining to the surreal, play to the extra-real. In addition, the sacred operation has a practical end….Play in itself has no practical goal; its essence lies in its very gratuitousness" (quoted in Ehrmann 34).[26]

Kitchener reveals in practice what Benveniste annotates in theory: Trinidad's Catholic-inflected carnival pushes past the boundaries of Catholic transubstantiation, perhaps with the result of creating a monster—"Mama, when they hear they go get dey carnival…they start turning beast on the street." In transforming the sacred into the profane, there seems to be a religious possession that takes place, whereby the performers, possessed by spirits, unconsciously "play" certain roles: "And they start to jump around, / And they start to tumble down, / And they fall down on the ground, / If you see how they play." In the end, however, it is a pursuit of play that reigns, and the seriousness of the religious side of the transformation does not survive the change—carnival remains a comedy rather than a tragedy, and even the elements of nature, namely rain, cannot wash away the highly stylized (d)'rama.[27]

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[26] Benveniste continues: "In short we have the elements of a structural definition of play. It originates in the sacred, of which it offers an inverted and broken image. If the sacred can be defined by the consubstantial unity of myth and rite, we can say that there is play when only half of the sacred operation is carried out—when the myth alone is translated into words, or the rite alone into acts. We are thus outside the divine and human sphere of the efficient" (quoted in Ehrmann 35, 36).

[27] There is a common saying in Trinidad where, when one encounters some type of hardship and he laughs, he explains it away by saying, "If you don't laugh you will cry."

Finally, all of the examples I have chosen for this chapter underscore the striking potential for transformation that carnival provides and also includes slaves' appropriation of an original European-influenced performance to create their own version of carnival, one that allows both observation and performance, and one that wants to substitute play for work. The Caribbean version of carnival, one that upends the European folk version that Bakhtin elucidates in *Rabelais and his World* (1941), articulates resistance to form its own cultural representation. I choose to read this ability to transform across the Caribbean, regardless of language restrictions, as the formulation of a new Caribbean performance, a connection that Rob Canfield suggests when he calls Trinidad's carnival "the first truly West Indian theater" (295). This theater is now replicated in the streets each year in various parts of the Caribbean, including Trinidad and Cuba, as part of the annual carnival festivities.

While I do not read this carnival-*cum*-theater strictly as an annual ritual of phoenix-like death and rebirth, there is an inherent convertibility attached to it, one that remains even after a century of evolution and one that imbues all aspects of Caribbean literature, including plays. Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert argues that Caribbean carnivals, while sharing "many similarities to the European carnival, is not a European-inspired nature festival, but rather a celebration rooted in the experience of slavery and the commemoration of emancipation" (216). Paravisini-Gebert is perhaps too eager to reduce the influence of the Europeans and to establish origins for a region whose culture is based on accretion rather than individuation. While the current instantiation of Trinidad carnival has elements of *cannes brûlées*—where slaves with torches were marshaled to extinguish the accidental fires in the sugar cane fields—it is myopic to discount the costuming that is

now a staple of carnival which derived from the French masqueraders. Caribbean carnivals may not make a claim for a single source of origination; they cannot. In assembling elements from various ethnicities and heritages, carnival creates a new culture for the New World.

History and Caribbean Carnival—from Trinidad to Cuba

At this point, I would like to look more closely at both Cuba and Trinidad's history as a means to provide context for Caribbean carnival. I use both Trinidad and Cuba as my sources as a means to bracket the Caribbean geographically and linguistically. While I do not argue that either Hispanophone Cuba or Anglophone Trinidad represent in toto the islands that lie between them, both islands have European-inflected colonial histories that many islands in the Caribbean share.[28]

[28] Between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries, the majority of the Caribbean islands were either owned or operated by the Spanish, French or British and were used to cultivate either cocoa, sugar, tobacco, cotton, or a combination thereof. Both Trinidad and Cuba were Spanish "owned" for over three hundred years beginning in the late fifteenth century. My comparison of Cuba and Trinidad is further based upon their almost simultaneous shift toward plantation sugar cultivation in the nineteenth century in which most of the rest of the Caribbean already indulged. While neither Cuba nor Trinidad was originally a plantation system under the Spaniards, each eventually became so because of the fertility of their soils compared to other islands' overworked land (such as Barbados' and St. Kitts'). As Williams notes: "Cuba in 1789, like Trinidad in 1789, was relatively less developed economically, the large plantation was the exception rather than the rule…[w]hen Cuba in 1860 became a typical plantation colony, like the Saint Domingue or Jamaica of 1789…Cuba became as much a hell on earth as Saint Domingue had ever been…" (45). When Trinidad courted provisional emancipation in 1833, part of the problem, as the slaves saw it, was that "[i]f Trinidad was to be settled and developed, it was to be done on the basis of the plantation and not of the small farmer" (97). Williams acknowledges just how widespread the sugar plantation system was in the Caribbean in the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries in European-held Caribbean territories—the

Originally claimed for Spain by Columbus in 1498, Trinidad was inhabited by native Amerindians who slowly died out when enslaved to work the Europeans' sugar plantations.[29] African slaves were brought in by the Spaniards as an alternate labor force, disputably in the mid-fifteenth century. Most of the slaves were from West African tribes including "Igbos, Mandingoes, Yorubas, Asantes, Hausas, and Alladas from West Africa and Kongos from the Congo Basin" (Riggio 39). With the island still underutilized in 1776, the Spaniards issued the *Cédula de Población* to encourage European and free colored migration from nearby islands as long as the Catholic settlers swore an oath of allegiance to the Spanish crown.[30] Catholic planters were given land according to the number of persons in their households, including the enslaved—white planters received approximately 30 acres each, with half as many for each laborer; African and free coloured planters were given roughly 15 acres each, again with half as many for each laborer (Riggio 39).

Cuban slave code of 1789, for instance "was superior or less harsh than the slave code in Saint Domingue or in Jamaica or in Barbados, it was because Saint Domingue, Jamaica and Barbados were plantation colonies producing enormous quantities of sugar for the world market" (45).

[29] See Williams, *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* (1963), 10.

[30] See Williams, *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* (1963), particularly chapter 5, "Spain Reigns but France Governs," where he lists the terms of the cedula, including those that related to slaves, such as number 6: "No head tax or personal tribute would be imposed upon the settlers at any time, except that after ten years they would each pay an annual sumof $1.00 for each Negro or coloured slave with the guarantee that this sum would never be augmented;" number 12: "The settlers would be permitted, under Government license, to go to the West Indian islands in alliance with Spain, or to neutral islands, to procure slaves, on the understanding that only Spanish ships would be used;" and number 18: "The settlers were permitted to propose to the King, through the Governor, such Ordinances as were necessary for regulating the treatment of their slaves and preventing their flight" (41, 42).

Hill singles out Frenchman Phillipe-Rose Roume de Saint Laurent, living on the island of Grenada at the time, as an impetus for both French migration, and the Spanish dictum that encouraged it. Saint Laurent, impressed with the versatility of the soil and the agricultural possibilities of Trinidad, which, according to Hill "once had a brief flourish in tobacco-growing in the seventeenth century," visited neighboring islands "to encourage French migration" (6, 7). Saint Laurent also traveled to Madrid and persuaded the king to offer a second cedula in 1783 which produced similar land grants to the first. By the time the British took control of the island fourteen years later, "these planters with black slave labor had transformed some 85, 000 acres of virgin land into a flourishing agricultural industry producing sugar, coffee, cotton, and tobacco" (7).

The British, who non-violently wrested control of the island away from Spain in 1797, [31] were worried by the still increasing French presence: such an occupancy proportionately increased the prospect of voting the British out of power. The result was a British-instituted "Crown Colony system of government" that cemented British rule—rather than have a Governor on the island, political decrees came directly from Britain. During British rule between 1797 and 1834, the annual carnivals held by society members in the form of masked balls were established as a festival for whites and free coloreds. Hill notes that the masqueraders, who at this time moved from house to house,

[31] Williams catalogues the handing over of Trinidad to Britain by the Spaish. In 1797, José María Chacón, Spain's governor to Trinidad, realizing that his military contingent was lesser than the advancing British Commander Sir Ralph Abercromby's naval forces and sensing unavoidable defeat, along with his comrade Admiral Don Sebastián Ruiz de Apodaca, set fire to the ships of the Spanish naval base in Chaguaramas without a fight. Chacon and Apodaca were tried before a Council of War in Cádiz, and although their actions were deemed fully justified, the king was furious. He critized the decision of the Council as "contrary to justice and to the public interest" and both were subject to "perpetual banishment from all Royal Dominions" (49, 50).

dressed in various costumes including those of priests, Swiss damsels, and grooms, as well as mulatresses and as field slaves (*negue jardins*). Still, the French's presence, particularly with regard to *their* masquerade balls, which they held separately from the British, had a greater impact in developing the island's culture—the earliest form of carnival as a street festival is believed to have been instituted by the French around 1783.

The French balls, which were primarily private affairs that slaves attended, but in which they did not participate were, upon emancipation, adopted by African Creole slaves, who merged them with their *cannes brûlées* (canboulay) performances.[32] The emancipated slaves conducted their masking, like the French at the time, on the streets, and as the *cannes brûlées* element suggests, they costumed themselves as the slaves they once were as a form of remembrance of their enslavement.[33] Upon emancipation,

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[32] Carnival in Trinidad is necessarily tied to sugar production—Canboulay, the ceremony that celebrates the burning of the sugar cane at the end of the cane season, epitomizes the close ties of carnival to slavery. As J.D. Elder notes, "[c]anboulay is basically a ceremony symbolizing cane burning that Africans of Trinidad devised to celebrate their 'freedom from slavery' in 1838" (49). Milla Cozart Riggio explains that canboulay both "re-enacts the extinguishing of illegal cane fires by 'bands' of slaves with torches and drums in the night" and also represents a celebratory "form of emancipation celebration transferred at some point from August 1 to the two days before Ash Wednesday" (42). The celebration may not be divorced from its earlier practical application—cane is still burned today as part of the harvest ritual. Recorded only from 1881, when the British tried to eradicate it using police force, Elder defines canboulay in four prominent details: first, as a Black resistance ceremony; second, as a recreational pageantry of Africans; third, as an anti-Catholic celebration of freedom from slavery and the origin of the present carnival; and fourth, as a popular street theater exhibiting African-style dance, theater, and music. It can also be regarded as a boast—nonmoralistic exhibitionism—a duel between the European moral codes and the African canons of freedom which, in essence it was (49).

[33] Joseph Roach, in *Cities of the Dead. Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996), argues that surrogation is essential to understanding performance, especially in understanding "how circum-Atlantic societies, confronted with revolutionary circumstances for which few precedents existed, have invented themselves by performing their pasts in the presence of others" (5). The freed slaves re-performing their work as slaves within the parameters of play seem to substantiate Roach's claim.

Trinidad's population attained a distinctive cosmopolitan tinge: indentured South-East Asians—including, but not limited to the Indians of Fraser's note to the governor—arrived to replace free Africans who no longer wanted to work the fields.[34] According to Hill, "new shiploads of Chinese arrived; Portuguese from Fayal and Madeira came; free Negroes from the United States and…from the African coast swelled the ranks of an already preponderant black class" (9). Hill points out the impact both the French and the increased immigration had in carnival participation: "if conditions in Trinidad were unsuited to carnival revels before the influx of French-speaking settlers, the situation was now reversed. The new immigrants quickly established a fairly comfortable standard of living, maintained commodious country houses, and entertained themselves in varied divertissements, which were especially concentrated in the carnival season…from Christmas to Ash Wednesday" (7, 8). Trinidad's carnival continues to this day, with its season still stretching from Christmas to Ash Wednesday, and the main festival occupying the Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday on the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar.

Plantation Agriculture and Cuban Slavery

Cuba's historical relationship to carnival was similarly European-influenced and just as segregated as Trinidad's was historically. Claimed for Spain by Columbus in 1492, the first Spanish settlement was founded in Cuba in 1511. As with Trinidad, the native population, in this case the Taíno and Ciboney, were enslaved and were

[34] The first Chinese indentured workers immigrated to Trinidad occurred in 1806.

exterminated by infectious diseases. African slaves were brought to the island in 1762, and slavery was abolished in 1880.

While not a mirror image of other contemporary islands in the Caribbean, Cuba is analogous to them in terms of their economics: plantation slavery was similar for many islands particularly in relation to slavery and sugar production.[35] In this way, Trinidad and Cuba's histories are nearly identical, from their importation of African slaves by Spaniards to their move to full-fledged plantation societies, to the shift to Asian indentured laborers, to the influence of African religions on their originally European carnival celebrations. What finally separated them were the eventual British intervention in Trinidad and the shift in laws that accompanied that transition as compared to the uninterrupted Spanish rule in Cuba.

Europeans transported Africans to Cuba for several years, particularly between 1750 and the mid-1860s. They were brought primarily for the cultivation of sugar as well as tobacco and coffee. [36] Since sugar production required a large number of unskilled laborers, Africa, as Franklin W. Knight contends, was unchallenged "in supplying men who could be made slaves at that time," was the main source of labor. Between 1840 and 1860, the vast majority of slaves "ended up working on the plantations of the interior" (60). This geographical factor effected the shift of Cuba toward a plantation society. The

[35] Franklin W. Knight notes that "[s]ugar and slavery had a markedly similar development and course from Barbados in the sixteenth century, through Jamaica and St. Domingue in the seventeenth century, and ended up being not very different in Cuba and Brazil in the nineteenth century" (84).

[36] See Philip A. Howard. Vera Kutzinski notes that "[s]lave imports reached staggering proportions [in the nineteenth century], despite Spain's 1817 treaty with Britain to ban the transatlantic slave trade by 1820. Between 1821 and 1860 more than 350, 000 *bozales*, African slaves who had not been 'seasoned' elsewhere, were illegally shipped to Cuba, frequently with U.S. assistance" (*Sugar Secrets* 18, emphasis original).

planting season typically ran from September to December, and by the late 1860s, Knight notes that "nearly 50 per cent of all slaves in Cuba worked directly on the sugar estates, while a substantial proportion of the remainder were in some way involved in the sugar industry" (4). By the mid-nineteenth century, "the most important planters aimed at an annual production of between 5,000 and 6,000 boxes of sugar, or a little more than 1,000 tons" (68). The need for maximum output and efficiency on the plantations led not just to poor conditions for the slaves in terms of their living quarters and clothing, but ill-treatment as well. Because slaves were meant to work up to twenty hours per day, overseers believed the whip kept them both conscious and focused. The slave code of 1842, one of four major legislatures that was handed down by the Spanish Cortes in Cuba, and which was preceded by those of 1785, 1789 and succeeded by that of 1866, expressly discussed the treatment of slaves. The code of 1842, for example, sanctioned corporal punishment as a disciplinary tactic, including the use of "flogging, stocks, shackles, chains, and imprisonment" (76).

Knight locates Britain as having a direct influence on the Cuban slave trade. Their national and professional jealousy toward the Spaniards' cornering of the successful sugar market encouraged the British to exhort the Spaniards to declare slavery illegal. The British unsuccessfully lobbied the Spanish to determine the slave trade an act of piracy; slavery was too profitable for the Spaniards to discount it. Although the British naval forces intercepted slave ships off the African coast, Cuban ships still risked being caught by flying foreign flags as disguises, including the U.S. and Brazilian flags. Regional pressures eventually undermined the industry of human labor. The "single most effective measure which destroyed the Cuban slave trade," Knight argues, "was the

abolition of slavery in the United States and the withdrawal of the Americans from the slave trade after the Anglo-American treaty of 1862" (56).[37]

Finally backed into a corner by the U.S.'s dismissal of slavery, Spain and Cuba turned to Asian laborers and indentured servitude. On July 9, 1866, the Spanish Cortes passed the new "law for the suppression and punishment of the slave trade" (57). This law looked unfavorably upon the trade and levied stiff fines and imprisonment for offenders. The death penalty was enforced on those who resisted arrest, as well as on those whose cruelty resulted in the death of slaves. The result was a steep decrease in newly-imported slaves. The law of 1866, however, did not affect the slave trade *in toto*. The planters were interested only in cheap labor and not necessarily *slave* labor. Indentured Asian servitude worked just as well. Knight points out that, after 1861, "the importation of Asian coolies began to remedy the labor shortage; Africans at last became dispensable" (58).

The *Cabildo*

Some of Cuba's African slaves, even before manumission, organized groups that aided their political and social statuses in colonial Cuba. These mutual aid societies, known as *cabildos de naciones de afrocubanos*, came into existence as early as the

[37] Knight adds that "Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, removed the strongest psychological defense for Cuban slavery" (56) because it left them and Brazil as the only two nations that still condoned the slave trade.

sixteenth century.[38] They were voluntary and, as Philip Howard notes, also helped to "mitigate the psychological and cultural shock of transplantation from the familiar context of traditional African societies to the uncertainties of life in the Americas as slave laborers" (xii). They also promoted and maintained African language and heritage and influenced education. Howard argues that, because of the activities "of the Afro-Cuban mutual aid societies, all forms of transportation, public places, and schools were opened to blacks" (xv). Between 1830 and 1834, however, many cabildos were involved in insurgencies against the government, and authorities considered abolishing them. Eventually, the government declared "racial prejudice and acts of discrimination illegal in Cuba" and allowed their continued existence.[39] Howard adds that "[t]hese organizations progressively became politically active, and after the first war for independence (1868-1878), their political efforts became radical in nature. When their unconventional activities failed to obtain the results they desired in the context of the social, political, and

[38] I understand the Afro-Cuban term *cabildo* to translate loosely as a religiously-inflected neighborhood fellowship that historically consisted of African descendants who provided various community services, including acting as police when necessary, and having some political influence. David H. Brown adds that "[g]rouped by putative African ethnic identity (*nación*), Africans and their descendants gathered in mutual aid/religious societies called cabildos beginning as early in the sixteenth century in Cuba" (54). He adds that the oldest known cabildo, the Cabildo Arará Magino, existed since 1691.

[39] David H. Brown delineates the benefit to the Cuban government in allowing the formation, and continued existence, of these groups: "[i]n the minds of the Cuban colonial government authorities, grouping the slave population into separate *cabildos* represented a 'divide and conquer strategy…which had cultural, as well as political, dimensions. As a hegemonic cultural strategy, the gradual, projected Hispanicization and Catholicization of *cabildo* members would serve the purposes of long term social control. As early as 1755, the Church in Havana instituted devotions of Catholic saints in numerous *cabildos*" (54, 55, emphases original). Brown adds that the cessation of the slave trade (1865-1870), and emancipation (1880) changed the ethnic make-up and functions of the cabildos (56).

economic changes taking place on the island, the Pan-Afro-Cuban mutual aid societies generated political action that was increasingly reformist" (xv). [40]

Cabildos attracted free slaves and blacks and, according to Judith Bettelheim, "posed an ongoing threat to official stability": this threat again lessened governmental support. On December 19, 1884, by official decree, both public processions of *cabildos* and Día de Reyes celebrations, which officially lasted from 1823-1884, were prohibited in Havana (143). While restricted in their public roles, however, the *cabildos* continued to demonstrate subtle, and not so subtle, political influence. During the War of 1898-1902 the Cabildo Carabalí Isuama, by way of drums, transmitted warnings and surreptitiously provided insurgents with medicine and weapons.

Howard notes that, by the middle of the 1850s, an evolved version of the Afro-Cuban mutual aid society, called *sociedades de color*, "[b]ased loosely on the cabildo associations," appeared. These evolved *cabildos* now had an interesting relationship with the slave code that Spain had developed during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. These new *sociedades de color* did not limit participation to language or ethnicity, and

[40] Around the turn of the century, however, the escalation or influence of Afro-Cuban political groups required closer government inspection, and Vera Kutzinski notes that "[a]mong such enclaves were the secret religious organization of the ñañigos (banned by the government of José Gómez in 1903), the Comité de veteranos de la raza de color formed in 1902, and the so-called Negro Protest Movement that had been active particularly in Cuba's eastern provinces since the early 1900s and led to the founding of the Partido Independiente de Color (PIC) in response to the 1908 elections (*Against the American Grain* 5)." Judith Bettelheim notes various incidents of cabildos serving as epicenters of uprisings, such as the 1812 Aponte Conspiracy and, the uprising in Havana in 1835 led by Juan Prieto, foreman of the Cabildo Lucumí, a cabildo associated with the Yoruban kingdom of Oyo.

Howard notes that the majority of these members were "second- and third-generation Afro-Cubans who were free members of the island's urban working class" (xiv, xv). The slave codes mentioned earlier both indirectly and directly affected the *cabildos* and the slaves in general.

The 1785 and 1789 codes are considered the most important. The 1785 code, the *Código negro carolino*, "emphasized the right of the slaves to religious instruction and mandated that they participated in the life of the Catholic Church" (3). While the code also prohibited African dances and music during Christian funerals, as well as assemblies without permission, because of the possibility of insurrection, it also encouraged slaveowners "to give their slaves a *conuco*, or provisional ground" (3, 4). This is an integral difference between Trinidad and Cuba's histories. As noted earlier, the British were adamant not to relinquish land to the African slaves. The Spanish codes were not as restrictive. [41]

1789 brought a decree of free trade in slaves, and that year's code, the *Código negro español,* again mandated that slaves receive religious instruction and convert to Catholicism, since, as Howard notes, there was a concern "about a slave revolt breaking out in Saint Domingue at this time" (4). Howard adds that "the code ordered masters and slaves to observe religious holidays by not working on those days except during the harvest season" (4).[42] The authorities implemented structures to ensure obedience toward the code, including fines or loss of slaves. Still, the rebellion at Saint Domingue hovered

[41] Howard notes that "the objectives of the codes included the intention to establish or encourage plantation agriculture, to increase the number of African slaves working in agriculture, and to construct and reinforce a caste system" (3).

[42] This becomes important later in the chapter in my understanding of the film *La Última Cena* where a slaveowner reneges on a promise to allow his slaves a day off on Good Friday.

as a threat to the established way of life, and although the 1789 code, called the *Código negro español*, "was considered urgent in order to prevent slave flight and insurrection…it was never applied in Cuba" (4). The perceived potential to see Saint Domingue as a blueprint for freedom was too large. Spain did not draft a new code until 1842. This code contained over two hundred and sixty articles including the rights of slaves.

Cuban Carnival

Although it is believed that the original carnival in Cuba was imported by Spaniards in the mid-sixteenth century and was a pre-Lenten festival in the vein of Trinidad's celebration, Bettelheim notes that the contemporary *Carnaval* of Santiago de Cuba evolved from the *mamarrachos* held on various saints' days at the end of June. The *mamarrachos*, or masqueraders, who are "grotesque, comic figure[s]…[who] participate in Summer carnival" and perform on the streets, usually congregate in groups termed *comparsas* which are "a group of carnival masqueraders wearing costumes…[and may also include a] gathering of masqueraders accompanied by a drum major and musicians playing *tumbas, bongó, tantán, maracas,* etc." (125, 186). The *mamarrachos* are believed to have been in existence since 1757 and have historically troubled authorities because of their licentiousness. Bettelheim notes that the *congas*, a carnival group with African-descended members, offended the authorities to the extent that, in June 1919, "the main newspaper in Santiago printed an announcement, known as the Edict of Mayor Camacho Padro, prohibiting '*comparsas carabalís* with African style dancing and drumming' from

appearing in Carnival" (104). The public argued and campaigned for an overturning of the ban and the edict was eventually rescinded.

Carnival is also seen in another historic Cuban festival, the Día de Reyes celebrations, which came about during the 1823-1832 rule of Captain General de la Isla de Cuba, Dionisio Vives (*Cuban Festivals: An Illustrated Anthology* 146). Mid-nineteenth-century Día de Reyes celebrations featured elaborate costumes of the black participants, and each group was led by a lone black masquerader "dressed either as a '*tambor mayor*' [a drum major] or in military fashion" (142, emphases original). Each group also elected a king and queen, who were descended from the "royal lineage" of the cabildos. Until the 1920s, there were two types of carnival in Santiago de Cuba. The first was determined by the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar. In this instance, carnival was held just before Lent, which usually fell in February or March. In Santiago de Cuba, this festival was called Winter Carnival; it was private and sponsored by private organizations and clubs. Interestingly, Winter Carnival was nicknamed carnival for the " 'blancos Cubanos,' meaning Cubans with more Spanish than African heritage" (*Cuban Festivals: An Illustrated Anthology* 146).

The second version of the carnival, the Summer carnival, originated during the slave period. Bettelheim notes that it was "[h]eld after the sugar and coffee harvest [and] originally was intended as a period of rest and divertissement for the laborers (the Blacks) and was eventually nicknamed 'Carnaval de las clases bajas' (or Carnival of the lower classes) or the Carnival of the mamacharros, which also coincided with the celebration of Saint Santiago (St. James) day on July 25" (147). The 1920s saw the abandonment of the Winter Carnival, leaving only the Summer festival. The Summer carnival had its own

sponsors, usually alcohol and tobacco companies. Bettelheim notes that "[m]any of the participants in Summer Carnival were the newly employed sugar and coffee workers, who were quite willing to remain in Santiago de Cuba after the harvest and work for these commercial patrons in the jobs that the festival season created. This combination of the unemployed and the commercial sponsor contributed to the popularity of July Carnival" (*Cuban Festivals: An Illustrated Anthology* 147). This segregation in carnival is unique to Cuba in comparison to Trinidad's festival. While blacks were forbidden to participate in the European carnival in Trinidad, there is no record that, when they were allowed to participate, they held an explicitly separate parade. This is part of the rights that *cabildos* effected in Cuba, and Bettelheim goes so far to say that "[t]he institutional foundation of Carnival today is rooted in urban history, in cabildo history" (*Cuban Festivals: An Illustrated Anthology* 141).

According to Bettelheim, there are three types of carnival groups, all derived from the *cabildo*. The conga, the most traditional, is made up of "a small group of musicians playing a special conga rhythm on drums and metal percussion instruments." While they consist of costumed performers, their routines are not choreographed. The comparsa is the second type and consists of musicians who perform popular Cuban tunes. Santiago comparsas are known for their male performers who wear detailed capes and hats and dance in lines while forming figure-eight patterns. The most recently-formed group, the paseo, is more elaborate than the comparsa and has a greater variety of costuming and routines. The paseo is known for introducing greater participation to a traditionally male-dominated event (142).

The express relationship to violence and carnival, often by way of politics, and as seen in the sometimes contentious relationship between the *cabildos* and government, is an important feature of trans-Caribbean carnivals. The historical canboulay riots in Trinidad, annotated earlier, come to mind. Bettelheim notes that the Carabalí Isuama, for example, was both "a public *cabildo* that danced and marched during street festivals," and was also "a private *cabildo* that supported the *mambises* against the Spanish in the Wars of Independence (1868-1895)" (*Cuban Festivals: An Illustrated Anthology* 143).

The mid-twentieth century saw the merging of many *cabildos* and their evolution into *comparsas*. These *comparsas*, especially those that participated in street dancing, were limited to their neighborhoods of origin and were sometimes altogether banned. Increased tourism in the 1930s and 1940s saw the reduction of restrictions. Still, there was a tinge of racial bias toward the *comparsas* and *cabildos*, and Bettelheim notes that newspaper accounts were, at times, pejorative and sensationalistic in their coverage, and likened the groups to cults (*Cuban Festivals: An Illustrated Anthology* 145, 146). In contemporary Havana, as well as in Matanzas and Santiago de Cuba, "Carnival is celebrated from the 18th to the 27th of July, in honor of the Revolution, with the final complete Carnival parade held on the 26th. This date commemorates Castro's assault on the Moncada barracks in Santiago de Cuba, on July 26, 1953, which was specifically planned to coincide with traditional Carnival in that city" (*Anthology* 146).

In the 1980s and 1990s, Cuban carnival continued to evolve. With a growing number of tourists flocking to Cuba for their carnival each year, the fear was that performances were being skewed to their foreign perspective. Bettelheim argues that "[a]s Afro-Cubans attempt to participate in the U.S. dollar-based economy, they sell what

they can, what they 'own'—in this case their religion, now more than ever open to the public for a fee" (*Cuban Festivals: A Century of Afro-Cuban Culture* 128). The fear is that a disingenuous cultural identity is being put forth, or created, specifically for tourist purchase. This is not the only effect. Parade routes are changed; local hotels are being bought by foreign franchises; recorded Dominican meringue music is now commonly used instead of the traditional Cuban music. Most disturbingly, Bettelheim notes that "[i]n the late 1980s…a dance school to train the performers" opened (*Cuban Festivals: A Century of Afro-Cuban Culture* 135). Such a school, Bettelheim believes, manipulates and reconfigures the culture of carnival; "[t]o a trained dancer's eye there is a difference between rehearsed steps and learning to perform by being trained to perform for others" (*Cuban Festivals: A Century of Afro-Cuban Culture* 135). Compared to the performances in contemporary Trinidad carnival, where the movements are free and unstructured, the Cuban performances seem planned and determined. They seem less carnival performances based on resistance and more fixed, classical theatrical acts.

Taking Over the Carnival in the Midst of Bacchanal—Becoming Both Participant and Observer

In giving brief, but essential histories of Cuba and Trinidad, I hope to have established the essential connection between their sugar plantation economies and their carnivals. I would like to return to Edwards' letters, which I introduced earlier as an anthropological text, to establish how such a document may be used as a springboard to expand into literature that discusses carnival as a cultural representation that moves away from its European-inflected origins and toward a version that incorporates African

influences. To this end I would like to bring in one more record, a Cuban document written by Vincente in 1842. Although his record is similar to the first two texts in sentiment, it is different in genre; it records Cuba's carnival in verse rather than as personal experience:

> If today were to be the first
> Day a foreigner could study
> The good people of this country,
> In the judgment formulated,
> Of what he hath contemplated,
> He'd be bound to make a mistake.
> For today African people
> The City of Havana all over
> Run shouting with such great pleasure.
> And their chanting is so savage,
> So wild their laugh and their visage,
> Incessant in their day's passage. (quoted in Ortiz, 12)

The above passage is similar in tone to Edwards': the first half privileges the "foreigner" as he engages in a "study" of "[t]he good people of this country." Unlike Edwards' letter, there is self-awareness both in the narrator as an interloper and as a dilettante anthropologist who observes and records; he admits that foreigners observing such an incident for the first time are "bound to make a mistake." The second half of the verse, however, privileges the native rather than the foreigner, and although the native performers still have no distinctive voice, their "shouting" and "laugh" is described as "great pleasure." Although the passage is divisive in that the narrator separates a "foreigner" from "[t]he good people of this country," and he maintains distance between the two groups, the subtext is of indecipherability of a representative societal event. His use of the words "shouting" and "chanting" gives the natives a voice.

The above verse warrants comparison to a scene of execution in Alejo Carpentier's novel *The Kingdom of This World* (1949) where European plantation owners

in eighteenth-century Haiti (then Saint Domingue) execute a rogue African slave, Macandal. In executing Macandal in front of a large number of slaves, the Europeans hope to dissuade the other slaves from rebellion. Instead, a carnival erupts, replete with laughter and celebration that the Europeans cannot understand. At this point, I would like to contrast the scene of Macandal's execution in *The Kingdom of This World* to the strictly anthropological texts discussed earlier as an example of how fiction, as a work of art in the same vein as Kitchener's calypso, provides spaces and gaps for greater interpretation and is able to better express a lived-in performance than an anthropological text. In this way, fiction is able to participate fully, like the slaves I will discuss, as both an observer and a participant. My aim in shifting from what I have deemed anthropological texts to a fictional work is to argue that fiction, by dint of it being a written form of art, and by being more in keeping as an ideal source for Iser's concept of indeterminacy, assumes the benefits of both anthropology and art and also better illustrates the performative aspects of carnival.[43]

In *The Kingdom of This World,* Carpentier utilizes a third-person narrator who infiltrates the text, but not at the expense of the characters. The narrator reports on the attitudes of the slaves and their roles as both an audience, which their roles as slaves mandate, and as performers, which they achieve through acts of rebellion. Carpentier succeeds in how he utilizes the narrator because his role is less an analyst than a witness—a reader learns more about both the Africans and Europeans than he does about

[43] As Roberto González Echevarría argues in *Myth and Archive. A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (1990), "[a]nthropological knowledge provide[s] the Latin American narrative with a source of stories, as well as a masterstory about Latin American history. In fiction, Latin American history will now be cast in the form of myth, a form derived from anthropological studies" (153).

the narrator, as seen in an early scene in which the slave Ti Nöel accompanies his master to the barber: "While his master was being shaved, Ti Nöel could gaze his fill at the four wax heads that adorned the counter by the door…[b]y an amusing coincidence, in the window of the tripe-shop next door there were calves' heads, skinned and each with a sprig of parsley across the tongue…and it amused Ti Nöel to think that alongside the pale calves' heads, heads of white men were served on the same tablecloth" (10, 11). The narrator, like Edwards in his letter, privileges amusement, but unlike Edwards, he ascribes the emotion to the "amused Ti Nöel." Further, unlike Edwards, he allows a native to privilege his environment. This concept of the amusement of the natives will continue to play an important role in my study—amusement, or the privileging of play, unsettles and discombobulates the Europeans in *The Kingdom of This World*; they cannot fathom play for play's sake. It is illogical to them.

Although *The Kingdom of This World*'s narrator does not completely suppress his own views, he is not as forthright as Edwards in mentioning the connection between Catholicism, metamorphoses, and carnival. Instead, the narrator subtly foreshadows the "sacrifice" of Macandal and the carnival that immediately ensues.[44] His connection between carnival and Catholicism is present but not as obvious.[45] He mentions the term "coincidence," for example, both in the passage above and just a few lines later, suggesting that all "coincidences" in the text are artfully arranged by the narrator in order

[44] My understanding of carnival here is "rioutous revelry" (OED).

[45] Knowing the religious/historical connection to carnival in Cuba, one may read the lambs' heads as a traditional Catholic symbol of *Agnus Dei* or the lamb of God, which refers to Christ as a sacrificial offering, or one may even extrapolate the image to associate the sacrificed lamb on the table with last supper iconography associated with the night before Christ is crucified and, of course, one may consider, in concert, the transformations that are the hallmarks of both Catholicism and carnival.

to achieve a narrative structure with a prescribed meaning. Still, it seems as if the narrator purposely allows for indeterminate gaps to let the narrative expand and develop on its own.

The Kingdom of This World is a novel about the narrator's presence in the text as well as about the slaves' voices, authority, and communal agency that they transform into national agency through the creation of carnival via rebellion. Macandal's first spoken words are, "the time has come" (26). While the words are unspectacular, their sentiment is daring: the time has come for revolution. The "time" is eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Saint Domingue between the years of 1750 and 1830, and the rulers—the French plantocracy—rule without fear of retribution. Macandal determines what poisons populate the fields in which he toils and outlines a plan of revolutionary action against the slaveowners: he will poison their food supplies, including their cattle and their stored grains. Macandal is the novel's central catalytic figure, both literally and figuratively. He is a rabble-rouser, a figure of disruption and imbalance. Although he causes some disturbance to the plantocracy, he is eventually captured and executed. As a result of his execution, he instigates years of unrest in San Domingue, and it is as a direct result of his execution that carnival, or moments of chaos, are established, which leads to the more contemporary understanding of carnival among the slaves who witness his execution.

