

2AICA

Southern Caribbean

• Migration & Diaspora in Caribbean Art •



SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS

August 2001

University of Central Florida

2AICA

Southern Caribbean



• Migration & Diaspora in Caribbean Art •

SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS

August 2001

University of Central Florida



association internationale des critiques d'art
international association of art critics
asociación internacional de críticos de arte

ISBN 976-8080-15-9

Copyright © 2003 Aica Southern Caribbean, The Authors and the artists.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without the written permission from the publisher or authors.

Cover Design & Page Layout by Infinity Graphics

PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION	3
KEYNOTE ADDRESS	
GROWIN UP W/OUT ART ?	
KB's MiddlePasage Chromosounds by Kamau Brathwaite	5
SYMPOSIUM PAPERS	
LA MIGRATION DES ESPRITS: ZAR D'ETHIOPIE, LWA D'HAÏTI ET DJINNS DU MAROC. PEINTURE ET POSSESSION by Michele Baj Strobel	41
AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT OF PUERTO RICAN VISUAL ARTS IN NEW YORK AS PART OF THE DIASPORA: THE EPITAPH OF THE BARRIO by Diogenes Ballester	47
A TASTE OF COFFEE by Nel Casimiri	55
PAINTING HISTORY IN EXILE: A GLANCE AT ULRICK JEAN-PIERRE'S HISTORICAL PAINTINGS by Cécile Accilien	61
LE MEXIQUE : TERRE D'ACCUEIL POUR L'ART CUBAIN by Dr. Leonor Cuahonte de Rodriguez	69
MULTI-CULTURAL APPROACH TO ART BY CONTEMPORARY WOMAN ARTISTS OF THE CARIBBEAN by Myrna Rodriguez	77
"WHAT GOOD ARE ROOTS IF YOU CAN'T TAKE THEM WITH YOU?" by Erica Moiah James	83
THE DOMINICAN DIÁSPORA: REDEFINING NATIONAL ICONS by Luz Alfonsina Figuereo	93
MIGRATING TO OTHERNESS IN THE LATE FICTION OF ERIC WALROND by Carl Wade	101
PONDERING THE ROLE OF INTUITION IN CARIBBEAN AESTHETICS by David Gall	109
REFLECTIONS ON THIRD CINEMA: THE ANTI-AESTHETIC OR TOWARDS A THEORY OF SENSATION by Andrew Millington	119
THE COLOR OF THE DIASPORA by Haydee Venegas	127
REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY	131
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	133

Introduction

AICA Southern Caribbean is a regional chapter of the International Association of Art Critics. Established in 1997, it represents members in Barbados, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Jamaica, Curacao, Cuba and Haiti. AICA Southern Caribbean is proud to present the proceedings from the 2nd Symposium of Caribbean Art Criticism which was hosted at the University of Central Florida during August 30 - September 1, 2001. The event was organized in collaboration with the UCF Interdisciplinary Program in African American Studies, College of Arts and Sciences, under the directorship of AICA SC member, Dr. Gladstone Yearwood.

The three-day symposium commenced with the Keynote Address delivered by Dr. Kamau Brathwaite. While Dr. Brathwaite is renowned internationally as a leading Caribbean poet, and is currently professor of Comparative Literature at New York University, it should be recognized that his writings on the visual arts and artists date back to the 1970s in Jamaica. Dr. Brathwaite spoke eloquently and intimately about his experiences growing up in Barbados "with no art", identifying what was officially recognized or sanctioned as art and what was not acknowledged, and how these perceptions evolved over time. The address raised several seminal issues which presenters and participants addressed in the following days.

AICA Southern Caribbean is a young and small chapter whose members continue to work with a shared desire to foster the development and exchange of critical dialogue about the visual arts in the Caribbean. I would like to acknowledge and thank those members who have worked with dedication to ensure the modest and ongoing successes of AICA SC. To ensure the future survival and growth of the chapter, we look forward to expanding contributions from a broadening membership, as well as collaboration with other cultural agencies. This will be imperative as AICA SC works towards hosting the AICA International Annual Congress in November 2003.

Allison Thompson
President, AICA Southern Caribbean.

**GROWIN UP
W/OUT ART ?
KB'S MIDDLEPASSAGE CHROMOSOUNDS**

University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida, 30 October 2001

rev from transcription NYV Jan 2003

INTRODUCTION: Mr. Nick Whittle

This symposium, to my mind and to my knowledge is the first time that works of art from the Caribbean have formed part of an intellectual discussion. It is no longer valid just to send works of art out there and let others interpret and talk about them. It is more important now than ever that works of art go out there and it is we from the region who are talking about that work of art. So this symposium, I think, is the first of its kind. Yes, we had exhibitions going abroad, but now we have an exciting exhibition at the University in Central Florida Art Gallery that we will see this evening. I had a sneak preview and it is a thrill to see the work up. We have a wonderful catalogue in the three languages, the official language of AICA. I want to apologize for any errors in translation, but as we know in the Caribbean fund-raising for the arts is not easy and fund raising came

late, the catalogues came late and it was a rush, but we have a document and that is the important think.

I could go on and on, that's why I have my watch here, but I am not the keynote speaker and I therefore want to welcome Kamau to the podium and I want you to give him a warm welcome of applause.

1

KAMAU: I'm very honoured and excited about this occasion. I've always said - and I'm glad that Nick reminded me - that we need to connect our various disciplines in the Caribbean. UWI. Caribbean Artists Movement. Carifesta. TIE. etc So when I hear of the formation of your group or Society of visual artists. I'm very happy about that. But when I get the invitation to be a keynote speaker to it. I say *Hey!* Here's a great opportunity not

so much to air my own views or to drink my own thoughts. but to have the privilege of meeting you. Because I feel that artists in the Caribbean - yr kind of artists - are among the most important of our xpressors and I've always been in awe of the incoherent articulateness of painters and sculptors. Of all the people who *do* things. you are the ones who get across the access. even the *xcess*. you don't only do it in a tactile form. but you somehow get across what you are about and what you want & what you want to *do* and how you want to do it - form colour shape motion - and you have a very great sense of *nativeness* - ourselves w/in our space & time . So I want to celebrate yr presence. And my presence in yr presence. And I want to take this *bonne chance* to learn from you and in turn share with you some of these what I call *chromosounds* this afternoon

I want to try you – and I hope not tie or tire you – with an idea of my contact with Caribbean artists. my contact with-you. So it's a kind of graphical and historical journey and I'll also introduce some slides. some 36 verbal slides. of commentary

3

I begin w/Growin up in Barbados

4

Growing up in the nineteen thirties & forties during the second World War thru still the period of (late) colonialism. growing up 'without Art'(?). growing up without Art in the little island of Barbados...

This stark contested statement. *growing up without Art*. is somethin (*g*) that we cannot conceive these days. But I will also say that we're still *growing up without Art*. so we have a paradox

5

I was very much aware that we were growing up 'without Art' - and without graffiti! - that modern popular substitute for art - because we're very polite people. Annalee Davis but not yet Basquiat. The Pelican. not yet DeWitt Peters' Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince. tho we have to remember that all these - together - are xpressing symbols of our world. But in Barbados (and in the Caribbean generally. xcept. since Independence. in the political 'garrison' areas) we didn't scrawwl the walls. . . And w/out graffiti. w/out *timehri* [see KB. 'timehri'. *Savacou* 2 (1970). 35-44/comment on the Guyanese painter Aubrey Williams and oth er things] we didn't have the kind of visual resource & stimulus that would influence Aubrey Williams. Dennis Williams. Stanley Greaves. Ron Savory & the Broodhagens among others in Guyana. w/out the spirits. the 'sacred insanity'. that produces vèvè. Hector Hyppolite. Kapo. Griff. Philip Moore. Gérard Valsin. Bro Everald Brown. And even today - for most of the population of whatever colour or class - there's as yet no natural mystic thought of a Bajan/ Caribbean painting in the home^m

*The matter of Caribbean art in Caribbean homes is still a very contentious issue. By the time Caribbean art becomes readily commercially available, it has also become, for the most part, part of the capitalist commercial system. And artists have become (except for rare like Broodhagen) hermetic and inaccessible people who find it hard to talk to far less converse with the average person. So that even if my Mother, for example, had wanted to buy a painting, she wouldn't know where to begin & who to begin with. And for her to have 'commissioned' (!!) something that would have meant something to her - like a likeness of her children, for example - would have run into the same problems I've already outlined - where & with whom would she begin & relate, when the artist is not speaking to such *hoi polloi*. Even today with my kind of earning and my kind of 'consciousness', to buy a painting or what's called a piece of sculpture, could be an economic devastation. What you want is either sold already and if not - and in any case - costs six months' salary and even then, even if you would hold your breath and buy it, you think you would get at least a smile from the producer? *you must be joking!* One gets the impression that many artists have in mind an 'audience' and patronage for their workings that don't include the Bajam - and this applies from the private gallery bods to rasta-artists in the Lower Green, from up-scale ceramicists, to young men still selling black-coral & conch, and wrapped incense sistas selling baskets who can't even wrap-up the tinn in bracelet nicely for you

and then there's the 'question of taste'. People like my Mother are much maligned in the art world for not having any - taste that is. Money too! but the paroxysm is usually frittering on taste. But is there much, really, 'taste-wise' and emotionally, that the artist - and I not talking about a like-a Francis Griffith here-now - can 'teach' a daughter of the Middle Passage. . .? These survivors make very fine distinctions between 'likeness' and 'realism' and will tell you that they already have 'too much realism' in their world, what they really relate to is the likeness of the familiar, and of course the 'sacred'. Francis Griffith is the next 'step', and Francis is working in - if not 'for' - his 'downscale' urban village Dundo Lane community - long before he's 'discovered' by the Critics in 1987

Which is pretty late in the so-called development of our Art, no? and at the same time we have to note & remember that he's a seaman who is influenced - rare among Caribbean artists - by direct unmediated - but self-meditating upon! - Egyptian art, thus missing the Schools and the 'alterRenaissance' altogether. And I'm linking the point that Francis Griff & his Dundo Lane 'Middle Passage' community are quite comfortable with each other, being socio-economically part of each other. They might not buy his paintings - scar-

ce money resources can't be spent on 'decoration' - art for art's sake etc - tho if at any stage his work or some of his work or certain aspects and/or conditions of his work - wd be seen - or nominated - as 'sacred' - cd be used/had to be used - for 'protection' or healing for instance - like icons of the Virgin, say, or like powurs in vodoun/santeria etc then of course that wd be a different matter. And we have xamples of the Law (as distinct from the lwa) coming out > these kinds of artists on the ground that they are producing 'obeah/black magic/nigganancy' objects - as happen for xample to Kapo in Jam aica [See also Roger Mais' novels, Brother Man (1954) & Black Lightning (1955)]

I'm trying to indicate the kind of art a Daughter of the Middlepassage wd relate to. But if you displace the features of her boychile, do you xpect her to be satisfie? Remember what happen to Christopher Gonzalez first public statue of Bob Marley? The people threatened to tear it - and the Government - apart if it wasn't removed from where it stood just outside the National Stadium. (it now stands - out of the people gaze - in the foyer of the National Galler (y) (of Jamaica)). What the Daughters of the Middle Passage at that time said was 'Im na faava Bab!

The Middlepassage - not middleclass - dahja don't want no picasso-face pickney in her sittin-room. she already know what he look like when she have to slap im face. she already know how ugly - heart-wrench in - he can be when he cryin. she knows what hungry-belly is. And child-birth. she have to haggle w/ the fisherman you privilege all art long. she kno the Singin Sandra song. flowers? Sunsets? Breadfruit? Chattel houses (?) So whats new?

Whats new might be the conversations with her that might humble yr palette and so- cialize it humanize it nativize it from within. not top to bottom. side-by-side

7

something similar applies to 'Literature'. my Mo and her Bible vs the Rest of Us w/Books. In the first place the Bible is she own. she own it. had it before she know sheself. don't

*have to go to no Public Libree down in Coleridge-Street to
 'tek it out'. put brown paper-cover pan it. tek it back in time
 if not you pay a fine! de Bible is she own like how she own de
 House. an it look better - more beautiful - than any Book yu
 bring. the smooth. the shine. the patent-leather binding. an
 the stories! Yu tink Lammin or TomClarke ed write anything
 like dat? an un-a-dat bad-langridge needs. un a dat
 'dialec' an bad-words an wutlissness. an de print CLEAR.
 so I kin read it. an de paper tin & white & shiney an I kin go
 wid it anywhere an it doan tear - I is see to dat. an is not
 like something yu does keep on top ya shelf. like weddin-glass
 or decoration. I'ose use it everyday God senn. An above all it
 is Holy. an God-say to Keep it Holy. is de Word-a-God-
 Heself-High-Up-in-Heaven. is GodsWeard. a swear in
 Court. a pillow in my bed at night. a prop against de door.
 Black boy against de deep. . . An free . .*

8

I remember in our home at Round House. for example. like evva
 body else of my 'class'. we had pictures (framed reproductions. But we
 thought of them as 'pictures'. real pictures. originals. 'Oh you have one of those
 too?') of these strange Europeans. you know those variations of -
 there was always an oak tree with two young people - a young

couple - under it. lounging. sometimes he w/ a guitar or holding the reins of his horse. or there might be a horse with a rider a Gay Cavalier or some red Hunting Scene w/the dogs straining forward or looking up yappin or laffin. often a dark spreading 'oak' or a 'chestnut'. all alone for its own sake. w/out people. And in some homes of course - 'country people' most often. and the urban 'upper working class'. **CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THIS HOUSE.** sometimes w/a large red xposed often bleeding Christian Heart. and at the Catholic Church. right opposite our house²²

*the house where Kamau is brought up. a Bajan architectural wonder dated 1834 on one of its glasswindows. the house is literally semi-circular - only three such in Barbados - two on Bay Street. near each other. one formerly the Hospital 'Eye Ward' opposite Jemmotts Lane and nxt to 'Eye Ward Jetty' of the mo [Jan 03] falling in ruin. the other perfectly opposite the Roman Catholic Cathedral across the narrow street. so perfect that the central window and all the central doors of RoundHouse are all perfectly aligned w/the steeple of the Cathedral - edral w/its bell, which you can therefore see in the house when looking onto the street or when coming up the steps from the beach. and has played such a part in Kamau's work]



At their Flower and Patronal festivals. they would parade an image of the Virgin Mary that they seem to worship like a god around the outside of the church. w/young girls who use to bade and 'frolic' w/us in the sea. kissing & throwing flowers towards her white and golden downcast Image an pretendin dem doan kno you. an the holy lookin St Lucia acolyte w/the brass-bowl who is

at school wid you. and another swingin the swingin censer out along it clickin chain - more gold again - the blue magic. al bla ckmagic incense everywhere. and all a them who kissin & trow-in the flowers & swingin the incense & like duckin-down at the same time. all de young-boys & priests wearin green gold & sil ky white dresses. all-a-dem (de young-boys) stiff & slim & facety in dem cassocks

10

But nvr - *inconceivable* - a Caribbean painting. the imagen Hail Mary dem was worshipping was white. unless you went by Fran (k) Collymore at 'Woodside' where in his sitting room was Sybil Atteck. Nina Lamming and Geoffrey Holder (I think Holder was 'Boy with folded arms' reproduce in blk&white in *Bim* 11/1949) and Ivan Payne an early Karl Broodhagen

And later on a British Council officer & artist. John Harrison. put on Showings at the British Council and eventually at the big Annual Exhibition in Queens Park in a special little lighted room and speak about them on Radio Distribution and Collyer's art reproduce some of them in *Bim* etc etc etc [see my Index to Caribbean Art in Bim

in my Appendix to this talk]

But not a soul then say a word about African art or Indian art or Chinese art or Amerindian art or - was this possible? - slave - canefield - art. It is only almost 100 years later that I would hear about this last from Edna Manley and George Campbell in Jamaica who said they were looking for canefield art/artifacts. already narrowing the false distance between art & artifact & therefore between artist & artisan. in the end distance between slave & Slave Institute

This *canefield art* is something that we still haven't found. but Edna & GC were convince - and don't you agree w/ them? - that if people work(ed) in the fields. not only did they sing in the pain. but they wd have mark(ed) something. carve(d) some/thing in those fields. esp since slaves come from a long culture of carvers. . . they wd have made some sign. oblation. some *timehri*. some memorial of their presence there. their suffering & longing leaving some shape of Time upon their shackle consciousness. some re-creation of the loss. some signal of or to or for the future

And Manley/Campbell were convince that if we search(ed) hard enough - in the right places. with the right spirit-heart. even w/ the climate's heat. even w/our kind of soil-consuming-producing sugar in the cane. that we were still likely to find some little perhaps rosetta stone of the xperience. the kind of thing that for goodness sake we now know as *Saramacca & Paramacca art*. not as elaborate of course. *no such richness allowable on the slave plantation*. the art of Surinam is maroon not slave - if you appreci-

ate the distinction. but very African. tho even here. when I'm
 comin up. there are Authorities - I call them CULTURAL CENSORS -
 who went (in those days) to great length in their books & lectures
 to deny not only this African provenance. but the very possibility
 of it. And - since it cdn't be *slave neetha* - it kinda xisted in a
 kind of limbo of our knowledge & stagnation - there but not there
 ?real but chimeric. awaiting. really. the discovery of 'Xplanati-
 on'^m

11

*The first 'Xplanation' is that somehow all this was influ by the Portuguese - they brought language it seems to the West African coast & sugar to Brazil & the Caribbean plantations. But how the Portuguese actually come to provide the template for *sindô* combs. *apinti* drums. textiles or a *mulungà*. was never clear. but you can be sure it had to do w/ 'trading'. Later there was the even more amazing 'Java/Indonesian' xplanation starting w/ batik and continuing into wood & fibre. Not even any comment. of this st age. on Warraou & other indigenous influence etc etc etc. So that even today (now oz. if you go by the books) there isn't really any real connexion w/any other Blk or nativist originations

12

I believe that in the parish of St Thomas/Jamaica. people have since begun to find certain things which they think is 'canefield art'. certainly there were things in those fields which cd not be explained as 'contemporary' - i.e 'modern' or 'postmodern'. But that whole journey towards a discovery of our own *fabulosa*² is still awaiting us. so we grow up w/out any sense of that kind of Art. . .