Macandal's execution is a performance based on liminality. The novel establishes in its first few pages that he is able to transform physically from human to animal, or, to be more precise, from a *slave* into an animal, and the novel prefaces Macandal's physical

transformability by the loss of his hand to a machine that extracts juice from sugar cane.[46] In "The Great Flight," the chapter in which the slaveowners execute Macandal, there are two possible interpretations of the events. The first is that Macandal's execution truly occurs—his persecutors tie him to a stake and burn him to death. This is what the plantocracy and slaveowners observe. The other interpretation belongs to the slaves. Instead of witnessing Macandal's execution, they see him transform into an insect and escape, which causes them to exclaim "Macandal saved!" (52). The difference between the two interpretations lies, on the surface, in perception. The slaves refuse the perception offered to them by the slave owners. As a forced audience, the slaves know that the entire execution is a farcical performance, an act done to keep them suppressed and compliant. If slaves witness the brutal execution of one of their own, they are less likely to revolt; fear breeds compliance. The guards lead the slaves into the space where the execution will occur as if they are a theater-going audience: "Shepherded by their masters and overseers on horseback, escorted by heavily armed guards, the slaves began to darken the city square while the military drums sounded a solemn beat" (49). This sequence portends the performance aspect of the scene: Macandal acts as a metonym for the slaves. It reads as if all of the slaves are being led to their executions; the description privileges both the slaves' existence as chattel, and their transformation into an audience. Even when they are not at work, they are at the behest of the slaveowners.

[46] Vera Kutzinski notes that "[s]team engines were used in the grinding process [in Cuba] as early as 1820" (*Sugar* 209). Howard adds that the "[m]echanization of the plantations did not ameliorate the conditions of labor. Although the mill that ground the cane was mechanized, and railroads were used to transport the cane in bulk from the field to the mill, cane cutting remained arduous manual labor for the field slaves" (9, 10).

The plantocracy is also an audience, as seen when the women who carry "[b]right parasols moved in the balconies, like the gay nodding of flowers in a windowbox. As though talking from loge to loge in a huge theater, the women, fans in their mittened hands, chattered loudly, their voices delightfully excited" (49). In this description, as with the one above, the narrative privileges sound, a move that underscores the aural quality of an audience. Such a move serves as a means for the narrator to insinuate himself into the text without being overly-intrusive.[47]

The narrative thus establishes the moments before the execution as a choreographed performance where below the ladies in their loges stand the slaves who "awaited the performance that had been prepared for them, a gala function for Negroes on whose splendor no expense had been spared" (50). As the performance qua execution proceeds, one notes that the audience has been clearly delineated not just physically with the plantocracy in their class-defined loges with the slaves beneath them, but along the lines of expectation—the slaveowners are going to put forth a performance in which they know how it ends, or how they *want* it to end, but the slaves, who act, on the surface, as the audience they are meant to be, which is to say a self-determining audience with agency, await an alternate ending. In the eyes of the slaves, a kind of performance has already occurred—the *real* performance for the slaves lies in Macandal's ability to transform and he has already demonstrated this to them—at least by word of mouth, an action that again underscores the "aural" roots of the term "audience."

[47] It should be pointed out that these European women, accustomed to the temperate climate and the fixed attire of a traditional European audience, do not adjust their traditional dress for the climate—they continue to wear gloves in a tropical environment although it is unseemly; their dress points to the inflexibility of European performance. Their dress for a classical theater points to their expectation of an uninterrupted execution, or a show that goes according to plan.

The slaves know that in the gaps of transformation in which Macandal converts from a human to an animal he establishes himself as a master of play, a superior carnival king: "What did the whites know of Negro matters? In his cycle of metamorphoses, Macandal had often entered the mysterious world of the insects, making up for the lack of his human arm with the possession of several feet, four wings, or long antennae. He had been fly, centipede, moth, ant, tarantula, ladybug, even a glow-worm with phosphorescent green lights" (50). Macandal, in his ability to transform physically, and in his ability to transform into many things, which points again to the variability of a performance's end and its inherent indeterminacy as related to the slaves who are forbidden space for their own performance, anticipates the street theater of carnival and those masqueraders who dress up to become the objects they mimicked. More importantly, he leaves behind the traditional strictures of the physical slave—Macandal's loss of an arm augurs a rejection of slavery and his impending freedom achieved through his "playing" the role of animals.

The problem with the plantocracy lies in their arrogance; they are unable to anticipate space for the slaves' performance so that it may expand, change, or become something different than what they intend. When Macandal is lashed to the post the Governor approaches him "[w]ith a gesture *rehearsed* the evening before in front of a mirror, [and] unsheathed his dress sword and gave the order for the sentence to be carried out" (51, emphasis mine). The plantocracy observe Macandal executed because this is the logical end to the theater they have prepared. The slaves know of Macandal's ability to transform and while *what* will happen remains a mystery, they know enough to expect the unexpected. When the pyre is lit, "the bonds fell off and the body of the Negro rose in

the air, flying overhead, until it plunged into the black waves of the sea of slaves" (51, 52). This event ignites a carnival, a moment of chaos described in the novel as "pandemonium" where "[t]he guards fell with rifle butts on the howling blacks, who now seemed to overflow the streets" (52). This explosion, this riotous revelry, this moment of chaos, is the climax of the execution, a further separation of the slaves' understanding of the theater of carnival versus the slaveowners' understanding of a fixed performance; the point of the execution for the slaveowner is compliance, not the actual execution. Just as the folk theater that Bakhtin discusses in *Rabelais and his World* (1941), in which the Europeans' carnival remains fixed in what they expect it to be, the plantocracy's expectations here are staid. When the narrator describes that during "the noise and screaming and uproar were such that very few saw that Macandal, held by ten soldiers, had been thrust head first into the fire, and that a flame fed by his burning hair had drowned his last cry," (52) he reveals that the slaveowners insist on carrying out their preconceived performance to its logical end, but he also, ironically, creates space for an alternative ending. For the slaves, the performance is already in the midst of falling action. The slaves' observations of Macandal's escape leaves room for the possibility of both an additional ending as well as Bakhtin's chronotope.

The slaveowners further suffer because they collapse their roles—they want to be both generous performers and genteel audience in order to become both participant and observer. They want to observe Macandal's expiration as much as they want the other slaves to experience it. The problem with such a corruption is, as Herbert Blau states in *The Audience* (1990) that "what is endemic…to the sentimental gaze…is a desire for appropriation" (6). The problem with such a move by the slaveowners is that "the gaze is

obdurated" and "*refuses* to see, since it converts what is palpably out there to the delectable image of the metonymic *I*" (6, emphases original). It is the obdurate ego that obstructs the slaveowners—they, of course, do not identify with the slaves, but also do not identify with the possibility of a shifting performance that may have more than one ending. Simply put, they cannot be both participant and observer because, like Edwards, they do not share the belief and faith of their slaves and thus do not allow for a dialogue.[48] The slaves have not missed Macandal's death, nor have they chosen to ignore it. They, however, are from a culture that believes in "princes who were leopards"; it is not beyond their ken that both events have occurred (15).[49]

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[48] As Vera Kutzinski argues, "Identity, then, is not a question of unity, of identifying with one culture or another, of conquering or being conquered. It is instead a matter of dialogue between cultures and thus of literacy" (43).

[49]Howard notes that "[o]ne of the cabildos of African origins that has been well documented was the one instituted by the Ekoi, or Ejagham, people of southwestern Cameroon and southeastern Nigeria. The Ejagham men were members of a leopard society they called Ngbe. This all-male association met to talk about the "Ngbe values of nobility and government" and to pay homage to their masculine spiritual patron god, the leopard, who symbolized perfection, elegance, and strength. According to Jorge and Isabel Castellanos, Africans established leopard cults throughout Africa because they considered the animal to be semidivine. As a result, cult members believed that it was taboo to eat leopard meat. This traditional African organization was transplanted to Cuba by slaves, and because the *criollo* name "Abakuá" referred to the *Ekoi* (and to several of their subgroups in Calabar), their composite group was called the Cabildos Secretas de Abakuá" (21). He adds that "[t]he Ibibio and the Ibo peoples, western neighbors of the Ekoi, also founded leopard societies. The animal symbolism present in the Abakuá was widespread in West Africa, even among the Yoruba, for example, who adopted animals as patron gods or identified themselves as descedants of animals. Examining this cultural practice among the Yoruba, anthropologist G.J. Afolabi Ojo found that this custom stemmed from the belief that humans equitably *shared their physical surroundings* with animals. Animals were also considered living objects that could serve as temporary resting places for the spirits of the dead. The Yoruba believed that living persons could transform themselves into various animals in order to perform both good and bad acts for the entire group. Afolabi Ojo maintained that these beliefs and behavior were reinforced

While one of the slave owners, Lenormand de Mézy, "prepares to develop in a speech larded with Latin quotations" about the "lack of feelings at the torture of one of their own," "Ti Nöel got one of the kitchen wenches with twins" (52, 53). While the Europeans resort to written words, the slaves move forward with actions and performances that privilege play, and in so doing provide an alternate form of carnival. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea provides a similar point of view in *La Última Cena* (1976), a Cuban film that incorporates many religiously-inflected carnival-like elements as I have outlined in Trinidad and Cuba's carnivals, particularly in its last supper scene.

Performance, Space and Voice—Accommodating Two Endings

Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's film, *La Última Cena* (1976), recalls the historical events of Cuban plantation owner Count de Casa Bayona's interaction with his slaves during Easter in the late eighteenth century, when "on Maundy Thursday, 1789, [he] washed the feet of twelve of his black slaves and sat them at his table in imitation of the Last Supper of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. Instead of being grateful, the men organize a revolt and burned down the count's sugarmill. Once caught, they were executed and their heads placed on pikes" (57). Various sources date the event differently. According to Natalie Zemon Davis, the film takes place during the religious festival of Easter in Cuba in 1789:

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by the empirical fact that nature—that is, wildlife, the elements, and other inhabitants of an environment—constantly informs individuals' conscious and unconscious lives. Hence it was found that the chiefs were compared with leopards, whose skins were symbols of authority. These beliefs obtained and functioned in similar ways in Cuba (22)."

"[The events derive] from a document in the archives of the Real Consulado (Royal Council), [about] Count de Casa Bayona, who on Maundy Thursday, 1789, washed the feet of twelve of his black slaves and sat them at his table in imitation of the Last Supper of Jesus Christ and his Apostles" (57).[50] This date is important regionally. The Haitian Revolution began on August 22, 1791 and took place over a decade; it ended on January 1, 1804. Alea, however, seems to take artistic license in having this historical event occur after the revolution in Saint Domingue which is seen when one of the characters refers to the Haitian revolution.

There are two major scenes in the film that point to the performative aspects of *La Última Cena* and both, ironically, take place at the dinner table and explicitly involve the voices of the slaves. The first is when the Count admonishes his manservant after he warns the Count that perhaps he has had a little too much to drink and should perhaps go to bed. This manservant, up to this point of the scene, plays a notable interstitial role. He is a good valet and has remained in the background for much of the dinner. He has helped seat the slaves at the table and he has poured his master's wine when needed. He observes but does not participate. When he speaks, however, he becomes overly-present. He inserts himself too far into the performance and is reprimanded because he disturbs the illusion. His intrusion pulls the Count out of *his* performance and reminds all the performers that *they* are part of a performance.

[50] Jason Mraz, in "Recasting Cuban Slavery: *The Other Francisco* and *The Last Supper*," gives the historical date as 1790 and William O. Deaver, Jr. argues for 1791. Easter is a traditional Christian religious festival that celebrates the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Roman Catholic tradition it is considered the most important feast of their liturgical calendar.

From the manservant's posture it is clear that he considers himself better and apart from the other slaves at the dinner table: they are field slaves and he is a house servant. At this moment he is an observer but refuses to be a participant. He understands that he is not on the same level as the Count, a point the Count humiliatingly underscores through his reminder of the manservant's place: "How dare you give me orders? Are you forgetting your place? I'm your master. Your master!" At this point the other slaves laugh and the Count, just before he falls asleep, proclaims, "may no one interrupt our happiness."

What *La Última Cena* puts forth in this scene is an alternative for carnival where the slaves, like the slaves in *The Kingdom of This World*, create and occupy a Bakhtinian chronotope that allows them to be both participants and observers. While in the eyes of the Count they may occupy the singular role of the participant, Alea provides them a chronotope. When the slaves try to occupy this unsanctioned space and speak, as does the manservant who tries to be an observer and a participant in the same vein as the Count rather than as a slave, trouble ensues.

The dinner scene is the most important in the film because it individualizes all of the slaves in a move that works to foreshadow their revolt. As individuals they are no longer slaves. Such individualization also frustrates the manservant. He believes himself better than these slaves because they do not have names—they are a formless mass that toil in the sugar cane fields. During the dinner scene, however, the Count asks the slaves about themselves and allows them to speak. Sebastián, the central figure of the film who escapes execution at the film's end by transforming into various other forms a la

Macandal, speaks for the first time during the dinner, and individualizes himself on the same level as the manservant attempts.

Sebastián's speaking is the second major performance at the dinner table, but unlike the manservant, Sebastián waits until after the inebriated Count falls asleep to speak. When questioned by his fellow slaves about how he will be successful in his next attempt to escape, Sebastián replies: "I have powers. Sebastián will become a tree in the mountains. A fish in the river, a stone. He'll turn himself into a bird and fly away. Nobody will ever catch me. Nobody can kill me. [He blows powder into the sleeping count's face]." Here, Sebastián has, like Macandal, given hope through speech. He has sown the seeds of distrust and, the next morning, when the overseer tries to get the slaves to work, they revolt.

Like Edwards' letter and *The Kingdom of This World*, *La Última Cena* valorizes freedom through play. While at dinner, the Count questions the slaves about their lives working at the mill. "But there must be some good things in the mill," says the Count. He turns to the slave to his left. "What do you like?" "Freedom!" the slave replies without irony. "Yes Master, Holidays…food…cock fights… and 'ndokó'." The other slaves explode in laughter and the ignorant Count asks for further explanation. "Cock over the hen," the slave explains, and the Count, now in on the joke, laughs with them. The laughter does not last long, however, and one of the slaves rises from the table and performs an impromptu song and dance: "The slave is cursed by God, born to suffer. When you see a black laugh, ask him 'Who's crying?' if a slave's singing, Brymba is crying…" he sings. There is a discrepancy between the slaves and the count that the slaves understand but that the Count does not. "Nature has made the black man more

resistant to pain," the Count argues. "No white man sings when he cuts sugar-cane. The black man always sings. And, by singing, he forgets what he's doing. He becomes joyful. The white man suffers more than the black. Now, then, God arranged it for the black man to have innate qualities for cutting cane. The black was practically born for the fields." At first, it seems as if the Count is just repeating received knowledge of the time, the faulty science of the nineteenth-century which claimed that blacks were intellectually inferior. One slaves tries to correct him: "Master," he says, "the black sings and cuts the cane, but he likes singing better." The slave makes a claim for play and for freedom, but the Count, confident in the performative role that slaves are meant to play, dismisses him: "That's why the overseer is necessary," he says. "His job is to make the lazy slave work." For the slaves, it is an entirely preposterous proposition, and they laughingly patronize the Count when he gets drunk, and their carnival begins—they throw bits of food at the sleeping Count; Sebastián threatens to transform and escape again; the slaves sing and dance. It is a carnival that anticipates the next day's revolution when play goes beyond the fixed boundaries the dinner table provides.

Unlike *The Kingdom of This World*, where the narrator's vision is seen in both words and performance, one may only discern the director's vision through the characters' actions and their words. At the start of the film, the plantations overseers drag an escaped Sebastián back to the plantation and punish him by cutting off one of his ears. It is the third time Sebastián has tried to escape and his fellow slaves warn him that he will be executed the next time he tries to flee. Sebastián is recalcitrant. His desire to escape is fueled both by the experience of slavery and his faith in African myths.

Sebastián relates a story to the other slaves that privileges transformation, and because of his belief in that ability, he feels that he will eventually escape.

The film centers on a devout plantation owner, the Count, who, in an attempt to make himself more Christ-like, holds a "last" supper with twelve slaves from his plantation on the eve of Good Friday, the most significant date in the Christian church's calendar. During the dinner, he gets drunk and falls asleep, and Sebastián, one of the twelve slaves chosen to have dinner and who, up to the moment of the Count's falling asleep, has remained silent, tells a creation myth based on the Yoruban god Olofi where he explains that "When Olofi made the world he made it complete. He made day and night. He made pretty things and ugly things. He made good things and bad things. He made Truth, and also made the Lie." Sebastián notes that while Truth is attractive, the Lie is ugly and malnourished. As a result "everyone wanted to go with Truth." Sebastián continues that Olofi armed the physically inferior Lie with a machete "to defend itself." One day Truth and Lie fought and Lie decapitated Truth. As Sebastián explains, "Truth had no eyes and no head…and felt around with its hands for its head…until it touched the head of the Lie and…[Here Sebastián puts his hands on the severed head of a hog that lies on the dinner table] it wrenched off the Lie's head and put it in place of its own. [Here Sebastián holds the hog's head in front of his face as he addresses the other slaves at the table]. From that moment, Truth deceived the world—he had the body of Truth with the Head of the Lie."

Sebastián's mythological tale is reminiscent of Macandal's own mythical remembrance of Africa just before he loses an arm. Just as Macandal, it is Sebastián's collapsing of a mythological African past with a capital-driven European present that

fuels his belief in transformation and his ability to escape. Sebastián underscores his ability to transform by superimposing a slaughtered pig's head from the dinner table onto his own. The image of Sebastián holding the pig's head as a surrogate for his own is visually striking—the viewer is subjected to an apocalyptic beast with the head of an animal and the body of a man. This image also reinforces the idea of a slave as an animal and cements the transformative abilities associated with Catholicism.

It is no accident that the revolution in *La Última Cena* occurs on Good Friday, during the last few days of Lent. One may read the suppression of the revolution by the God-fearing plantation owner as punishment for the chutzpah of having a carnival during the high holy season. Carnival in Trinidad, as I mentioned earlier, stops on the eve of the start of Lent, which then ushers in Easter, the Christian church's most significant event. That a carnival takes place during the dinner is a fatal flaw on the part of the Count. While the Count sleeps, the slaves hold all manner of philosophical discussions, including the goodness of the Count, the significance of religion and, most importantly, whether they will have to work the next day. This becomes significant because the slaves were promised by the devout Count that they would not have to work on the holy day. Things go awry the next morning when, one suspects, that the still drunk Count does not relay his promise to his headstrong overseer who wakes the slaves for work as usual. The slaves revolt, and the overseer and his wife become casualties.

In *Kingdom of This World* and *La Última Cena*, the bodies of the slaves who play the central characters and have been reduced through amputation, are in a position, through language, to reverse the effects of slavery that lead to the maiming of their bodies. It is the absence of these blacks' body parts as a result of slavery that allows the

slaves to reverse the violence inflicted on them through speech: an armless Macandal curses the slaveowners just before his execution and motivates years of revolt in Haiti. Losing an ear as punishment for attempting to escape, Sebastián calls into doubt the generosity of the dinner that his slaveowner has bestowed upon select slaves and, when his words prove to be true, the slaves revolt the next day. Both Macandal and Sebastián gain subjectivity through their diatribes. The difference is that while Macandal's rants are untranslated to the audience in *Kingdom of This World* because of the presence of the slaveowners, Sebastián's words are accessible to the audience because the Count, who has fallen asleep, cannot hear him. When questioned by his fellow slaves about how he will be successful in his next attempt to escape, Sebastián does not show the other slaves; he explains it in speech.

Sebastián's declarations are self-interpellations. He positions himself as a character that is able to separate himself from the enslaved persona that previously fetters him. Saying nothing while the Count is awake, he is able to seize subjectivity by speaking while the Count sleeps. For both Sebastián and Macandal, the public stating of physical transformation is the same as completing the act. These slaves, in uttering their ability and/or desire to change, are not concerned with the specific ability to transform into another form so much as they are concerned with the ability to transform into something *other* than a slave. In speaking, particularly when the Count sleeps, Sebastián seizes agency; in speaking about his transformation and his ability to transform, he shirks his enslaved state and gains subjectivity. At the film's end, he is the only slave uncaptured, a fact that the film underscores with the display of all of the other captured and impaled slaves' heads upon pikes. In this scene, there is a peripheral shot of a

headless pike, the one meant for the escaped Sebastián. By seizing subjectivity, Sebastián, although he loses his ear, keeps his head and thus, his voice.

CHAPTER III

JAIL, CARNIVAL AND COLONIALISM: REALIGNING THE AUDIENCE AND SUBVERTING THEATRICAL EXPECTATIONS IN CARIBBEAN THEATER

> *"…the audience loves me and I love them. And they love me for loving them and I love them for loving me. And we just love each other"*
>
> —Roxie Hart, *Chicago*

In this chapter I examine "carnival moments" within plays through the relationship between the plays' performers and their audiences.[51] I focus entirely on plays because I consider the carnival moments in these plays as carnival writ small and because I am interested in the visceral reaction that an audience has to a performance, a feat which is difficult to determine from a reader of a text. In an audience's response to a play, whether singly or collectively, there is a reflection of the performance. Further, since this project's main focus is carnival, it seems necessary to account for the response a performance elicits. This is not to discount entirely the textual influence on a play's performance. In Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1977), which I examine, I analyze the additional relationship between Walcott's written words in the form of textual notes, his performers and the reaction that the combination of these two factors on his audience. Through his textual notes, Walcott seems to want to accost his audience directly. These combinations of words and performances work in tandem to affect the

[51] I understand these "moments of carnival" to be moments of resistance in performances in which resistance may take the form of opposition to other characters in the play, or opposition to a political ideology like colonialism.

emotional responses of *Dream on Monkey Mountain*'s audience and I argue that the performers' moments of resistance in their performances solicit audience participation.

All of the plays I examine in this chapter feature performances in which the characters are either literal or symbolic prisoners. With respect to the plays that feature the Caribbean, the reason is obvious: Caribbean plays often feature either an overt or submerged response to slavery and colonialism. I argue that these prisoners' performances in these examined plays transform their audiences into active participants who mirror the ideals of prison guards, figures of colonial authority or abolitionists. In this way, the audience members become agents in the production and I examine what effect their agency, if any, have on the production.

I start the chapter by investigating the U.S. musical *Chicago* (1975).[52] I argue that *Chicago*, as a production, seeks a general collective reaction from its audience. *Chicago*'s collective audience contrasts well with the second play I examine, Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, a play set on a nameless Caribbean island that features imprisoned creolized characters of African descent. *Dream on Monkey Mountain* seeks to solicit various audience responses through Walcott's textual directions. Such variability of audience responses, combined with the prisoners' performances in which they seek freedom, result in moments of carnival. Both of these plays feature the use of jail cells in visible and invisible ways and I interpret these cells, moreso in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* than in *Chicago*, as symbols that recall Caribbean plantation slavery and, later, colonialism.

[52] I utilize this play for various reasons, but primarily because it features prisoners. It was also the only performance I was able to view as a live stage performance. The result is that I am able to dissect the relationship of the audience from a first-hand account.

While *Chicago* purposely eschews a physical jail cell, which results in a closeness and empathy between the audience and the prisoners, *Dream on Monkey Mountain* utilizes a physical jail cell that it adds and removes as the scenes dictate. Ultimately, I want to use Walcott's textual notes, which at moments separate and privilege sound over sight, to get to the root of the use of sight and sound in performances whose combination, separation, and isolation of these senses seek to destabilize fixed historical understandings of British theater and seek a new Caribbean understanding of performance in plays and in carnival.

From here I examine the performances of Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña's performance as prisoners in *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit* (1992) in which they cage themselves as a live Amerindian exhibit that travels to museums. This performance focuses intently on the role of the audience and I evaluate what effect Fusco and Gómez-Peña's performance has on what is, for the most part, an audience that occupies the space and roles of colonial figures of authority. Finally, I look at the character of the midnight robber, a character from Trinidad's carnival who eschews traditional masquerade bands filled with similarly-dressed characters during carnival in exchange for lone performances in which he accosts individual spectators. The midnight robber is ingenious because he eliminates the possibility of collective thought in an audience by limiting his audience to a single person. A fearsome figure, he uses rehearsed bluster to challenge the audience as individuals.

In thinking about how all of these plays work together, I append Paul Gilroy's concept of "the politics of transfiguration" (37). Gilroy argues that politics "emphasizes the emergence of qualitatively new desires, social relations, and modes of association

within the racial community of interpretation and resistance *and* between that group and its erstwhile oppressors" (37, emphasis original). For Gilroy, such transfiguration "points specifically to the formation of a community of needs and solidarity which is magically made audible in the music itself and palpable in the social relations of its cultural utility and reproduction" (37). Such community-formation is easy to see in *Chicago* where the imprisoned women are all charged with murders they committed and all of whom seek the bright lights of fame. It becomes easy for the audience, as a grand collective, to support or disdain the prisoners collectively.

It is more difficult to discern a community of characters in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* since it is difficult to locate such easy points of commonality among the characters. Makak's imprisonment is troublesome on several fronts and begs the question "does his punishment fit the crime?" There is also the question of an uneasy community of resistance that forms among the villagers who oust Moustique from their midst. The reason for Moustique's initial acceptance, then later rejection, is that he disguises himself as Makak, who seems to oppress the island's colonialism, but when the villagers reveal him as Moustique, and realize that he agrees with aspects of colonized rule, they feel duped and attack him; they accept him when he seems to be on the side of the oppressed, but reject him when they recognize the inverse.

Because *Dream on Monkey Mountain* is so rich with Caribbean relationships, including that between ethnic groups, the presence of social hierarchy and the rights of prisoners, it is difficult to determine the establishment of a community as a mode of resistance against colonialism as the play's major theme. Walcott, of course, as a deft playwright, addresses this concern subtly. Such subtlety, as Gilroy argues, is necessary

because resistance, during slavery, was "[c]reated under the very nose of the overseers" (37). In *Dream on Monkey Mountain* I thus examine both Walcott's production notes as well as the performers' actions since these actions, when combined, work to undermine the status quo of colonialism and the audience may be able to better determine the relationship between colonialism and community. Walcott's performers are remarkable because they do not just deliver their lines, but sing, dance and play musical instruments. [53] The actors' performances gain tremendous credence since, as Gilroy notes, such "politics exists on a lower frequency where it is played, danced, and acted, as well as sung and sung about because words…will never be enough to communicate its unsayable claims to truth" (37). As a result, Walcott's words in the form of his production notes, combined with the performances of his actors in which he solicits performances that may not traditionally be used in British theater, all work together to address colonialism and to establish a new form of Caribbean theater.

Negotiating the Prison through Performance

In October 2009, I attended the Ambassador Theater in New York City to view a performance of the long-running revival of the musical *Chicago* (1975). As I entered the theater I immediately became aware of its physical dimensions. It was, like most theaters, intimate: the house was big and the stage was small. Although I sat near the back of the theater, I was centrally located and had a clear line of sight of the stage. From where I sat, it seemed as if the performers would have no more than twenty feet from the edge of the stage to the area behind them to perform. Behind the performers' space sat a full

[53] This is important because *Dream on Monkey Mountain* is not within the genre of musical theater.

orchestra in a rising tier. As others continued to file into the theater, I became aware of myself as a spectator among many spectators. When the lights went down, I became something more—a voyeur perhaps, but I still understood myself as an individual.[54]

When the first few notes of the popular and familiar opening song "All That Jazz" began, I noticed that a few people clapped along with the performance. I did not join them. I wanted the performers to perform. That was, after all, their role. If I joined along it seemed as though I were being conscripted. But as more spectators joined in, softly, but noticeably, I understood that we, as spectators, were *expected* to participate in this manner. It was part of our role, and it transformed us into a collective audience. We were meant to perform along with the actors on the stage, and we were meant to perform in unison. This was what constituted an audience in this particular production. It was as if, collectively, we became the jury that willed the main characters' releases at the play's end.

Chicago was written in 1975 by John Kander and Fred Ebb and based on a 1926 play by Maurine Dallas Watkins. It is set in the U.S. city of the same name in the 1920s during prohibition. The play opens with Velma Kelly in jail for murdering her philandering sister and husband after she catches them *in flagrante delicto*. Kelly performed a vaudeville act with her sister, but now awaits trial on death row along with other murderesses. Her performance of "All That Jazz" serves as a welcome to the audience but also a way of initiating them as participants as well. Kelly's co-star and

[54] In differentiating "spectator" from "voyeur," I consider the level of activity or investment in my visual participation. As a spectator I may be passive in how I view an event. As a voyeur, I am active and become invested in how events unfold. The act of lowering the lights in the house focuses my attention on the stage and what takes place there and intensifies my voyeurism.

rival, an aging small-time chorus girl named Roxie Hart, then takes the stage. What Kelly and Hart have in common is their desire for fame and public adulation which, in a meta-fictional way, they attain through their staged performance before us as their audience. Hart hopes the furniture salesman with whom *she* is having an affair will advance her career through contacts he claims to possess. He does not. When he admits to her that he has no contacts and that he is, in fact, ending their relationship, Hart, in a fit of rage, shoots him dead. Hart's husband, a sweet but naïve man, at first files a false police report that says that Hart's dead paramour was a burglar who attempted to assault his wife and that he, Hart's husband, shot him. When he determines Hart's infidelity, however, he reneges on his statement and Hart is arrested. She joins Kelly and the other women in prison. The rest of the production features how the two women manipulate the media while in jail in order to earn their releases so that they may transpose their notorious celebrity onto a free stage. They both employ a slick attorney named Billy Flynn who easily and remarkably manipulates the details of his clients' cases for the media and to gain public sympathy.

While most of the play's events take place in a prison, and often within an actual cell, the director of the play eschews a mimetic, or visual, jail cell in the production. This seems to have been done partly out of the concern for stage restrictions, since actual jail bars would hinder the audience's ability to see the performers. From a critical perspective, the biggest reason for the absence of bars is that their presence would both limit the audience's imagination and reduce the illusion of the audience's proximity to the performers. A physical jail would warp the performance's illusion. Because of the coziness of the theater, the absence of a jail cell makes one feel as though one is in jail

with the women. The entire audience is imprisoned. The play develops this proximity both to elicit compassion and empathy for the inmates. The prison becomes the unspoken metonym of the performance and, although invisible, it is one with which I was concerned throughout the show. The imaginary bars serve as a conduit that also filters and concentrates the play's events, so that when the performances eventually reach the audience, there is a collective response: the audience applauds during a familiar song; they laugh at the lines delivered by certain characters; they feel badly when one of the inmates, who may have actually been innocent of her crime, is executed. The invisible jail, I argue here, manipulates the audience's solidarity and, to some degree, elicits the audience love about which both Billy Flynn and Roxie Hart sing.[55]

In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (1973) Jacques Lacan notes that "[i]n our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it—that is what we call the gaze" (73). Lacan argues that the audience's vision, or gaze, is not infallible, that it misses things, and that the resulting slippage is especially present in the performance's transmission. As an audience member, one should expect this and should not consider it a hindrance in viewing and interpreting the play. What occurs on the stage is an illusion, and the theater does nothing to disguise the fact that what it puts forth is an impression of reality. The audience's job is to interpret the entire illusion and not necessarily to dissect each aspect of it. The stage trades in metaphor as reality, and it is

[55] Billy Flynn's signature solo performance is an ironic song called "All I care About is Love."As a manipulative, self-serving lawyer, however, he cares about celebrity as much as his clients do. His "love" is a love of celebrity and fame.

the audience who interprets these metaphors and serves as a collective sense-making being. The transmission of a performance from the stage to the audience's gaze is an outright manipulation that purports performance as reality, and its success is predicated on the audience, as a collective, interpreting this manipulation. Hence, when the entire audience claps along with "All That Jazz," my refusal to do so does not distinguish or excuse me from the *collective* audience. As a member of the audience, I have already been interpellated and the performers know that if they do their jobs well, then the audience becomes a mirror of their own performances. The result is a call-and-response in which the audience responds to the performers' call. *Chicago* works to limit Lacan's slippage so that the audience exists as an autonomous collective.

If the actors do their jobs well as specific to this production, the result is the response one gets from the audience of *Chicago,* which responds en masse. At the start of the second act of the show, Velma Kelly, aware that the audience is at her beck and call, greets them with the familiar, sly, and pejorative "Hello, suckers!" Kelly here addresses both her ideal audience, the audience that would adore her if she were out of prison and performing on stage, as well as the audience of which I was a part in viewing *Chicago*. Kelly is hyperaware of her dual roles. She is there to entertain the audience in both roles—her gestational period in prison before her inevitable release, and the role that her performance in *Chicago*, the play, demands. As Ben Brantley notes in a review of the show in the *New York Times*: "What this production makes clear is how much *Chicago* is about the joy of seducing an audience that goes to the theater, above all, to be seduced." He adds that "the performers seem to be saying, what we're doing is all illusion, and you're falling for it." Brantley rightly suggests the audience's complicity in *Chicago*'s

production. What happens, however, if they are made aware of their roles or if the traditional sensorial familiarity is reduced? Does the audience revert to individual spectators or form small pockets of groups of audiences? It seems that in a play like *Chicago*, in which the performers are aware of their roles as performers on two levels, an audience member almost has no free will in deciding how to respond. His response will focus either on the characters as prisoners, or the characters as performers in a play. In establishing such a dichotomy, there seems little room for a third option. To overcome such binary restrictions, what the viewer may do is to consider the roles of those not seen on the stage, particularly the playwright, the director and set designer. Just as much as the performers on stage, these people work to establish the play's illusion.

In *Dream on Monkey Mountain,* the textual notes that Walcott utilizes in the text of the play offer telling signposts about how he attempts to manipulate his audience. His use of a disappearing and reappearing prison cell points to the historic suppression of a slave's language and voice, as well as to the slave's absence of agency. In his manipulation of the prison as a visual device, however, Walcott also subverts the authority that slaveowners, and that colonial powers later exercised in the Caribbean. In the cell's presence, the prisoner's voice is muffled or non-existent; in the cell's absence, the prisoner's voice has agency. Through such manipulation, Walcott unsettles the audience as theater-goers familiar with a traditional Western theatrical structure that privileges a combination of sight and sound.

I am concerned initially with the gaze that the audience affixes to stage performers, not solely in Lacanian terms, but combined with their understanding and *reaction* to the idea of imprisonment, in which their theatrical vision is entrapped by the

stage. I focus mainly on Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, a play set on a nameless Caribbean island that focuses on the relationship between that colonial island's population and the laws that govern them. In Caribbean theater, colonialism necessarily casts a shadow across any play that features imprisonment of African descendents so that in my reading of Walcott's play, which features such a scenario, I focus on the gaps that separate the performers from the audience, both in the spaces between the jail bars and when the entire cell is lifted, and thus examine the audience's existence in these gaps. It is in these spaces, as I argue above, that both audience manipulation and reception occur, but it is also in these spaces that there is room for audience interpretation depending on their feelings based on the bars' presence, on an individual rather than a collective level. I show that in Walcott's production, Caribbean plantation history becomes such a heavy influence that moments of carnival that move beyond resistance into the realm of play, if only temporarily, need to be included so that this plantation history does not overwhelm the illusion that theater seeks. Moments of carnival diffuse the intensity of plantation history as well as the repression of colonialism.