13

* *fabulosa* is a term I'm using to refer to the whole body of ancient ancestral folk/traditional often mythological 'lore' that a culture possesses and uses/calls upon in its proverbs, dreams, metaphors, 'unlearned' aesthetic decisions. In Europe the fall of Rome, the Middle Ages, Arthur, El Cid, Charlemagne, Joan of Arc, witches, Robin Hood, the Black Death, Dracula etc etc etc. In the Americas: Amazonia, Atlantis, Sargasso, El Dorado, the fall of Tenochtitlan, Slavery, Palmares, Caribs, Black Caribs, GrandeeNanny, Fidel, Bustamante, Bussa, Bogle, Bedward, Marcus Garvey, the 1937/38 Riots, the birth of pan etc etc etc

14

Which is different, tho. than saying *growing up w/out Art*. To say this is inscribing a blankness (lack of blackness!) that is really

tory. we gut an scale our criticism. we make certain stereotypic
 fishments that become entrench & drench for us and really wh-
 en we question it/it really *isn't true*. We *did* grow up with Art. No
 body can live live long w/out its breathing water light & air

The thing is. *what kind of art we grow up with...? and why is it that*
we didn't kno that we was growin-up-w/'it? hence the blankness. some
 people say is co. lon. ial. . .ism and all dat. . .But is a lot-more
 dan dat too. . .

15

What I'm saying is that my kind of colonial education
 didn't allow me - even now! - to foreground what we really had
 and has force(d) me/?us into a kind of perspectation or *post-telling*
 of a kind of false 'Italian-Renaissance-situation'
 which we projected onto & into the Caribbean/Américas
 but which we certainly didnt have. dint own

You see. . .when we say we '*grow up w/out art*'. we really sayin that we feel bad because we didn't grow up in Venice or Firenze. didn't have no Uffizi to hang-around-in. That's our problem. we didn't have Chagall. we didn't have Rembrandt. we didn't have Leonardo. we didn't have dei Medici. we didn't have no quattrocento. so therefore we didnt/cd nt 'have Art'. Is this mis. conception we have to flight. we have to fight > the notion that we don't have because we don't have what other-certain-kinds-of-other-people have. and *that's because we no-countin. ignoring. our (own) native resources.* our own DNA as it were and long ago the poet & Professor of Education. John Figueroa. write a (poetry) book he call *Ignoring hurts...*

16

And that's what's going on when I'm growing up. And it hasn't change - not much - it hasn't really change - not yet. And this is 2K1/2/3. Even tho we've had in Barbados since 1868. this great White Whale of a Lion at Gun Hill. now at last recognized

and to be preserved as a national monument carve(d) out of the limestone of St George by a Rankin British Army Officer name Henry Wilkinson (is that correct? his name?)

But tho the Gun Hill Lion is part of our *fabulosa* (is because thousand (s) have love & related to/with it over the years. that its been recognize as a National Monument – rather a National People-&-Tourist Attraction) it's nvr. as far as I kno. been regarded/recognized as Art. its certainly not there in Poup eye or in *Art in Barbados** [*there are still w/few definitive studies or accounts of Art in the Caribbean. in English there is Verle Poupeye. *Caribbean Art* (London 1998) and *Art in Barbados: what kind of mirror image?* (ed Allissandra Cummins. Allison Thompson. Nick Whittle (Kingston & Brown 1999). these two. however. wonderfully supplying context & background to/for the discourse. but we need a good & annotated bibliography of Caribbean - panCaribbean - art]

So that altho the Lion is there. is there. all the time I growin up in Barabados. I still startin off my talk before you now w/the gri-
p that 'I grow up w/out Art' And that's partly at least because the School System dint needa call it 'Art'...

17

a dead a dear. . . here comes the blame-the-system(s) bit. . .

18

is the schools that really into dis duppy-Renaissance ting - 'du-
ppy' in the sense that you cd 'sense' the Renaissance . the need
for 'Art' . it never materialize. it didn't matter. didn't even
matter. . . in the schools it really was/?is an *education w/out Art.*

**So the Gun Hill Lion nvr become a model
nor did Lord Nelson
set up in the miggles of Bridgetown
fifty-five years before the Gun Hill Lion**

**Do you think our teachers talked to us about
these icons?**

**did they use the word *icons*? did they ask us
to draw *likenesses* of - not to say *variations* !
on - these 'models'?**

19

*tho to complicate matters even more. the 'models' themselves carry a colonial anguish . non-natively planted
in native soil. so-ho? the Lion by this Military Man (Scotts, British? na-barn-ya!) and beside we don't have*

lions - xcept that red-one in the park - and until the Rastaf and the non-Bajan Nelson? older bigger and some say better-lookin than Grantley or Bussa!!

20

i spenn my entire school-life either tryin to draw a clay pitcher (w/ out ever knowing its connection w/the Bajan Pottery Tradition in the Scotland District). i spenn my entire school-life being *unable*. in fac. to facsimile that pitcher. so that i in fac spend my entire school-life 'doing' no Art at all! - drawing no pitchers nor pictures - not even defacin 'Art' !!

21

So that my growin up - I wd say 'our' but i don't want to impliace you! - had no artistic relationship whatever to our Mother Arts: the Gun Hill Lion. Lord Nelson. fishing boats. fisherman's nets. monkies. Chalky Mount. my Mother Father's face in wash or char coal. you think we were ever ask(ed). en courage(d). to look-at . sketch . draw . enshrine . my girl-frenn - a (native) love-one face?

22

There was in fact one person. an artist. who was doing this. painting the faces of our own families. indeed I had the good fortune of knowin him. *but I nvr kno. growin up. that he did what I juss said he did. not really!* all I receive was the impression that Briggs Clarke was 'different'. nervous. uncertain. tentative. even the scratchy voice. we wd now say 'seemingly marginalized'. despite his warmth. evident kindness. sensitivity. and talent . a man walkin on the yellow-pop xamination berries of his greatness on the unlevelled playin field at Weymouth. somehow he was somehow doin something 'odd' & 'wrong'(!) - he a *painter!* and you cd hear the pain in the unspoken voices sayin this - **'bein an artist!'** (they pronouce it *asstist*) - *painting* - not the *Queen* or *Princess Margaret Rose* or the *Dionese Quintrooplicates* - but the *native* - this was the atmosphere - impression - that i got - and I didn't get to know Colly. Broodie. Aileen Hamilton (my favourite teacher's wife) until I'd grown up. Ivan Payne - 'down in' Speighstown - was nvr more than a rumour on the far horizon. and Golde White - a wild-one golden in her passing cyar. . . and tho Kathleen Hawkins teach my sisters at

Queens College. i didn't get the impression that she was teaching Art at all (!!<smile>!!) certainly not them! altho in the court of time I begin to see their work in QueensPark (John Harrison again (n)) and in *Bim* [see my Appendix Bajan/Caribbean Art in Bim]

23

Which brings the I to my first Question. if we didn't offer to the white Gun Hill Lion or Lord Nelson and the other fabulosa of our Time. the kind of regard we reserve for 'art'. how are we to recognize & relate to the 'real' authentic wood & ceramic sculpture arts of our community when they come-along? if you can't recognize or relate to the Mother Arts – the public honorary kind I'm talkin bout. how are we goin to recognize the art of the chattel house? how are we goin to recognize the art of the fishing boats. the art that creates the fishing boat - not only its function. but the shape of the art of its function. the painting (decoration) on our canoes and lorries. the signs and walls of our shabeens? Because here too is art in every sense – tho of course it doesn't come from 'The Renaissance' And the books don't carry any record. as far as I kno. of Michelangelo having a go at the ceiling of a barber shop in Cats Castle or Roseau. The fishing boats & canoes & the now old wooden lorries & buses. sno-ball carts. are wood sculpture(s) in every sense – painted wood-sculpture. therefore a new & other representation of paint-

ing. and how are we going to recognize & 'contextualize' our monkies?

[The only work known to me that attempts a record of these Mother Arts, is Ulli Beier in Nigeria dur the 50s (see, for instance, *Art in Nigeria* (1960) and later in Papua New Guinea . I know nothing similar in the Caribbean tho I suspect/xpect that there shd be somethings from/for Haiti. I have already mentioned the project dreamed up by Edna Manley & Geo Campbell, but now they both have passed. . . Sharon Chaco in Jamaica has/had undertaken/started a study in the 1990s. . .but there is still nothing. . .and the fabulosa are fading. . . disappearing fast. . .]

24

Now I have to pause here because all of-you are not Bajans and when I say *monkie*. i doan mean what Eric Waldron say he was call when he first went to Harlem. 'monkie' is the Kongo *monké*. the Efik *mong*. in Akan Twi the word for drink/to drink is *nom*. while the inside tube of a mouth is *anóm*. and there are many other West African connections. all these roots carrying cultural-religious significance. of definition. of nourishment. of naming

This *monkie* is the clay vessel we regard as a uniquely Bajan product (tho of course there are *monkés* elsewhere in the Caribbean & PlantationAméricas) part of our Mother Arts. a so very beautiful a *kuruwa*. carrier of coral water.