In *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, Walcott focuses on the sensorial details that influence the performance, particularly sight and sound, because such a focus, and particularly a separation of the two, influences the performance to the degree that the audience's own sensorial interpretations are called into question. In the absence of physical bodies on a contemporary stage, sound's presence magnifies. For an invisible performer, or one who is offstage, sound, in the form of his voice, increases how the audience perceives his agency. This focus on, and initial separation of, sight and sound, further creates performative gaps that encourage variable audience interpretations so that

there is no single reception such as the one that *Chicago* elicits from its audience through its complete physical absence of jail cells. By initially concentrating on the aural as separate from the visual, and including moments of carnival where carnival begins as moments of resistance but evolves into an unbounded expression of the collated visual, aural, and other theatrical forms that manifest itself as moments of resistance, Walcott instills the theatrical spirit of carnival into Caribbean theater.

Walcott's aim in this move is not solely to create a rank juxtaposition of a New World street theater with a classical British rubric. Rather, he seeks to tease out a *sui generis* theatrical form that the combination of the two generates. Carnival proper cannot exist if one separates sight from sound, but an interpretation of carnival on an enclosed stage may allow such a division. In such a move, Walcott reveals the elasticity of carnival moments, even on an enclosed stage, when compared to traditional British theater. If a street carnival necessarily represents the breaking away from colonization's strictures, then, in attempting to maintain these qualities when confined to a stage it also represents a distancing from the rigid status quo of British theater.

Walcott separates the aural from the visual on the stage to highlight the rigidity of historical colonialism. Such a focus at first underlines the historical sixteenth-century English theatrical standards that privileged the aural over the visual and that continues, for the most part, to this day. His separation of sight from sound reveals that separation of the aural from the visual is a historical, theatrical technique, that such a past is prologue, and that his interpretation of contemporary Caribbean theater encourages such subversion. Walcott's Caribbean theater concentrates all aspects of performance, including dance and music, on its stage to form a hybridized, creolized, syncretic

performance. Caribbean theater includes the dissonance of Caribbean carnival; the former does not exist without the latter. Hence, in what I consider to be the most important scene in the play, in which Moustique is lynched, this act is preceded by a tremendous focus on the visual, the sense that colonialism most privileged.[56]

Play and Carnival

Before I pursue an interpretation of *Dream on Monkey Mountain* and Walcott's structuring of it via his production notes, I would like to introduce the concept and rules of play, and the connection of carnival to the production and my reading of play. While Makak, the play's main character, attempts to overthrow the colonial power structure via the mini-carnivals or "rioutous revelry" of resistance that the riot produces at the market, his move is later duplicated by his sidekick Moustique in an attempt to reduce resistance solely to play. Although Moustique intends his actions to be solely jocular, they eventually turn deadly serious and cause a riot in the village market due to his calling the villagers' belief system into question. In doing so, Moustique substitutes seriousness after he initially promises play. In the same way, the white woman who "possesses" Makak denies him the freedom from play and he rebels. I read both Makak's attempted subversion of power, and the villagers' resulting riot, as residues of the revolts during Caribbean slavery that become absorbed into the Caribbean street carnivals of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

[56] See chapter one where, in my reading of *The Kingdom of This World*, I discuss the importance of visual colonial display and performance in the execution of the slave Macandal.

In the seriousness of slavery, it is play which is renounced, and it is exactly this, as J. Huizinga argues in *Homo Ludens: A study of the Play-Element in Culture* (1949), which may *not* be revoked: "Play cannot be denied. You can deny, if you like, nearly all abstractions: justice, beauty, truth, goodness, mind, God. You can deny seriousness, but not play" (3). According to Huizinga, play exists when logic breaks down "the absolute determinism of the cosmos" and, as a result, it is irrational (3). Huizinga adds that "play is not 'ordinary' or 'real' life. It is rather a stepping out of 'real' life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own" (8). As such, I do not read "play" solely as an attempt to achieve frivolity but as a breakdown of logic. Play is voluntary, and because this is so, it is freedom. When Moustique attempts to switch out play for seriousness, he attempts to introduce the logic of colonialism to the villagers. The intersection of freedom and play is revealing: reality is corrupted play, and, as Jacques Ehrmann argues in "Homo Ludens Revisited," "play is then by way of contrast, the sacred inverted and thereby impoverished, degraded, devaluated" (39). Such play becomes a quest for freedom, or a quest for freedom to play. Both Makak's murder of the woman and the villagers' lynching of Moustique are quests for freedom via an overthrow of traditional colonial strictures. This is where *Chicago* and *Dream on Monkey Mountain* intersect: the characters in each both seek freedom through play. They diverge because while *Chicago* is a meta-performance in which the players *know* their fates, in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, in which the jailed characters descended from slavery and live in a society that still carries the vestiges of colonialism in everything from their political to their law structures, the characters do not know what the end result will be. They do know that colonialism's political and law structures value logic and seriousness, and this

is why the villagers highly value play. The seriousness of logic and colonialism promises only permanent imprisonment.

From the Page to the Stage—Writing for the Audience and Appropriating Theatrical Space in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*

Dream on Monkey Mountain opens with Makak, a creolized Trinidadian character of African descent, so-called by others because of his physical resemblance to a monkey, in prison for vandalism. The night before his imprisonment, he tries to convince a crowd of villagers about the reality of his dream in which a white woman convinces him of his divinity. Disbelieved, Makak wrecks Alcindor's café. While in jail with Tigre and Souris, two other criminals with unknown offences, all of whom are guarded by the mulatto corporal Lestrade, Makak experiences another dream in which he recalls his adventures as a faith-healer with his sidekick Moustique. During these adventures, he encounters Basil, the figure of death, whom Moustique challenges and to whom he eventually succumbs.

Part of the difficulty in interpreting Walcott's play on the whole, and this scene in particular, is in trying to determine in which scenes Makak is dreaming or actually experiencing reality. The play offers no easy concession. One is never quite sure if the woman who affects Makak exists solely in his mind and serves as one dimension of colonialism or if he experiences genuine interactions with her. Illusions abound throughout the play, starting with the title of the play and the very concept of a staged play as I discussed earlier, as a simulation of life. Toward the end of the play, for example, one learns that Moustique was not really murdered by the mob; rather, that was

part of Makak's dream. If such a vital aspect of the performance is imagined, or the result of a dream, then it suggests that one may question "the reality" of every event in the play. At the end of the play, in which a benevolent Corporal Lestrade releases Makak from jail to return to Monkey Mountain, such an action may mean that the entire play exists as several dreams within dreams akin to Russian nesting dolls. Part of what Walcott suggests in nestling dreams within dreams is James Joyce's idea that history, and particularly colonial history, is a nightmare from which his characters try to awaken.

In *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, Walcott insists that his involvement in the play, via his production notes, is just as important as the play's visual and aural components. In this way, Walcott's role in the play is participatory—there is not a clear distinction between the play's creator and its performance. Walcott's insistence on his presence is difficult to determine by simply watching a production of the play; one ideally needs to read the text as well. There are clues encoded in the written text that during the play's performance, suggest Walcott's presence, specifically the raising and lowering of the jail cell. The jail cell's removal, sanctioned by Walcott as playwright, leaves a trace of Walcott's input that remains in the audience's mind as the play progresses. When the cell is lowered once again, it is as if Walcott reasserts his invisible presence. By inserting himself in this manner, that is to say through a symbol that comes and goes, Walcott aims for a New World play that conflates, but then separates, various elements of the play, such as sound and vision, to create a new type of play. Walcott's invisible presence in the play, and his separation of sound and vision, is not enough on its own to suggest a new form of contemporary Caribbean theater. This is partly because the play still follows the basic structure of the British play. In order for Walcott to create a new type of regional

play, he needs additional elements that are not traditional to the British play's format. For this reason he imports elements of Japanese Noh theater as well, particularly demonstrated in how the actors physically carry themselves. By instituting another form of theater and combining it with traditional British theater, Walcott suggests a New Caribbean theater that is similar to carnival in its mosaic nature. Through these various techniques, *Dream on Monkey Mountain* signifies a new type of Caribbean theater. The play does not just exist in the structural vein of standard British theater, but seeks to embrace, and add elements to British theatrical techniques.

It seems that differentiating "dream" from "reality" is not Walcott's goal. Rather, he seems to want audience members to think as individuals and to consider the traditional structure of the play, seen in various characteristics, including the automatic conflation of sound and vision, as restrictive and confining. For this reason, at various points of the play, Walcott separates sound from vision, then conflates them, then separates them once again. Such a move does not just get the audience to consider the traditional theatrical structure. By conflating the aural and the visual, Walcott also encourages a dreamlike state in which the characters are not completely able to dissociate their sleeping state from their waking state. When Walcott separates these senses, he gives signals that suggest that the entire play does not take place in the unconscious.

Walcott opens the play by focusing on the visual before the aural, as opposed to featuring them simultaneously. In focusing on the visual before the aural Walcott aims both to overturn what has become standard, sensorial, Western theatrical expectations, as well as the legacy and logic of colonialism. He achieves both by corralling the chaos and disorder of carnival within the fixed and enclosed, classical, theatrical stage. By allowing

carnival disorder, even an ironic, controlled disorder, to exist in a space traditionally reserved for classical, structural, theatrical order, Walcott develops a Caribbean theater within the rubrics of the traditional theater that acknowledges European roots, but that encapsulates a post-slavery, carnivalized exuberance that disavows fixed borders.

Walcott achieves this feat partly through his production notes. In these notes, he sets up the physical, visual stage by noting that "[a] spotlight warms the white disc of an African drum until it glows like the round moon above it," and that "[b]elow the moon is the stark silhouette of a volcanic mountain." He shifts to a focus on the aural when two figures enter and a "lament begins" (212). What one may not notice right away, unless one reads the textual notes of the play, is that this lament does not come from the two figures now on stage, but from a conteur and a chorus who remain offstage. The conteur and the chorus sing a call-and-response to each other about a woman's imprisoned son. The audience may at first confuse these voices with the two figures who actually occupy the stage: a "dancer [who] enters and sits astride the drum," and "a top-hatted, frock-coated figure with white gloves, his face halved by white make-up like the figure of Baron Samedi" (212). Merging the sight of the two visible figures and their drumming and dancing with the invisible conteur and chorus, Walcott eventually synchronizes the aural with the visual: the drumming and dancing characters provide musical accompaniment for the invisible singers. Walcott reveals his separation of the aural from the visual to the audience when he notes that "[t]he figure [the drummer] strides off [stage] slowly, the CONTEUR and CHORUS, off-stage, increase the volume of their lament" (212). At this point, it is obvious to the audience that the sound comes from offstage and that what remains is sound without visible performers. Using theatrical terminology,

Walcott privileges an aural dietic—or what the audience hears but does not see, namely, the chorus and the conteur—over the mimetic, or what the audience sees, namely the drummer and dancer. Walcott ultimately reveals his sleight of hand both to unbalance the audience and to reveal his control of both the performers and their spaces. Eventually, Walcott relinquishes his control, as seen when he allows both the aural and visual to once again converge. Walcott performs such a move to refocus his theatrical vision. Having already called attention to the interaction of sound and sight and their traditional interaction in one form of theater, he shifts his vision to other traditional theatrical structures, namely theater spaces, stage spaces, and dramatic spaces.

Of the three types of theatrical space—theater space (which refers to architectural design), stage space (which refers to the stage and set design), and dramatic space (which refers to the space occupied by a dramatist), the third is the most variable. This dramatic space is both ephemeral and difficult to calibrate critically. As Michael Issacharoff notes,

> in a theater script language takes two forms: auditory (the spoken text or discourse of the characters) and non-auditory (the stage directions or meta discourse). *Both modes of discourse can refer to dramatic space*, but they differ in their respective functions. The function of meta-discourse is to refer exclusively to what is *visible* (i.e., what the producer has intended to make visible to the audience). The function of discourse, on the other hand, is to refer both to what is visible and to what is not, and thus, for example, to space described but not shown on the stage. In its referential function, meta-discourse guides the activity of the *producer*, while discourse, when it refers to visible (i.e., mimetic) space, channels the perception of the *audience*. (215, emphases original)

When Issacharoff states that "meta-discourse guides the activity of the *producer*, while discourse, when it refers to the visible (i.e., mimetic) space, channels the perception of the *audience*," he suggests that the playwright *must* think of his audience in writing the play, not just along the lines of the reception of dialogue and the spatial positioning of the

performers but also in contemplating how the actors' occupation of spaces will relate to the audience's perception. The playwright thus concerns himself with the transition and reception of performance in moving from the page to the stage, and from the stage to the audience. As his notes show, Walcott knows that starting the play with the visual before the aural will have a different effect on his audience than starting with the aural before the visual, for example, or issuing the aural at the same time as the visual. In revealing the mimetic prison cages on the stage, while having the conteur and chorus lament off-stage for the imprisoned, Walcott privileges the visual impact of imprisonment while marginalizing the aural impact of the "free" voices that sing about imprisonment. The suggestion here is that while voices may still exist in jail they are marginalized and made impotent.

Because most of the Anglo-Caribbean nations during the time that this play was originally produced became independent, or were on the cusp of independence from their colonial powers, the mimetic role of the jail's bars gain poignancy as a symbol. By initially presenting prison cages as mimetic stage structures, but then having the invisible voices continue to sound out and increase in strength while suppressing the physical bodies attached to those voices, Walcott highlights the history of colonialism and the political change soon to occur via postcolonialism, but he also slowly gives credence to the imprisoned voice and demands that members of the audience—at least those members of the audience cognizant enough to notice the split of the aural from the visual—do the same. Imprisoned voices, Walcott seems to suggest, are paradoxes—prisoners do not have voices, and for him to *insist* that they do, shows a move away from traditional historical slavery mores. Via this move Walcott also shows the more perceptive audience

members that their expectations are always already imprisoned, that their expectation is for a contemporary theatrical production where a jail must be physically represented on stage and where voices must emanate from physically visual bodies.[57] By starting with a mimetic prison, removing it, then reinstating it at various moments throughout the production, Walcott emphasizes the move of the Caribbean from an enslaved space to a postplantation space, to a colonized space, to an independent space, but that is, as shown through the traditional British theatrical structure that is still under the influence of a colonial past, an independent space that is continually influenced by colonial authority.

While Walcott's initial separation of the aural from the visual may not stand out in the "real time" of the actual production, and indeed, it is fair to note the difficulty for the audience in perceiving something so readily, in reading the play, and parsing the performance through his textual notes, this separation of various elements becomes clear. In consciously separating sound from sight, Walcott challenges theatrical history and returns, on one level, to a Shakespearean understanding of theater where "for Shakespeare's age and rivals [including] Ben Jonson—for whom performance was by nature a copyright infringement of the text—and who thought of the spectator as primarily an *auditor*, within a long tradition that the audience is the auditory…Jonson was more rigorous than anyone in his time. If the text was to be performed, what he wanted, with even more vigilance than the Watchman, was an *understander* with 'inquiring eyes,' but more so with 'quick ears'" (Blau 101, emphasis original). Blau's suggestion that performance is an infringement on the written text of the play may be somewhat overstated in contemporary Western theatrical performances in that the

[57] By contrast, *Chicago* keeps its jail structure invisible to privilege the voices of the imprisoned from the very start of the production.

contemporary audience tends to privilege the visual over the aural. The historical sentiment, however, is not out of place—the written text of the play, which certainly does not go hand in hand with the contemporary viewing of a performance, although it is sometimes unavailable to theater-goers, is often easily dismissible as the play's source, and it should not be.

In separating sound from sight, Walcott does more than isolate two historically separate and vital theatrical senses; he unsettles an unconscious connection to which Western twentieth-century theater-goers have grown accustomed and at the same time suggests a Jonsonian view where the text, while it may not supersede contemporary expectations of performance, is just as important as the visual aspects of the play. It becomes Walcott's task, as the performances unfold, to show both that imprisonment need not mean only containment of the body, and that freedom does not singularly mean a body's existence outside of a cage. This is where a separation of the visual from the aural becomes vital. Walcott shows that when these senses are combined with other techniques not usually considered traditional British theatrical techniques, such as Japanese Noh, that a new theater, a Caribbean theater, forms.

In *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, Walcott shows that his conception of Caribbean theater involves an initial separation of the aural from a visual, that a combination of the two, along with a combination of the two in concert with other theatrical forms, in this case, the addition of Noh is necessary to form a New World Caribbean theater.[58] The

[58] Herbert Blau adds that in contemporary theatrical productions "the physiology of the audience…still privileges sight and sound. Whatever the body language, perception is largely determined by the parsing out or oscillation…of eye and ear" (100). When Walcott splits this normal sensorial coupling he re-orders both the audience's reception of the production and of themselves as an audience.

endpoint of these combinations works to underscore a binary of performance through the lens of the mimetic prison. Walcott expects his audience to escape from both the mimetic prison of the physical jail on stage, as well as the dietic, mental prison of the audience's theatrical expectations via the carnival that the contour and the chorus mention, even though no traditional carnival takes place at any point of the play.

Walcott suggests carnival in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* via a mini-mob in the village market scene where Moustique is murdered, and that through this act of violence, the villagers seek play and freedom from colonial law. *Dream on Monkey Mountain*'s carnival is thus similar to the carnivalized moment for which I argue in the scene of Makandal's execution in *The Kingdom of This World* in chapter one of this dissertation. The voices of the villagers in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, underscored just before the mob scene in which they discuss mythical actions that they have not seen, mirrors the bodiless sounds of the conteur and the chorus at the play's start. If Walcott initially separates sight from sound both to point to an earlier form of theater as well as the repressive nature of colonialism, he reunites the aural with the visual, *while adding Japanese theatrical techniques*, to birth a New World Caribbean theater which includes carnival and its corollaries: cultural and theatrical revolution. Such a disruption does not go unnoticed or unpunished during the action of the play. Corporal Lestrade, who represents colonialism's grip, uses the threat of force to keep potential revolution at bay. Part of the reason that the villagers riot against Moustique disguised as Makak is that Lestrade and his threat of violence overly-intimidates them. The open-air village, ironically, becomes just as much a jail cell in which Makak sits. The presence of Lestrade and his gun suggests the presence of invisible bars.

Part of the subtext of the eruption in the village market, then, is the market's repressive nature under colonial law—Corporal Lestrade comments to the market inspector how he virtually rules the market with his pistol. Lestrade transforms the market vendors' wares with the power of his words and the reinforcement of his might. Under Lestrade's command, the villagers literally accept paw paws as melons. When the villagers become a mob that murders Moustique, they are, in effect, staging a revolution to gain their freedom from Lestrade's suppression. Walcott's "carnival" thus echoes the historical carnivals I discussed in chapter one, but with a greater focus on sensorial theatrical elements. Walcott's goal, in the production of *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, is to facilitate the characters' escape from a mimetic jail, and also to facilitate the audience's escape from their understanding of traditional Western theatrical sensorial combinations in order to establish a hybridized Caribbean theater. Walcott wants to achieve the possibility of play that *Chicago's* imprisoned cast demonstrates from the very beginning with their diegetic invisible jail cell. He wants the metaphorical prison that colonial rule represents to be removed altogether and for the audience to demand its removal.

The Jail as a Mimetic Space

In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Michel Foucault discusses the panoptic mechanism and how it "arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately" (200). The major result of the Panopticon is "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power," so that "the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is

discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers" (*Discipline and Punish* 201).[59] Further consideration of the concept of the Panopticon reinforces unidirectional power and knowledge. In both Foucault's ideologized account, and in Walcott's play, the audience sees the imprisoned characters, but the prisoners cannot see the audience.

I extrapolate this concept to think of the performances of *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, set on a classical, enclosed stage, as an informal, yet structured and bordered space where everyone, including the audience and the performers, is in his prescribed place and performs the duties assigned to him—prisoners have no rights before their guards; the jailed characters in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* have no rights beyond being a mimetic visual stimulus for the audience and Walcott wants to reinforce to the audience their power through their permanent visibility of the stage. In such a formulation, the audience serves as a conscious presence for the performers but just like the guards in a Panopticon the audience is not a presence that the performer may anticipate. As Blau notes, "[t]he audience…is not so much a mere congregation of people as a body of thought and desire. It does not exist before the play but is *initiated* or *precipitated* by it; it

[59] Foucault, in structuring his idea of the Pantopticon through Jeremy Bentham's views of the Panopticon as an omnivisual structure, adds that "[i]n view of this, Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must he sure that he may always be so" (201).

is not an entity to begin with but a consciousness constructed. The audience is what *happens* when, performing the signs and passwords of a play, something postulates itself and unfolds in response" (25, emphases original). Audience initiation is what happens, for example, when the crowd begins to clap along with the opening song in *Chicago*. In Blau's understanding, it seems that the audience is separable from the playwright's conception while the play is written, but it is not so once the performers initiate their performances. Once the play begins, "thought" and "desire" locate the audience as an act of the conscious, or, in his words, "a consciousness constructed." The performance triggers the audience and instantly invests it with voyeuristic properties.

Walcott, as noted earlier, through his production notes, considered the audience during his writing of the play via characters and performers and through his constant control of the jail cell. Although Walcott reminds the audience of their traditional visual power, he wants to disabuse them of it. Walcott does not want his audience to be homogenous in their viewership, their interpretation of the play or to maintain a staid role as a fixed audience. Such actions render the audience, and the play, as derivative. They also reinforce colonialism's historical power. To ensure that his audience does not become a unified collective in the same vein as *Chicago*'s audience, however, he, Walcott, does not initiate his audience, at least not in the collective manner Blau suggests. If Walcott initiates his audience, he does so in a splintered manner via the raising and lowering of the jail cell in which each audience member is not necessarily in lock-step with another audience member. There seems to be a few reasons to want to achieve this, chiefly to separate a new Caribbean theater from its British precursors. Still, there are limits to affecting what or how an audience views a performance.

Because of the mimetic presence of the cage, the relationship of the audience to the performers in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* undeniably becomes one of a Panopticon, where the guard-like audience, as holders of power, unconsciously influences the characters. It is important to note that it is precisely the cage's physical presence that makes this possible; this is not the case in *Chicago*, where the jail remains invisible. While the characters in *Chicago* seek freedom, it is only so that they may financially profit from their performances. In *Chicago*, the power rests firmly with the performers and the audience participation is the end result. The performers are aware of the audience but are not threatened by them; they *seek* an audience. In *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, Walcott, as playwright, anticipates his audience's traditional power, and through his production notes, and in pushing his performers past staid expectations for traditional performers—his actors dance, drum, and sing—he sidesteps the traditional parameters of a contemporary Westernized performance to set forth a new Caribbean theater that integrates aspects of African performance, Japanese theater, and sixteenth-century British theater. Walcott seeks versatility from his performers to upset Western audience expectations.

Importing Japanese Performance into *Dream on Monkey Mountain*

Toward the end of the Prologue of *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, Makak's physical presence, particularly his balance, becomes important. This is so for one particular reason: while Makak makes his deposition before a judge and a barrister, played by his cellmates and Corporal Lestrade respectively, the production notes reveal that "*the cage is raised out of sight*" (226). Walcott clearly intends for the audience to

focus on Makak at this moment. While the theater-going audience may listen more intently to Makak's words, especially since he delivers a lengthy monologue, without the cage as a visual impediment, Makak's actions become just as important. He is not a *visual* prisoner at this moment. He is temporarily free, and with such freedom comes an agency of language and action. According to the production notes, Makak drops to his knees during his speech, rises slowly, assumes a warrior's stance, falls, and is finally carried away by the two prisoners. In the cage's presence, Walcott separates vision from sound. The removal of the physical cage also removes traditional theatrical restrictions. Walcott is now free to conjoin the visual and the aural and to have performers sing and dance as well.

I choose to point out Makak's movements and imbalance during his speech both because Walcott's production notes virtually demand them, but also because there is the suggestion that Walcott imports Noh techniques into his production. Makak's physical presence assumes Noh techniques for two reasons: first, to add an element of non-European Western performance to help craft a New World Caribbean theater that is not solely dependent on historical European theater; and second, to include the concept of Japanese balance in his character's performance moves away from the earlier separation of the aural from the visual that was a feature of sixteenth-century Western theater. Makak's imbalance serves as synochdoche for Walcott's own precarious act of writing; Walcott seeks to maintain aspects of traditional British theatrical techniques without kowtowing to them full bore. Walcott does not shift from the British techniques so much as import Japanese techniques to create a new theatrical form. Moustique's imbalance as a performer becomes a reflection of Walcott as a playwright. Both Moustique and

Walcott seek a means of agency that does not rely on fixed past structures assigned by colonialism. A secured Makak may only act or move in one manner; a Western-theater influenced Walcott may only write in one way, that is, with an eye to maintaining traditional Western theatrical historical forms and structures. Through disrupting Makak's fixed space and his balance, Walcott disrupts what critics may request as his own writerly expectations.

At this point I would like to focus on how I understand Makak's posture and balance to be influenced by Noh as a means to examine Walcott's quest for a new Caribbean theater through his writing. Eugenio Barba defines the intersection of theater and anthropology as "the study of human beings' socio-cultural and physiological behavior in a performance situation" (6). Barba enhances his argument with the claim that bodies perform differently on a daily basis compared to theatrical performances in which, in the latter, bodies implement "extra-daily" movements. Extra-daily activities, Barba claims, create new movements, and thus new interpretations. This extra-daily movement is frequently seen in Japanese Noh theater where the actor moves by sliding his heels, rather than by the traditional Western performance technique of lifting them. This results in a discernible change of balance in the performer (35). Although Barba's focus on the punctilios of performance seems fastidious, it addresses one of the basic elements of a stage performer's craft: his very *presence* on the stage and the effect his presence has on his performance through his movements. To have an actor shuffle his feet rather than lift them may seem like a small aspect of his performance, but Barba suggests that such a minute degree of difference in movement may ripple through the play and affect every other performance, and this may influence other characters'

movements, both via grandiose movements, as well as moments of calmness and inactivity. Walcott's inclusion of a main character that is slightly off-kilter also reinforces the peripheral position of the postcolonial subject, and by extension, Walcott as a postcolonial writer.

Walcott references his inclusion of Japanese theatrical forms in the instructions for *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. In an interview with William Baer, Walcott speaks directly to his inclusion of Japanese Noh theater:

> And so, when I started to write this play, I remembered an almost inhuman man named Makak Rougier—I suppose his name meant 'Rougier's monkey,' because he worked for a man named Rougier—who used to come into town and get terrifyingly drunk. He'd roar up and down the main street, fling things around, and get arrested. At the same time, I was influence (sic) by Japanese Nō plays and the whole Kabuki thing. I thought that I could see in it the truly ethnic West Indian dances—some of the surviving celebrating or warrior dances—the same kind of force you get in the Japanese theater. We have a similar percussive feel we use flute and drums—and we have a great oral tradition in the islands that gives us a reference for speech. So I tried to combine these elements into a play….(Baer 19)

In his comments, Walcott privileges the implementation of dancers in his production although, as I noted before, *Dream on Monkey Mountain* is not in the musical theater genre. Walcott's comments further suggest that, like Japanese theater, dance and theater are inseparable, a point which Barba reinforces: "The tendency to make a distinction between dance and theater, characteristic of our [Western] culture, reveals a profound wound…which continuously risks drawing the actor towards a denial of the body….[t]o an Asian performer, this distinction seems absurd…he would shake his head with amazement if we asked him to explain the difference between dance and theater" (10). Because the Westernized separation of dance and theater, as Barba notes, seems absurd unless in a musical theater forum, it seems that Walcott seeks the melding of both not just

because he sees a resemblance between Caribbean and Japanese "force," but also because he sees a distinct New World Caribbean performance that incorporates various heritages that is reflected in a cosmopolitan culture, most particularly in carnival.

Christopher Balme addresses the historical effect of British theater in their colonies when he notes that "[t]he normative aesthetics of realistic drama were exported *intact* to the farthest-flung colonies and exerted an unmistakable influence on indigenous dramatists and directors. The polyphonic potential of theater, particularly the interplay of music, dance, and dialogue found in certain Western theatrical genres, tended to be treated pejoratively in comparison to the ritualistic dialogue-based model of Shaw and Ibsen" (4, emphasis original). Balme's noting that the British theatrical form must be "intact" suggests that any tampering with the form disrupts it to the point that it corrupts it. Walcott's inclusion of Japanese theatrical forms along with his use of "music, dance, and dialogue" is thus as revolutionary as carnival. He maintains certain Western theatrical rules to prove his knowledge of the form (such as the three-act structure), but he adds to them because "Caribbeanness," that is, creolization, insists that he does. As Édouard Glissant notes, Caribbean history must exist as an "expression of lived reality" and the "collective relationships of men with their environment [in] a space that keeps changing and in a time that is constantly being altered" (69, 70). Glissant adds that the "struggle against a single History for the cross-fertilization of histories means repossessing both a true sense of one's time and identity: proposing in an unprecedented way a revaluation of power" (93). Just as carnival is ultimately a mosaic of heritages, ethnicities and history, so is *Dream on Monkey Mountain* and Walcott's attempt to re-examine living Caribbean history to make room for New World citizens.

Walcott melds the encoded movements of the Noh performers with the specific actions of the historical figure of Makak Rougier. His combination of the performance strategies of Japanese music, dance, and theater with the European use of actors and story develops an anti-Western mode of Caribbean performance that is not overly-indebted to traditions such as the frowned-upon interplay of music, dance and dialogue. *Dream on Monkey Mountain* is, in fact, very much a Noh performance. One may read it as a Noh performance set in the Caribbean, which integrates Caribbean themes rather than a Western performance with Japanese characteristics. More than the similarities between Japanese and Caribbean culture that Walcott notes, the greatest similarity is that Noh, like Caribbean theater, is also a hybridized form of theater. Leonard Cabell Pronko notes that contemporary Noh became recognizable at the end of the fourteenth century: "a blending of several earlier forms, both native Japanese and Chinese transplants, Noh drew chiefly upon *dengaku* and *saragaku.* The former was at first a folklike dance associated with rice planting and harvesting…*saragaku* began as a variety-type popular entertainment incorporating mime, acrobatics, juggling and music. By the fourteenth century it had moved in the direction of *dengaku* which had in turn honored certain elements from *saragaku*" (73, 74). The important aspect of Noh, then, lies in its hybrid nature, a quality that Walcott recognizes as central to Caribbean existence, and which he expresses in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*.

There are further similarities between Caribbean culture and Japanese Noh. Pronko notes that Noh contains three main elements: mimicry, song, and dance. Each of these qualities is vitally important in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. Moustique mimics Makak through singing and dancing and they become important reasons for his murder.

These qualities should not be underestimated. "Noh," Pronko states, "was born on the day when mimicry—and the dramatic incident it implied—was integrated with song and dance" (74). There are other essential elements necessary to Noh that are present in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*: "Noh plays…fall into one of five categories: god, warrior, woman, frenzy, and demon plays. A full Noh performance includes all five plays in that order, which conforms to the aesthetic rule of *jo*, *ha*, and *kyū*, or introduction, development, and conclusion" (75). All five of these characteristics are present in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*: Makak's major delusion is that he is a god; he becomes a warrior because of this idea; a woman fuels his belief; there is a frenzy epitomized by the mob at the market; and Moustique mistakes a collection of villagers as devils. Pronko adds that "[t]here is only one true actor in the [Noh] performance, the *shite*, who impersonates the central character," and one might note that Moustique, who impersonates Makak, fits this character (75).[60]

The Variable Audience in Variable Space: Postcolonial Theater, Audiences, Slaves and Prisoners in the Caribbean

In 1992, two performance artists, Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, presented themselves as "undiscovered Amerindians from an island in the Gulf of Mexico that had somehow been overlooked by Europeans for five centuries" (145). They

[60] See Ezra Pound's *The Classic Not Theater of Japan* (1916) that notes that in Noh theater, there is also the *Tsure*, who is the follower of the hero, the *Waki*, who is the guest or guests, (very often a wandering priest), and the *Hannya*, an evil spirit" (15). Know too that the term "kabuki" assumed the Japanese characters for "song" (ka), "dance" (*bu*), and "ability" or "skill" (*ki*) and originally came from the verb *kabuku*, which meant "to stand at an angle" or to be off balance. See Don Kenny *On Stage in Japan. Kabuki. Bunraku. Noh. Gagaku.* (1974).

caged themselves for the exhibit and called it *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit* (1992). They named their mythical homeland "Guatinau," and they called themselves "Guatinauis."[61] Fusco notes that part of what she was after in the performance was the "construction of ethnic Otherness as essentially *performative* and located in the body" (149, emphasis original). Such "otherness" comes through in the documentary that captures the performance, especially in relation to the live audience who observes Fusco and Gómez-Peña. The audience's individual responses to the performance range from total belief in the authenticity of the couple as Amerindians, to a belief that their performance is just that, a *performance*, and that Fusco and Gómez-Peña *act* convincingly as Amerindians.

What initially makes Fusco and Gómez-Peña's audience interesting is their ambivalence: there is no consensus as to who believes what about their imprisonment. The reception of the performance remains open-ended. The audience does not know where it begins or ends; they are forced to rely on sometimes faulty historical knowledge and this delimits their collective power. This dispersal of audience expectation and participation inverts Fusco and Gómez-Peña's performance whereby, due to the audience's varied responses, the performance of the audience becomes more important than what Fusco and Gómez-Peña put forth. What further makes the audience interesting is that they become the only variable aspects of the performance. In thinking of my

[61] Fusco notes in "The Other History of Intercultural Performance" (1994), that their "performance was based on the once popular European and North American practice of exhibiting indigenous people from Africa, Asia, and the Americas in zoos, parks, taverns, museums, freak shows, and circuses. While this tradition reached the height of its popularity in the 19th century, it was actually begun by Christopher Columbus, who returned from his first voyage in 1493 with several Arawaks, one of whom was left on display at the Spanish Court for two years" (148).

concept of moments of carnival, it is safe to say that such moments shift from Fusco and Gómez-Peña to the audience in that there is a variable response. Wherever Gómez-Peña and Fusco end up in the world geographically—Madrid, Minnesota, or Chicago—they maintain *their* performance. It is the reaction of the city's population that changes and individualizes each performance. As Fusco necessarily notes, she and Gómez-Peña only mimic the practice of exhibiting humans in cages, a move instituted by Columbus when he delivered Amerindians to the Spanish Court for display in the late fifteenth century. They essentially parody an element of Spanish colonization and their performance, in its own way, elicits a "carnivalized" reaction from the audience in which, again, I understand carnival to mean "rioutous revelry."

What differentiates Fusco and Gómez-Peña's performance from *Dream on Monkey Mountain* is the lack of scripted agency of the performers in provoking the audience. As Fusco and Gómez-Peña note, and as clips from the documentary show, they mimic stereotypical understandings of caged indigenous people. More than in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, the audience of Fusco and Gómez-Peña affects the overall performance. I am thus interested in the cage's effect on this variable audience who, I argue, in their variable receptions, remain individual spectators rather than a collective audience. Such an examination gestures toward Walcott's own relationship with his audience but in this case shows even more closely how a splintered audience with individualized responses relates to a staged/caged performance.

In thinking of Fusco and Gómez-Peña's performance and its relationship to their audience's performance, I would like to look briefly at the response of the guards at the presentations who, Fusco notes, had a difficult time when she and Gómez-Peña were in

various world locations: “One of our zoo guards in Spain actually broke down and cried at the end of our performance, after receiving a letter from a young man condemning Spain for having colonized indigenous Americans.” She also notes that “[o]ne guard in Washington and another in Chicago became so troubled by their own cognitive dissonance that they left the performance early” (159). Fusco’s recording of these guards’ reactions underlines their forced respective realizations. What these guards “protect” is neither the performance at hand, nor the museum’s performative property, but rather a *fixed* understanding of what Homi Bhabha terms “mixture” and “purity.” The guards are there to *enforce* otherness, and to make sure that it does not affect normality, which, in this case, are the people outside of the cage. The guards keep purity in check and “mixedness” at bay. As Bhabha notes, “[t]o identify the ‘play’ on the border as purity and mixture and to see it as an allegory of law and desire reduces the articulation of racial and sexual difference to what is dangerously close to becoming a circle rather than a spiral of difference” (74). The guards, to put it simply, ensure tradition and continuity. They allow the audience to react collectively in the manner that a collective audience descended from colonial powers have historically reacted toward imprisoned others, not necessarily with a desire to see the prisoners continually imprisoned, but not with a desire to see them released either. The prisoners serve as entertainment. This familiarity and its resultant indifference is, of course, not the collective opinion. As intimated earlier, people’s responses to Fusco and Gómez-Peña range from acceptance to outrage. A collective audience response is a difficult feat to accomplish, because although the cage acts as a contained stage for Fusco and Gómez-Peña, the audience’s space is variable.

The audience's space, which is the museum itself, is not a fixed architectural theatrical space. Unlike the audience of *Chicago* or *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, the members of the audience are not consigned to fixed seating, nor are they encouraged to project themselves into the cage as the audience in *Chicago* is. Fusco and Gómez-Peña's cage finally eliminates performer/audience intimacy and, with that, a general sympathy for the imprisoned. Thus *some* members of Fusco and Gómez-Peña's audience, who unconsciously reinforce Columbus' fifteenth-century sensibilities of placing Amerindians on display in the Spanish court through their indifference to caged people, (un)consciously reinforce the idea that those who do not look like them deserve to be separated. Still, this desire of separation of the imprisoned from the free is not a consensus, and there are spectators who would rather see Fusco and Gómez-Peña free. One such spectator leaves a voice message to the museum in Chicago saying "I'd like to withdraw my membership. I'm shocked and amazed at an exhibit I just saw of two people in a cage. I'm disgusted with the museum at this point. Goodbye" (*The Couple in the Cage*). Another irate museum attendant leaves a voice message that says "Feeding people [in cages] as if they were animals is completely disgusting. I've never seen anything like this before in my life" (*The Couple in the Cage*). Another attendant was fine with the performance and stated that he wanted to get into the cage to dance with Fusco.

It is the variable and open theater space of the museum in this case that allows room for dissent and subversion and the lack of a collective audience. While Walcott influences his audience through a variable prison, in this instance, the audience's space becomes the provocative variable. Not only is the audience space unbordered, but the very bars of the prison are always porous. In an enclosed theatrical space, such as in

Chicago, the prison's invisible bars act like a convex lens to converge and concentrate feelings; in Fusco and Gómez-Peña's exhibit, the visible bars have the inverse effect because the audience's space, the museum itself, is so open and unconfined.

From Repression to Opposition to Play

Lestrade, the guard in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, represents the guards in Fusco and Gómez-Peña's performance. Unlike those guards, he is aware of his role as a guardian of purity, and because *Dream on Monkey Mountain* takes place in a fixed space, there is a greater chance for a collective audience response. Lestrade's role is vital in the play because he serves as the liaison between colonial authority and New World resistance. His interaction with Makak, for example, moves from representing the former to commiserating with the latter upon Moustique's death. I would like to look more closely at Moustique's death as the subversion of the rule of colonial law, an attempt to secure play and freedom, and an escape from traditional "enclosed" performance to achieve an open "carnivalized" performance. By this I mean that Moustique dissociates himself from the colonial expectations of ethnic hierarchy in a similar manner to Trinidad's carnival, which, when appropriated by freed slaves, upends colonial expectations for black "performance," for example, by moving away from servility and toward jubilant celebration.

Moustique's performance is not just an act perpetrated for his audience at the market, but one done in reaction to an oppressive force. While he is a generic Noh character, Moustique is also a physical representation of Walcott's attempt to restructure classical theater into one that incorporates the New World and the Caribbean. In *Dream*

on Monkey Mountain, Walcott first unveils Moustique as Makak's sidekick and a malcontent who desires that Makak re-evaluate their poverty, develop ambition, and actively seek economic prosperity. This is seen most pointedly when Makak heals a villager and Moustique seeks to profit from the event: "'And who heal the man? / Makak! Makak! / All your deliverance lie in this man…So further the cause, brothers and sisters' [*He opens his haversack and holds it before him*]" (251). It is when Makak reveals his desire for profit and his disdain for the villagers that the villagers revolt. His pursuit of profit reveals him as ideologically similar to the colonists and the villagers, as a result, rebuke him. The entire scene devolves into a tug-of-war between colonial might and creole revolution.

Just before Moustique appears in the market scene where he dies at the hands of the mob, Corporal Lestrade lectures the market inspector about the power of legal authority whereby he demonstrates legal power by purposely complimenting, but misnaming, a vendor's fruit: "That was a melon," the market inspector informs Lestrade. "I know," Lestrade replies. "But in the opinion of the pistol, and for the preservation of order, and to avoid any argument, we both was satisfied it was a paw paw." The market inspector replies "I am beginning to understand the law," (260, 261). Such a law is based on the same emphasis of vision that Walcott employs at the start of the play. Before they accost the market vendor, Lestrade informs the market inspector that he wears a pistol "not to destroy but to protect" (259). As Bhabha suggests, Lestrade "protects" tradition and the *status quo*, and Bhabha's separation of purity from mixture. The pistol, of course, is both a symbol of legal authority as well as a metonym for prison and social death. If one does something antithetical to what the pistol represents, that is, if one breaks the law

or flouts its jurisdictions, then he is subject to jail. Just like prisoners in a Panopticon, the ability of the prisoner to see the guard is important and, it is vital that the prisoner understands the omnipresent threat of the guard. It becomes important that the law and its representatives see possible miscreants, or miscreant activity, even if the law's representative is physically absent, and that what the representative sees either falls within or without fixed parameters of what the law considers to be pure. Lestrade's renaming of the fruit reminds the vendors of colonialism's omnipresence. Lestrade's presence converts the open marketplace into an open Panopticon. There is no room for nuance; the law is either "right" or "wrong." It is up to the law, and not nature, to determine whether a paw paw is a melon. Creolization, miscegenation, and any other form of mixture become illegal, and thus unacceptable.

Moustique understands that the law is neither Manichean nor easily explainable, and he attempts various moves, similar to traditional Trinidadian carnival performances, to subvert that law, including masking (visually changing his appearance) by pretending to be Makak, making fun of the law's representatives, and changing his name. He also performs for the members of the market, using their belief in him, disguised as Moustique, to influence them. In this way, Moustique attempts to appropriate the law's ability to increase the relativity of reality. Just as the law can transform a paw paw into a melon, Moustique can transform himself into either Makak, or a lion. Moustique at first occupies a liminal space—he represents both carnivalized performance as well as Western tradition. The villagers, however, like Western authority, deem this unacceptable. Moustique's fatal flaw is twofold: first, he does not understand that the might that stands behind the law represents repression, and he does not have either

corporal Lestrade, or a pistol, to intimidate the villagers. Second, he does not understand that the community that the villagers foster is one based upon resistance toward colonial attitudes; Moustique believes that the community forms through carnivalized play. Instead, Moustique attempts to appropriate the authority of the law through performance and bravado, and the crowd wisely understands this as his attempt to mimic authority: "Die in your ignorance!" Moustique chastises the crowd. "Live in darkness still! You don't know what you want!" (271). The crowd, of course, wants only freedom from suppression. They want out of the metaphorical prison to which colonialism subjects them, the authority that forces them to accept that a melon is a paw paw.

This collective rage is a far cry from the emotions at the start of the scene, when Moustique, disguised as Makak, enjoys the full support of the crowd at the market. At the start of the scene, the popular Moustique reinforces this support at the expense of two representatives of the law who represent traditional Western colonial power: Corporal Lestrade, and the white Market Inspector Caiphas J. Pamphilion. When they enter the scene Moustique is immediately disdainful of them both as representatives of unremitting colonial law:

> CORPORAL. You There!
> MOUSTIQUE. Who it is dare to call Makak by name? Which man dare call the lion by his name?
> CORPORAL. A corporal of police.
> MOUSTIQUE. [*Turning to the* CROWD] I laugh. I laugh. A corporal of police? Makak have come to Quatre Chemin Market and neither corporal nor spiritual stopping him today [*Pointing at the* CROWD] *Dire, About-ma-la-ka-jonga*. (265, 266)

Moustique does not subscribe to the restrictive authority of the law at this moment, or at least this is the image he projects onto the crowd. He ingratiates himself with the villagers with his use of creolized language. Not only does he scoff at Lestrade's position as the

law's representative but he both assumes Makak's identity and describes himself as a lion in the vein of African tribes who believe that humans could assume the forms of certain jungle cats.[62] At this moment, Moustique represents a conflation of heritages and theatrical forms—the separation of the aural and the visual signals historical English theater; the inclusion of mimicry suggests traditional Noh features, and the metaphorical ability to transform into an animal, as seen in *The Kingdom of This World* in chapter one, represents African tradition. This fusion leads to a New World Caribbean theater.

When Moustique is the center of attention, he is a performer, and the villagers are a willing, collective audience. He is, in effect, a carnival masquerader who performs without regard for authority. He loses the villagers' faith, however, when a spider startles him, and his masquerade falls apart. This is a vital moment in the play. At this moment, Walcott's production notes, as well as the dialogue, shifts its focus to sight and vision, where sight and vision represent the Panopticon and hence traditional Western authority: "BASIL *looks* for the spider*;* [a]s he gets nearer, [Basil] *looks* into his *eyes;* MOUSTIQUE, for that is who it is, *stares* at him*;* MOUSTIQUE *shows* the mask*;* MAKAK *looks around;* MAKAK *forcing his eyes open…peers* into MOUSTIQUE'S *gaze* and what he *sees* there darkens his *vision*" (269, 271, 272, 274). This concentration on vision is not limited to the production notes. The dialogue shows an increased focus on sight, vision, and tangible items that the villagers can see: CROWD: "Show us! Show us!" (270). Still, the crowd

[62] See Phillip A. Howard's *Changing History. Afro-Cuban Cabildos and Societies of Color in the Nineteenth Century* (1998) about the deification of leopards by African tribes including the Ekoi or Ejagham of southwestern Cameroon and southeastern Nigeria. The leopard society of Ngbe, for example, paid homage to their "masculine spiritual patron god, the leopard, who symbolized perfection, elegance, and strength." Howard adds that "[t]he Yoruba believed that living persons could transform themselves into various animals in order to perform both good and bad acts for the entire group (22)."

only demands visual proof at the instigation of Lestrade and the market inspector. It is only when the crowd falls upon Moustique that sound becomes important: "Kill him! Break his legs! Beat him! Kill him! [*They beat him to a noise of sticks rattling, tins banging and screaming women. The* CORPORAL *stands apart, then he moves towards them*]" (271). When the sound synchronizes with the visual, in a move for freedom, carnival occurs.

Just as the Panopticon heightens the visual at the unconscious expense of sound, Moustique's mob senses his traditional, and thus "panoptical" ambitions and, at the insistence of Lestrade, focus on heightened vision:

> CORPORAL. Then show us. You. You Basil, the carpenter, take it and bring it for the warrior.
>
> MAKAK. Take it.
>
> [BASIL *looks for the spider, holds it in his cupped palm and brings it towards* MAKAK *and places it on his body*. MAKAK *winces, enduring it. Shuddering*.]
>
> BASIL. [*As he gets nearer, looks into his eyes*] You cannot run fast enough, eh? Moustique! That is not Makak! His name is Moustique!
>
> MOUSTIQUE. Eh?
>
> [*A man comes nearer,* MOUSTIQUE, *for that is who it is, stares at him, sweating*. BASIL steps forward]
>
> LABOURER. Wait! Wait! It is Basil the carpenter. Let him speak.
>
> [*A rustling stillness*]
>
> BASIL. I have little to say. Why should I talk? Look for yourselves. The tongue is on fire, but the eyes are dead. (269)

The crowd senses in Moustique the repression that goes along with colonial law and they become as demanding of Moustique as Basil and Lestrade who egg them on. Although they eventually move toward a carnivalized moment of resistance, it is a carnival without any real joy or play. In seeking to overthrow the authority of the Panopticon, the villagers overcompensate. While it seems as if carnival is the end product of their riot, it only lasts for the moment in which they overthrow Moustique. Once their actions drive them past this joy, once the mob establishes themselves as murderers rather than seekers of

freedom, they occupy a space of anarchy and they destroy the fragile formulation of carnival. Freedom achieved, they go too far. They eschew play, which is what Moustique argues for before he succumbs to the rhetoric of colonial rule, but which he demonstrates when he teases the market inspector and Lestrade at the start of the scene.

Lestrade allows the mob to proceed because moving past colonial law into a carnival performance and then *past* this momentary carnival seems to lead the mob right back into a space where colonial law once again rules. The mob's herd mentality and its lust for violence is the reason why carnival is only momentary. Unlike the beginning of the play when Walcott manipulates the prison as a mimetic function and raises and lowers it at various moments, the mob is suppressed by Lestrade's role as authoritative figure, even in an open space, and cannot think individually. Moustique epitomizes a humanized form of carnival that personifies the play that carnival embraces. Because Moustique shifts from play to seriousness, which the villagers associate with logic and colonial rule, it becomes too much for the villagers to accept, just as it was difficult for Fusco and Gómez-Peña to have their audiences think as a single collective. The variation of space restricts the ability to have individuals enjoy freedom as individuals. Moustique does, but only because in disguising himself as Makak does he become a masquerader. In pretending to be Makak, Moustique becomes a midnight robber, a traditional Trinidadian carnival figure who performs as an individual and accosts his audience individually. In doing so, he strips away the anxiety of influence of collected thought both on his end, and in the audience. Moustique does not quite succeed as a midnight robber because a necessary part of the robber's performance is in dealing with single spectators rather than a collective audience.

Undermining the Individual Audience—Trinidad Carnival's Midnight Robber

What makes the midnight robber unique is that his relationship to his audience is predicated on an individual interaction. There is neither the collective understanding of the *Chicago* audience nor the fractured audience of the Fusco and Gómez-Peña production. The midnight robber's audience is usually limited to one person so that there is neither an unequal power dynamic nor shifts in power. Beyond this, the midnight robber is a paradox. Although a thief, he is not imprisoned. Although a visually fearsome character, he is essentially a figure of mischief, although not quite a trickster. The midnight robber traditionally appears in broad daylight. His main characteristic is his verbosity. He is known to speak in a monotonous, yet rapid-fire drone which he uses both for self-aggrandizement and for bombastic claims about nature. Dressed in all black, the midnight robber performs in the street and, as a result, is restricted neither by a prison, nor an enclosed stage. His *modus operandi* is that he intimidates passers-by into giving him money. The midnight robber holds power via the absence of a physical cage, and because of this, his visual presentation does not match the audience's expectation for his verbal performance. He thus shifts the traditional performer/audience paradigm by upending expectations. Although he is a "robber," he does not accost his victims physically; he does so instead with verbal acuity. He does not threaten his "victims" so much as he confuses them with his hybridized language. Like characters at the start of *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, he separates his physical appearance from his aural presentation. His speech is not based on aggression so much as a string of nonsensical statements. Like Walcott does at the start of *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, the robber

separates the aural from the visual to discombobulate the audience who expects a traditional performance. Yet he also acts as a figure of death. In *Dream on Monkey Mountain* there is a conflict between Basil, the actual figure of death and Moustique, not because Moustique seeks to become the figure of death, but in his pursuit of play he seeks to undermine death's, and by extension Basil's, authority. Although the midnight robber suggests death with his grim appearance, he does not want to enforce it. He seeks play through his words and resistance through his actions.

Ronald Amoroso's one act Trinidadian play, *The Master of Carnival* (1973), focuses on a Trinidadian masquerader, Delpino, who, each year, spends a princely sum of money to outfit himself in a costume for the carnival celebrations even though his family is poor. Although Delpino's reputation is still strong—he won the king of carnival competition seven years in a row—he did not win the previous year's competition and the common feeling is that he is past his performative prime. Delpino wants to make one final grand gesture in the upcoming carnival in order to salvage his professional pride. He spends a tremendous amount of money on material to create an Old Testament king costume that his wife alters until the last moments before the start of Carnival Tuesday morning, just before he sets out for the parade. After many tribulations, Delpino finally performs and eventually wins the king of carnival crown. Just as the results are announced, however, he expires. The impression is that Delpino, like Faust, exchanges his soul for his success. This is shown through the character of a midnight robber who bookends the play. Invisible but audible at the start and the end of the production, the robber apparently serves as a figure of death, just like the character Basil in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. This is not the case. The midnight robber only wants to be the master

of carnival and wants supreme authority over the play. Delpino's death does not come at the hands of the midnight robber but in his attempt to be the master of play. At the start of the play the bodiless robber proclaims himself Master of Carnival, a claim that directly opposes Delpino, who wants the same title:

> DELPINO. Ursula. Ah know it hard on you, but this year we have to come better than all the other years. And that will take some doing. But it has to be done. This year, Delpino, 'the Master of Carnival'. The man who win the crown seven years in a row, the man who they thief last year, have to get back the crown. He have to come out on top once again. Not second, or third, or fourth or fifth. Not the runner up or 'also ran' but number one. Numero uno! The King! And that is why we have to aim for perfection and nothing less Ursula. Nothing less. (3)

Like *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, the production notes in *The Master of Carnival* separate sound from sight: "The stage is in total darkness, the sound of whistles fill the air. The Midnight Robbers are roaming the streets. A voice is heard chanting." Amoroso, however, privileges sound for a different reason than Walcott does. His focus is on the daily birth of carnival which includes the imps who populate it. Rather than refer to any Western authority, Amoroso focuses on carnival as a *sui generis* event. Amoroso's midnight robber is not a commentator on colonial history, but solely on carnival as it exists in the moment: "STOP! / Drop your keys and bow your knees, / And call me the Prince of Darkness, / Carnival Master. / For it I gather my teeth and stamp my feet, / It will cause a great disaster. / So, bow your knees, you Infernal Traitor! / And call me your only Master!" This midnight robber follows the traditional script for a midnight robber—he identifies himself through braggadocio and through bombastic rhetoric, demands fealty from his audience. He is Delpino's antagonist, but indirectly so since he remains offstage. The next voice(s) that are heard are also offstage and are directly reminiscent of *Dream on Monkey Mountain*'s chorus:

VOICES. (offstage singing): Carnival is a bacchanal,
We don't care,
We drink we rum and tumble down,
We don't care. [x2]

These voices, sung in concert with the midnight robber, serve the same function as the conteur and chorus in Dream on Monkey Mountain: they locate characters who exist on the boundaries. In this case these characters serve at the behest of carnival. Carnival becomes its own authority and demands payment for the freedom that it provides. After Delpino's death, the invisible midnight robber is heard again, making his own claim to be the master of carnival: "There's no gun, no dagger, that's made of steel, Can make me feel or make me heal. My motto today is KILL, PLUNDER and SLAY. I have no sympathy upon human being, who's not with me is my enemy, And dust will be their destiny" (*The Master of Carnival*, emphasis original). Although it may seem that he does, the midnight robber does not murder Delpino with his words. The midnight robber shows that he, and not Delpino, is the Master of carnival. While Delpino seeks superiority through performance, the midnight robber gains his authority through orality. By separating the visual reality from the aural expectation, the midnight robber subverts the power that an audience traditionally possesses but, as an unlawful being in name, if not in actions, he manages to continue to occupy the margins that carnival centralizes. Although an outlaw, the midnight robber avoids the confines of prison as well as the confines of the stage. His dialogue is meant entirely as aside; he addresses the audience, not the other characters. In the absence of a colonial figure like Lestrade, however, Amoroso's voices offer a direct commentary on New World culture.

While *Master of Carnival* suggests the absence of a guard that protects Bhabha's purity, the midnight robber actually serves as a competent proxy. Carnival players

achieve play and freedom without the traditional figure of the guard, but with the midnight robber as stand-in. In accosting his audience in a *verbal* rather than a *physical* manner, and by accosting persons individually, the midnight robber corrupts the audience's traditional power. He achieves this in three ways: his performance, as mentioned, does not take place on a stage so he reduces the traditional distance and space allowed for audience interpretation. He addresses single spectators rather than large crowds and thus eliminates the comfort that an audience member usually retains as part of a large collective. Finally, the robber elevates the spectator's self-consciousness through one-on-one interaction: the robber's performance is a monologue that stuns the individual. This is where Moustique as midnight robber fails: he attempts to address the audience as a similar-thinking group rather than as individuals. Rather than gain their support, he whips them into a frenzy. Since what the midnight robber actually steals is expectations, it is provident for him to deal with individuals rather than a crowd; it is easier to placate an individual. The midnight robber, as a purveyor of African performance and a descendent of African slaves, incorporates aspects of African nations into a New World performance. To put it differently, the midnight robber represents carnival, and a New World performance, that attempts to serve as its own source of authority.

Brian Honoré, who plays a midnight robber in Trinidad's carnival annually, notes that the "[t]he bravery of the Robber, established most often in the context of a wrong done to his family generations ago, recalls the Emancipation tradition that is at the heart of the Carnival of Trinidad and Tobago. The desire to outwit and to outtalk his rivals, to become the King of the Robbers, lies at the heart of this mas'" (130). The midnight

robber attempts to conscript whatever authority an audience traditionally possesses or *thinks* it possesses. While the robber's talk may seem to be nonsensical at times, in terms of its ideas and construction, it is not so in terms of its syntax: midnight robbers tend to speak in "grammatically correct" British English, and they are known for their use of formality. They refer to men and women as "sir" and "madam." This provides another robber paradox in which a fearsome image combines with unexpected politeness. What becomes interesting about the robber's speech, beyond its odd politeness, is its colonial source. His speech becomes a move to subvert all the forms of authority that colonialism honors. Crowley notes two main sources as the material that the robber conscripts for his speeches: West Indian primers used in primary schools that were published in Britain and that emphasized British history and exploits, and the Bible, which was "at least as familiar in West Indian homes as the school books" (270). Such a religion-inflected speech is seen in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* where Moustique verbally spars with one of the ill Josephus' friends:

> MOUSTIQUE. [*Crosses himself, prays swiftly, then in the same whisper*]…And give us this day our daily bread…and is that self I want to talk to you about, friend. Whether you could spare a little bread…and lead us not into temptation…because we are not thieves, stranger…but deliver us from evil…and we two trespassers but forgive us brother…for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory…for our stomach sake, stranger.
>
> FIRST PEASANT. [*Keeping the whisper*] Where you come from, stranger…now and at the hour of our death, amen.
>
> MOUSTIQUE. [*Whispering*] From Monkey Mountain, in Forestiere quarter…and forgive us our trespasses…amen, is me and my friend and old man…in the name of the father…and we was sleeping in a hut by the road there, when we see you all coming, with all those lights, I thought it was the devil.
>
> FIRST PEASANT. …Now and at the hour of our death, amen….It ain't have much to eat, stranger. We taking the sick man down to the hospital, and it have just enough for all of us here…forever and ever, amen. (244, 245)

The intertwining of religious speech with localized actions—that of the Caribbean poor that Walcott mentions as an inherent property of Caribbean life and its theater—gives the scene a peculiar valence because it reinscribes colonial forms of authority. As the interaction clearly shows, Moustique and the peasant marginalize the power of the words. The prayers are not their central focus and one must literally read between the lines to get to the conversation's true intent.[63] The difference between these two characters, Moustique and the peasant, is seen in how they choose to position their snippets of prayer. The peasant tends to end his side of the dialogue with prayer while Moustique tends to end with his own thoughts. The exchange between the characters is all verbal thrusts and parries: the peasant tolerates Moustique; Moustique feigns sympathy. Their constant whispering, on the surface, seems to be courteous and a sign of respect for the expiring Josephus, but may also be a sign of the illicit. Moustique slyly says that he believes the group of peasants, "with all those lights," to be the devil, when he knows that any potential deceit rests with him. He is there to swindle these people out of food or money, and even though he will not do it maliciously, he will do it. This is also seen in the first person plural "we" that Moustique uses, although he is unaccompanied. Although he uses the first person singular early in the interaction, it is only toward the end of the interaction that he fully appropriates the "I" and separates himself from the as-yet-to-arrive Makak: "is me and my friend and old man," and when he admits that he believes the peasant and his group were the devil: "with all those lights, I thought it was the devil" (244).

[63] Walcott argues in *The Antilles* that "…in the Antilles poverty is poetry, with a "v," *une vie*, a condition of life as well as of imagination" (14).

Balme gives this scene a syncretic reading where he focuses on the faith healing aspects that occur when the real Makak later arrives and heals Josephus.[64] Although Balme acknowledges the traditional religious understanding of syncretism in the scene, he also adds a performative element to its interpretation: "In contrast to religious syncretism, which is usually an extended process brought about by friction and interchange between cultures, theatrical syncretism is in most cases a conscious, programmatic strategy to fashion a new form of theater in the light of colonial or post-colonial experience. It is very often written and performed in a europhone language, but almost always manifests varying degrees of bi- or multilingualism"(2).

Walcott, by juxtaposing the language of a Westernized Christian prayer with a Caribbean patois, aims both to render the Caribbean language more familiar and to render it even more complex to the reader/audience unfamiliar with its native construction. Like the midnight robber, this creolized language is both a cheeky jab at traditional Western language, and a means of owning the language. The profusion of ellipses in the dialogue points to the spaces or gaps where even to attempt full translation would be foolhardy, a point that Kirsten Hastrup elucidates in *A Passage to Anthropology* (1995): "A theoretical point also worth making is that we cannot properly translate cultures into our own without destroying their specificity. Taken to the extreme, translation implies a transformation of the unknown into something known" (23). Walcott does not write the play as an artifact to be interpreted, translated, and categorized; it is to be performed and appreciated, but not to be interpreted at the expense of its specificity.

[64] See Balme's *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-colonial Drama* (1999).

Both Moustique and the midnight robber provide an antidote to the history of colonialism through speech. By corrupting the "standard" English through odd semantics rather than through outright babble, they seek to manipulate the power that colonial language wields. Such linguistic power is, at best, short-lived, as seen when Moustique gets lynched in the village. This is why the midnight robber must be both itinerant and appeal to individuals rather than crowds.

Dream on Monkey Mountain ends how it begins, with Makak in jail, and with a focus on language. In the last scene, the song from the prologue repeats, but this time, Makak is serenaded by his cellmate, Tigre, rather than the bodyless conteur and chorus: "Mooma, don't cry, / You son in the jail a'ready / You son in the jail a'ready…" (321). While the creolized figure eventually attains a language that connects to his form, he remains at the behest of Western law. The epilogue opens with the visual revelation that "the cell bars descend [to show] Tigre, Souris and Makak in jail." In this instantiation, however, compared to the opening of the play, Coporal Lestrade displays some compassion: he explains to Makak that he is in jail for destroying a shopkeeper's business, but because it is a first offense, he will release him at dawn. At this moment, Lestrade's exposition reveals that much of the play's proceedings are Makak's dream:

> CORPORAL. Drunk and disorderly. You break up the shop of Felicien Alcindor yesterday, Saturday, on market day. I watch you quarrelling, preaching in the market. You insulted a friend of mine, Market Inspector Caiphas J. Pamphilion. You called a poor carpenter an agent of death. Then you start drinking, and before you cause more damage, I bring you in here. You had a rough night, friend (323).

Lestrade's last words in the play, as he releases Makak from jail are, "[h]ere is aprison. Our life is a prison. Look, is the sun" (325). These last words offer contrary emotions. Lestrade cannot rightfully connect life with the concept of imprisonment and not

acknowledge the sun as a symbol of hope. Still, he understands the colonial economy of his job. If he is to uphold the law then he will most likely arrest and imprison creolized blacks. The last sounds of the production, however, hold out for the hope that Lestrade will not or cannot give voice to colonialism's power. Instead it comes from the invisible chorus, still offstage, who sings and repeats the lines "I going home, I going home, / I going home, I going home, / I going home, I going home, / To me father's kingdom…" (326).

CHAPTER IV

CARNIVAL AS PROSTHESIS: REGAINING HUMANNESS THROUGH CREATIVITY AND MYTH

> *And there's a bicycle chain and gear thing, and you know it has to be exposed, because you don't hide de innards and de workings. And there are levers and cantilevers, the claws are going up and down. There's a moment [Mancrab] just settles center stage and breathes. And at that moment, the cloth begins to bleed in front of your eyes. This is the beauty of mas'.*
>
> — Peter Minshall, An Interview by Richard Schechner and Milla Cozart Riggio

In *The Black Jacobins* (1963), C.L.R. James notes transgressions against the enslaved body in eighteenth-century Saint Domingue. He points out that "[m]utilations were common, limbs, ears, and sometimes the private parts, to deprive [slaves] of the pleasures which they could indulge in without expense" (12). In one particular anecdote, James relates the interaction between a slave and the governor, in which the slave, "having lost one of his ears and condemned to lose another, begged the Governor to spare it, for if that too was cut off he would have nowhere to put his stump of cigarette" (15). These brief annotations set up slavery's legal hierarchy, gesture toward the repressed pleasure of slaves and delineate the strict parameters of plantation law. While the term "spare" signals leniency, it also suggests the superfluity of the slave's ear—although already reduced to one, his remaining ear is still "extra"—a slave does not need an ear to produce labor, so the governor determines whether the slave may keep something without which he functions just as well. It is this destruction of slaves' bodies that dehumanizes them and transforms them into property. The slaves understand this and, in an attempt to

regain some "humanness," and recalibrate the hierarchy of authority to include them, they, in turn, pass the brutality onto the animals with which they work and with which they are equated: "'Why do you illtreat your mule in that way?' asked a colonist of a carter. 'But when I do not work, I am beaten, when he does not work, I beat him—he is my Negro'" (15). Considered less than human, the slave appropriates the plantocracy's logic and attempts to re-appropriate his humanness; he determines the harsh equation between slaves and labor in which the lack of labor results in punishment, the punished are dehumanized, and the punisher is human.

While the mutilation of the enslaved body renders it inhuman in the eyes of the slaveholder, such violence actually renders the slave a "para-human," in that the enslaved body transforms beyond its original incarnation thus affecting its autonomy and agency; mutilations and fractures destroy the common structure of the human body so that it becomes "different" or "other" than its traditional form. Once the body of a slave no longer *looks* like the body of a figure of authority—a governor, overseer or slave owner—it is easier for this body to be treated as less than one would treat the uncorrupted body. By removing the varied parts of a slave body that make him or her resemble a human body, the slave is othered. Various critics, such as Orlando Patterson in *Slavery and Social Death* (1985), and Simon Gikandi in *Writing in Limbo* (1992), equate such amputated existences with social death. In this manner, these debilitated bodies, or to be more precise, the lost limbs from these bodies, produce traces that haunt the absence of their prior forms. Together, all of these corrupted bodies and amputated appendages form a community, a state of remembered destruction. As W.G. Sebald argues, while slave laborers may survive torture, they take on a "ghostly existence" in which they become

"inhabitant[s] of the city of the dead" (169). Bodies (de)formed through violence, whether torture, or otherwise, become ghosts that continue to search for their lost and missing parts.

In *Volatile Bodies* (1994), Elizabeth Grosz discusses the phenomenon of the phantom limb, the concept whereby those who have lost limbs still feel the missing appendages' presence. She notes that "[a]fter the amputation of moveable, functional extremities, the phantom limb seems to be experienced in close to 100 percent of the cases [and] occur in almost every part of the body" (70). Such is the case with New World slaves. For the Caribbean, a group of islands littered with the mutilated parts of slaves' bodies, the cumulative effect of countless forms of such violence is Sebald's city of death inhabited by a plethora of ghosts. These tortured and half-formed bodies that were mutilated in life become, in death, pliable phantoms that still suffer their losses. "The body," as Grosz notes, is "a cultural and historical product" (187). Such suffering and loss become psychic heirlooms that transfer generationally down through the descendents of slaves. Tales of violence get retold orally and lodge in the memories of descendents.

Appending Édouard Glissant's concept of the history of the French Caribbean, I argue that the history of the Caribbean as a whole, particularly those islands that endured plantation economies, is one "characterized by ruptures…that began with a brutal dislocation" (61). The Caribbean is a diasporic space and the dislocation created by the forced transfer of African bodies created a bald desire and longing in both whole and deformed slaves. The first amputation the slave endured was that from his land and he attempted to accommodate this loss through memory. He also attempted to compensate

for his loss by the revision, and restructuring, of myths. Wilson Harris, in "The Limbo Gateway," defines limbo as a Caribbean dance in which "the *limbo* dancer moves under a bar which is gradually lowered until a mere slit of space…through which with spread-eagled limbs he passes like a spider" (378, emphasis original). The limbo, he argues, is "a myth stemming from Africa which has undergone metamorphosis" (378). Harris suggests that limbo has become synonymous with Caribbean carnival and, indeed, limbo is coterminous with Trinidad's carnival for one—Trinidadian lore links carnival, calypso and steelband and the Trinidadian government makes a claim for Trinidad as the birthplace of all three modes of performance. The importance of limbo for my purposes is the manner in which its performer reconfigures himself to navigate an enforced restricted space. Such contortions require the body to renegotiate its form in order to retain its own boundaries; it requires the body to reconfigure itself in order to progress. As a dance founded during the Middle Passage, it forces the enslaved body to occupy a transitional space, but also to form a new identity while never allowing it to eradicate the past completely.