2

shape. contour. texture. tang - of course you know it! - it makes the water love
lier

These mongs have been produce(d) from the beginning of coloniza-
tion. from the beginning of the Plantation. ceramic continuation of
an even earlier ancestral civilization. But nvr given any special pre-
sentation representation or honour. And now w/the fridge & bottle dr
inks - and now bottle water - in danger of almost total xtinction

When I'm growing up there was a little village of them under the
cityside of the SwingBridge. near where the Slave Market & Auction
Block use to be. Now they are 'cute' & 'craft' & 'curious'. 'collectible'.
cured & curated in the British & Barbados Museum(s)

Same thing w/cou-cou sticks - these smooth beautifully fashion(ed)
black wooden spatulas we use to make cou-cou. taken for granted &
gone. and not a thought for the artists who first design them. because

as we've said already. these people weren't - are not - artists(!!). that's
 too privilege(d). they were at best craftsmen or artisans. consign(ed)
 - no song - after their 'function' they finish. to askance/neglect/obliv
 ion an gone. . .

OGOUN

for Papa Legba Bob'ob O'Neill of Mile&Quarter

my uncle make chairs. tables. balance doors on. dig out
 coffins. smoothing the white wood out

w/plane and quick sandpaper until
 it shine like his short-sighted glasses

The knuckles of his hands are sil
 -ver knobs of nails hit. hurt and flatt

-ened out w/ blast of heavy hammer. He was knock-knee'd. flat
 -footed and his clip clop sandals slapp

-ed across the concrete flooring of his little shop
 where canefield mulemen and a fleet of Bedford lorry drivers dropp

-ed in to scratch themselves and talk. There was no shock
 of wood. no beam of light mahogany his saw-teeth couldn't handle

When shaping squares for locks. a key hole
 care tapped rat tat tat upon the handle

of his humpback'd chisel
 Cold world of wood caught fire as he whuttled

rectangle
 window frames. the intersecting x

of fold
 -ing chairs. triangle

trellises. the donkey box
-cart in its squeaking square

But he was poor and most days he was hungry
Imported cabinets w/ mirrors. formica table

-tops. spine-curving chairs made up of tubes. w/ hollow
steel-like bird-bones that sit on rubber ploughs

. thin beds. stretched not on boards. but blue high-tension cables
was what the world preferred

And yet he had a block of wood that would have baffled them
With knife and gimlet care he worked away at this on Sundays

explored its knotted hurts. cutting his way
along its yellow whorls until his hands could feel

how it had swell(ed) and shiver(ed). breathing air
its weathered green burning to rings of time

its contoured grain still tuned to roots and water
And as he cut. he hear the creak of forests

: green lizard faces gulp. grey memories w/ moth
-eyes watch him from their shadow. soft

liquid tendrils leak among the flowers
and a black rigid thunder he had nvr hear w/in his hammer

come stomping up the trunks. And as he work w/in this shattered
Sunday shop. the wood take shape: dry shuttered

eye(s). slack
anciently everted lips. flat

ruin face. eaten by pox. ravage by rat
and woodworm. dry cistern mouth. crack

gullet crying for the desert. the heavy black
enduring jaw.. lost pain. lost iron

emerging woodwork image of his anger

26

This poem is 'about' my great-uncle Bobby O'Neale of Mile & Quarter. He's call Bob-Bob not only because this is short for Robert & Bobby. But he had a limp. like Eleggua. Papa Legba. like - but even before - Briggs Clarke. and is one of the greatest carpenters of his time. creating much of the most dark beautiful shining mahogany furniture in the (Anglican) churches & Great Houses of the North . Whim. Warleigh. Heymans. Rockless. Ashton Hall. Newstead. Maynards. Colleton. Rose Hill. Alleyndale. All Saints. Pleasant Hall. St Lucy's Church. Mount Gay. Benny Hall. even as far as Spring Hall. . .

27

Now much - most - of this famous furniture has left Barbados and fetches millionaire prices as 'Plantation Antiques' in Sotheby's and Soho. New York. But the artist? the artisan? nameless. faceless. Bob'ob. the anon . He don't get into the Score Boo

ks. the StoreBooks. not even into Popeye or *The Mirror Image*.
tho I glad I get him into my poem to such a degree that in 1998
the BBC send a squad to Bajam to flim the poem [see *Roots & Water*
Pt2 (BBC VideoTape <London 1999>. Films for the Humanities & Sciences (Princeton FFH
11090 <2000>)] w/a carpenter. Lionel Daniel. from Culloden Rd. do-
ing the 'part' of Bob'ob

But when we went down to Mile&Q to see & flim the actual site -
Bob'ob's carpenter's shop - we find only wildgrass rain growing
out of the ruin. and the news that the Government plannin to
drive a road right thru that sacred site. to connect-up w/a new
housing scheme that eatin up Brevitor

28

When Bob'ob grow too old & sick to work - I think he first lose
a foot to diabetes - he had nothing to fall back on. since he had

practically give-way his art to the Planters. And in the end. w/-
 out pension or recompense. Bob-ob dies in penury. Everything
 down. down. down. until finally his landmark house – one of
 the most beautiful & original 'upstairs-verandah' wooden house
 (s) in the island. dies&collapses on him ruin & his Mother Art

29

But my poem & this moment w/you here – artists & art-critics
 of the new millennium of the Caribbean – is passing something
 on. i think. a memory/metaphorical memorial of this person &
 so many more like him. and his place in what we tryin to do. ev
 en tho paraBOXically we passin on too much absence in all this

30

This absence – this-not-passing-it-on - abstinence - is v/unfortunate. v/serious for our future unless we can somehow create a time-warp difference. unless we can go back & resurrect & recompense & redeem that neglect which in a sense we doin now. . .

31

But we have to do more than that. . . We have to be able to pass this attitude/ intention & information on to the nxt generation. So that's another one of the things I want to talk about. . .

32

Problem is. our sense of 'passing things on' is v/v/ stereotype & ole-fashion. very 'renaissance'. in the sense that we've already been talkin about. 'Renaissance'. Museum Renaissance. So th-

at we don't pass things on in the right way even if we think we'r (e) passing them on. I did not know that there were actually people making art out of our Mother Culture. because the fishermen who make the canoes or rather the artists who make the fishing boats for the fishermen. no one recognise them as such. nor the sculptors & painters who were beginning to create the faces of our people . none of these regarded as important

33

So I'm going to call these names out [names of KB's Ancestral Artists] because I want to celebrate them even altho all of you are not Barbadians. and in fact I'm going to go even beyond Barbados and I'm going to name not only artists but <all> those who. as a writer. that other kind of artist. have influence(d) me & make me possible. because that's how <art> is. in space & time. and you can add yr own Names etc and we shd have these public & collective hieroglyphics. these *nimehri* before we do anything el-

se. like a libation and we shd have them up on the wall of time like a mural. and add to them for time to time and all the time for all to see & hear as we remember . & the wall & the salutatio- on & threshold. the memory. rememory. it shd not be 'wall'. it shd not be flat. or static. but vibrate. shd resonate. cinema. kin- esis. kenesis. love. life itself continuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuumm

34

For me then growing up in Barbados. coming into my 'consci- ousness' there. there is Briggs Clarke. Broodie. Colly. Kathleen Hawkins. Golde White. Aileen Hamilton. Ivan Payne. most of these people I know. or know of. growin up in small-island Bar badoes and I still starat-out sayin that we 'grow up w/out Art'. see what I gettin at? I still come-out here to say I grow up w/out art even tho in a small-island like Barbados. I know. or shd kno or shd have known. or cd have got to know. these people - or at least some of them

35

But we've also got to remember the always real & intransigent & continuing racial & social factors, the racio-social factors in a small colonial plantation-style island like Barbados, that try as I might, growin up in Bdos, it wd have been a miracle for me to really get to kno - have easy access to - Kathleen or Golde or any of the other main 'Establishment' (articulate & influential) figures then in Bdos who are represented in the *Art in Barbados* book, simply because they are white. And growin up in Barbados in the 30s & 40s, I still seem to recall - seems now so long ago & far away that sometimes it seems I'm not really sure about this - but is there, under the so many layers of recall, having been perhaps forcefully & wilfully submerge(d) - that one (black me) was expected to stand-aside or get-down-off the narrow Broad Street sidewalks esp on a busy Saturday morning or during the Xmas Season, when faced w/an oncoming white person. Settler

Mentality. Slave Mentality. Apartheid. But it was the 'expected thing' so done

So that this - from the point of view of access to artists - gettin to kno them in such a way that one cd really learn from them - was a limitation. esp when it was assumed - as Sam Selvon wd soon write in his boundary-breaking story 'The Calypsonian' . that only 'white people' was really aartists² -

**And when things was good with him, he went inside now and then, and tell the clerks and them that he does write calypsos. But they only laugh at him, because they does think calypso is no song at all, that what is song is numbers like I've Got You Under My Skin and Sentimental Journey, what real American composers [does] write.*
[Samuel Selvon, 'The Calypsonian', *Bim* 17 (1952), 42]

and any-an-errvating big-ups & privilege & special & talented. acquired & accrued to them!. which is why either I didn't learn enough from BriggsClarke (far less Ivan & the others - or am I makin xcuses??!!) even when flavoured w/the opportunity of familiarity. an per-ha-ha-haps why. in his turn. he was or seemed to be so lack ing in self-confidence & forthcoming. not at all like Therold Barnes and of course Colly. both of whom I'm soon to meet - not as artists however. but as writers. But their homes & their own work radiated (Caribbean) Art (see again my Appendix Art in Bim for th