In the same way, the endpoint of remaking myths is to make sense of the present through conversations with the past and particularly with the dead. Dead slaves, both mutilated and whole, carry the traces of their destruction and violation in their spectral forms and the manipulated reordering and retelling of myths serves as a balm, a memorial of time past, and a mechanism to cope with the present. As George Lamming notes when he discusses the "ceremony of the Souls" in Haiti, the living converse with the dead to hear "the secrets of the Dead":

> The celebrants are mainly relatives of the deceased who, ever since their death, have been locked in Water. It is the duty of the Dead to return and offer, on this momentous night, a full and honest report on their past relatives with the living. A wife may have to say why she refused to love her husband; a husband may have to say why he deprived his wife of their children's affection. It is the duty of the Dead to speak, since their release from that purgatory of Water cannot be realized until they have fulfilled the contract which this ceremony symbolizes. The Dead need to speak if they are going to enter that eternity which will be their last and permanent Future. The living demand to hear whether there is any need for forgiveness, for redemption; whether, in fact, there may be any guide which may help them towards reforming their present condition. Different as they may be in their present condition. Different as they may be in their present state of existence, those alive and those now Dead—their ambitions point to a similar end. They are interested in their Future. (9, 10)

Carnival attempts to restore the amputated elements suffered during the plantation economy, including dislocation, in order to account for the past and accommodate the future. It achieves this by acting as prosthesis. In its execution it retains the vestiges, or traces, of the history of violence inflicted on the Caribbean's bodies during slavery. Like Lamming's ceremony of Souls, it encourages interaction between the past and present to provide for the future. Carnival's costumes, its prostheses writ small, which stitch together fabric and feathers, also include memories that bear traces of violence within these stitches, which, as liminal spaces, act as junctures where the present and past intersect. These memories operate as psychic prostheses, since, as Grosz argues, "[t]he phantom is an expression of nostalgia for the unity and wholeness of the body, its completion" (73). In wholeness, however, there is not just completion, but also symmetry. Amputation creates imbalance, but the addition of a foreign element to replace an organic appendage results in a new type of imbalance that leaves seams which are the visible scars of violence. Just as the maimed human body becomes para-human, so too does the body that adds prostheses to compensate for its loss.

In chapter one, I argued that anthropology acts to intercede on Caribbean carnivals' present, and how the present operates. Still, it does not offer much instruction for the interaction of the present with the past, or even the future with the past, especially with regards to the violence of slavery.[65] In this chapter I argue two things: carnival and, more specifically, its costumes, acts as prosthesis to diffuse the violent memories of slavery. Artists also achieve this effect through creativity and the revisiting and revision of myths. For narratives about carnival, particularly fictional narratives, these prostheses attend to lost appendages, and attempt to address the bigger loss of languages, tribes, and heritages. Fiction, poetry and drama about carnival are prostheses created by the "othered"—traditionally creolized, non-Westernized descendents of African slaves. I do not mean to essentialize creativity along the lines of ethnicity by suggesting that only Caribbean artists who descended from slaves have such creative credibility—Peter Minshall, a white Trinidadian artist and bandleader who I discuss later, reveals that it is the creolized Caribbean artist—the descendents of all transplants to the New World, who retain the legacy of slavery. It is the creativity of these narratives that, in my examples, use both African and European myths as templates and sanctions the chaos of carnival. These creations are forays into myth-making and provide the slaves and their descendants with a claim for originality, heritage and history. Fiction needs to be formulated through

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[65] As Lila Abu-Lughod argues, "[a]nthropology's avowed goal may be "the study of man [sic]," but it is a discipline built on the historically constructed divide between the West and the non-West. It has been and continues to be primarily the study of the non-Western other by the Western self, even if in its new guise it seeks explicitly to give voice to the Other or to present a dialogue between the self and other, either textually or through an explication of the fieldwork encounter (as in such works as Crapanzano 1980, Dumont 1978, Dwyer 1982, Rabinow 1977, Riesman 1977, Tedlock 1983, and Tyler 1986). And the relationship between the West and the non-West, at least since the birth of anthropology, has been constituted by Western domination" (139).

myth because fiction, due to its inherent volubility in interpreting its surrounding environment and epoch, needs a fixed point of reference. As Frank Kermode argues: "Fictions are for finding things out, and they change as the needs of sense-making change. Myths are the agents of stability, fictions the agents of change. Myths call for absolute, fictions for conditional assent" (39).[66]

In "O Daedalus, Fly Away Home," African American poet Robert Hayden contemplates human flight for New World slaves. The characters in the poem are U.S. slaves who experience a "[d]rifting night in the Georgia pines." Music plays in the form of African-inspired instruments, including the "coonskin drum and jubilee banjo." The narrator implores "[p]retty Malinda [to] dance with me." It is not a stretch of the imagination to extrapolate and parallel the performance in this poem to Trinidad's carnival—both utilize African, or African-influenced rhythm instruments (think Trinidad's steel drums) to perform, and in these performances there are the inherent contemplations of a history of slavery. The narrator makes references to the lost land through mysticism: "Night is an African juju man / weaving a wish and a weariness together / to make two wings." The invocation of the juju man, a mystical character with a sorcerer's powers who is linked with performance, references the past and all things lost, including the homeland, but also attempts to conjure a means to atone for this loss through the making of wings to return to Africa. The wings, of course, are an inorganic prosthesis crafted to return to, and thus recapture, the lost land. Still, the wings are not

[66] Harris discusses the interaction of fiction and myth in his own work: "[The writer] discovers…[through rereading] that there are myths, ancient myths, which lie like fossils in the ancient past, that come alive within his own work so that the substance of tradition, which we apparently have forgotten, begins to re-enact itself, to come through the imaginative tradition" (19).

enough, on their own, to return the narrator home—they must also be borne by memories, the juju man, and the musical performance: "*O fly away home fly away /* Do you remember Africa? / *O cleave the air fly away home.*" The wings privilege both the ability to return home as well as the memory that suggests the move. If there were no memory, there would be no desire and hence no need to return home. The creation of the wings engenders the recollection of more memories: "My gran, he flew back to Africa, / just spread his arms and / flew away home." Here the poem cycles back to its beginning to remind the reader of the "drifting night in the windy pines," but adds that "night is a longing." The poem ultimately connects past (memory), with the present (performance, longing), to the future (flying home), and links back to the past with the final lines: "Night is a mourning juju man / weaving a wish and a weariness together / to make two wings."

Hayden's poem aims to recover the African body's dispossessed land through imagination and longing and the metaphorical return home via flight. This combination of imagination and longing re-form an imagined Africa and transform it into a creative space. It must be pointed out that this creativity, as expressed in the poem, is not born fully formed from the imagination. Hayden's poem refers to the Greek myth that tells the story of Daedalus who, with his son Icarus, fashions wings from feathers and wax to escape prison. Icarus, in an act of hubris, flies too close to the sun, which melts the wax of his wings and causes him to fall into the sea and perish. Hayden's poem also refers to the myth of flying Africans in which Africans work in a field under the watchful eye of an overseer yet escape back to Africa via flight. Observing a pregnant slave who does not work as hard as he would like, the overseer whips her. A nearby slave, an old man,

mutters words that allow the pregnant slave to take flight and return to Africa. Eventually the aged slave passes the word that engenders flight onto the remaining slaves, and to the awe of the overseer, they all fly back to Africa.[67] Hayden's poem suggests that this process of creativity requires a reference to both African and European mythologies, the former because it relates directly to his original heritage, the latter because, for the New World inhabitant forced into a new space, it represents a new, enforced heritage.

The major difference between Hayden's poem and the myth of the flying Africans is that in the latter there are no artificial wings. In the Daedalus myth, the artificial wings, while allowing for flight, also promote the asymmetry and imbalance that I earlier mentioned. Just as Icarus' artificial wings, as prostheses, eventually fail him and lead to his death, partly because Icarus discounts the wings as inorganic addenda to his body and accepts them as an organic addition, I argue that carnival's costumes, as prostheses, sometimes cause their masqueraders to lose control of their bodies since these costumes cannot seamlessly replace the missing limbs and cannot secure the body's original symmetry.[68] This is the case in Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979), the first novel that examines Trinidad's carnival on a broad scale.

Set in Trinidad in the late 1970s, *The Dragon Can't Dance* features Aldrick Prospect, a young man who annually constructs a dragon costume for carnival, which he

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[67] See *The Book of Negro Folklore* (1958) edited by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps.

[68] Grosz notes that "the body phantom is very commonly distorted. In the case of missing extremities…the phantom is invariably shorter than the limb; often the proximal portions of the phantom are missing; it is commonly perceived as flatter than the healthy limb; it usually feels light and hollow; and the perception of its mobility is extremely impaired (often to such an extent that its movements are experienced as the change from one cramped position to another), losing its ability to perform finer, more nuanced acts of dexterity which the intact limb was able to undertake" (71).

"bring[s] alive from…scraps of cloth and tin" (35). Prospect's dragon is a prosthesis that consists of, along with the cloth and tin, the memories of his forbears, and he attempts to use his dragon dance "*to link [memories] to get linear meaning*" (36, emphases original). Prospect not only bears in mind the remembrances of past dragon costumes, but incorporates the memory of his late grandfather in his construction as well, a person whom Prospect "remembered from the far distance of his boyhood" (36). Prospect's dragon fails because he tries to *remain* a dragon after carnival's completion and he discovers that the strident attitude he displays during his carnival performance does not easily carry over to secular time. In trying to continue a performance meant for a prescribed space and time, Prospect and a few other locals stage a failed revolution against the government that lands them in prison, ironically reinforcing the enslaved state that carnival originally resists, and redrawing the boundaries that limit the descendents of others. In order for Prospect's prosthesis to work, he needs to understand that the dragon as prosthesis works best, as with the limbo dance, over a short period of time and in a prescribed space.

The Limits to Addressing the Past Through Prosthesis

In the first few pages of *The Dragon Can't Dance*, Lovelace links the Hill, a fictionalized neighborhood in Trinidad's capital of Port of Spain, with Trinidad's colonial past. The main street, Alice Street, is "named for Princess Alice, the Queen's aunt" (10) and the Hill's inhabitants, the working poor descendents of the slaves who provided labor for Trinidad's historical plantation economy, are described as "blue-bloods of a resistance [who] lived by their ancestors all through slavery [and who] carried on in their unceasing

escape—as Maroons, as Runaways, as Bush Negroes, as Rebels" (10). Lovelace draws a comparison between the royalty of the colonial power, Princess Ann and Queen Elizabeth, and what he sees as the royalty of descendents of Africa as "blue-bloods." Just as James' slave attempts to regain humanness by whipping his mule, Harris attempts to eliminate hierarchy in his characters, particularly those descended from slavery, by comparatively establishing that members of the royalty are no better than slaves. Although Lovelace clearly establishes the slaves' descendents as heirs to the rebellious attitude of their ancestors, the contemporary occupants of the Hill remain in a state of malaise until the annual carnival celebration moves into high gear and jolts them into a sense of being, at which time, their "Idelness, Laziness and Waste" (11) dissipates. During carnival, the Hill transforms into a space defined by the performances of costumed masqueraders. When the Hill's ancestors don their costumes, they inhabit a second skin that gives them a physical presence that is non-existent for the rest of the year. This skin is both prosthesis and armor. It allows the performers to exist without forcing them to analyze their limited agency and allows them to enjoy the momentary play that carnival provides without contemplating the deficiencies of their lives during the rest of the year. When the carnival concludes, they remove their costumes and life returns to normal.

For the Hill, carnival is the annual trigger that "springs [its population] alive," and it is only through the inhabitants' replacing their daily skins with carnival costumes that they become human (11). Miss Cleothilda, an aging mulatta and past carnival queen, seeks to claim traditional royalty and dominance on the Hill through the memory of her performances in prior carnivals. Cleothilda claims the authority of sovereignty on the

level of Princess Ann and Queen Elizabeth and she uses her prosthesis to elevate her status to such a lofty imagined status:

> she would portray the queen—queen of the band—though the Hill was by now certain that she would never appear in any other costume; for the Hill knew that it was not only a habit—she had been playing queen for the last eleven years…the Hill knew what she knew: that to her being queen was not really a masquerade at all, but the annual affirming of a genuine queenship that she had accepted as hers by virtue of her poise and beauty, something acknowledged even by her enemies, something that was not identical with her mulattohood, but certainly impossible without it." (18, 19)

The combination of Cleothilda's "mulattohood," which the text delimits through her skin's complexion combined with her queen costume, affords her, in her estimation, authority over the darker-skinned inhabitants of the Hill. Usually aloof for most of the year, it is only during the carnival season that Cleothilda claims "all o' we is one," a traditional Trinidadian refrain that highlights the society's cosmopolitanism. While Cleothilda's claim for sovereignty on one hand and her cries for egalitarianism on the other seems contrary, it is not. Cleothilda knows that her sovereignty during carnival may only be sanctioned by the crowd and they will only do so, ironically, if she considers herself their equal. Carnival's sovereignty is democratic, not determined by divine right. Still, her cry for equality is her only desire for a shared humanness; her actions reveal her true nature. Caroline, Olive's friend and neighbor, discerns that Cleothilda harbors a hidden superiority that rests entirely in her ethnicity: "[because] the woman skin lighter than yours and mine she feel she better than people on this Hill" (21). If Cleothilda's claim for authority truly exists in the lightness of her skin as Caroline argues, then her body, as Russell McDougall notes, is "the body of colonialism" (12). The text bears this out. Cleothilda's royalty rests in the prosthesis of the color of her skin; her sole claim for authority rests on a physical outward expression of a similarity to the colonists' color

and, in this case, Cleothilda wields her body as a source of authority that seeks control of those bodies around her, particularly Olive's daughter, Sylvia.[69] At all times of the year, except the carnival season, Cleothilda's skin represents the past, in which the lightness of her skin acts as an ethnic buffer between whites and blacks. During carnival, although she at first seems democratic and encompassing, she uses her queen costume to make a claim for divine right of rule: Cleothilda's costume allows her to dispense other costumes, or substitute skins, to residents of the Hill; her authority determines not just her social standing, but controls the prosthesis of those around her as well. In this action lies her true claim for colonial authority and sovereignty.

In Cleothilda becoming royalty, or what McDougall would characterize as a site of "Order and Authority," Cleothilda's body transgresses its biological boundaries "to deny exchange and interchange…so as to minimize earthly intercourse with the world" (11). Queens are not subject to earthly authority and so Cleothilda's body transcends the biological toward the sovereign. Buoyed by the presence of white blood, but limited, at the same time, by the presence of black blood which is outwardly manifested in her "fading yellow red-nigger skin," Cleothilda makes a claim for true colonial authority through converting her body, combined with her carnival queen costume, into a para-human where she exists in a form that is not wholly human but remains apart from the other Hill residents. Cleothilda's body becomes, as Francis Barker argues, a "site of an operation of power" (10). When Cleothilda observes an attraction between Guy, the rent collector of the Hill's flats, and Sylvia, she insists "on blunting Sylvia's triumph and asserting her own power" by offering Sylvia one of her old dresses. For Cleothilda, the

[69] Sylvia, Olive's daughter, is an attractive, dark-skinned adolescent with a few suitors.

offer of a dress is an opportunity to cover Sylvia's skin with her own: "'Sylvia, wait! I think I have a dress here that could fit you—if your mother would let you take it.' And, without waiting for Sylvia's reply, was already calling in that ringing voice of hers that made every statement of hers a public announcement: 'Miss Olive, Miss Olive! You mind if I give Sylvia a dress?'" (29). By using the dress as a proxy skin, Cleothilda converts Sylvia into a minion. As a royal subject, Sylvia's body is not her own, but exists solely at the behest of the queen.

Prospect eschews Cleothilda's power over the Hill's human prostheses by constructing his own prosthesis that takes the form of his traditional dragon costume. For Prospect, the annual ritual of playing the dragon is typified by the annual molting of his costumed skin. He knows he has performed as a dragon when he discards the costume. The dragon allows him to consider the unexamined lives of those on the Hill, including his own, for just a few days until everyone, including himself, returns to their routines for another year upon carnival's conclusion: "Every year I make a new costume. The costume this year ain't the one I had last year. When I finish I always throw them away" (33). The problem with Prospect annually discarding his costume is that he discards the memories that he embeds in the seams when he sews it, including the memories of his grandfather, father, and uncle, the latter of whom constructed costumes before him. In doing so Prospect discards both heritage and a claim for historical origins. Prospect's annual sewing of the dragon's costume represents what McDougall would call "the breaking and re-making of the body, a movement out of slavery and confinement" (13). Still, the re-made body loses its remembered currency when Prospect destroys it and the process must begin anew the next year. When Prospect disposes of the costume and its

memories, contemplation is sidelined for a year and its embedded memes are lost. During this year's carnival, however, when Prospect retains the attitude of the dragon beyond carnival, he transcends the limitations of biology to become mythological. His new body, as Barker argues, refers to "a suturing of discourse and desire to the organism" and is "thus fully social in its being and its ideological valency" (13). As dragon, Prospect is able to interact fully with his ancestors, their memories, as well as with the contemporary residents of the Hill.

In describing the start of carnival Monday, Lovelace does not select the origins of the Caribbean's plantation economy as its starting point, that is, Trinidad's carnival origins, but goes "back centuries for its beginnings…back across the Middle Passage, back to Mali and to Guinea and Dahomey and Congo, back to Africa" (121). For Prospect, such a move is a grasp both for lost land and a lost heritage. When combined with his constructing and putting on the dragon costume, he does more than address time as past, present and future; when he dons the costume he achieves "a sense of entering a sacred mask that invested him with an ancestral authority to uphold before the people of this Hill" (121). Prospect's dragon is a character-mask, a construct of Wilson Harris' that encourages contemplation of time past, time present, and time future so that, as T.S. Eliot notes in "Burnt Norton," "Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past. / If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable" (117). The mask confers relevance and immediacy in time so that a specific moment contains a conflation of the past, present and future.

Prospect's constructed dragon is an accretion of memory and heritage, and it allows movement back and forth through time to address the present and the past in a

specific moment. As Vera Kutzinski argues, the character-mask is a "flexible prosthesis, a non-mimetic construct that, rather than replacing a missing limb or body, partially overlaps with it in time and in space" ("Wilson Harris's Phantom Bodies" 142). This character-mask, when it moves backward in time, accosts myths in order to formulate fictions to make sense of events and occurrences in present time. This addressing of myth provides the springboard to move toward humanness.

Still, carnival only activates the spirits of the Hill's residents; when the festival ends, so do the participants' rebellious attitudes. Prospect must find a way to continue the inspiration established during carnival. He must remain a dragon/man aggregate. He comes to this conclusion when he removes the dragon's head at the end of the day's performance but retains its body:

> When he reached the Corner of Calvary Hill and Observatory Street he said: 'Yes,' and he sat down on the pavement. Suddenly the head of the dragon on his neck weighed a ton, and he unhooked the head and rested it on the ground beside him and…watched the Carnival ending…[a]nd he thought: 'You know, tomorrow is no Carnival.' And he understood then what it meant when people said that they wished every day was Carnival. For the reign of kings and princesses was ending…[a]nd what of those selves? What of the selves of these thousands? What of his own self? (125)

In this scene, in which Prospect removes the dragon's head but retains its body, he realizes that, in this moment when he is neither completely man nor dragon, he occupies a liminal space that is similar to "the crossing" of the Middle Passage. He is in the midst of Harris' limbo dance, or gateway, where African mythologies undergo a sea-change to form Caribbean myths. At this moment of realization he possesses the perception of the character-mask but in removing the dragon's head Prospect shatters the illusion; carnival automatically ends at this moment. Fiction has no jurisdiction any longer and myth once again takes hold.

Where Prospect ultimately stumbles is in his belief that his dragon dance is feasible beyond the time that carnival allots. Like Cleothilda's royal claim for authority, the dragon dance only has jurisdiction over a limited space and time. Unlike Cleothilda, who knowingly pursues an escalated false sense of sovereignty during the period of carnival, Prospect unwittingly pursues the power of his prosthesis beyond the prescribed space and time. Beyond such limitations, the dragon can no longer dance.

Prosthesis and Performance in Peter Minshall's Mancrab

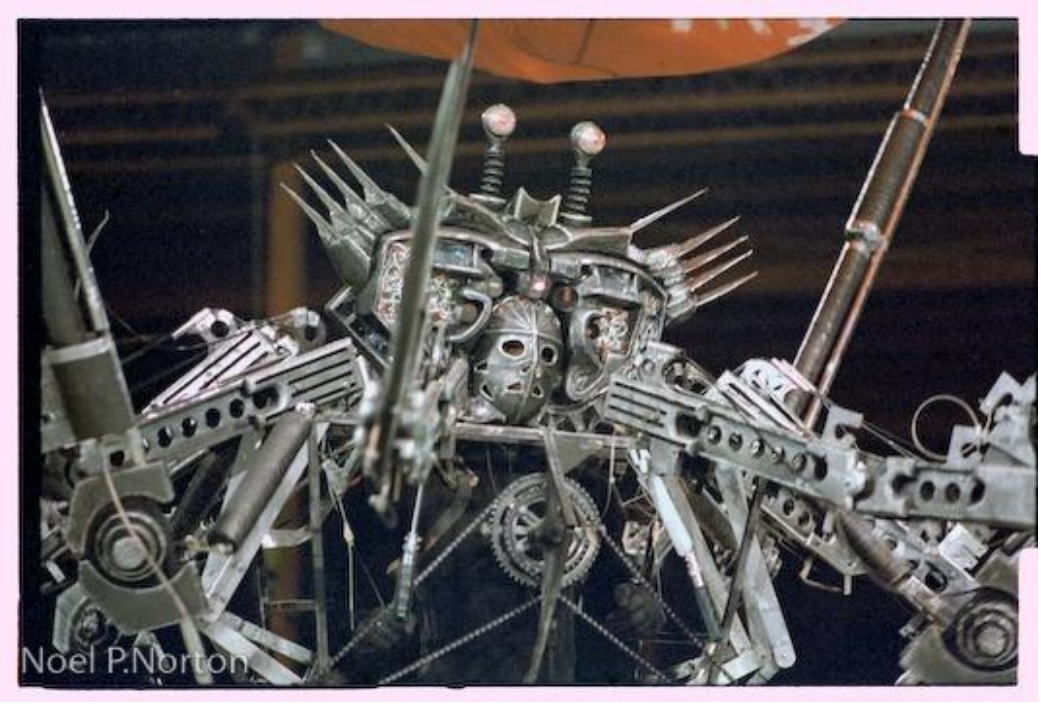

Fig. 1—Peter Minshall's carnival king Mancrab (1983). Photograph by Noel P. Norton.

The designers of Trinidad's major bands select a carnival king and queen each year to represent the bands in *Dimanche Gras*, a variety show held the Sunday night before Carnival Monday and Tuesday that includes the judging of that year's carnival king, queen, and calypso monarch. The king and queen are the apotheoses of the bands; each is

an individualized representation of the band's main theme. Like Cleothilda in her queen costume, the kings and queens possess a type of authority over the bands' other participants. To analogize: if the bands represent all the players of Greek mythology, the band's masqueraders are the mortals, while the kings and queens are their protective or dismissive gods. In 1983, Peter Minshall, a prominent Trinidadian band designer, released a band named *River*. Its queen was "Washerwoman," while the king was "Mancrab." In Minshall's narrative for *River*, Washerwoman represents purity, while Mancrab represents the corruption of technology in man. The difference between the two lies in the presence and absence of prostheses: Washerwoman has no foreign or inorganic prostheses; she is portrayed by a masquerader in clothing similar to the other masqueraders; Mancrab contains an overwhelming number of mechanical limbs as seen in the image above. In an interview with Richard Schechner and Milla Cozart Riggio, Minshall describes Washerwoman and Mancrab:

> He, a master of technology, all of man's genius, all the more powerful now because he has technology. She, simple love and beauty. She representing Blanchisseuse, [a village in Trinidad through which a river of the same name runs], the pureness of the clear river water also the pureness of true love. She, dressed in white cotton organza, the simplest little costume, carrying two poles, and lines of silk washing just hanging down, and a laundry basket in her hand, so simple. He, Mancrab, the claws of the crab turned this way [gestures upward] like so many arms, and the two gundees [main claws, pincers] like something coming out of a military tank. He's metal with a great crab's head with little lights and things flashing, a compressed-air canister on his back. He comes onstage moving to the sound of East Indian tassa drums. I had seen kathakali in London so I go up to an Indian village with [carnival king performer] Peter Samuel [Minshall spreads his legs into the wide, bent-knee stance of kathakali and stamps the ground with high, violent steps to an imagined drumbeat]." (117)

Mancrab represents technology, but also Enlightenment thought as an unmitigated success, what David Harvey describes as a "the demystification and desacralization of knowledge and social organization…through a break with history and tradition…[that

sought] to liberate human beings from their chains" (13). Such liberation, ironically in this case, manifests itself in man's ability to splice himself with machines. Mancrab is coterminous with the plantation economy's modernism. If he is art, he is a fixed idea of art according to mechanized logic rather than creativity. Mancrab sanctions the separation among humans, the dehumanizing of man and finally the subordination of man to his mechanics.

What further stands out in Minshall's description is his appropriation of non-Westernized myths epitomized by Kathakali—a form of East Indian dance drama that is similar to Japanese Noh—and his conflation of it with the crab's prostheses. In Mancrab's resulting movements and performance he invokes the suggestion of an alternative movement or, as I noted in chapter two, an "extra-daily balance," which is a form of balance that is distinguished from traditional Westernized performance. What Minshall achieves with Mancrab is an indigenous movement borne from a conflated performance with man's daily movements. It is an original performance that does not rely on fixed Westernized theatrical movements but, in Mancrab's case, it is also one that completely seeks to eliminate man's influence.

In *River*, the masqueraders seize the egalitarianism that Prospect seeks for the Hill's community in *The Dragon Can't Dance*. Minshall, who creates an apparently indestructible Mancrab clothed in stainless steel, also sows/sews the seeds for Mancrab's destruction through the combination of biological skin and organic cloth of his masqueraders: "I used the clothes of our island ancestors—African, Indian, some European; turbans with pearls, two thousand people, men and women—all in white cotton….In fact, the colour scheme of the band was this skin tone and that skin tone and

all the many others. And the white just framed it. The people looked beautiful" (7). Minshall, a white Trinidadian, is not ignorant of the ethnic hierarchies that make up Trinidad both historically and contemporarily. Instead of ignoring them, he utilizes the differences to disrupt the traditional racial framework in which the white clothing becomes a blank canvas upon which the costumes—the masqueraders' skin complexions—project. These costumes, if they are prostheses, work to enhance the masqueraders rather than to overwhelm them. These costumes seek egalitarianism.

On Carnival Monday, the masqueraders perform while Mancrab and Washerwoman rage. The story of *River*, according to Minshall, is that on carnival Monday Mancrab "challenges" Washerwoman and she rejects him and in retaliation Mancrab makes "an illusory rainbow" using "all his technological magic." On Carnival Tuesday morning, the masqueraders, still ignorant of Mancrab and Washerwoman's conflict, which is to say, the masqueraders' roles in the lives of their king and queen, perform without worry about their place in the hierarchy. In so doing they unwittingly sabotage both Minshall's vision as well as Mancrab's quest for dominance. The masqueraders destroy Mancrab's "illusory rainbow," and his mechanical victory through their own chaotic dissemination of color: "[e]very single person in the band has been supplied with a white pouch and in it is a white squeezy bottle…loaded with colored dye. Ha! Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple. Now this is where people take the art over from the mas' man. You have to understand the thing" (118). Minshall's "thing," as he explains earlier in the interview, is that "mas'", a Trinidadian neologism that represents carnival performance, is "about human energy," and human energy denies the claim for

authority from their costumes in a manner that Mancrab cannot deny his additional appendages.

Minshall's hope is to color each section of the band in one fixed color to show Mancrab and technology's victory as seen in a clearly delineated rainbow: one band section of two hundred people will have their white carnival Monday costumes dyed only red, another only blue, &etc. Instead, during the preparation to cross the main stage, a masquerader's bottle ruptures prematurely, soaking a masquerader in color, and before Minshall can give the signal for his proposed unified sectional coloring, the masqueraders break rank, color themselves with various colors, and create their own rainbows:

> And then, the best laid plans…a bottle bust, color splashes onto a lady's nice white costume. Well, is to know, color spread like fire through the band. My friends, do you know about theater? Do you think I know about theater? Those people start to paint each other. Talk about action painting! Two thousand people on the day of the carnival going through this ritual of ablution, see their shining faces—but it happened before its time….This rainbow thing starts to stretch and haul itself over the stage and the calypso music breaks out. All those people who said, "Oh God, it's white!" on Monday, but then realized it looked so beautiful! On Tuesday, Jesus, the country is in disbelief. How we could spoil it so! Because the river now the story is coming to completion—is polluted. (120)

Instead of conforming to the original plan to paint within the lines, the masqueraders douse each other without regard, resulting in chaos. Their hijacking of Minshall's best-laid plans hearkens back to carnivals' origins when sidelined African descendents infiltrated the street parades of the French plantocracy. Minshall continues to describe the scene: "So much for my artistic ideas of neatly coloring each section. This was a chaos of color, a madness, all the colors running together till they got to a deep purplish muddiness. But it was so much better than what I had planned—the people played the art profoundly. They played pollution better than any artist could have painted. They played the mas" (120). Minshall, of course, as the band's creator, is entitled to an interpretation

of his vision. But where he sees "pollution," I see the rejection of the autonomy of prosthesis. The interaction between Mancrab and Washerwoman is carnival in the manner that McDougall argues that "[c]arnival is in part a re-working from within conscripted habit of Caribbean folk forms, evolving specifically through archetypes of Carnival to renounce colonialism" (2). Mancrab seeks, through technology and violence, to organize disorder to create order. The masqueraders refute his singularity. They reject his actions, not in order to discard Western influence, but its fixed rationality. For the masqueraders, there cannot be just the single axiomatic order that Mancrab's Enlightenment project seeks through his prosthetic limbs.

Mancrab fails because his singular pursuit of dominance through violence and technology corrupts him. Rather than a conflation of man and animal, as his name suggests, he is instead a man who succumbs entirely to his prostheses. Speaking of bodily limitations, Grosz argues that bodies "are perpetually capable of being superseded, overcome, through the human body's capacity to open itself up to prosthetic synthesis" (187, 188). The problem, it seems, in trying to complete the deformed body via prosthesis, is that there is a possibility for overcompensation, mainly because the prosthesis is meant to stand in for the body phantom which, although "invisible," is still present. When there are too many prostheses on the body, they overcompensate for the original loss and the body becomes less man and more prostheses, which results in little chance for the body either to reclaim what was originally lost, or to have the prostheses work effectively for the deformed body. This debilitates Mancrab. His prostheses exert their will over what remains of his human body, and seeks to do the same to all surrounding bodies, including Washerwoman and the other masqueraders.

Fig. 2—Mancrab stands before Washerwoman and white-clad villagers on the stage of the Queen's Park Savannah. Photograph by Noel P. Norton.

Mancrab's assault of Washerwoman on the main stage of the Queen's Park Savannah on carnival Tuesday is more than just a temporary victory of technology; it is a disregard for ancestral memory. Unlike Prospect's dragon, which integrates memories and memes into its fabric and design, thus ensuring a symbiosis with nature and/or biology, Mancrab relies on "unnatural" and manmade extensions forged from man's ambition. While Prospect's dragon becomes an organic extension of him, a biosynthesis as it were, Mancrab's prostheses, made up of his tremendous accumulation of added metallic limbs and appendages, are foreign and overwhelm him. Mancrab is no longer part crab and part man; he exists entirely as an unnatural colossus. In Mancrab's artificial limbs there exists imagination and creativity, but a soulless creativity run amok. His

artificial limbs overwhelm the biological appendages and his entire body. If Prospect's dragon represents the tenacity and revolutionary spirit of the descendents of slaves, Mancrab is colonialism's continuous quest for dominance.

In describing Mancrab to Schechner and Riggio, Minshall talks about how he devised the concept, and how the costume takes on a life of its own:

> I actually constructed the model, then realized that a man normally stands like this [demonstrates feet together], but you play mas' like this [demonstrates feet apart]—considering the distance between the ankles. Therefore, extending a man's shoulders into a kind of rectangular armature with arms going out at each corner perfectly angled and fiberglass fishing rods coming into the angles so that one is going there, one there, one there—as he rocks his shoulders all of those rods move. At the tip of each rod the corner of a 25-square-foot piece of silk, so that the dancing steps of the feet move the rods which give life to the canopy of silk, a turbulent, billowing cloud. Yes, 'to make the cloth dance.' This is contemporary.…I feel comfortable with this. (117)

Minshall is unable to discuss the movement, or performance, of Mancrab without linking it to man's movements, but his discussion reveals how Mancrab overwhelms man's movements rather than complementing them. Mancrab's prostheses become more than a supplement, they become their own entity. Instead of the biological body's arms supporting the fiberglass fishing rods, the inverse occurs. The end results, as seen by the symbolic rape of Washerwoman, and evidenced by the red cloth that emanates from Mancrab, are new forms of violence, repetition of remembered violence, and the continuation of the historic cycle of trauma.

Prosthesis, Trauma and Ethnicity in Carnival

Robert Antoni's novel, *Carnival* (2005), uses Trinidad's carnival as prosthesis for lost and violated memories. Set in Trinidad in 1983, the same year of Minshall's *River*, it features the band, Minshall, and his carnival king, Mancrab. While Antoni is interested in

carnival as prosthesis, he is also interested in the use of fiction as a creative prosthesis to address the past. To use fiction, as I argue earlier in the chapter, Antoni must first utilize mythology, and there are several myths that exist in the novel. The formation of Minshall's band is the central myth around which William Sangor Fletcher, the novel's central character, and a writer, drafts his own narrative. Another myth, to which Fletcher attributes the formation of Minshall's band, is based on a Rastafarian sect called the Earth People who live in a village outside of the city of Port of Spain.

Fletcher, a white expatriate Trinidadian who lives in New York City, uses carnival as a whole, and Minshall's band specifically, as prosthesis: he participates in Minshall's band and, at one point, helps to construct some of the costumes. While the novel does not talk about the band at length, Minshall and his band become a peripheral character in the text: "Michael [one of the costume designers] could collaborate with Minshall on Samson-Mancrab and indulge himself: the costume, Shay-lee told me, represented modern man 'Whose science and technology has cut him off from Mother Earth, bringing his slow destruction,' she smiled, making quotation marks in the air—she was paraphrasing Mr. Minshall" (112). Fletcher, if one reads the notes from Minshall's interview with Schechner, takes poetic license in describing Minshall's creative process. Minshall does not admit his use of the Earth People as an influence of his band. The inclusion of the Earth People as creative inspiration, however, works on two levels: it supports my argument of Minshall's Mancrab as a creature whose technological prosthesis cause him to run amok, and it supports my claim that mythology must first be addressed in order for fiction to operate. Still, Antoni's *Carnival* is not about a prosthesis replacing the body phantom and overtaking a body, it is about the violence of history

having such a large historical influence that it begets even more violence even one hundred years after emancipation. *Carnival* argues that Trinidad's historical violence, institutionalized in slavery, is so all-encompassing, that not even carnival's creativity can entirely supplant it. While Fletcher, on the surface, seems to use carnival as a prosthesis to address his own history in the form of his sexual violation while an adolescent, at the novel's end, through a separate act of sexual violence perpetrated on an African-descended character called Eddoes, in which the police castrate him because he had consensual sex with Fletcher's white cousin Rachel, history spills over its boundaries and suggests that it will continue to repeat itself through time.[70]

Carnival centers on a personal traumatic memory, that of Fletcher's rape while an adolescent. Fletcher is in the midst of a sexual encounter with his cousin Rachel when three Afro-Trinidadians break into his house and sexually assault them. Fletcher acknowledges that the most painful memory from the incident, "the one that has remained with me," is when, during the assault, he transforms into one of his assailants: "in that bizarre moment—in my memory it's only a moment, an image of pain—in that surreal moment of juxtaposition I became that boy" (169). Although Fletcher's transformation suggests a deep cognizance of Trinidad's ethnicities, and his potential sympathy with his attackers and the social hierarchies therein, his use of the word "boy," a pejorative term for African descendents, is troubling, particularly since as a Trinidadian expatriate educated and living in the U.S., Fletcher must be aware of its use as a

[70] Eddoes is also a member of the Earth People who joins Minshall's band and who wears one of the two fictional carnival king costumes Antoni ascribes to Minshall's band (in truth there was only one Carnival king in the band—Mancrab). In addition to castrating Eddoes, the police also shear off his dreadlocks. It should also be pointed out that eddoes are a starchy vegetative root that grows in the West Indies, and are thus, of the earth.

pejorative. Fletcher's assault is eventually revealed as a moment of physiological contamination that, although it does not remove his whiteness, or the status whiteness confers, corrupts it. The "transformation" that he constantly remembers eventually seems more traumatic than the actual physical rape and suggests that the attack marginalizes him to the point that he occupies the same marginalized *social* space as the men who attacked him.[71] Fletcher, in effect, becomes othered.