(e) appearances there of Barnes and Collymore) which means that which-everway i tune. my growing-up was not takin or able to take the fullest opportunity of the occasion of our artists. and their art

35+

i really stickin i-self out here - illus the need for Caribbean psychology & analysis, since this kind of poet's consideration - esp frpm the distance of reflection & not really having 'all the facts'. is/cd be - a problem. But nevertheless i got to put it to myself & share it w/you as clearly and honestly as i can get. the nxt stage will be yr reaction to this. is only w/putting our hearts together & thinking about it from all the circumferences of the circle. that we can begin to arrive at any real understanding of ourselves & the crucial development of our 'creole' sensibilities & from there to some understanding of some - not 'definition' - but at least circulation - of the roots & branches of our arts - the at least basis of/fr- shall we say - a Caribbean aesthetic

KB/ny 19 Jan 2003

36

When Broodie at last get a job. in 1944. teaching art at Cawmere [Combermere Sch ool]. he is 'still' (i.e ONLY) a tailor - not 'artist' but 'artisan' - remember?! - at No 24 Swan St. His 'elevation' (it's seen like this by some /by many [see Therold Barnes, Bim 8 <1947>) - the 'first time in our history - is a Revolution. one of the 'little' ones that make a big difference. forever. from that moment we cd start lookin back - like the Sankofa bir (d) whose image 'ends' this testimonio - to begin our looking forward²

[*KB's aesthetics don't encourage him to use wor d/concepts such as the missileic 'forward' anymore the concept is more enclusive. sharing the widening circle. but we'll let the word rest here for now. since he sure y'all kno what e mean]



BIEN DES ASPECTS des arts contemporains méritent aussi une approche anthropologique, car la pluralité des formes culturelles est d'autant plus compréhensible que l'on situe les œuvres dans leur contexte de création. Le tableau des métissages, des échanges et des hybridations est cependant devenu complexe en ces temps post-modernes et post-coloniaux. De nouvelles sensibilités et des perspectives originales mettent à jour la question des relations entre arts plastiques et cultes de possession. Les questions que l'on peut se poser à ce sujet concernent à la fois le statut de l'image et le rôle de l'artiste dont l'expression se présente comme le miroir d'une expérience vécue de la transe. Si les relations entre la Musique et la Transe ont déjà été étudiées¹, on connaît assez peu d'analyses sur les liens entre Possession et Représentation. C'est la corrélation entre trois sociétés où ces pratiques contemporaines sont courantes qui nous permettra d'aborder ces questions quelques peu marginales des arts contemporains. Il s'agit essentiellement d'œuvres d'artistes autodidactes et en même temps adeptes de cultes de possession au sein de religions syncrétiques. Nous allons surtout évoquer les peintres gnawa du Maroc et certains peintres d'Haïti, du groupe de « Saint Soleil », les uns et les autres faisant partie de sociétés issues de la diaspora africaine et dont les ancêtres ont été esclaves. Néanmoins, lorsque l'on étudie d'autres exemples de représentations de génies ou d'esprits de possession, comme les zar d'Éthiopie, on se rend compte d'une sorte de familiarité de formes, de styles et de composition, comme si toutes ces expériences d'un autre monde donnaient lieu à un même type d'images. Ainsi, les dessins et gouaches des informateurs éthiopiens de Michel Leiris, —constituant des exemples initiaux pour toute étude sur cette question— nous fournissent de précieux exemples d'analyse et aussi certains éléments de compréhension. On essaiera donc de montrer comment s'articule, au sein de sociétés métissées, cette étrange familiarité des esprits voyageurs qui ont l'air de migrer allègrement d'un monde à l'autre, d'une culture à l'autre. Il nous paraîtrait d'ailleurs intéressant de faire une sorte d'inventaire des représentations liées à des visions, en tenant compte des religions chamaniques et de leurs expressions plastiques. On verrait alors que certains exemples remontent aux premières marques gestuelles sur les parois des grottes pré historiques et que ces arts de la transe, ou du rêve, se manifestent partout dans le monde. Cette étude comparative m'a été suggérée par le contact direct avec les œuvres et les artistes d'Haïti et du Maroc, lors de différents voyages, et a pu être enrichie par des lectures ethnographiques spécialisées².

Mais les ressemblances et les connexions ne sont pas que formelles et stylistiques, elles reposent aussi sur la manière dont le regard occidental a « découvert » et traité ces arts qui aujourd'hui s'inscrivent dans un marché spécifique et donnent lieu à des expositions, des analyses, qui les situent entre les arts bruts et les arts populaires.

LA MIGRATION DES ESPRITS: Zar d'Éthiopie, Lwa d'Haïti et Djinnns du Maroc. Peinture et Possession

Nous pensons qu'il s'agit avant tout d'un art sacré qui retrace une certaine vision extatique soit, mais aussi une vision du monde et des relations avec le divin. Il est en effet question de croyances, de ferveur et de métamorphoses des esprits qui sont craints et vénérés. Et c'est bien de religion qu'il s'agit.

LES ZAR D'ETHIOPIE ET LEURS MANIFESTATIONS

Lorsqu'il entreprend, entre mai 1931 et février 1933, le périple qui le mènera de Dakar à Djibouti, Michel Leiris a trente ans et est recruté par Marcel Griaule comme secrétaire-archiviste et enquêteur. Il a en charge d'étudier la sociologie religieuse et les sociétés secrètes. Cette mission permettra au jeune écrivain de réaliser une sorte de voyage initiatique le menant à une mise à l'épreuve de soi. Il expliquera souvent que voyager est pour lui une façon de retrouver une origine, de se départir des couches culturelles déposées par l'éducation. « Plus qu'un art d'apprendre, l'art du voyage est, me semble-t-il, un art d'oublier toutes les questions de peau, d'odeur, de goût et tous les préjugés, et je n'ai jamais perçu avec autant d'acuité ce que c'est que d'être en voyage que dans les lieux où j'en venais à ne même plus savoir ce que j'y étais venu faire, me demandant quel bizarre démon avait bien pu m'y pousser »³.

Cette quête des « démons », se manifestant à travers l'oubli de soi, Michel Leiris va la mettre en forme à partir de 1934, lorsqu'il publiera plusieurs études sur les cultes de possession des Ethiopiens de la région de Gondar⁴. Mais ce qui retiendra surtout notre attention c'est l'ensemble exceptionnel de dessins et de gouaches sur parchemin qu'il a pu recueillir sur le terrain et nous fournir ainsi de précieuses données sur les représentations des Zar. Ses principaux informateurs ont été des Abyssins chrétiens pratiquant le culte de ces génies —auxquels sont attribués des maladies, des mauvais sorts et des malheurs— et qui se manifestent en possédant un individu qui « tombera en transe ». La guérison se fera grâce à un sacrifice sanglant sous la conduite d'un prêtre ou d'une prêtresse qui sont donc de surcroît guérisseurs.

« Dans ma chambre, Mälkam Ayyahou dessine à la plume divers portraits de zar », écrit Leiris à la date du 8 novembre 1932, dans son journal qui deviendra l'Afrique Fantôme. Ainsi ce sont des zar qui ont guidé sur le papier la main d'une adepte du culte, illettrée, signant de quatre croix les lettres qu'elle dictait. Un autre informateur, Enqo Bahri, peignait des rouleaux « magiques » tout en étant adepte des zar à la suite d'une étrange maladie. Impressionné par la qualité des réalisations, Michel Leiris lui laisse des plumes et des gouaches pour exécuter sur parchemin d'autres portraits qui seront remis à la mission avant son départ de Gondar.

Le principe de ces cultes à base de possessions est universel : le dieu accorde sa protection en échange d'offrandes et à défaut d'être satisfait, il persécute le coupable. La « maladie » s'installe et fait figure d'épreuve du sacré. Il faut alors identifier l'esprit, obtenir sa clémence et restaurer son culte, comportant des séances de transe, et au cours desquelles le dieu possède son adepte. C'est exactement le même schéma dans les cérémonies vaudou d'Afrique de l'Ouest et d'Amérique noire ainsi que dans les religions de la boucle du Niger dont sont originaires les ancêtres des Gnawa. En fait, ces religions évoluent en marge des monothéismes (Islam ou christianisme) qui les combattent et sont souvent les manifestations de la foi populaire, sans monuments sacrés, mais dont le corps de l'adepte devient en quelque sorte le réceptacle de la divinité. Ces cultes s'accompagnent de rythmes musicaux et de danses, de signes tracés au sol, de devises des génies, de parfums et de tissus aux couleurs symboliques et sont attribuées à tel ou tel génie, lwa, zar ou djinn. Les adeptes miment alors, en une sorte de « théâtre vécu », selon l'expression de Michel Leiris, les caractères essentiels qui permettent de les identifier. On retrouve ces religions de la transe dans tout le monde méditerranéen (Afrique du Nord, Egypte, Libye) aussi bien qu'en Afrique sahélienne, du Sénégal à l'Ethiopie. Dans le Golfe de Guinée, les cultes de possession sont intégrés au vaudou aja fon ou des orisha yoruba et ont de multiples ramifications, surtout en Amérique -suite à la traite négrière— où on les retrouve sous diverses formes, du Brésil aux Antilles. (Analyse de documents N°1). Leiris en Ethiopie, portraits de zar, dessins et gouaches de Mälkam Ayyahou et Enqo Bahri.

LES MIGRATIONS SPIRITUELLES

La mise en relation entre les cultes d'Ethiopie et le vaudou haïtien est suggérée par Michel Leiris lui-même qui, lors d'un voyage en Haïti en 1948, a été frappé par la similitude des cultes. Il compara même les conduites des prêtresses du vaudou à celles de son ancienne informatrice « patronne des zar » et développa un parallèle entre les familles de génies. A juste titre, il jeta ainsi un pont entre l'Ancien Monde et celui des transplantés dans le Nouveau Monde. L'exemple des Gnawa du Maroc, vient s'ajouter à ces relations complexes entre les croyances et les expressions plastiques liées à la transe, comme si partout l'humain en tous temps et au sein de toute société ne pouvait « pas se contenter d'être ce qu'il est »⁵.

Les populations Gnawa (mot qui signifierait noir en berbère) et créoles d'Haïti sont toutes deux issues du déplacement imposé par la traite négrière. Les premiers sont les descendants d'esclaves raziés à partir du X^e siècle au Soudan (Mali actuel) par les Arabes, pour fournir une main-d'œuvre aux citadins des grandes villes comme Meknes, Marrakech, Fes. Ils ont été islamisés mais ont conservé des éléments

LA MIGRATION DES ESPRITS: Zar d'Éthiopie, Lwa d'Haïti et Djinns du Maroc. Peinture et Possession

importants —langue secrète, musiques, croyances— de leurs régions sahéliennes d'origine. Se disant « fils des Bambara », ils sont spécialistes de la transe thérapeutique qu'ils célèbrent lors de nuits appelées lila de Derdeba. Dans le Maroc d'aujourd'hui, les Gnawa appartiennent aux couches les plus défavorisées de la société, ils sont musiciens itinérants, munis de tambours et de crotales, bouchers, coiffeurs ou forgerons. Mais à Essaouira, ancienne Mogador, port de départ de la traite atlantique et point de convergence des routes caravanières provenant de Tombouctou, certains Gnawa sont aussi peintres et cela depuis les années 1970 environ. Progressivement leur renommée a pris de l'ampleur, certains adeptes des cultes ont surtout acquis leur célébrité dans le domaine musical et ont été reconnus par des artistes euro-américains adeptes eux de la contre culture et de la vague « hippy » qui ont marqué ces mêmes années. Des musiciens tels que Jimmy Hendrix, Pharoah Sanders, Don Cherry, la troupe du Living Theater, ont résidé à Essaouira et ont partagé avec les musiciens gnawa toutes sortes d'ingrédients et de ferveur qui ont pu mener à divers types de transes...

Dans les mêmes années, un amateur danois, Frédéric Damgaard, décide d'ouvrir une galerie à Essaouira et recueille à cette fin les productions des artistes locaux probablement influencés par les peintures occidentales et « psychédéliques » que leur montraient les artistes étrangers. On a donc assisté à une connexion toute contemporaine entre cultes traditionnels et peinture actuelle. Les peintres d'Essaouira, tous imprégnés de rituels confrériques à base de transe, puisèrent aux sources de leurs fonds berbères ou arabes d'origine, imprégnés de mystique populaire, de contes, de mythes, tout en exprimant leur univers personnel avec une acuité et une sensibilité renouvelées. Et ils emploient les moyens techniques des arts plastiques d'Occident : peintures acryliques, toile, carton, papier mâché pour exprimer leur vision du monde. Il est évident que l'apparition de cet art populaire, souvent qualifié de « singulier » ou d'ethnique, rappelle étrangement les origines d'une certaine variante de la peinture haïtienne qualifiée de « vaudou » et dont André Malraux a, dans ces mêmes années 1970, jeté les bases d'une ferveur évidente. Ces peintres de Soissons la Montagne, en Haïti ont en quelque sorte été « découverts » par les amateurs étrangers, un peu comme leurs aînés que Dewitt Peters a rassemblés à Port au Prince dans les années 1950. Ce sont bien des regards extérieurs qui ont permis, dans les deux cas, à des peintres autodidactes, marqués par un univers magico-religieux actif et puissant, de faire connaître leur talent sur la scène internationale. Ceux de Saint Soleil sont également paysans, maçons ou cuisiniers et sont pour la plupart houngan soit « prêtre » des rites vaudou.

(Analyse de documents N° 2) Peintres Gnawa et Haïtiens : Thème du tourbillon de la transe et du labyrinthe : Mohamed Tabal, Saïd Ouarzaz, Aït Maïmoune / Dieuseul Paul, Levoy Exil, Prospère Pierre Louis.

On peut éprouver une certaine difficulté à analyser les œuvres, elles sont étranges et ne laissent pas indifférents. Il semble bien que l'image peinte agisse comme un témoignage de cette relation avec les esprits. Pourtant elle n'illustre pas une transe, l'œuvre ne cherche pas à expliciter le visible mais à restituer une expérience de l'invisible. Il faudrait comparer les éléments plastiques en jeu dans la peinture même. Nous percevons des rythmes, des chocs, des secousses et surtout des imbrications d'éléments et des formes en gestation. Dans ces œuvres, ce sont en fait des paysages mentaux qui nous sont donnés à voir, ils se déploient sur la toile selon la vision du peintre qui active les pouvoirs spirituels des génies pour nous les « montrer ». Le jeu graphique des points, des cercles, des entrelacs, et des combinaisons de couleurs nous invitent à une « traversée du miroir ». Nous voyons « à travers », les motifs sont confus comme si voir était aussi une façon d'expérimenter une autre vision. Encore faut-il s'appuyer sur quelques repères pour comprendre cette scénographie de l'invisible ; comment est-elle mise en acte ? Nous allons ordonner le commentaire selon trois axes qui correspondent à l'inventaire des formes plastiques que Carl Einstein a appliqué à l'expérience visuelle influencée par les « arts nègres ». Il s'agit des notions de décomposition formelle, de flux et de mobilité et enfin de la dissociation et de la vision extatique⁶. (Analyse de documents n°3) : Décomposition, flux, extase. Œuvres de Saint Brice, Louisiane Saint-Fleurant / El Atrach, Abdelmalik Behriss...

CONCLUSION

Ces arts picturaux nous apprennent en fait que l'image est rarement imitation ou représentation du réel mais qu'elle peut se déployer dans un intervalle rendu visible, dans une ligne de fracture entre le réel et l'imaginaire. C'est dans cet écart-là que nous sommes conviés à visionner les images des génies. La transe elle-même est un état intermédiaire, second, un moment d'abandon et de participation à une étrange réalité. Les tableaux réalisés avec les matériaux modernes, sont la matérialisation de cet espace intermédiaire qui permet de capter ce qui erre et qui divague. Les génies de diverses origines naissent tous des fantasmes humains et c'est ainsi qu'ils se déplacent et trouvent leur chemin et leurs « moyens de transport » puisque les humains trouvent toujours matière à les inventer. « L'afro-Atlantis » comme l'appelle Robert Farris Thompson, est un territoire de translation et de transaction ainsi qu'un lieu de transit qui relie et active en permanence cet espace intermédiaire entre deux rives de l'Océan. La diaspora africaine qui balaie ce vaste champ de relations, oscille entre la quête des origines et les inventions sur place. Le voyage spirituel et le chevauchement par les lwa, ou les djinns permettent surtout de garder un contact avec la terre d'origine.

**LA MIGRATION DES ESPRITS:
Zar d'Éthiopie, Lwa d'Haïti et Djinns du Maroc. Peinture et Possession**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Il s'agit d'un ouvrage de Gilbert Rouget, *La musique et la transe*, Paris, Gallimard 1980, Préface de Michel Leiris.
2. Depuis près de deux ans je m'intéresse plus particulièrement aux rapports entre possession et représentation. Le point de départ m'a été dicté par l'analyse des drapo haïtiens qui sont des objets de culte, et certaines peintures vaudou. J'ai présenté quelques éléments de réflexion lors d'un colloque du CEREAP en Martinique (Décembre 1999) et lors de "ACASA Meeting" à St. Thomas, Avril 2001. Ces études n'ont pas donné lieu à des publications. Ici, c'est la première fois que j'aborde la question éthiopienne.
3. Michel Leiris, *Zébrage, "l'Abyssinie intime"* Paris, Folio Essais, 1992, page 58.
4. Michel Leiris, "La Possession et les aspects théâtraux chez les Ethiopiens de Gondar" , in *Miroir de l'Afrique* Paris, Gallimard, 1996 ;
5. "Ne pas se contenter d'être ce que l'on est", Préface à *La musique et la transe*, de Gilbert Rouget, reprise dans *Zébrage*, Paris, Folio Essais, 1992, pp. 201-212.
6. Carl Einstein, *Ethnologie de l'art moderne*, André Dimanche, Marseille, 1993 et autres publications de Carl Einstein, dans *Documents*, Paris Jean Michel Place, 1992.

FROM THE WINDOW of my studio at the corner of 106th and Lexington Ave, I can observe the recent gentrification of a neighborhood that was once, and is still today, an icon of the Puerto Rican exodus to the United States.