Fletcher's narrative, up to the moment of his attack, already establishes that Trinidadians of African and East Indian descent are marginalized: earlier in the night, before their assault, Fletcher and Rachel attend a New Year's Eve party that discriminates based on ethnicity: "in the half-dark [there were] the men in tuxedos and the women in hats and gloves and glittering gowns. With the blacks and East Indians gathered along both sides of the drive—they weren't allowed past the policemen posted at the club's wrought-iron gates" (59). Fletcher's description, which includes policemen guarding his clearly-defined ethnic space, also sets up legal and social parameters: blacks and East Indians are literally pushed to the borders. It turns out that Fletcher saw his assailants earlier that night; they were beyond the boundaries of the club, sitting in trees, and he remembers them because he makes note of their shorn hair.

The assailants, it turns out, have themselves suffered a kind of amputation. The police, in acts meant to punish the Earth People, often raided their villages, chopped off their dreadlocks, and shaved their heads, a blasphemous act since the Earth People's hair is a source of their spirituality. Fletcher's assault, and his resultant transformation into a mutilated member of the Earth People, places him in a similar social position as his

[71] See Orlando Patterson. *Slavery and Social Death. A Comparative Study*.

attackers, who he defines solely by their ethnicities, and later, through their assault of Fletcher, by their sexualities. Still, such an essentialized reading of bodies simplifies them and lessens them in the same manner of the fracturing, and piecemeal amputations of slaves' bodies. As Kutzinski argues, "[w]hat those whose bodies are gendered, raced, and sexualized are presumed to lack is, of course, the ability to testify to stable origins and thus to order their reality in a coherent fashion" ("Wilson Harris's Phantom Bodies" 144). Fletcher gravitates toward such a self-identification in order to grapple both with Trinidad's history, as well as his family's role in that history.

Fletcher, who was very sure of his origins up to the moment of his assault, and thus his identity, in which his family comes from generations of West Indian wealth, now finds himself trapped in a space that at least troubles, and quite possibly inverts, this knowledge. Up to the moment of his attack, for example, he sees himself clearly as a heterosexual, but after the attack, he becomes sexually impotent toward women. This transitional identity destroys Fletcher's functioning sexual body and traps him in a moment of time where he cannot properly access the past, nor can he progress into the future. Contrary to his original understanding of himself, the sexual assault reveals to Fletcher that he is not heterosexual, but homosexual, which is confirmed when, after several failed sexual attempts with women, he becomes aroused upon seducing his black friend, Laurence de Boissière toward the end of the novel. Up to the moment of discovered homosexuality, the assault renders Fletcher's sexuality, symbolized by his now unusable heterosexual penis, into an ambiguous state where he lives in a state of preferred memory.

Fletcher returns to Trinidad for carnival each year for its prosthetic memorial effect. It allows him to compartmentalize and recall memories other than his assault: "[m]y policy had always been to go to [carnival] alone….I had my own friends at home, and I never believed in mixing. I liked the idea of keeping my two lives separate. And it was those few days of carnival each year that enabled me to keep my other life, my past, where it belonged: in place behind me" (67). As someone trapped in the body of his assailants, who have had their spiritualities literally cut off from them, this move gains even more weight. In reading *Carnival*, it seems that the frustrated Fletcher perceives his violent loss of heterosexuality as a temporary psychic castration that troubles the clear delineations that Mancrab, for example, seeks to enforce. The attack on Fletcher and his resulting transformation means that he is no longer singularly "white." While not the case physiologically, Fletcher's progeny will metaphorically contain black blood. Fletcher uses carnival to heal a psychic sexual violation rather than a physiological one and in this way carnival serves as prosthesis for him.

It is not unimaginable to extrapolate and couple Fletcher's assault and his loss of heterosexuality to the loss of his relationship with his father and his colonial heritage. Fletcher's father, by denying Fletcher a doctor's examination after his rape, denies Fletcher's rape entirely. He has to if he wants to consider Fletcher's blood uncorrupted. Upon learning that both Fletcher and Rachel were raped, Fletcher's father has Fletcher clean himself up and effectively destroy the evidence of his assault. Fletcher's father only allows the physician to examine Rachel: "Our parents wouldn't let Rachel shower, or clean herself up, until after the doctor examined her….Mummy went over to Rachel's house to fetch her some fresh clothes, and she brought them back….My father nodded to

me and I understood and hurried upstairs and showered quickly and dressed, pulled on shorts and a T-shirt" (169). Although primarily meant to retain Fletcher's racial purity, Fletcher also reads his father's move as a destruction of his patrilineal claim and, as Fletcher reveals later, becomes one of the reasons that he returns to Trinidad solely for Carnival: "It was the only time I did return home. Not because I loved carnival more than anything, which I did, but because it was the only time of year…I knew I wouldn't have to see my parents. My mother and father regularly 'escaped the rabble' by flying off to Barbados for the week" (67). Fletcher's highlighting of the term "rabble" is troublesome because it reinforces the suggestion that Fletcher's assault at the hands of Afro-Trinidadians means that he is now one of them and thus *part* of the rabble. In a novel that traffics in easy essentialized types such as hypersexualized blacks and privileged whites, this suggestion points to a historical essentialized racism: not only do Fletcher's parents leave for the week, but they do so "with their proper group of English friends…who considered [carnival] vulgar and barbaric and wanted nothing whatsoever to do with it. An event, at best, to be tolerated for the 'blacks'" (67). Fletcher's parents, and their friends equate "rabble" with "blacks," and subtly deploy all the classism that goes along with such claims. They are, of course, better than rabble and probably want to avoid Fletcher as much as he wants to avoid them. Fletcher's parents' friends, by dint of being English, suggest that their ancestors are historically responsible for the nation's institutionalized racism during the plantation economy and that continues to exist currently. Although Fletcher seems to desire to distance himself from such thinking, there are various signs that highlight his resentment. As much as Fletcher seems to align

himself with Trinidad's blacks through his enjoyment of carnival, there are suggestions that he thinks similarly as his parents and their friends.

Just as Fletcher's use of the term "boy" unsettles, Fletcher's later narration further proves him to be disingenuous. Fletcher eventually revels in his own predilection for riacl stereotypes when he distinguishes between Trinidad's blacks. He sees Boissière, with his "French-Creole surname," as creative because he "is a prize-winning poet with three books already published" (4). By Fletcher exoticizing Boissière through his creativity, he sets him apart from the novel's other blacks. Boissière's literary success makes him acceptable to Fletcher because Fletcher lusts after the same literary success. Fletcher not only views Boissière as a better class of black person because of his creativity, but as a black person of promise, especially since he embraces history and writes "a play in verse inspired by C.L.R. James's book of the Haitian revolt, in which Toussaint L'Ouverture daubs his face with the blood of his former French master, whom he had also defended fiercely and loved like a father" (8). Boissière's creativity, and his ability to mobilize Caribbean myth in the service of his creativity, serves as a grand credential in Fletcher's eyes, and inspires Fletcher to use his own writing and creativity, in addition to the creative energy that carnival provides, to construct a personal prosthesis that transforms him back into his original form.

Fletcher seems to use his attack as a means to become a better writer. He exiles himself from Trinidad because he knows that historically this is the path that successful Caribbean writers travel. Boissière migrated to England as a young man and in so doing joins a long list of Caribbean writers who achieved success once they left their homelands including Edward Kamau Brathwaite (Barbados), V.S. Naipaul (Trinidad), and Derek

Walcott (St. Lucia). Fletcher's assault and transformation is important because, as a white Trinidadian, he has access to privileges that non-white Trinidadians cannot access. As C.L.R. James notes in "Discovering Literature in Trinidad: the 1930s," "you stayed [in Trinidad] not only because your parents had money but because your skin was white; there was a chance for you, but for us there wasn't—except to be a civil servant and hand papers, take them from the men downstairs and hand them to the men upstairs" (quoted in Gikandi 38). Fletcher *needs* his transformation to distance himself from his historical privilege; he believes he will not be taken seriously as a writer without such distancing.

Fletcher's writing does not just serve as a prosthesis, but acts as Harris' character-mask, which Kutzinski argues is the existence of a phantom body which "connect pasts with presents" ("Wilson Harris's Phantom Bodies" 142). It is only Fletcher's violated, transformed form that warrants his creativity. The problem is that he is caught in a catch-22—his assault allows his transformation so that he becomes a writer with something worthy to write and that distances him from his privilege, but his entrance into the writing world is based not on his writing ability but a misunderstanding—Colombia University accepts him because they believed he was black.

The problem with Fletcher's character-mask—his writing—is that although it allows him to re-enter the time and space where his normalized social position is restored, in which he becomes the self he was before his attack, this construct results in a limited narrative. While Fletcher's writing allows him the heteronormative social status he occupied before his assault, where African-descended, East Indian-descended, and European-descended Trinidadians operate in fixed, and clearly-defined spaces, it makes for staid, unexceptional prose, as seen when Fletcher meets with his Afro-Trinidadian

friend Boissière and a writer of East Indian descent who is a fictionalized version of V.S. Naipaul. In this scene, in which Fletcher promptly compartmentalizes Boissière and the Naipaul character based upon their ethnicities and the types of alcohol each consumes, he admits to the poor quality of his resulting writing: "[t]he scene was too ironic to touch. Too good even for literature, which is why it'll end up in my novel: three West Indian writers, one red, one black, one white. Drinking their appropriate labels of imported scotch" (126). The description is myopic, but allows Fletcher to create and occupy a mental space where everything is in its right place, a world where not only are there uncorrupted forms of alcohol that match clearly defined ethnicities, but where each ethnicity drinks from the correct bottle. This is as close to his original self that Fletcher may approach though his writing, but such a space is a deeply racialized one that is offensive to the egalitarian space that carnival represents.

During the same scene Fletcher reveals that he admires Naipaul not for his writing, but for his reputation, and the mythology that it engenders: "There are two world-famous writers from the British West Indies. Neither lives here now, but they both come back for a visit occasionally. One of them is of African origins, the other East Indian. One a poet and playwright [Derek Walcott], the other a novelist and travel writer [Naipaul]. It's the latter who has the added distinction of having been knighted by the Queen of England" (123).[72] Just as Fletcher limits Naipaul's identity to an ethnicity compatible with a brand of scotch, he reduces his writing to a reputation sanitized by England's queen. In this way he is no different from *The Dragon Can't Dance*'s Cleothilda: the British monarchy continues to sanction and sanitize its former colony and

[72] One reason that Naipaul is an easier character for Fletcher to address, rather than Walcott, is that Walcott is of mixed ethnicities.

just like Cleothilda, he seeks its approval. Fletcher, although he realizes that his creativity is not vibrant enough to lift him to the level of sovereignty, hopes that his assault and his transformation combined will serve as a powerful enough prosthesis to accomplish this act. For Fletcher, blackness by proxy, which he attains through his assault, combined with his love of carnival, should be enough to propagate his writing career.

Ultimately, Fletcher does not use his character mask to return him to his "unviolated" state, but to return Trinidad to a "better" time when English colonialism was the law of the day. Fletcher's writing ultimately suffers because it reinforces colonialism's divisiveness. What also shows through is that Fletcher does not solely covet Naipaul's abilities and successes but his recognition by England. Although Naipaul won a literary Nobel prize, an award bestowed by Sweden, Fletcher does not mention it, but chooses instead to recognize that Naipaul was knighted by the Queen of England, and thus received the blessing of Trinidad's former colonial ruler. He admires Naipaul's success in pleasing the "Motherland," so much so that Naipaul has no need for carnival—he leaves the island before the festival begins, and flies back to England on a plane devoid of the *hoi poloi*: "[b]ut it was the best time of the year to be flying to England, he told us. Not only did they put on special direct flights, his plane would be going back to the Motherland empty. He'd have it all to himself" (127). Further, when Fletcher describes his father, he notes his connection to England, a connection sterilized by his heritage: "My father had gone to Oxford too, though he'd studied law. His first step to becoming QC for our branch of the Colonial Department—Queen's Council. Of course, like my mother, he'd come from generations of West Indian money. And although the family fortune was no longer anything compared to what it had been four or five

generations back, on either side, there was still lots left. Plenty blood money" (28). Although Fletcher does not define what transactions allowed the family to accumulate its "blood money," one tends to think that it is in some way connected to the plantation industry, since this is traditionally what "generations of West Indian money" tends to signify. If this is the case, Fletcher is unable to move past the weight of Trinidad's history to address his own. At one point his friend Boissière accuses him as having a historic and proxy role in slavery: "[y]ou're a slave driver…[g]ot it in your genes," to which Fletcher replies that he "[d]isowned those long ago" (229). Reading his narrative, however, does not bear this out. As a white Trinidadian, and a person of privilege, Fletcher finds it impossible to dissociate himself from the wealth that he equates with his heritage, but because of this, he is unable to create any viable fiction based on his past.

Although Fletcher uses the mythology of the Earth People to explain Minshall's creation of his band, there is a more personal myth that relates to Fletcher, which he disavows. This myth relates directly to Fletcher's understanding of himself as a writer more so than as a Trinidadian, but he dismisses it because of its source: it involves someone who is of a non-traditional ethnicity. When Fletcher returns to Trinidad for carnival, there is an interaction between him and an immigration officer with whom he went to high school. The immigration officer, Ganish, is biracial—one parent is of East Indian descent, the other is of African descent.[73] Ganish, who wanted to be a writer but was not afforded the opportunity, has a sense of humor about what he has heard of Fletcher's success. He tells Fletcher that "he hear a good story about [him]! While back. Good few years ago it is already" (76). He accuses Fletcher of receiving the opportunity

[73] The Trinidadian term for someone of East Indian and African descent is the pejorative "Dougla," which Fletcher uses.

to study writing in a U.S. university under false pretenses, that Fletcher modified his ethnic identity to gain admission: "I hear this story bout how you did pose as a negro-man. To get some kinda scholarship they was giving-way in one them fancy writing schools in New York. Columbia University, or someplace so. Any trut [sic] in that?" (77) These details that Ganish provide make a plausible story, but he also adds elements of the incredulous that engender myth: "[b]oy the story going round here was how you did paint yourself black! With shoepolish. And people say how you put on a heavy West Indian accent for them Yankees, and the blasted fools fall for it. Only a island boy could tink up scheme good as that, eh? Only a scoundrel like we!" (77). Although he teases him with ole talk, Ganish is generous to Fletcher in considering Fletcher's nationality rather than his ethnicity. Ganish considers Fletcher a Trinidadian—"an island boy," rather than a *white* island boy. Although Ganish considers Fletcher a scoundrel, he considers him a scoundrel free from ethnicity. *This* is the ethnicity-free acceptance that Fletcher pretends to seek but, as revealed by his various discomforts, he actually disdains. Even though the rumor is based on the truth that Fletcher *was* accepted to the writing program because the admissions panel believed that because he was from the Caribbean that he would be black or East Indian, Ganish embraces Fletcher on a cultural level. Still, the story embarrasses Fletcher, such that he attempts to set the details straight and he admits there "was a confusion with the application" (77). Fletcher's denials show that he wants his myth to be on his own terms, but this is not possible. Myths are organic, and build by communal accretion, or, as Maes-Jelinek notes, a "community of texts." Fletcher may not devise a myth of himself, by himself, at least not a myth that will propagate. What Ganish's story also reiterates is Fletcher's desire for clear ethnic boundaries. Biracial Ganish, who tells a

story about Fletcher over which he has no control, troubles Fletcher greatly. Although Ganish offers Fletcher entrance into a community that eschews ethnicity, because such a community does not fall along clearly delineated lines, Fletcher refuses the invitation. Fletcher's story has already become myth to Ganish, possibly because it has passed through several hands, and like all myths, it contains elements of truth.

Fletcher's interaction with Ganish is important for two reasons—as a biracial New World citizen, but one whose ethnicity is composed of traditionally othered ethinicities, Ganish intimidates and alienates Fletcher even more than Fletcher does to himself. As a returning expatriate, Fletcher feels as a visitor rather than a citizen returning home, despite Ganish's harmless teasing. In addition to this, Ganish's job as an immigration officer, in which he is a guardian of legal entrance into a nation-space, underscores Fletcher's discomfort with his Trinidadian identity. At one point, when Fletcher is in Trinidad, he admits to someone that he lives in New York City (120), and at another point he claims that he, Boissière and Rachel are Americans, i.e. U.S. citizens, admitting that "it was an odd claim to make" (222). Ganish, as a purveyor of mythology whose understanding of the truth is necessarily not just limited to facts, but incorporates the incredulous as well, all toward an aim of understanding the cultural *status quo*, occupies a role that Fletcher cannot attain. Fletcher, who believes only his own version of his story because it is essentially his own history, cannot indulge in what Glissant determines as something that clarifies, as well as occludes: "[m]yth disguises while conferring meaning, obscures and brings to light, mystifies as well as clarifies and intensifies *that* which emerges, fixed in time and space, between men and their world. It explores the known-unknown" (71, emphasis original). This is the main reason, I suspect,

that Fletcher's writing is limited—even though he *is* a Trinidadian, he does not subscribe to its mythological mechanisms because he is overly-concerned with a history clearly delineated by ethnicity, while someone like Ganish is not.

Prosthesis, Fiction and Myth

Ultimately, Minshall, Antoni and Lovelace all rely on various mythologies to power their performances. Minshall relies on Kathakali, Antoni on colonialism and the Earth People, and Lovelace on Dante's *Inferno,* early carnival representations of the dragon, and St. George. What distinguish each respective use of mythology are their relationships to their prostheses. The difference between Prospect's dragon and Minshall's Mancrab is the difference between a biological organism and an inorganic addendum. Mancrab's additions overwhelm his biology. Prospect's dragon does not supersede his organic aspects but is a character-mask, a means to go forward by first going backwards, and so it works, as Glissant suggests, as a way to have "a memory of the future" as well as to have "a premonition of the past." Although such moves seem preposterous, time in literature is not restrictive.

In order for fiction to operate as prosthesis, it first needs its own prosthesis, its own memory, portrayed by myth. Myth acts as a placeholder until fiction develops its own understanding for loss, whether it resides in limbs or land. Fiction's resulting prostheses exist to make sense of loss in the Kermodian manner, but also to revisit the past. Hayden's wings in "O Daedalus, Fly Away Home" achieve this goal, as does Harris' concept of limbo as seen in Prospect's dragon. Literature fills the gaps wrought in dislocation, diaspora and myth, which are, as Harris notes in "The Limbo Gateway,"

variables in the imagination. In thinking about Harris' fiction, for example, and how he uses his creativity to negotiate the past, Hena Maes-Jelinek notes that

> [Harris] *never questions the sublimity nor significance of Homer's, Dante's or Goethe's work, all precursors and creators of vision in their own time. But he has repeatedly insisted on the need to renew the form and content of epic, allegory and myth, to re-vision as well as reverse the stereotypes they have given rise to and to see them as a community of texts and forms unhampered by the limitations of space and time. The dynamics of his revisions lies in his conviction that no character (whether god, mythical hero or ordinary man), no belief or type of behaviour can represent an absolute ideal. Their partiality must be recognized and they must be dislodged from recurring absolute frames of thought and demeanor. (Callaloo 48)*

Maes-Jelinek's focus on renewal of form and "revision," is important—it points not just to the past, but the present and future and it allows citizens of the New World an entrance or, to use Harris' terminology, a "gateway between Africa and the Caribbean" (379). The space of the gateway is amorphous and transitional. Because myths and mythology consist of the formation of their own types of prostheses—heroes are usually demi-gods, half-man and half-celestial—or contain the interaction of mortals with immortals, they already exist in such a transitional space, a mixture of the natural and man-made, of the organic and inorganic, of the biological and the constructed, that make them essential elements in fiction formation. The creation of fiction from myth serves as a bridge between the old world and the New World, between Africa, Europe and the Caribbean, and in the wake of destruction and loss, they encourage renewal and rebirth.

CHAPTER V

SEEING WHAT YOU SAW AND HEARING WHAT YOU HEARD: MISDIRECTION AND VENTRILOQUISM IN PAULING MELVILLE'S *THE VENTRILOQUIST'S TALE*, PAULE MARSHALL'S *THE CHOSEN PLACE, THE TIMELESS PEOPLE*, AND WILSON HARRIS' *CARNIVAL*

> *Imaginative sensibility is uniquely equipped by forces of dream and paradox to mirror the inimitable activity of subordinated psyche; inimitable in that no art of total capture or subordination of originality within formula exists despite appearances. Thus the unity or density of original expression, in a work of profound imagination, is paradox; it is both a cloak for, and a dialogue with, eclipses of live 'otherness' that seek to break through in a new light and tone expressive of layers of reality.*
>
> —Wilson Harris, *The Womb of Space*[74]

In this chapter, I analyze the gaps and spaces between certain formulaic aspects of carnival, specifically imagination and reality, in order to examine carnival as a volatile cultural event that resists categorization and division into its sum parts. Scholars often define Caribbean carnivals as festivals based upon its sensual exhibition, particularly sight and sound, since for the uninitiated, carnival's cacophony of colors and sounds often seems to be its central conceit.[75] For the neophyte observer, such a combination seems easy to dissect.[76] I argue that carnival purposely conflates these sensual elements which reside in, and are the result of, the intersection of imagination and reality, to make these fusions almost inseparable. It is difficult to separate carnival into its individual elements—music links with dance which links with the costumed performances to form a

[74] See *Womb of Space* p. xvii

[75] See Errol Hill, Peter Mason, Judith Bettelheim for the complex layering of carnivals.

[76] See Englishman Bryan Edwards' observations of Trinidad's carnival in chapter one.

theater which projects onto the streets. Scholars would do better to investigate the interaction of the various strands of carnival in its performance interstices, by which I mean to examine the intersections of music and dance, for example, rather than seek to parse out these features into their elemental strands.

Carnival is a cultural mosaic partly because its formation derives directly from fragmentation as a result of the Caribbean's historical plantation economy. These fragmentations, which I discussed in earlier chapters as well as in the introduction, started with a separation of Africans from their land, their tribes, their families, and finally their language. Trinidad's calypsos, with their creolized use of European and African languages, and their mix of European and African instruments, are an attempt to reclaim some of these losses but because such reclamation is impossible, they always remain partial and incomplete. Carnival dances, which include the limbo, are another reclamation project. Since the limbo dance, for example, was forged on the diasporic journey from Africa to the Caribbean, it necessarily contains elements of loss and longing. Because both of these modes of representation are already incomplete, it is improbable to categorize them completely. These songs and dances, and their combinations, are true representations of carnival, but because of their incompleteness, they are also paradoxes of representation which may mislead those who observe them to view them as pure and uncorrupted spectacles. Viewed symbolically, for example, one could read calypso as a form of ventriloquism, in which its content seems to come from a source other than the calypsonian and, as a result, may result in misunderstanding of its meaning.[77] Masks, of

[77] I do not attempt a sleight of hand in my deployment of ventriloquism here—in this instance I mean for it to represent a misunderstanding of content rather than a misunderstanding of its point of origin. Calypsos are notorious for their double-entendres,

course, are always already a means of misdirection in that they disguise one's facial features.

Carnival's ventriloquism and masks are the results of slavery and colonization's fragmentation; they work to signify "absences through presences" whereby each seemingly stands in for absent originals. In early calypsos, for example, lyrics often featured the desire to return to an idealized homeland, an impossible action. Misdirection also occurs in carnival when a masquerader uses his mask to manipulate his features to fit a stereotypical conception of a "native" of an African nation. Unlike prostheses, these substitutions are meant as camouflage rather than substitutes; they are meant to act as proxies for the absent originals such as the lost original African language. They do not expressly replace or supplement the originals but only suggest a temporary expression of the originals, a temporary reality. Still, in the creolized language of calypsos, there are genuine African terms.[78] The resultant traces left by the seemingly absent, but actually hidden elements, encode different effects than the prosthesis does in a body phantom. The relationship between the natives and celebrants in the Americas for those who understand and live carnival as a cultural event versus those observers who do not,

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particularly of the salacious variety. As Steven Connor notes in understanding ventriloquism, "[w]hen I disguise my voice, I am producing differently something which is in the first place an active production and not a mere condition of my being" (4). The suggestion here is of purposeful and willful misrepresentation of verbal content.

[78] In Trinidad, there is a term "sousou," for example, which operates like a rotating credit union in which all participating members contribute the same fixed amount of money over a given time. At the start of the new period, all members donate the same amount of money, but a member who has not yet received the full donation collects it. "Susu," Chike Pilgrim notes "is a word based on the Yoruba word 'esusu' meaning a rotation of funds to persons who have contributed to a central banker; a sharing of capital. This practice is done commonly throughout West Africa. A general misconception is that the word had its origins in the French word for 'cent' (Pilgrim)

creates a schism in understanding since for those individuals who do not really acknowledge carnival as a living cultural event, it exists solely as spectacle, a festival for study, or as a source of derision (I am thinking of Englishman Bryan Edwards' observations from chapter one).

For carnival to continue to exist as a cultural event, and for it not to be conscripted, degraded, or categorized, it must move toward an existence that avoids classification either through its physical or aural manifestations and it must use a combination of these aural and physical elements to misdirect those who would reduce it to one thing or the other. Carnival realizes that it may exist as a festival but must exist as something beyond this to ensure its continued existence such as would happen if its individual elements were to be separated and categorized. Carnival ultimately attempts to minimize the separation and categorization of its "voice" and its "body" through the imagination.[79]

Part of the desire for the foreigners seen in the texts I examine to separate carnival into its elements is based upon science in general and anthropology in particular. As Foucault notes in *The Order of Things* (1966), during the nineteenth-century, "it was decided to include man…among the objects of science—among which it has perhaps not been proved even yet that it is absolutely possible to class him; they appeared when man constituted himself in Western culture as both that which must be conceived of and that which is to be known" (376). Foucault saw that man sought to classify events and occurrences into "a volume of space open in three dimensions" that included mathematics and the sciences in the first dimension, "language, life, and the production and

[79] It seems that classification or categorization equates to a type of death in which the festival is no longer vibrant, but staid and ready to be mounted for display.

distribution of wealth" in the second dimension and, in the third dimension, the "philosophical reflection" which "develops as a thought of the Same; it forms a common plane with the dimension of linguistics, biology, and economics: it is here that we may meet, and indeed have met, the various philosophies of life, of alienated man, of symbolical forms" (378). Foucault saw the end point of all of this as "the formalization of thought" which he deemed perilous "because [it represents], as it were, a permanent danger to all the other branches of knowledge" (379). Particularly dangerous to Foucault was anthropology "which becomes a threat as soon as the relations of thought to formalization are not reflected upon correctly, for example, or as soon as the modes of being of life, labour, and language are incorrectly analysed. 'Anthropologization' is the great internal threat to knowledge in our day" (379). The problem with anthropology is that it wants to render man, and particularly the Westernized conception of man, as the central element of his science and understanding even though, as Foucault notes, "[w]e are inclined to believe that man has emancipated himself from himself since his discovery that he is not at the centre of creation, nor in the middle of space, nor even, perhaps, the summit and culmination of life; but though man is no longer sovereign in the kingdom of the world, though he no longer reigns at the centre of being, the 'human sciences' are dangerous intermediaries in the space of knowledge. The truth of the matter is, however, that this very posture dooms them to an essential instability" (379, 380). In all of the novels I examine in this chapter, foreigners, either in the form of Europeans or U.S. citizens, seek to classify carnival and colonized people into the dimensions that Foucault outlines, and both the people, and carnival, resist it. Such classification leads to instability that would undermine the festivals', and the celebrants', organic expressions.

Carnival seeks instability but an instability that evolves naturally from creativity, as seen in the creation of calypso or limbo.

An examination of how the foreigners interpret and catalogue both carnival and the belief system of colonized people is seen in their quest to seek a disjunction between sight and sound. I examine Pauline Melville's *The Ventriloquist's Tale* (1997) which, although not explicitly a novel about carnival, is situated in Guyana and focuses on a formerly colonized people who indulge in misdirection to keep foreigners at a distance.[80] The indigenous people that the novel features, the Wapisiana, utilize ventriloquism to camouflage their folklore, mythologies and systems of belief. Such ventriloquism, as I noted earlier, is an element of Caribbean carnival but also serves, in this case, as a mode of resistance against colonial attitudes. *The Ventriloquist's Tale* becomes a dialogic story about the misdirection of the foreigners by the locals. Melville's novel discusses ventriloquism as a technique of camouflage and/or misdirection, and suggests that its aural and visual components are inextricably intertwined among the Wapisiana legends. A visiting European anthropologist, Michael Wormoal, attempts to disentangle these strands and reduce local myths to the elements of mathematical equations. The novel thus reveals the limits of anthropology as a means of cataloguing and understanding culture: what one sees, hears and interprets may not be the full extent of what the Wapisiana experience, particularly if one trusts the misleading ventriloquial voice of the Wapisiana or their visual illusions. As I will show, although Wormoal believes he possesses significant knowledge of the Wapisiana society, such knowledge is still deficient partly

[80] Guyana has its own annual version of carnival called "Mashramani" and includes a parade similar to Trinidad's. It takes place on February 23—Guyana's Republic Day. <http://www.landofsixpeoples.com/news401/nc402235.htm>.

because he does not participate in the society. In seeking to catalogue the Wapisiana, Wormoal remains apart from their society and, as Albert Braz argues, for Wormoal, "science and scholarship are not disinterested pursuits of knowledge but discourses of power" (26).

From here, I shift to a discussion of Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* (1969) which, among other tasks, examines carnival on the fictitious Bourne Island (a thinly-disguised Barbados), through its plantation history and its effects on carnival's performance. Marshall's novel focuses on the visual cues of carnival, particularly through the physiology of the eyes, much more than on its aural codes. Her text also reveals the limits of the visiting anthropologist's desire, in this case U.S. citizen Saul Amron, to delimit both Bourne Island's agricultural and cultural existence. Marshall's carnival relies so heavily upon history, and the mythologization of history, that the intersection of sugar and carnival, as I point out in the introduction, becomes a fertile area for dissection of possible misdirection.

I end this chapter with a reading of Wilson Harris' novel *Carnival* (1985). Through my reading of *Carnival*, in which Harris moves away from the traditional cataloguing of carnival as a viewed festival by viewing it as an imagined activity, I address the limits to separating sights from sounds. In *Carnival*, Harris locates carnival in the imagination and thus argues against the reducibility of carnival's conflated elements to any of its sense-based variables. Carnival, for Harris, is always transitional. In all of the texts I analyze here, the gaps and spaces between the sensual fragments, their sights and sounds that form carnival, reveal that carnival transcends the sensual and physical to become a metaphor of imagination.

In the epigraph at the start of this chapter, Harris discusses the paradox that exists in imagination: it seeks both to hide itself yet to carry on a dialogue with "eclipses of live 'otherness'" that intersects with "layers of reality" (xvii). This is one place where the three novels I discuss in this chapter intersect. The narrator of *The Ventriloquist's Tale*, for example, becomes enmeshed in such a paradox. His job as a narrator is to render a truthful tale artfully told. At the same time, he possesses privileged knowledge of Wapisiana mythology which plays a major role in the novel's plot although he wants such information to remain discreet. The narrator, Macunaima, only partially reveals his name in the novel's prologue and it remains a secret until it appears seemingly innocuously later in the text as attached to an eponymous mythological character. Macunaima is trapped in the paradox of having to provide information while desiring to keep much of that information discreet.

Revelation and discretion intersect both figuratively and literally in the novel through the ironic image of the solar eclipse. Macunaima succeeds in suppressing some information by not revealing the full complement of meanings or definitions of various terms that relate to the eclipse. An eclipse never quite means the same thing each time it surfaces in the text. In one tale, it represents negligence on the part of an alcoholic, lonely nun who allows her charges to witness the eclipse in the reflection of a body of water, a move which renders the children blind. In another instance, it symbolizes incest in a mythological tale in which a brother, who makes love to his sister, climbs into the sky and becomes the moon, a move which entices her to follow him and become the evening star. In the latter tale the mythological details conflict with the "reality" of the nun's tale

to add a secondary layer of reality and to insist upon the efficiency of "imaginative sensibility."

The second formulation of Harris' claim comes into play in Marshall's *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* in which the "combination and break through" of discretion and revelation reveals itself through carnival celebrations. To the anthropologists who visit Bourne Island to study its agricultural methods and its carnival, the festival seems solely to exist as an annual, temporary release similar to the one in Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance*. For the citizens of Bournehills, however, who perform the same historical masquerade that features the rebellion instituted by a slave from their region, Cuffee Ned, the parade is a remembrance of their "subordinated psyche." It is art as well as history told through narrative, and serves as a reflection of their contemporary situation which does not seem to have evolved very much from the days of slavery. The villagers never reveal this information to the visiting anthropologists and the result is that the anthropologists' learned information remains partial and incomplete.

Misdirection Through Ventriloquism

Pauline Melville structures *The Ventriloquist's Tale* as a framed narrative that seeks to disrupt the dissection of the myths of the Wapisiana tribe in Guyana into its elements of character, plot and cosmology. The novel's frame opens with a nameless trickster, Macunaima, who admits that he lies, a move that immediately privileges narrative instability: "I lay claim to the position of narrator in this novel," he notes at the start and then admits, "[w]e, in this part of the world, have a special veneration for the lie

and all its consequences and ramifications" (1, 3). One eventually learns that Macunaima, along with his brother Chico, is a character in a Wapisiana creation myth, a vital story which he does not tell, but that is related by another character in the novel. Macunaima, who gives his brother Chico's name as his own, which proves to be an early indicator of his willingness to lie, refuses to give his real name although he appears throughout the novel at various times as either a mythical or invisible figure with a parrot on his shoulder (344) where the parrot, of course, symbolizes ventriloquism.[81]

Macunaima's use of ventriloquism, combined with his refusal to divulge various forms of local information, including his own name, is both a ventriloquial and a masking tactic that works to suppress and derail European inquisition. Foreigners who study the Wapisiana's culture do so only to categorize it and to understand it fully, a move which seeks absolute truth and which Macunaima and the Wapisiana detest.[82] Such fixity is abhorrent to the Wapisiana because, as noted before, truth, to them, is variable. The Wapisiana live practical lives in which animals may transform into humans and vice versa. They participate in existences in which animals and humans may procreate and produce human offspring that transform into plants, existences in which humans may ascend to the heavens and transform into stars. These intricacies are important elements

[81] Albert Braz also points out that the parrot's relationship to the orality that Macunaima cherishes over the written word: "toward the end of the novel, Melville's narrator returns to the parrot, a bird Melville describes in her story 'The Parrot and Descartes' as a 'natural representative of the oral tradition' (*Migration* 112) and a possible mediator between contemporary Wapisiana and the time before the destruction of 'the unity of magic and science'" (23).