El Barrio, also known as Spanish Harlem, is a Puerto Rican neighborhood located on the upper-east side of Manhattan in New York City. The neighborhood became a center of migration for Puerto Ricans after WWII, following the U. S. government initiative Operation Bootstrap which encouraged Puerto Rican immigration as a means of supplying cheap labor to factories and industries. As a result of this exodus, communities like Spanish Harlem became important cultural centers where the development of a Puerto Rican identity in the United States was crucial to the new immigrants.

Within this context, Puerto Rican artists began to develop an aesthetic that addressed the values of their community while also adapting to the avant garde currents of the City. This aesthetic, as well as the values of the community from which it stems, have evolved considerably over the past fifty years and are worthy of study at this historic moment, as the community is rapidly changing in the face of gentrification.

From this perspective we can reflect on the Puerto Rican artistic expression that has occurred in El Barrio. We will first look at the period of the 50's and 60's when the pioneer and the second-generation artists began developing a collective expression that inspired a cultural movement, and led to the founding of important community institutions. We will also examine the development of a diaspora aesthetic as it manifests in visual arts. A discussion of public art in El Barrio will follow. In conclusion, we will address the impact of gentrification on the arts and culture of El Barrio.

The Period of the 50's and 60's

The mass emigration of Puerto Ricans to New York in the 40's and 50's created a dominant center of Puerto Rican culture and quickly spawned new levels of artistic activity. From a community rooted in a small-town agrarian based culture, these immigrants, as so many before them, became a part of the City's working class. They passed on to a second generation of Puerto Rican artists a class and cultural consciousness that by the end of the 60's gave rise to three major centers of cultural ferment in El Barrio.

AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT OF PUERTO RICAN VISUAL ARTS IN NEW YORK AS PART OF THE DIASPORA: The Epitaph of the Barrio

The first artists to emerge from the diaspora were folkloric and primitive, artists that are to be found in the first stages of any displaced culture. Grassroots painters Johnny Vazquez, Millito Lopez and Carlos Raquel Rivera made a precarious living decorating the walls and ceilings of social clubs with tropical scenes.

Jose Caraballo and Pedro Villarini, self-taught folk painters known for nostalgic Puerto Rican landscape's such as Villarini's "Villa Playita" (1969), did not address the New York context. However, their expressions of love for Puerto Rico are clearly of El Barrio. Carlos Osorio, Rafael Tufino and Vitin Linares arrived from Puerto Rico in this period and joined the primitive group of painters, concentrating mainly on Puerto Rican themes rather than those of New York. Influential in this community as well as in the art world, these artists brought a whole new set of stylistic inspirations. Linares's work signals a connection with the social realism prevalent in Puerto Rico's Community Division. His paintings abound with slum scenes from "El Fanguito" and "La Perla," and with figures of the working-class shown toiling. Carlos Osorio brought with him the experience of collective creation and political consciousness, and worked hard to develop the links between artist and community. Tufino introduced the techniques of serigraphy, linoleum, and wood cuts. His work represents an extension of Puerto Rican themes, but is more expressionistic and portrays the suffering of the people.

Issues of the city soon came to the forefront as the children of the first wave of immigrants came of age. Rafael Montanez Ortiz's "Mattress" (1963), in the Museum of Modern Art, is an example of this generation's abrupt entrance on the scene. The work consists of a sprung mattress, preserved as an archeological object by a covering of liquid plastic that freezes it in its decomposed state. It looks like the mattresses that populated the vacant lots of El Barrio, announcing in technique and image the poverty of the Latino community at the time.

The work of Ortiz staked a place outside the folkloric vision of Puerto Rican society, reflecting the experience of the poor throughout the city. It revealed the potential power of a throw-away object when viewed as a signifier of an historical experience, nailed to the wall of a museum. Ortiz's work blazed the trail for Rafael Ferrer whose installation of hay, grease and metal was shown at the 1968 Whitney Biennial and Marcos Dimas, who echoed Ortiz's focus on solitary objects adding a diffused, mythic relationship with Puerto Rico, sparked by the search for identity and an intense appreciation of the Caribbean tradition.

By the end of the 60's, El Barrio had three important centers of Puerto Rican art. El Museo del Barrio, founded in 1969 with Rafael Montanez Ortiz as the first director. Artist's Struggle Organization, OLA, founded that year as well, involved the painters of the 50's generation in a quest for the primitive and the folkloric. Taller Boricua, had its beginnings in 1969 with the Real Great Society, when this organization of architects and community activists in El Barrio provided space for Marcos Dimas, Adrian Garcia, and Armando Soto, the founders of El Taller. They were followed by Osorio, Rafael Tufino and the young Nitza Tufino.

The Puerto Rican Diaspora- An Evolving Aesthetic.

While Puerto Rican artists in New York use many stylistic expressions including folkloric painting, social realism, neo-expressionism, conceptual, and digital art; the art of the diaspora in and around El Barrio can be categorized by the themes portrayed. These themes, though somewhat interchangeable, can be demarked as 1) social political, 2) cultural, and 3) the search for identity.

The social political theme stems from the Puerto Rican colonial status with the United States since 1898 when the U.S. overpowered the independence movement and appropriated Puerto Rico from Spain. Most Puerto Rican artists in the City maintain a strong sense of Puerto Rican nationalism and have been adamant in their support for Vieques, the Puerto Rican Island used as a bombing range by the U.S. Navy. They are equally concerned with issues confronting the Puerto Rican population in the United States such as racism, the "second class citizen" status, and social conditions of Puerto Ricans on the mainland.

For example, Jorge Soto, was a political activist. In his expressionistic assemblage entitled "Tom and Jill" Soto drips dark hued paint over two silver painted mutilated mannequins depicting the suffering of oppressed and alienated people.

Juan Sanchez, combines photographs of political leaders and common people, painted symbols from the Taino Indians (the original inhabitants of the island), and text to address the social political concerns of Puerto Ricans. His juxtaposition of brilliant colors against a dark ground captures the feel of a richly colored people struggling in the face of oppression.

Fernando Salicrup uses a video camera, computer paintbrush, and digital printing to apprehend and transform scenes of El Barrio. His social commentary is dream like

AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT OF PUERTO RICAN VISUAL ARTS IN NEW YORK AS PART OF THE DIASPORA: The Epitaph of the Barrio

with swirling colors and images of haunting characters populating the myth of the promised land distorted by reality.

The Puerto Rican diaspora boasts a number of female artists who address the social political theme from the feminist perspective. For example, Marina Gutierrez's "Poem Pieces - Vision of Julia" 1995, a mobile sculpture, created for the Julia de Burgos Latino Cultural Center in El Barrio consists of shapes cut out of metal. The large center piece of the sculpture cut in the silhouette of a female figure and painted with tropical scenes holds cascading river waters in each hand, symbolic of the poet's writings and love of her island homeland. Miriam Hernandez in her multiple panel painting "Nutrition" (1989) uses fragmented nude figures of females clothed only with the helmet of a warrior to face the spiritual and mental battles of this violent and sexist world.

The issue of culture, closely related to the social and political, is paramount to all immigrants. At question is how to fit into the host country without losing the cultural values of the motherland. The day to day culture of the Puerto Rican people on the island and in the City has inspired artists to appropriate found objects, kitsch elements, and images from Puerto Rican history. Pepon Osorio's installation piece "The Scene of the Crime" exhibited at the 1993 Whitney Biennial recreates and parodies the interior of a "typical" Puerto Rican apartment filled with oversized furniture, family photographs, Santos, knick-knacks, and so much more. He places a crime scene amidst these cultural artifacts, addressing the violence that has invaded the Puerto Rican home.

Antonio Martorell, who exemplifies the ever-increasing interchange between the island and mainland artists, also uses artifacts to create installations that address the culture. For example, In "Casa Singer" (1991), he uses a decorated sewing machine in a house made of sewing patterns, pearls, lace, ribbons, sequins, and trimmings to pay homage to the women seamstresses of Puerto Rico.

Jose Morales also speaks to the culture of the Puerto Rican people in the United States. In "El Vivero" (1993), Morales paints abstractions of caged chickens, row upon row, one on top of another across three large canvases. He captures not only the experience of buying live chickens from the market, a common practice in El Barrio in the 1960's, but also metaphorically the experience of the people of El Barrio, caged and vulnerable.

Embedded in the diaspora is the question of identity. Who are these first, second, third generation immigrants, no longer Puerto Ricans from the island but clearly not accepted as part of mainstream America. Artists, along with the people of El Barrio,

have searched for their roots and have found the Pre-Colombian and African heritage of the Caribbean. Since the 1970's Marcos Dimas has used symbols from the Taino Indians in his paintings and drawings. For example, he created a series of frotages from Taino symbols carved on the stones at the ceremonial grounds at Utuado, Puerto Rico. The series, done by placing Japanese paper on the stone and rubbing ink over it, captures the spiritual energy and power of these ancient stones.

The recent work of Gloria Rodriguez addresses identity. She creates acrylic painting collages that she calls "acrollage" using images of woman and black men from photographs which are framed by multiple layers of translucent paper of different colors. These images speak of the issues facing women and black males in a society dominated by sexism and racism.

My own work also fits into the theme of identity. After moving to New York from Puerto Rico in 1981, I became increasingly aware of the multiple threads interwoven into the Puerto Rican spiritual tradition. In works such as "Globalization, Post-Industrialism, and Syncretism" 1999/2000, I use encaustic and charcoal on multiple panels of paper to depict expressionistic figures of spiritual icons from the Afro-Caribbean religion of Espiritismo. The piece becomes both an installation and an altar with the addition of artifacts from spiritual rituals that connect us to our past through the umbilical cord of oral history.