[82] As April Shemak notes, "[a]t the heart of Melville's novel are the myth's multiple layers of translation and the role of the native informant in the process of translation. Melville constructs Macunaima as an embodiment of the act of translation, and of the competing discourses of endogamy and exogamy" (353).

of Wapisiana society and, because they remain uninvestigated thoroughly by the visiting Wormoal, limit his study. "Variety," Macunaima notes very early in the text, "[is] more reliable…[t]ruth changes. Variety remains constant" (3).

Such variety becomes an inseparable aspect of Macunaima's oral tale and, as a result, assumes its own form of truth. As a storyteller and narrator, Macunaima eschews the written word because it seeks an ultimate truth that reveres the written word: "[w]riting things down has made you forget everything" (2). Conversely, Macunaima reveres orality because it venerates variety. For Macunaima, the written word represents cataloguing and compilation, two qualities for which he has no use: "No one round here likes measurers, collectors or enumerators," he proclaims. "We cannot hoard in the tropics" (3). The written word strives to pin down cultural elements, and Macunaima, as seen through his affection for the parrot's ability to fly and throw its voice, values the variety that movement, or ephemerality, creates. As April Shemak notes, "[b]y presenting a narrator who is not who he claims to be, and who has no intention of revealing himself to us, Melville disrupts the notion of 'native informants' as purveyors of cultural truths" (358). Macunaima hones his skills as a narrator through hunting, which the text reveals as a skill that depends a great deal upon ventriloquism, which I understand here to mean the ability to make one's voice seem as if it emanates from another source. Ventriloquism works as an act of deception or camouflage. It embodies presence through absence. As Macunaima ends his narration of the novel's first section, in which he addresses the reader directly and gives way to the other characters' stories, his parting words are "[t]hat's all for now, folks. The narrator must appear to vanish. I gone" (9). He is, of course, not gone, just camouflaged. Full absence is impossible; how would one receive

the story but through a narrator? Melville suggests that the narrator overcomes any narrative shortcomings through the use of several narrators who provide multiple sources and multiple versions of similar stories that vary upon a singular theme. These multiple sources serve as viable substitutes for a single narrator and avoid categorization.

Through the deployment of several versions of mythological tales, *The Ventriloquist's Tale* creates a narrative camouflage that unsettles the reader and refuses to allow him to situate himself or properly differentiate the elements that make up myths. Such instability makes it difficult to identify origins or to determine a direct causal relationship within a culture's mythological structure. If many stories say similar things but have details that differ to the extent that a character, for example, does not represent one characteristic expressly, there always remains a measure of occlusion. This is seen in the main plot with the incestuous relationship between siblings Beatrice and Danny, Wapisiana Indians who live in Guyana's Rupununi savannah. Although the village does not view incest as a completely offensive act, it is one they would prefer to avoid: "Not that it was unheard of for a brother and sister to live 'close' as it was known," muses Danny and Beatrice's mother, "[s]he would just have preferred it not to be her own children" (176). The story of Beatrice and Danny reverberates through Wapisiana mythical tales that contain similar details that either discuss incest directly or approach it indirectly through a symbol of incest, the tapir. Again, this tale shows the necessity of the interaction of the Wapisiana with animals, which they consider to be organic, egalitarian partners of their society. In one myth, a couple abandons their child who is taken in by a female tapir, or bush-cow, an anthropomorphized animal who "[e]verybody knew…was too lazy to mate outside its own family" (176). When the child becomes a man, he and

the tapir "began to live together as man and wife…and then one day she became pregnant" (300). One night, while out hunting, he rediscovers the village of his birth. He feels comfortable there and when the villagers went hunting for a "certain bush-cow they had been seeing around the place" he joined them (300). The man did not want the villagers to know that the tapir was his wife. During the hunt the tapir smelled her husband and ran toward him and he "shot an arrow which pierced her neck and she fell to the ground and died, the child still in her womb" (300). Another myth features a character "Nuni [who] made love to his sister" while disguised as a stranger (191). At first Nuni's sister does not recognize him in the dusk as her brother and she "painted him with genipap all over his face" so that she could identify him during the day (192). These markings eventually allow her to recognize him, but once Nuni realizes that he has been identified, he escapes to the sky and becomes the moon. His sister follows him and becomes the evening star. Both of these tales connect through misdirection. In the latter, Nuni disguises his identity to seduce his sister then she ironically marks his face with paint in order to recognize him. In the former tale, the man does not reveal his familial relationship—which exists on two levels—with the tapir to the villagers. In this way, Danny and Beatrice's tale contains overlapping elements from various Wapisiana myths that suggest a deep fatalist connection between Wapisiana culture and myth. Danny ostensibly rapes Beatrice the first time they have sex by not revealing his identity to her, leaving Beatrice to believe he was a different suitor. Later, she paints his face with genipap in a move reminiscent to Numi and his sister (204). Beatrice is also characterized to have, like the "short-sighted" tapir, difficulty in seeing. Culled from various tales, all of these characteristics conflate to form a complex narrative that separates the individual

elements and do not give prominence to the complexity of either the full story or its individual influences.

Because of Macunaima's reverence for variability, his narrative highlights the distinctions within these various stories rather than their similarities. If it highlighted the similarities and the connections in the way that Wormoal does, then all that the reader would encounter is the same story repeated ad infinitum. Such an action would necessarily debunk the variety that Macunaima seeks so hard to establish.

While the various myths in *The Ventriloquist's Tale* possess similar details, their conflated conclusions are unique enough to sidestep conclusions one may attempt through the separation of the stories' details. Still, Wormoal attempts to separate and quantify these myths to achieve a fixed understanding of Wapisiana myth in the manner that Foucault fears. Wormoal, upon leaving Guyana, claims near absolute knowledge of Wapisiana eclipse mythology: "'I've had a very successful trip,' he said, beaming through his glasses. I've got most of the information I needed. I think I know *as much as it's possible to know* about the eclipse mythology in these parts'" (351, emphases mine). Although Wormoal admits he does not possess complete knowledge, he believes his partial knowledge approximates complete understanding so that it equates with a full understanding. Wormoal's own verbal qualifications finally undermine such a claim. In stating that he possesses "most" of the information and that he knows as "much" as possible, he hedges against the total knowledge that he seeks. The various myths reveal that what originally seem like inconsequential gaps in Wormoal's knowledge turn out to be substantial. Wapisiana eclipse mythology overlaps with incest mythology which overlaps with animal mythology which overlaps with the Wapisiana acts of hunting and

culture. The conflation of all these variables proves to be necessary elements for which one must account. Much of what the Wapisiana know about animals, which represents major elements of their mythology, comes from their *interaction* with animals through hunting, an activity in which Wormoal never participates. One may argue that hunting is such a vital aspect of Wapisiana life that for him *not* to participate in it invalidates any exclusive authority that he claims. This is not to suggest, of course, that non-participation invalidates cultural knowledge, only that it handicaps it. Beyond this, there are still aspects of related myths that are inscrutable and that a visitor is unable to determine unless he lives among the natives for a much longer period of time than Wormoal does. And Wormoal, of course, never actually visits the Rupununi or lives among the Wapisiana. Such a physical distance hampers his knowledge. Later in the novel, for example, one learns that the tapir is not just a symbol of incest, but of knowledge and comprehension as well. Soon after a scene in which Father Napier, a European Catholic priest and missionary stationed in the Rupununi climbs a mountain to celebrate mass with a local boy, the boy dies. The boy's father explains to Father Napier that the mountain is sacred and that "'[t]he mountain…once [possessed] a great tree [on which] grew every sort of fruit. The only creature who know its whereabout was the tapir'" (152, 153). Father Napier, involved with his own religiosity, dismisses the Wapisiana creation myth. In this case, however, the tapir does not just symbolize incest, or interspecies sex, but knowledge, and not just knowledge, but a very specific kind of *empirical* knowledge. The text does not reveal specifically whether Wormoal understands this extended symbology of the tapir, but the suggestion is that he focuses so intently on one dimension of it, its relationship to incest, that he does not.

Wormoal's shortcoming is the shortcoming of all colonizers: his totalitarian attitude means that he does not approach Wapisiana culture purely on its own terms, but thorough translation to his. Wilson Harris understands this to be a "paradox of vision" and argues that "[i]t is *the alchemisation of, or paradoxes of vision into, evolutionary layers blind in themselves*, that one needs to turn and face in inmost self-reflection" (*Womb* 86, emphases original). Harris' use of "alchemisation" here is provocative; I understand it to mean that one takes a base understanding of the Wapisiana culture and transmutes it, through Wormoal's science of anthropology, into a higher form of knowledge. Instead of deriving a whole from the various elements that he learns from eclipse mythology, however, Wormoal instead unknowingly creates the inverse, further fracturing his "earned" knowledge. As Harris notes, "the higher may *not* be 'implicit in the lower' as strict formula or tamed identity, but it is susceptible to itself as a part of unfathomable cosmos *through* the miracle of human perception that seeks to translate/re-dress all codes into fractions and factors of truth" (*Womb* 86, emphasis original). Wormoal seeks to descralize the Wapisiana knowledge,[83] but he fails because, as Harris notes, the "re-dress of the higher in the lower and vice versa is a fissure in *personae* of conquest which so often masquerade as divine or higher moral authorities" (86, emphasis original).

Wormoal, and most Europeans in the novel, possesses a causal understanding of myth that depends exclusively on scientific understanding rather than experiential

[83] This is a term used by David Harvey to explain, in part, the Enlightenment Movement: "Enlightenment thought…embraced the idea of progress, and actively sought that break with history and tradition which modernity espouses. It was, above all, a secular movement that sought the demystification and descralization of knowledge and social organization in order to liberate human beings from their chains" (12, 13).

understanding. Wormoal argues that there is a way, mathematically, to explain Wapisiana myth: "[a]fter many years of research, we have discovered that the most effective and fertile methods of analyzing myths are those regulated by algebra. With algebra, we can constitute a set of elements of units by which myths can be compared and by which we can analyse their internal logic. It is to science that we must now look for explanations of mythology. Even such a rambling and misshapen body of artistic entities as mythology can be proven to have a scientific basis" (81). The misgiving with such a formulation is that it suggests a limiting one-to-one relationship between sight and critical analysis. The Europeans believe in what they see and they analyze and make logical deductions based upon their vision. For the foreign anthropologists in the novel, vision serves only as a tool of scientific investigation, which is seen when McKinnon, the Scotsman who marries into a Wapisiana family, attempts to photograph the eclipse.[84] The novel's foreigners rely so definitively upon their relationship to science that it disturbs them when they see things which they cannot explain scientifically. Macunaima reveals that "[m]any of the colonists were gripped by a fear of the existence of something they could not see. Slave conspiracies. Illnesses that could kill within hours" (35, 36). This narrow vision affects even the earliest colonists, including a planter, "Mynheer Nicklaus, who, in harmony with the streets of the city, possessed blue eyes set so wide apart that it seemed possible that the fields of his vision did not overlap—that there was a gap in the middle where he saw nothing, yet where something existed—tried to fasten his lids back at night in order not to

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[84] The eclipse represents not only nature, but nature's uncontrollability. An eclipse refuses the permanent design of sunrises and sunsets. It disrupts the rhythm of daily teleology. It may be explained scientifically, but it may not be controlled.

sleep because he was so frightened of this 'something'" (35, 36). This "something," which I deem the numinous, or mysterious elements of Wapisiana myth that may not be determined mathematically or otherwise, haunts Nicklaus: "[h]e developed the habit of moving his head from side to side like a scanner. But still, the feeling that he never managed to see everything that was there drove him into a frenzy. When he was sure he could see everything at the centre, he became convinced that there was something on the outer edges of his range of vision that remained just beyond his sight" (36, 37). Part of Nicklaus' frustration comes from his desire to categorize fully and to understand explicitly: "[h]earing how the savannah Indians believed that everyday life was just an illusion behind which could be divined another reality, he ordered that one should be captured and brought to his house in order to prise from him the secrets of his philosophy. A Wapisiana Indian was seized and carried to Mynheer Nicklaus's plantation house" (37). This suggestion that both myth and daily existence contain a series of illusions that occlude or at least complicate reality undermines the very basis of Wormoal's science. For the Wapisiana, however, it is a natural relationship—sight and myth comingle easily and without conflict.

The Wapisiana prove not to be as restrictive in their understanding of sight and vision as the Europeans. What they see inevitably has a plenitude of meanings that while decipherable, are not singularly fixed and thus not easily separable. The eclipse, for example, is a symbol of incest, but it also means that monsters will appear and attack the villagers and that the dead will return to life (180, 181). Sight and vision represent the ability to vary reality for the Wapisiana; the resultant illusions represent the visual equivalent of aural ventriloquism; they may not truly emanate from the source from

which they seem to derive and they may not represent that which, on the surface, they seem to signify. The difference between the European and the Wapisiana concept of vision is that the Wapisiana willingly accept the unexplainable as a corollary of nature. As a result, there is no schism between lived life and myth; both intersect. As McKinnon, the Scotsman who marries two Wapisiana women and sires both Danny and Beatrice learns from his father-in-law, "there was no point in trying to do anything about everyday life. It was an illusion behind which lay the unchanging reality of dream and myth" (99).

The Wapisiana see all occurrences, even fantastical ones, as illusions, and they accept such occurrences without attempting to discern a greater meaning. Danny's uncle Shibi-Din tells him that he once shot a monkey, but only wounded it and the monkey sought to staunch his wound with leaves: "I've never liked to shoot a monkey since," he explains to Danny. "It was too human. Animals are people in disguise, they say. I can believe that. Some people say we are just the prophetic dreams of animals. Their nightmares. I could believe that too" (122). Such a concept is not just fantastic for the Europeans; it is laughable. When the British novelist Evelyn Waugh visits the Wapisiana and asks a local woman, Koko Lupi, how she arrived in the village, she explains that she flew and he notes in his journal that she "pretends to fly" (288). For the Wapisiana, there is no reason to disbelieve that humans may become animals or vice versa. Part of the reason for this is that animals possess a similar imagination to humans and their senses are similar: "Never underestimate a tiger," Danny explains to Beatrice. "They have fantastic imagination. Uncle Shibi-Din saw one get in a boat once and float downriver….They can swim, climb trees and run fast. Uncle Shibi-din said they were the sun on earth. They're ventriloquists too. They can make their voice sound as if it's

coming from somewhere else" (199, 200). This amalgamation of shared sensual traits between humans and animals, particularly the ability to deceive through the voice, is vital in Wapisiana culture.

What is ultimately egregious for the Wapisiana in the intrusion of the Europeans into their community is the eventual corruption of Wapisiana culture. Intermarrying is culturally acceptable, as the myth of the man who marries the tapir proves, as well as Maba's marrying of McKinnon. Cultural corruption, however, disconcerts, as Chofy's cousin Tenga notes, because it suggests colonialism's continuous influence and its ability to manipulate local culture: "[w]e Amerindian people are fools, you know. We've been colonised twice. First by the Europeans and then by the coastlanders. I don't know which is worse. Big companies come to mine gold or cut timber. Scholars come and worm their way into our communities, studying us and grabbing our knowledge for their own benefit" (54). Tenga here addresses not only the neo-colonization caused by a multi-national oil company, but he inherently refers to slavery. Chofy, a Wapisiana who travels to the main city of Georgetown and has an affair with a visiting British woman, disagrees with Tenga and tells him that all races must mix, "otherwise we have no future. We must get educated…Guyana has to develop" (54). Tenga retorts that he's not Guyanese, he's Wapisiana. This is a crucial argument. Chofy's idealized "education" inherently encourages an acceptance of European science at the expense of Wapisiana understanding. As both McKinnon and Father Napier prove, incest is not an acceptable part of what they, as Europeans, consider to be evolved civilizations. It is illogical and their participation in Wapisiana society, although it should be more credible than Wormoal's non-participation, becomes just as futile. Tenga understands that encouraging

European education means a disavowal of Wapisiana understanding or worse, a dismissal of certain aspects of it so that it becomes fractured.

The problem with the Europeans' partial understanding of Wapisiana myth is that it leads to destruction of Wapisiana society. Father Napier's ignorance of the cultural significance of a mountain leads to the local boy's death. McKinnon's arrival leads to his Wapisiana family being torn apart in various ways: Beatrice attempts to poison Father Napier when he puts an end to her relationship with Danny and she flees to Canada to avoid potential prosecution. It is also finally seen when Chofy's friend explains how the intrusion of Hawk Oil into the Rupununi leads to Chofy's son, Bla-Bla's, death: "One of the Americans saw a little boy [Bla-Bla] in the area and he pointed to the danger spot and shouted: 'Chofoye. Chofoye.' He said he was trying to warn him. He though it was an Amerindian word for explosion. Bla-Bla must have misunderstood and run towards the spot because he thought his father had come home. The stupid Americans didn't even realise [Bla-Bla] spoke English—let alone that we all have different languages anyway. And you come to town and mix with these people" (343, 344). The learning of the meaning Chofy's name comes about through a string of coincidences. He reveals its meaning to Rosa, the British woman with whom he has an affair at the start of their relationship, and she imparts this knowledge to Wormoal, who repeats it to the U.S. oilmen, who misunderstand the complete translation of Chofy's name. Chofy's name, it turns out, *could* mean explosion, but this is only a *partial* translation. Properly translated, his name means "an explosion of water." [85] In this example it is the conflation of

[85] Rosa explains Chofy's name to Wormoal when she says "'His name is Chofoye McKinnon. Chofy for short. Apparently it's a Wai-Wai name. It means 'explosion of rapids or fast-flowing waters'" (78).

misunderstood sound that highlights the distinctions between the Wapisiana and the Europeans. As I argued earlier, the Wapisiana understanding of the world around them depends upon vision, but a vision that may be misleading, and one that depends upon illusion and the inscrutability of illusion. The oilmen's misunderstanding of Chofy's name is ultimately an act of ventriloquism, as well as a lack of desire to find out its true source or meaning. Because of it, Tenga's fear of foreign misunderstanding comes to fruition, as does the limitation of Wormoal's partial education of local knowledge.

The Eyes Have it—Deceiving Anthropology through the Mythology of the Dead in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*

Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* addresses vision as a complicating aspect of communal culture that refutes foreign intrusion in a manner similar to *The Ventriloquist's Tale*. The U.S. anthropologists who visit the fictional Caribbean island of Bourne Island in Marshall's novel attempt to understand both the island's carnival and agriculture in scientific terms. Anthropologist and U.S. citizen Saul Amron and his assistant Allen Fuso travel there to observe and analyze the island's sugar economy and social setting, specifically in the village of Bournehills, a town whose income still relies heavily, in the mid-1970s, on the now inefficient subsistence harvesting of sugar. Amron and Fuso engage the villagers mainly through the anthropological technique of the participant/observer. Along with Fuso, Amron arrives at Bourne Island with his wife Harriet in tow and he eventually has an affair with a local woman of mixed ethnicities, Merle Kinbona, who runs the guesthouse where Amron et al lodge for much of the novel.

Like *The Ventriloquist's Tale*, *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* addresses the limits of foreigners' abilities to interpret local customs completely. Amron's wife Harriet is almost clueless toward local customs; she visits a poor local family at one point and feeds the destitute children the eggs that their mother means to sell at the market (176-178). Harriet is blind to the affair that her husband has with Kinbona until a local reveals the situation to her (424). Such scenes set up vision in the novel as the visual equivalent of ventriloquism; it camouflages and deceives. Even Amron, who is trained to observe, participate and analyze a society, admits that he is unable to understand the local culture completely. The novel particularly focuses on Bourne Island's carnival celebration as a means of deception: the combined sounds and sights of the festival misdirect Amron and company rather than reveal intimate communal details. More importantly, the historical influences of carnival, particularly seen through the revered mythology of a historical Bournehills rebel, Cuffee Ned, elude the anthropologists. Whereas illusion is the visual technique that confuses the Europeans in *The Ventriloquist's Tale*, carnival's masks, symbolized by vision, confound the foreigners in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*.

While there are several carnival scenes in the text, the nightclub scene at Sugar's, which introduces Amron to Bourne Island's nightlife and sets up the illusion of carnival, is not explicitly a carnival scene. Kinbona takes her guests to Sugar's as soon as they arrive on the island, telling them that "you people aren't officially on the island until you've met Sugar and he's passed on you" (78). Wilson Harris, however, acknowledges Kinbona's duplicity in her role as tour guide: "Merle Kinbona's involvement with the Bournehills folk is a paradox. She is a pregnant muse of the people, she sustains avant-

garde (or militant, forward) hope to achieve the re-birth of the depths in the heights, but at the same time her enlargement of ambition is akin to a gross envelope of deprivation and misgiving masquerading as a pregnant or swollen feature" (60). Harris again points to the difficulty in elevating a cultural activity beyond its margins to accommodate science. When Amron inquires as to whether Sugar's is a club, Kinbona replies "[y]ou can call it what you like [but] let's just say it's the one place where in the space of one evening *you can see* how things stand on this side of the island. That should interest someone setting out to do a study of us, shouldn't it?" (78, emphases mine). Kinbona suggests that vision equates understanding, that with the small amount of background information that she eventually provides him, Amron will be able to comprehend all that he sees. This is precisely the limitation of European science that Wormoal et al experience in *The Ventriloquist's Tale*. Kinbona is right to an extent; Sugar's is all about immediate reactions, particularly those based upon sight. The experience of Sugar's as a space relies on sight because what occurs there is all about performance and performances that, although consisting of disparate elements such as the affluent mixing with the working poor and blacks mixing with whites, works as an equalizing space that dismisses those elements toward the end of the night when the mass of bodies breaks down into chaos. As Lyle Hutson, a local attorney argues about Sugar's, "[it] is perhaps the one truly egalitarian institution we have on the island. That is, all types go there. From the P.M. down to the lowliest yard boy. And all shades and colors, castes and classes. All the little distinctions and snobberies that beset us here in Bourne Island are set aside there" (79). Here Hutson, as Kinbona does earlier, suggests that vision will make it possible to delimit everything that one sees, that while at Sugar's it is "impossible

to tell who was dancing with whom. To someone looking on, it appeared that there were no separate couples or partners, but that all the different bodies, black, brown, white, and the endless variations in between, had merged into a single undifferentiated mass, and the dancers were really one body, the inseparable parts of a whole" (81). Such an estimation is limiting and misleading, as the phrase "[t]o someone looking on, it *appeared* that there were no separate couples or partners" points out. Sugar's only breaks down racial barriers just for the night and just in that space. Kinbona knows this, and her willful deception in telling Amron that Sugar's explains how things stand at all times even outside of the club is a type of deception that is no different to Macunaima's misleading the reader in *The Ventriloquist's Tale*. It is a type of ventriloquism that, although not done for the same reasons as Macunaima's lies, achieves the same result. In Kinbona's description of Sugar's, her not telling Amron about slavery's historical role in an understanding of Sugar's is just as duplicitous.

What further makes the scene at Sugar's illusory is that it submerges the connection between the history of slavery to how things currently exist. While a newcomer may take note of the establishment's forthright name, which automatically links it to the island's history of a sugar plantation economy (but which may not because it is also the name of the club's owner), to the naked and foreign eye it is impossible to know that "[t]he room which housed the nightclub [that] occupied the second story of a former sugar warehouse" (81). It would also be difficult to discount that "[t]he thick stone walls still breathed of the crude sugars and muscovado that had been stored there" (81, 82). Sugar's nightclub turns out to be a museum that portrays a contemporary illusion of racial unity but that houses "[t]he rusted remains of the iron manacles that had

been fitted around the ankles and wrists" of slaves and is also a mausoleum where these items "could still be seen, some said, in the walls of the cellar" (82).

The main deception that Kinbona purports in taking Amron to Sugar's is to submerge slavery's continued influence on contemporary Bournehills culture. The scene at Sugar's acts as a type of mask that obscures the divisiveness of the past in exchange for a collaborative, but transitory, present. In this way, Sugar's pretends to be a snapshot of Bourne Island's annual carnival in which the entire carnival is an illusion for the relationship between Bournehills' working poor and the rest of the island. I am thus interested in this metaphorical mask that carnival operates under in this novel and particularly the symbol of the eyes that peer forth from the resulting mask. From Sugar himself on down, most of the people in the nightclub possess "eyes without expression, fixed, like Sugar's, on the same nothingness" who "were performing out on the cleared dance floor" (89). Marshall's use of eyes as the central image of foreign misdirection is prevalent throughout the text and it comes out especially in the invocation of history. It is the combination of history and contemporary carnival, particularly as seen through the image of eyes that creates various illusions that Amron cannot quite decipher.

In *Mythologies* (1957), Roland Barthes defines myth and mythology almost via a process of accretion. As the text proceeds, he annexes various definitions to the terms. At one point, he personifies myth and links it with corporality and death: "[m]yth…does not want to die: it wrests from the meanings which give it its sustenance as insidious, degraded survival, it provokes in them an artificial reprieve in which it settles comfortably, it turns them into speaking corpses" (133). In thinking about Barthes' words, and using them to analyze Marshall's novel, I argue that Marshall, in accordance

with the epigraph at the start of her novel, suggests that the historical ruptures in the Caribbean that now reside in the mythologizing of Cuffee Ned result in a continuous revisitation of the past, with the result of a mythologization of Caribbean slavery and the plantation system. Harris, in his reading of the novel, suggests this as a movement between the living and the dead: "Douglin is as much a roadmender as a doorkeeper into the kingdom of the living dead" (57).[86] As a result, although the population continuously performs "ceremonies of reconciliation," the specter of slavery continues into the present. As Marshall's epigraph at the start of her novel, states: "Once a great wrong has been done, it never dies. People speak the words of peace, but their hearts do not forgive. Generations perform ceremonies of reconciliation but there is no end." Marshall cements this idea of an unending cycle of visiting the past by bookending her novel with Douglin as a figure of slavery that represents the cyclical nature of history and death as well. The narrative that results—the actual *text* of *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*—becomes a book not about the repetition of history, but a book about the dead and the constant invocation of the dead in the form of Cuffee Ned which, again, acts as a historical touchstone that limits Amron's full understanding of Bournehills' culture. It acts as visual camouflage which conflates the living with the dead, but it also acts to discount the nineteenth century science that Foucault notes that Western man, represented here by Amron, privileges.

Just a few pages into the novel, Marshall lays the groundwork for the conflation of the living with the dead by describing Mr. Douglin, a contemporary laborer in the

[86] Douglin, a character who I will discuss in greater depth later, is an old man who still tends the cane fields despite his tremendous age, and who the narrator draws parallels with Cuffee Ned.

sugar cane fields Kinbona drives past on her way to the airport to pick up Amron et al, as a living corpse: "The man, dressed in patched and faded denims and wearing a frayed, wide-brimmed straw hat against the sun, had taken no notice of the car when it drove up…but had continued wielding his cutlass in slow and loving strokes over the grass on the shoulder. He raised up…and under the protective brim of the hat he was an old, old man, his black skin sucked in upon the skeletal frame of his face and his eyes like two cleanly bored holes that had been blasted out of the skull with a gun" (6). At the end of the novel, when Kinbona drives to the airport to travel to Kenya to seek her estranged daughter in Africa, she once again encounters Mr. Douglin: "Old Mr. Douglin, faithful keeper of the grave, hailed them with his cutlass from his fixed station along Westminster Low Road, at the place where Cuffee's severed head had been left on the tall pike" (472). While the first description defines Mr. Douglin by his actions, his "loving" work with the cane, the second description directly links him with death and the rebellious Cuffee Ned. These two descriptions of Douglin serve as markers both of Bournehills' plantation history, as well as of its attempt to conflate the historical past with the contemporary present. It also plainly associates plantation slavery with death. To invoke Cuffee Ned in such a bald manner and link him with the image of a contemporary corpse-like laborer suggests that although the villagers of Bournehills are able to revisit their plantation history, they refuse to move past it. When I say that the narrative results in a book about the dead, I do not necessarily mean that the people of Bournehills are expressly the walking dead who live unexamined existences that lead only to death, but that the text's nameless, omniscient narrator delivers a mythology which results in a carnival of the dead, in which carnival becomes a performance onto death. What this suggests, when

viewed through the slaves' continually replaying Cuffee's uprising and execution, is that although historical violence and death permanently occupy the minds of the villagers of Bournehills, it is a death of the end of oppression and subjugation. They celebrate transition away from oppression. The entire novel ends up as a text about characters whose lives are lived through death, who exist without any future or past, but only as a constant Mobius strip-like repetition of past events.

Revisiting the description of Douglin, I would like to look more closely at the description of his eyes. Marshall uses Douglin's dead eyes, which are "like two cleanly bored holes that had been blasted out of the skull with a gun" to set up the symbol of eyes as a permanent stasis into which the people of Bournehills have entered. In the section of the book that describes the carnival procession, when the villagers re-enact Cuffee Ned's uprising, Douglin is once again mentioned:

> And as they told of how [Cuffee's] severed head had been placed on the pike along Westminster Low Road to serve as a warning the crowd could see all the way at the very end of the band the lonely figure of Mr. Douglin, his wide-brim hat hiding the eyes that were like the empty eye sockets on certain statues which seem to draw you into the stone back to the age when the model for it had lived. He was marching by himself, slowly because of his great age, and carrying in one hand the cutlass he used to trim the grass at the one spot along the shoulder, and in the other a tall pike with a doll's head in a tasseled nightcap affixed to the top. (288)

Again, Douglin's presence is linked to Cuffee, and again, the narrative privileges his dead eyes, this time as "empty eye sockets." The passage also privileges the idea of a carnival of death whereby the slow-moving performance of Mr. Douglin is complicit with the image of Cuffee's execution. The description of the dead eyes ironically serves to take the living back to a past time of life.

All of these meanings for eyes, especially the meanings that link to the past, and the violence of the past, evade Amron and limit his understanding of Bournehills' culture: these eyes serve to mask their culture as a whole, and carnival in particular. Amron remains effectively blind to these occurrences, as he confesses to Kinbona:

> [What] I haven't ever spoken to you about, although I've wanted to, is that for the past couple of months, I've had the feeling I'm not seeing all there is to Bournehills. Something important seems to be eluding me. I've been more than a little troubled by it….Well, this today—the masque about Cuffee and the revolt—seemed in some way connected with that. For the first time I felt as though I might understand someday…[y]ou know I'm beginning to suspect that what Bournehills needs is one of those old-fashioned soothsayers or diviners, somebody whose business is dealing in mysteries, not some poor half-assed anthropologist who's supposed to be concerned only with what's real. (316)

Amron is correct, of course, to point out the vital connection with the legacy of Cuffee Ned, but more startling is his linking of that history with the paranormal. He understands, unlike Wormoal in *The Ventriloquist's Tale*, the link between mythology, history, and the present. Unlike Wormoal, he participates in the community he studies. In the end this is still not enough to gain a full understanding. History, its current mythologization and contemporary cultural interactions and the interaction among all of them is so complete that even a comprehensive knowledge of even one of the strands (the novel suggests that Amron achieves a good understanding of contemporary local interaction), is not enough to convey a full understanding of the community. The people of Bournehills, both consciously and unconsciously, act as aural and visual ventriloquists to consciously and unconsciously misdirect the visiting anthropologists.

The Science of Seeing

At this moment I would like to revisit a section of my introduction in which I utilized Houston A. Baker's essay "Caliban's Triple Play," to discuss the interaction between a neocolonial presence and a postcolonial nation. Baker argues that "in European travel narratives, a whitemale I/Eye always narrates the landscape of invaded territories in a manner that produces self-effacing accounts of endlessly proliferating nature. What never appears in such narrations is the I/Eye itself, or the indigenous inhabitants as people in functional relationship to the landscapes. Instead, as objective voice domesticates and normalizes the landscape, recording it with an eye always in the service of European 'science'" (187). In Baker's quote, as in *The Ventriloquist's Tale*, he suggests that for Europeans, vision must be conterminous with science, or even, as I suggest earlier in this chapter, that vision works solely in the service of science. In my argument, the history of slavery troubles the visiting anthropologists in both texts such that their vision is limited to what they can see unfolding around them combined with their limited understanding of the contemporary environment. This is particularly seen in Amron's wife Harriet who, as someone who is not trained as an anthropologist, does not scientifically seek to separate the carnival into its individual elements, but actually participates in the event in a manner that her husband does not. The results, however, remain the same. Because Harriet does not possess knowledge of the island's historical relationship with slavery, she does not understand the festival as fully as she might.

Harriet starts off as a witness to the carnival's procession and believes that via her participation in a carnival band, that is, in her becoming a participant/observer, she will experience the same emotions as the natives: "[s]he had been moved on one hand by the

silent downcast march, and vaguely unsettled on the other by the scene taking place between Stinger and Ferguson on the float (what little she had been able to see of it over the intervening heads), yet, as always, she had remained essentially out of it, removed, the spectator looking on from her seat near the wings. It had all seemed part of a somewhat busy drama which she could enjoy while only dimly understanding its meaning" (292). Her misunderstanding of the pejorative violence between Stinger and Ferguson, which reenacts the relationship between the revered Cuffee Ned and his rebellion against his master, whom Ferguson portrays and whom Stinger, so taken in by the performance that he forgets that it is a performance and attacks Ferguson, reveals the limits to her participation.

Harriet, without a full knowledge of the relationship of Cuffee Ned to contemporary carnival, cannot fully participate in Bourne Island's culture. At one point, while she participates in the carnival parade, a female spectator, spotting Harriet amid the masqueraders, leans out of the crowd and cries, amazed, "'What, don't tell me you's a Bournehills, too, my lady?' Gwen had answered for her, shouting back, 'How you mean! Of course she's one of we.' And she [Harriet] hadn't denied it; she had even, strangely enough, found herself nodding. Just then, catching sight of Saul moving down through the band to check on her, she had smilingly waved him back, telling him she was all right" (292). Harriet, of course, is not one of "we," but, just as the Wapisiana allow interlopers to participate in their society—I am thinking of McKinnon, who lives with the Wapisiana for over twenty years and even marries into the tribe, has children but eventually flees—she may participate on a culturally superficial level without becoming one of them.

The finer points of carnival evade Harriet; the festival itself remains masked to her, in how Bakhtin describes a mask as a peculiar interrelation of reality and image (39). During a critical part of the parade, she believes that the masqueraders will march into the ocean that lies at the end of their route. Here Harriet's ignorance, in the way that Tenga describes European ignorance in *The Ventriloquist's Tale*, kicks in. The masqueraders, who repeat the festival annually, know that they will turn onto a side street before they march into the ocean. The route, however, provides such an illusion to Harriet that she tries to inject her logic to dissuade the masqueraders from what seems like certain doom:

> But her voice couldn't carry above the furious clatter of their combat boots on the cobblestones, the insane rattle of the toy machine guns and the loud carnival songs, including the one extolling Cuffee Ned, which they were hurling, full voice, into the falling dusk. They hadn't heard her. Nor, she suddenly realized, *her shock reflected in her eyes*, had they really *seen* her. But how could this be? She was unmistakable among them with her hair (it was almost as blond now as Dorothy Clough's from the long months of sun) and her face, which despite her tan was still nonetheless white. But even those closest to her, the one bumping into and pummeling her as they rushed past, appeared totally unaware of her presence. (294, 295, emphases mine)

Harriet's inability to understand reveals her as a foreigner, but more importantly, as Baker's "[w]hite [fe]male I/Eye…in European travel narratives [who] always narrates the landscape of invaded territories in a manner that produces self-effacing accounts" in which she restructures the events so that she becomes the centralized and most important figure in the parade (187). Harriet's greatest concern at this moment is not about the members of the band's *collective* demise, but her *own* demise and how it may be possible that she appears invisible to the Bournehills citizens. Her hair, her skin, her voice, all demand acknowledgement which the festival and its participants refuse to grant her.

A Carnival of the Mind—Wilson Harris' *Carnival*

Wilson Harris invokes nuclear armament in his novel *Carnival*, which spans the period of time in Guyana from the mid-1920s to the 1980s. The mention is brief, but prominent:

> Perhaps it was the sculpture of coming events that Carnival felt in 1926, the economic depression of the 1930s, the war that would follow that depression. Perhaps it was the gestation of a nuclear age to be sculpted in the atom that Carnival felt in 1926. Perhaps it was a nameless foreboding that Carnival felt about independence for the colonies of the Inferno, an independence that would lay bare a variety of stigmata that would bleed in the 1950s and 1960s, but succumb to a brute hardening of the flame of blood, to tribal institutions that made all the more ironclad every ritual grievance of the 1970s and 1980s. (60, 61)

In this passage, Harris links "the gestation of a nuclear age," to the independence that many Anglo-Caribbean nations experienced in the 1960s and 1970s.[87] Although the two are not strictly equitable, there is a clear connection between them: Harris sees the destruction caused by the detonation of the atomic bomb as comparable to the destruction wrought by the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Such a connection is important to Harris; he also discusses the detonation of the bomb in a separate novel, *Infinite Rehearsal*: "The sentence of chaos had been inflicted on all species the year I was born, 1945, the year the Bomb fell and history changed, revised itself backwards, never to be the same again" (*Infinite Rehearsal* 184).[88] In making such a vital connection based on variable forms of destruction, Harris establishes *Carnival* as very much a modernist text that portrays

[87] The following islands gained independence from Britain in the 1960s—Jamaica: 1962, Trinidad and Tobago: 1962, Barbados: 1966, Guyana: 1966.

[88] Later in *Infinite Rehearsal*, he mentions it again: I was born (may I say it again) in 1945, the year my grandfather died. It was the year of the Bomb, the year of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. 'We are born with the dead, with the fish and the bird' (186).

modernist tenets of fracture, destruction and ephemerality that the detonation of the bomb confirms. *Carnival* does not just highlight the widescale destruction of the bomb, but it also foregrounds personal violence, which repeats profusely throughout the novel and is featured in the puncturing of skin, specifically through cutting and tearing of skin with knives. In this way, *Carnival* echoes the fears of bodily destruction stated by the modernist thoughts of two Nobel Prize-winning writers from the Americas, William Faulkner and Derek Walcott.

In Faulkner's 1949 banquet speech for the Nobel prize he argues that "[o]ur tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear so long sustained by now that we can even bear it. There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only the question: When will I be blown up?" Walcott does not worry about fracture and dismemberment, which colonialism has already wrought on the New World, so much as what happens afterward—how can the dismembered be re-membered? He argues

> Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of its original shape. It is such a love that reassembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars. This gathering of broken pieces is the care and pain of the Antilles, and if the pieces are disparate, ill fitting, they contain more pain than their original sculpture, those icons and sacred vessels taken for granted in their ancestral places….And this is the exact process of the making of poetry, or what should be called not its 'making' but its remaking, the fragmented memory, the armature that frames the god, the rite that surrenders it to a final pyre; the god assembled cane by cane, reed by weaving reed, line by plaited line, as the artisans of Felicity would erect his holy echo. (8, 9)

Walcott's reassembled vase connects with Harris "sculpture of coming events," in that both invoke the idea of creation through destruction. Harris' "sculpture" does not point merely to an *objet d'art* as artifact, but the endpoint of destruction as well—*Carnival* invests itself in the *cutting* that is necessary to *sculpt*; there is an inherent destruction that

goes along with such creation, a whittling away of what becomes excess or dross, and it is seen in the novel not just in wounds delivered to the skin, but also in one scene that features the destruction of a basket of eggs, in another scene that highlights a conflagration that sweeps through and destroys a town and a ship and finally in a scene in which the state executes an Amerindian man who performs ritual murder on his terminally-ill mother. The result of all this violence is a paradox that resides and repeats in *Carnival*—that of creation through destruction—and it is a theme that is particularly prominent in modernist texts, since modernism, as Marshall Berman notes, "threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality…in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity" (15).

Berman's idea of "perpetual disintegration and renewal," which he, and Harris in his novel, rightly acknowledges as a paradox, troubles Harris' text. In a novel strewn with acts of violence, murder and suppression, Harris wants the reader to believe that violence is not the cornerstone of civilization, that through reversible fictions, one may revisit past violations, and if not right them, then remodel them, like Walcott's vase, to create something that is constructive rather than destructive. In these reconstructions there are, of course, the vestiges of the destroyed originals that reside in the cracks and seams of the reconstituted object. The original may never be regained and what is newly-formed exists in the fissures that make it up. Antillean art is not just the "restoration of [Walcott's] shattered histories," but the residue that resides in the empty spaces of the reassembled parts, what I read in Harris' novel as imagination. Such an imagination, which is the by-

product of New World art, serves as a protection against further fracturing and destruction. Harris' imagination protects him from the colonial anthropological move of categorization and translation. *Carnival*, by taking place through the filter of Harris' imagination, becomes a project of camouflage, in which Harris may hide or protect the reassembled artistic fragments. What I see as his "textual masking" takes the form of what he permits his characters to say. In this manner, he performs textual ventriloquism.

In *Carnival*, Harris executes his imagination-infused textual ventriloquism through the novel's protagonist, Everyman Masters, who is dead at the novel's start, yet influences and participates in the entire text with his deceased voice. Like Macunaima in *The Ventriloquist's Tale*, Masters permits a host of voices to narrate the novel's story and like Macunaima, he embraces variety. Masters' voice is not just a ventriloquial voice that replaces or camouflages like Macunaima's, but one that creates as well—it creates narrative, characters, and plot. In short, the voice creates the *text* of *Carnival* in a manner that is dissimilar from Macunaima who tends to report and participate in the text rather than create it. I append Connor's concept of the vocalic voice and body to explain this move: "The principle of the vocalic body is simple. Voices are produced by bodies: but can also themselves produce bodies. The vocalic body is the idea—which can take the form of dream, fantasy, ideal, theological doctrine, hallucination—of a surrogate or secondary body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operations of the voice" (35). Such a vocal presence is exactly how Masters influences and creates the text. Through dreams and the use and creation of character-masks, which I discuss in the previous chapter, he is able to manipulate textual time and move backward and forward through time, all of which

seems to be important uses of Masters' voice. It is not ventriloquial in the purest form of the definition—the *reader* knows from whence the voice comes—but it is ventriloquial to the characters in the novel in that it comes from a character who is dead. Like *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People,* Harris allows the dead to remain among the living. As Russell McDougal argues, "[c]arnival is in part a re-working from within conscripted habit of Caribbean folk forms, evolving specifically through archetypes of Carnival to renounce colonialism and resurrect the dead gods of another life" ("Music" 2). As a result, the past continually haunts the present. Masters circumnavigates such a potential limitation by producing a text replete with images as a means to prevent his voice's capitulation and usurpation, but also as a means to trouble the traditional understanding of what a textual voice may do. It also helps his voice's credibility since, as Connor argues, "The history of ventriloquism is to be understood partly in terms of the repertoire of *imagings* or incarnations it provides for these autonomous voice-bodies. It shows us clearly that human beings in many different cultural settings find the experience of a sourceless sound uncomfortable, and the experience of a sourceless voice intolerable" (35, emphasis mine). Masters ensures that his voice is not sourceless, but he does well to complicate the location of that source. Like Macunaima in *The Ventriloquist's Tale*, he makes himself visible yet invisible, but does not, like Macunaima, remove himself from the text for the majority of the text. Masters is very much part of the text and his "imagined" presence allows him to move freely through time but also allows him to give credence to hypothetical past events that never occurred.

Chapter three of *Carnival* ponders the hypothetical childhood rape of Everyman Masters although it never occurred. This is a seminal scene in the novel—it sets up the

narrative's move away from the idea of carnival as a performance–based event toward one that fully indulges the imagination. While the reader's concept of carnival still indulges costumes and performances, it must now also include imagined performances. There is no flamboyance or bright colors in these imagined performances. Joy is muted. Instead, one experiences "carnival" as images and experiences, both imagined and real, that exist in Masters' mind, including memories from his formative years in New Forest, Guyana, and from his life as an adult in England. Up to this moment, the novel's plot revolves around setting up the narrative such that it allows for Masters to exist and interact as a character in a text in which he was recently murdered. The logistical problem that arises is how to allow the deceased Masters to communicate with the living. The text solves this problem through dreams: Masters is able to visit his still-living biographer and the novel's narrator, Jonathan Weyl, through Weyl's dreams but these dreams have such vividness that they are tantamount to directed illusions. As a result of these illusions' substantiveness, Masters and Weyl are able to improbably visit the events of Masters' past as if attending a film screening. Such recollections indulge generous movements through time. When the reader encounters the hypothetical assault of Masters in his childhood, it is done as if one were watching a film scene embedded in another film; the reader ostensibly views Masters and Weyl as they watch a scene from Masters' past. These collected illusions, like the collected illusions in *The Ventriloquist's Tale*, work as signposts toward giving credence to Harris' goal of carnival as imagination. Such encounters privilege Masters' memories to the extent that the reader must accept that Masters' memories, be they truthful, incomplete, or misremembered, are the constituents of his imaginary understanding of carnival, which are ostensibly the moments of his life

replayed. In this way, carnival becomes an abstract rather than a performative concept and Masters' imagination becomes the source of its own ventriloquial source. It remains without location and elusive. As a result, his true ventriloquism displays itself in narrative misdirection.

Masters' potential rape is purely hypothetical and serves as narrative misdirection. It never occurs and Masters survives to adulthood without being assaulted. Still, Weyl, the novel's narrator, who is also Masters' biographer, which makes *Carnival* partially a generic biography, ponders how the unoccurred rape affected Masters' life: "Did something reside in him now of the psychology of rape, the psychology of conquest? Was this the seed of Ambition to rule, to master a universe that had despoiled one, to march at the head of great armies into monsters one projected everywhere?" (26). Weyl's invocation of potential colonial might is crucial; it suggests that the lure of colonialism's power lurks as a temptation throughout Masters' life such that Masters may only evade it in death. This hypothesis points, of course, to my earlier discussions of appropriation, conquest and colonialism, but the use of the word "projected" is what stands out in Weyl's thoughts—it suggests both the understanding of staged imagery, such as with a film's projection, as well as the psychological connotation in which one ascribes his feelings or thoughts to someone else. The novel indulges both definitions. Still, the incident with Masters and his potential rapist, who the narrator variably calls a "false shaman," and an "intimate stranger," does not occur. It is, in effect, a false image. It is the visual equivalent to throwing one's voice. Colonialism presses Masters into ventriloquism as a means of self-preservation. If the source of someone's voice is occluded, then that person is much less easily influenced. As such, the rape's *psychic*

vestiges and its absence of violence become central events in Masters' life. Weyl argues that this moment of hypothetical violation is nonetheless foundational in Masters' life, particularly in how he views and remembers his past: "Had he run forwards from the false shaman that New Forest day into the list of light years, or backwards into the eye of a star cautionary and wise that forms in the spaces of the womb where fiction gestates? The fiction of Carnival began to gestate from that moment" (26). It does not really matter whether Masters moves backward and forward through time, only that he is able to negotiate it to camouflage himself from colonialism's lure. Masters' movement through time, however, suggests that violence, at least his image of it, is unavoidable; it appears wherever he does. As much as he may avoid colonialism's personal influence, he may not avoid one of its by-products. The constant movement through time also ensures that both Master's voice and the images it discusses or produces, remain ephemeral and fictitious.

This implication of fiction highlights absences, or gaps, in the move between the past and the present. The "spaces of the womb" that Masters mention become a site for memory and imagination to mix, with the result that the fiction that the novel invests in becomes a fiction of absence, potentialities, and hypotheticals. The resulting text becomes a fiction of abstraction on various levels of its definition. It relates to the foreshortening of events, it connotes being lost in thought and, in its artistic understanding, it suggests a creation meant to appeal to the senses. Harris' imagined carnival resides in the spaces of fictional and mental creativity, the gaps perpetrated by his fictional childhood assault.

The resultant fiction, *Carnival* as a novel, is a direct response to Masters' hypothetical assault and relates to the concept I mentioned in a previous chapter of

Kermode's definition of fiction as a means of making sense of contemporary events; the startled Masters turns inward and moves toward a world of imagination. The resulting "fiction of Carnival" is what carnival becomes in the text; it is no longer a street performance that possesses the potential for re-appropriation of the body as seen in Minshall's Mancrab, or singly a festival that pieces together historical events as seen with Cuffee Ned in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*, but one that consciously and strenuously refuses the capture of the body. In doing so, it places a premium on the senses such that Masters' carnival moves past sight/vision and hearing/sound to become entirely about the imagination, since imagination remains much more difficult to corrupt, own, or diminish than the body or even the myths of *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* and *The Ventriloquist's Tale*. Imagination, Harris argues, resists foreign intervention, whether political, geographical, or physical. When Masters avoids the physical assault as a child, it charges and imbues his imagination, and immediately after the incident, he "sees" his fetal gestation through a glass version of his pregnant mother. The physical escape from the false shaman/intimate stranger pushes Masters toward generating an understanding of carnival in fictive terms.

Part of Harris' project seems to be the need to address, beyond moving past a physical conception of carnival, variable consciousnesses. The reader not only experiences the mind of the deceased Masters, or the pre-adolescent Masters on the beach, but Weyl's mind as well, and a host of other characters' minds, including Masters' cousin Thomas. These highlight colonial and postcolonial considerations because Thomas, for one, and a doppelganger of Masters, for another, are characters who at various times in the text possess the "psychology of conquest," and the "ambition to

rule": Thomas sexually pursues a financially destitute black woman whose access to rent money he destroys when he topples her crate of eggs, and Masters' doppelganger, who turns out to have been an overseer on a Guyanese plantation, slept with his slaves. In such moves, Thomas and Masters act like Harriet in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* in that they seek to make themselves the central focus of the narrative. Harris' imagined carnival struggles vigorously to deny this.

Harris' fictional carnival of the mind is one that moves from image and vision to imagination and fiction in what I understand to be perception, wherein one is "affected by a phenomenon without *direct contact* with it."[89] Harris highlights vision from the very start of the novel when he encounters Jane Fisher for the first time—the woman who murders him after an intimate encounter. Harris details Fisher's physical form: "[h]er subtle red lips were stitched by the needles of space into another woman's jealous mouth. Yes, it was true. He saw it all. He remembered" (9). Here Harris establishes a link between sight and image, and sight and memory as well; later, he reveals how sight, image and memory influence each other to order his narrative. Still, Harris pushes the boundaries of sight and memory to explore how they influence individuals. Masters does not limit the physiology of sight to what the eyes observe or interprets through image and memory. Sight links with memory and image to engender *perception* and it is perception which acts as a second sight: "[f]or himself Masters saw *through* Jane to the other woman who had stabbed him twenty-five years ago in New Forest" (11, emphasis mine). It is this perception that allows Masters to see *through* his mother to observe his gestation in the womb. Combined with his imagination, perception also allows him to see his mother, to

[89] See the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

imagine and conceive her thoughts, and to learn that his father, who raised him, is a different person than his biological father: "He explained that the shock of encounter as a child with the 'intimate stranger' on the foreshore of New Forest had so curiously broken him, yet imbued him with the spectre of terrible Ambition, that he had run back metaphorically into the womb; and in spying upon his mother had been so overwhelmed that a closely guarded family secret sprang into his mind….His father was *not* his father" (28, emphasis original). For Masters to divine such a secret through a combination of memory and imagination suggests both perception and a "re-vision" that works on two levels—he sees and remembers a memory that is not indigenous to him and, as a result, he creates and manipulates the resulting vision—he is able to be a part of the vision (he is the fetus in his mother's womb), and apart from it (he is able to stand outside of his mother and observe himself *in utero* within her).

One may naturally question the validity of dreams and visions in Masters' narrative, particularly after the disturbing incident of his potential rape, and his return home to see an image of his distraught mother considering ending his life before it begins. The imagination involved in this contemplation of abortion is eventually irrelevant to the "truth" of the grand scheme of the narrative that I have tried to establish as fictional, and as such, allows the inclusion of all facts as truth. Imagination sanctions fictive moves, and an ability to disrupt time as well, as seen in the passage that suggests Masters may have "run backward" in time to see his gestation, or "run forward" in time away from the potential rapist. Masters' move back into the womb does not need to be read literally. Instead, it imbues the reader with the ability to interpret Masters' partiality: "Instead of the 'plucked brand' or the Abortion his mother, the glass woman, had begun

to plan, the foetus would mature and the child would be born with a capacity that was strangely fractured, strangely unfulfilled, a capacity to employ such partial fracture as an integral element in unraveling/overcoming the lure of diseased Ambition or conquest" (29). It is this "fracture" that seeks to prevent further violence that the text, up to this moment, suggests as unavoidable. Harris ironically uses the inherently fracturing nature of violence to argue that violence is not the cornerstone of civilization and, particularly, not the New World civilization:

> [Masters] paused; his blind eyes seemed to burn. He continued, "To put into reverse the obsolescence of institutions, the obsolescence of dead languages, that accumulate upon the sacred and clothe it with false charities." He paused again as if he heard, even as I saw, the rising waves. "A reversible fiction," he said softly as if he spoke to himself, "unsettles false clarities…reopens the profoundest human involvements and perspectives to illumine a truth."
>
> "What is that truth?" I demanded.
>
> "Violence is *not* the corner-stone of a civilization."
>
> "But, but," I began to protest.
>
> "I know, I know," he said. "Violence seems irreversible in a desperate age where alternatives are fearsome and we appear to have no option but the lesser of two evils. But that is why we need a dual hand," his voice choked a little then cleared, "a dual hand within an irreversible function to yield an edge, if nothing more, a subversive edge, that turns into the terror of pity, the terror of beauty, the terror of gentleness, to ravage our minds and purge us *through* violence *of* violence." (90, emphases original)

This concept of violence not being the cornerstone of the New World's civilization is ironic because in instance after instance that I examine, in both literary and historical sources, this seems to be the case—Hawk Oil's testing explosions in *The Ventriloquist's Tale* causes Bla-Bla's death and suggests a destruction of the Rupununi savannah. The shutting down of the sugar refinery in Bourne Island leaves the citizens of Bourne Hills nearly destitute. More than that, there seems to be a perverse, voyeuristic tendency that accompanies both violence and carnival as a performance, and Harris expounds upon such a tendency in the novel during a scene in which he and Weyl observe a market scene

that closely approximates the carnival parade performances I have pointed out in various guises.

Harris attempts to use the spaces, gaps or fractures that violence creates to establish *hope* as the antithesis to violence. Berman understands Foucault's reading of modernism as such that Harris' project of imagination remains a foolhardy mission: "Do we use our minds to unmake oppression—as Foucault appears to be trying to do?" Berman asks. "Forget it, because all forms of inquiry into the human condition 'merely refer individuals from one disciplinary authority to another,' and hence only add to the triumphant 'discourse of power'" (34). I disagree. It seems that Harris aims for a novel, as does carnival as a festival, which constantly moves, reinvents itself, and rejects fixed meanings. *Carnival* is not just a novel but a retelling of history, a biography, as well as an autobiography. It is its intertextuality and its largeness of vision and imagination that allows it to occupy the injustices that violence creates and that the text denounces. Like the physical manifestation of carnival, replete with colors, costumes and the movement of people, it breaks down the barriers of art. Masters tries to subvert violence, but he knows that he may not dismiss it entirely. As Hena Maes-Jelinek notes when discussing the end of *Carnival*, in which Weyl contemplates a young child that he and his wife will raise, and who most likely is the child of Masters and his murderess Jane Fisher, "Masters is the dying god or king who must learn 'the art of dying,' and we may think he succeeds in doing so since he is the putative father of the child conceived by the woman responsible for his death. The child represents the new spirit and the new kind of fiction that began to gestate with the reconstruction of history" (95). Maes-Jelinek words seem to sum up Foucault's argument against trying to reduce phenomena to science. In doing so, one may

reduce man himself to an "empirical entity," and although such a move may not lead directly to slavery, within it lies the possibility for the explosion and fracturing that originally created carnival. As Christine Pagnoulle notes, "[j]ust as 'Carnival' disconnects the disjunctive exclusions of rational reasoning, *Carnival* fractures the logic of enforcement whose one-sidedness denies a recognition of mutual dependence. By taking us 'through and beyond' familiar boundaries, *Carnival* makes us see the partial and paradoxical nature of truth. Wholeness can only be reached through a conscious embracing of partiality" (83). It is the partial and paradoxical that must be embraced to experience carnival fully. Carnival the festival is not seamless and to attempt to smooth over the seams or to fill the cracks is to attempt to make it fit a mathematical equation. At this point carnival ceases to be. What remains is a collection of prosthetics and unusable parts that cry out for completion.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: MOVING PAST POSSESSION

In *Cuban Counterpoint. Tobacco and Sugar* (1947), Fernando Oritz goes to great efforts to differentiate between tobacco and sugar as mainstays of Cuba's eighteenth and nineteenth century economy. Sugar, he says at one point, is feminine while tobacco is masculine. He adds that "[s]ugar has always preferred slave labor; tobacco, free men. Sugar brought in Negroes by force; tobacco encouraged the voluntary immigration of white men" (81). Ortiz finally notes that tobacco depends greatly on the individual's efforts and his work with his hands while sugar depends greatly upon machines.[90] Ortiz's observation about the importance of machinery in the production and harvesting of sugar and how this contrasts to tobacco's reliance on intensive "hand work" is vitally important. The addition of such machinery corroborates my earlier investigation of the effect of prostheses on slaves (and their descendents) in an attempt to set up a dialogue with slavery's effects. Combined with the slave, who is already considered non-human, Ortiz's proclamations about sugar, which he compares to a slave in that it "comes into the world without a last name," further enhances its connection with slavery in that, when eventually allowed a name, it "take[s] on [the name] of its owner, of the plantation or

[90] Ortiz notes that "[a]ll the operations in the preparation of tobacco are carried out without machinery, using only the complex apparatus of the human body, which is the tobacco central. In leaves cut by hand and one by one, the vega yields its harvest to the grower, and from his hands the leaf passes into other hands, and from hand to hand it reaches the warehouse and the factory, where still other hands work it up into cigars or cigarettes that will be consumed in another hand, that of the smoker. Everything having to do with tobacco is hand work—its cultivation, harvesting, manufacture, sale, even its consumption" (Ortiz 39).

mill" (42). Ortiz's observations ultimately argue how sugar possesses the slave entirely and extends its possession, by proxy, through machines.

It is in thinking about how slaves accommodate, yet invert, such forceful and permanent attempts at disability that I would like to end my study, particularly through a brief examination of performance in Dennis Scott's play *Echo in the Bone* (1974). Rather than focus on the repercussions of history on the Caribbean, and particularly a history determined by the destructibility of the enslaved body, I will instead ponder the slave's look to the future through his reconsideration of the past. Through such a vision, one that considers yet ventures past emancipation, colonialism and postcolonialism, I hope to contemplate a direction in which twenty-first Caribbean studies may move. My dissertation has sought, in part, to investigate the separation between the forced conglomeration of slave and machine, both in the actualization of slavery but in literature that examines slavery as well. It is a project that other scholars have attempted, particularly with regard to the liberating possibilities of such spaces. Heather Russell, in *Legba's Crossing: Narratology in the African Atlantic* (2009), argues that "formal contestations embodied in African Atlantic narratives produce liberating spaces, creating multivocal quiltings for new national, global and diasporic possibilities" (4). These liberating spaces, as I argue at various moments in my study, aim to aid the slaves to regain their humanness. As Renu Juneja notes, "[r]ecovery of the past, if it is to lead to perception and understanding, must involve *active* reconstruction. Such an understanding will not only make the people possess the past, it will also paradoxically free them from possession by the past" (97, emphasis mine). Freedom "from possession by the past"

occurs partially in these gaps and it is in these spaces that the descendents of slaves may accost history, make it malleable, and attempt to make it partly theirs.

The most vital element of *Echo in the Bone* lies in its desire to consider the past and suggest alternatives for it. This is best expressed in the last scene where Crew, who occupies the body of his son Sonson through spiritual possession, learns from his other son Jacko that instead of murdering Mr. Charles as he thinks he has, he has instead been slaughtering hogs. This is not the case—Crew has indeed murdered Charles—but such an alternative—killing hogs—resides in the intersection between desire and wish fulfillment and as such, it privileges *active* imagination. Liberation from the past involves accosting the past but is impossible without imagination. Such imagination, as I have argued earlier, implicates play, which was not something easily afforded the slave. Ortiz, for example, outlines types of liberation and makes note of the maroons that "took flight to the hills and…the collective suicide of bands of desperate slaves" (86). He notes the tendency that Mandingas had for group suicide and that such an action "freed themselves from the labors and had the last laugh on the master with a strike for which there was no settlement" (86). In such an action, there was the belief that the slaves would resurrect and find themselves returned to their villages and communities in Africa. To prevent such thinking the "masters, aware of this belief, mutilated the [slaves'] bodies, even after death, cutting off vital organs so that when they came back to life, it would be without head or limbs, and through fear of this…they discouraged the living from following the others' example" (86). Such a move by the slaveowners was particularly malicious since it both sought ownership in perpetuity and attempted to circumvent and abort imagination: in such a move the slaveowners' influence over his slaves would be without

end, and would have effect both in the physical and spiritual worlds. It is also a move that underscores the dispensability and continuous destructibility of the slave body.

Echo in the Bone centers on Crew, a Jamaican descendent of slaves, who murders Mr. Charles, a white plantation owner who still owns a large amount of land and refuses to share his water supply with Crew so that Crew may irrigate his crops. Absent for nine days after he murders Charles, Crew's wife, Rachel, presumes Crew dead and, is standard with the Pocomania belief upon the death of a loved one, friends and family gather to celebrate and remember Crew's life and actions. Crew is not *physically* present in the play; he is already dead and exists only as a ghost in the memory of his family and friends when he spiritually possesses the bodies of loved ones. His being dead, however, carries great importance since, as Juneja notes, "[t]he dead tell the truth. Indeed, they *reveal* the truth, uncovering what may be obscured or even deliberately hidden" (99, emphasis original). Crew's presence, seen when he occupies the bodies of his family and friends, essentially becomes a confession. He also becomes a communal prosthesis when he possesses various friends and family members with his spirit. The double meaning of "possession" that the play underscores here should not be taken lightly. It primarily means, in this instance, that of spiritual possession in which a spirit enters the body of a living person and controls his actions and speech. Combined with the additional meaning of ownership, however, it underscores each of the term's definitions. The play knowingly and deftly addresses this secondary definition of ownership by touching upon various dates in Jamaica's history and examining how it relates to its history of slavery. One major scene takes place in 1834, for example, when Britain abolished slavery in Jamaica and when and a visiting doctor apprises a slavemaster of the situation. Each of the

historical scenes deftly highlights the separation that slavery privileges—in one scene it is the separation of people from their communities and, in another, it is the mutilation of a slave by the cutting out of his tongue. Ultimately, Crew's return seeks to posit a new possibility for his family and friends, one that seeks to establish communal unity. It is a move that encourages healing and, unlike *The Ventriloquist's Tale* or *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*, transparency. If Crew's spirit may not return to the community of Africa, he may at least bequeath a unity that germinates and blossoms in the New World.

Crew's possession of his family aims not to reconfigure the obvious dissent between him and Charles, but to rectify the strained relationships within his family. Jacko, Crew's younger son, has married Brigit, a young woman who once had a relationship with Sonson, Crew's older son. The new relationship, in conflict with the past one, strains family ties: in act one Sonson tells Brigit "I don't know how Jacko stand you." Brigit retorts "Is him a married to, not you" (1.1.52-53). Later, their argument centers on communication:

> SONSON. You cyan find nothing in de house, you don't know where nothing is, all you do is chat, chat, and leave de work to you mother-in-law.
> BRIGIT. You don't own me mouth.
> SONSON. You damn right, thank God I don't own no part of you.
> RACHEL. Sonson, Brigit!
> BRIGIT. Das what bun you! (78)

The tension between Brigit and Sonson is symptomatic of a greater problem—their divisiveness is a residue from slavery's tendency to separate families. Sonson's argument centers partly upon possession when he openly talks about owning no part of Brigit. Ownership, as the play reinforces, begets destruction of the family unit. Crew's impending spiritual possession of Sonson unwittingly seeks to cure the contemporary consternation within his family although when he first possesses Sonson, he claims to

want only to escape, to liberate himself from what assuredly will be punishment for the murder of Charles: "They going come and find me," Crew reasons. "I not going to jail for this, you hear me! I suffer too long—three hundred years! Three hundred!" Crew's eventual suicide further underscores the tension within the family. With his passing, he severs a major familial artery to a national history. The text suggests that the resulting strained familial relationship is inevitable. Rachel tries to placate Brigit by noting Sonson's relationship to his father: "This is a hard time for him. Him did look to his father." Brigit's response points out the constant familial separation that slavery sought and that continues as a residue in its descendents: she tells her mother-in-law that she, Brigit, keeps her distance from Sonson. Rachel notes that as family, this is the opposite of what she should do: "A family must be able to live in de same house and don't fight people so all the time."

While Crew's suicide ironically distances him from his family, it is a move that unwittingly works to reconcile them. While spiritually possessing Sonson, he hears the approach of friends and family but believing them to be the authorities, tries to escape from them. He climbs a tree and Rachel sends Jacko to placate him. Jacko, at first, becomes indignant at the responsibility: "You think I can fly all of a sudden? How? The damn fool going to break him neck and I can't help him" (132). Jacko, at this moment, is unaware that Crew possesses Sonson's body.[91] He believes only that it is Sonson, with whom he is still angry, that he must rescue. Jacko's response, like the double meaning of

[91] Jacko's response, however, also points toward the ability of Africans to fly and return to Africa. His scoffing at the possibility—his response is meant only as a sarcastic jab—suggests a disconnection from values that may have come with those taken from Africa.

the term "possession" points to his dissection and rejection of his family on two levels: He rejects not just his brother but his father as well. Brigit attempts to allay his concerns:

> BRIGIT. Now is the time to show yourself, Jacko, my husband. You was always the clever one, you remember? You brother fight to get what him want, but you bide you time, and make people like you, and then you have you way. Not so?
> JACKO. That is so. That is what you think about me. Why you never tell me from the first?
> BRIGIT. You think I judging you, Jacko? Maybe that is the better way. I don't know. But that is your way, and maybe it will help you now to figure out how to save him. (132, 133)

For Jacko "to figure out how to save him" requires imagination. He must be *actively* clever, as Brigit suggests, but he must also be compassionate, forgiving, and desire to want to heal the rift within his family. Brigit finally convinces him of this when she directly addresses Jamaica's relationship with history and to what extent slavery has dehumanized them as descendents: "What I have to say to make you understand, Jacko? The white man is right after all. Is only brute force can make us change our ways! Is only blood that people like us understand, is only revenge that satisfy us. And we is no better than the beast in the field, that don't know nothing about love!" It is only upon her saying these words, where the invocation of blood, like "possession," and Sonson's rejection of two family members at once, may carry two meanings—the first pointing toward the spilling of blood through violence, the second meaning the strengthening of family through the ties of blood, that Jacko finally understands his obligation to reunite his family and to do so by the rejection of violence and the embracing of imagination, both themes for which Wilson Harris advocates in *Carnival*. Jacko tells his father, still in possession of Sonson's body, that "everybody waiting for you." When Crew argues that they are waiting to throw him in jail for murder, Jacko counters that no, it is his family

and friends who await him so that Crew could wrestle Stone, a family friend. Jacko advocates the strengthening of family bonds through communal fellowship. His activated imagination secures a vision for familial and communal unification. He seeks to establish a village and all of the fellowship that a village may possess: "I sure you stronger than Stone, Pa. I feel you is the strongest man in the whole village!" These reassuring words, and particularly the invocation of the village, placate Crew; it is at this moment that he becomes a member of a loving society and his family's bonds reform. Finally able to be at rest, his spirit leaves Sonson's body and Sonson forgives Brigit through a tender gesture of physical intimacy in which he touches her face.

The bonds of the family reunited, Rachel, the matriarch, has the last words of the play. She acknowledges that her husband is dead and that he will never return. Still, she points out that it is not good to mourn extensively: "[s]ometimes is not a good thing to cry too long. My man is dead yes. But not all the crying in the world going bring him back. And I fraid to lose what leave. We is hear, don't is so?" (136). Rachel rightly points out that while one must acknowledge the past to navigate the future, that one must not focus on it so intently that it overwhelms the present. She acknowledges the role of the past in the family's current configuration, but gives credence to hope and the strength of the family for its present and future: "No matter what is past, you can't stop the blood from drumming, and you can't stop the heart from hoping. We have to hold on to one another. That is all we can do. That is what leave behind, after all the rest. Play, Rattler. Play for what leave behind. Play for the rest of us" (136). Rachel's plea is ultimately for community—it is the only way to withstand the constant desire to dissect transplanted Africans in various forms—either by dissecting their bodies, in separating families, or in

the communal destruction that attends slavery. When she tells Rattler to play his drum, she recalls an action that takes place throughout the play, and that, as Errol Hill notes in his introduction for *Plays for Today*, acts as a liaison in community formation: "Beating it starts the ceremony, it is used in scenic transitions, it evokes the spirit possession. It is one of the obvious links with an African past and it speaks with an insistent authority that cannot be denied" (11). Such drumming is the play's quest for community set to music. It acknowledges an African past but, as seen in the drum's playing at the play's end, it endorses the present as well. In Rattler's creative drum playing one perceives a consideration of the past through memory, imagination and, of course, through play.

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