Public Art in El Barrio

The Public Art created in El Barrio cuts across the themes already addressed but will be discussed separately because it is the most direct form of artist-community dialogue and interaction. In addition, public art brings together a broader perspective of community concerns and can function as a form of social intervention.

The Public Art in El Barrio includes a variety of murals, from traditionally painted walls to aerosol art and mosaics, sculptures of various forms, and chalk drawings on the street. A large mural of domino players by Hank Prussing painted in 1978 on the wall of a building at 104th Street and Lexington Avenue reflects a typical barrio scene of interpersonal connectedness. The creation of this mural served as a training workshop for the young Manuel Vega who later created other public art pieces in El Barrio. These include a wall painting (1981) of a jibaro family working the land at 103rd Street and a ceramic mosaic (1997) related to Afro-Brazilian religious experience situated at the 110th Street subway station.

AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT OF PUERTO RICAN VISUAL ARTS IN NEW YORK AS PART OF THE DIASPORA: The Epitaph of the Barrio

Nitza Tufino's ceramic tile mosaic "Neo-Boriken" (1990) at the 103rd Street subway station interprets Taino symbols that convey our heritage to the metro passengers as they arrive at El Barrio. Similarly, James de la Vega's numerous mural paintings of religious images and community personalities have become icons in El Barrio. Other public art in El Barrio is more temporary. Made on the streets and side walks, chalk drawings from the yearly Festival de la Tiza organized by Jose Morales unite the artists and the community who work together creating colorful street murals on 104th Street. Although these disappear once the street is reopened to cars on the evening of the Festival, the spirit of the day lingers in the heart of the community. In the tradition of the festival, James de la Vega, a folk hero in El Barrio for his temporary public art interventions, creates sidewalk drawings and proverb-like texts with chalk or masking tape.

Graffiti murals in El Barrio have a twenty five-year tradition. The Graffiti Hall of Fame located at 106th Street and Park Avenue is transformed each year by the most prestigious graffiti collaboration in the City. With leadership from local artists like Joe Whippler, the collaborative is conscious of the mural's dialogue with children on the schoolyard side of the graffiti wall. This year the group selected Graffopoli as the theme. While boasting the artistic dominance of the graffiti crew, the mural simultaneously exercises a social critique of the neighborhood's gentrification.

The Gentrification of El Barrio

El Barrio has changed since the 1950's. Puerto Rican families have moved out to the suburbs. New immigrant groups such as West Africans, Chinese and Mexicans have crowded the rooms of the old tenements. This is not a new process. The ethnic make up of this stretch of land from 96th Street to 125th between Central Park and the East River has changed many times from North American Indians, to Dutch, to German and Irish, to Italian and Jewish immigrants, and African Americans who came from the south. What is new is the class change that is currently transforming El Barrio.

Gentrification has already transformed neighborhoods such as the West Village, Soho, the East Village, Tribeca, Williamsburg, and Chelsea, as the upper middle class moves in while the working class and working poor are forced out. Interestingly it is the artists and bohemians who stake the first outposts. This can be seen as young Anglo artists are arriving in El Barrio. Will they be followed by the yuppies, cafes, and designer shops that are homogenizing the City? What will this mean for the Puerto Rican diaspora and the artistic aesthetic that has grown from this community?

Clearly, El Barrio faces a challenge. On the political front, there has been a rezoning of the area with the southern section from 106th to 96th now part of Upper Yorkville. Economically, money is flooding into El Barrio through developers. Although declared an empowerment zone only a fraction of government money has been available to the people of El Barrio. Artists, because they do not generally employ others, are not even eligible to apply. El Museo del Barrio, under pressure to broaden its economic base, has been redefined as a Latin American and Puerto Rican Museum. On a brighter side, The Taller Boricua, under the leadership of Fernando Salicrup, has over the past fifteen years wisely secured gallery, studio and artist housing space and is collaborating on planning efforts to create a multifaceted Cultural Corridor Project in El Barrio.

And what about the community? The next phase of the diaspora is not yet known. Many working class Puerto Ricans are moving to Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey and Florida. Elaine Soto, a Taller artist, who paints beautiful Black Virgins has moved to Denver. Pepon Osorio has moved to Pennsylvania. However, young Puerto Ricans, among them many artists from the island and other cities in the United States, more educated than previous waves of immigrants and more globalized in their perspective, are still arriving. Like their predecessors, they are working in the community. For example, Miguel Luciano does interactional installations pieces such as "La Mano Poderosa Racetrack," 2000. He also is currently working on a mural project with Robert Fulton Housing in the Chelsea area. His work forecasts the imminent battle over the status of Public Housing which will be crucial to the fate of working class Puerto Rican's in El Barrio.

In conclusion, our community, together with the artists who recount and interpret the tales, has the ability to not only withstand the onslaught of gentrification but also utilize it to enhance El Barrio. We are indeed resilient and just as back home our people have struggled for our identity in the face of 500 years of Spanish and U.S. colonialism so too we will continue the struggle. The next stage of the Puerto Rican diaspora and the artistic aesthetic that speaks of that journey awaits us. Let us meet the challenge.

AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT OF PUERTO RICAN VISUAL ARTS IN NEW YORK AS PART OF THE DIASPORA: The Epitaph of the Barrio

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Abad, Celedinio. "Conquered Space", Exhibition Catalogue: A House for us All, El Museo del Barrio, Antonio Martorell and Friends, September 1992- 93, p. 44 - 47, Museo del Barrio, New York, New York
2. Ballester D. and Kuster, T. "Reflexion on Organizing Puerto Rican Artists in El Barrio, from the 1940's to 1960's, Excerpts from a 1976 memoir by Rafael Colon Morales", Unpublished Compile Information by Diogenes Ballester, 1989, El Museo del Barrio, New York, New York (unpublished)
3. Cotter, Holland. "A Neighborhood Nurtures its Vibrant Cultural History , The Arts", The New York Times, Monday, March 16, 1998, p. 1, 3, New York, New York
4. Indych, Anna. "Nuyorican Baroque: Pepon Osorio's Chucherias", Art Journal Magazine, Spring 2001, p. 72 - 83, CAA, New York, New York
5. Lippard,R. Lucy. Socio Political Implications, Exhibition Catalogue: Taller Alma Boricua: Reflecting on Twenty Years of the Puerto Rican Workshop, September 1990, p. 20-26, El Museo del Barrio, New York, New York
6. Lippard R, Lucy. "Out of Sight, out of Mind (II): Artists Asian and Hispanic", Upfront Magazine : A Publication of PADD, Fall 1994, p. 18,19, 20, New York, New York
7. Martorell, Antonio. "Jose is Painting", Exhibition Catalogue: Recent Paintings by Jose Morales, June 1993, p. 2,3, Galeria Raices, San Juan Puerto Rico
8. Ramirez, Yasmin. Perpectives on a Decade of Collecting at El Museo del Barrio: Voices from Our Communities, Exhibition Catalogue, June 2201, p. 36. El Museo del Barrio, New York, New York
9. Tejada, Rosa. "Introduction", Exhibition Catalogue: Current Arrivals, a Selected Group Exhibition, July 1989, p. 5 Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, New York, New York

PEOPLE OF THE CARIBBEAN are not sure where they come from. No one is purely from the west coast of Africa, everybody has mixed blood. What is their background? When they are proudly declaring they are from Jamaica or from Bonaire, they are insecure what exactly that means. They are born there and hope to die there, but in the meantime they know that for educational or economic reasons they often have to live on another island or even abroad.

During the 12th conference of Caricom the prime-minister of the Bahamas expressed his worries about the immigration in the region. People from the poor islands are migrating to the islands with more economic welfare. Worrying about it in 2001 looks like this is something new, something of this time. But this migration is characteristic for the Caribbean. As for the Dutch Caribbean, in the early twenties, just before Shell started on Curaçao, people from Curaçao and Aruba were en masse going to Cuba. Illegal and by boats almost sure to be shipwrecked, but Cuba was where the sugar and the money was. Many did not make it, did not reach Cuba as these days many Cubans do not reach Florida. There still is a small Dutch Caribbean community living in Cuba.

Fishermen from Saba had to travel on their boats all over the Caribbean to earn a modest income for their families on the island, known for being inhabited mostly by women. Their husbands were off fishing or working on the boats for the big companies. And I am sure, the other Caribbean islands can tell similar stories.

In the first half of this century the ideology of creolisation grew throughout the region. Medical doctor/ lawyer/ author/ philosopher Cola Debrot wrote that living in the Caribbean everybody gets the color of coffee. That can be black or with milk. Some even with a lot of milk. And although his prediction became true, at least in the Dutch Antilles, the ideals are gone, so it seems.

History doesn't help either. During the last five centuries the islands, especially the smaller ones, have been ruled by Spain, France, England, Holland, Denmark and the U.S. Curaçao for example has had Spanish, Dutch, English and French colonisers. And although the Dutch Caribbean islands have official autonomy, the influence of the Dutch government is still very strong. Curaçao people love to grumble about everything Dutch, but on the other hand accept financial and advising support willingly. As long as the Dutch don't interfere with on what it is spent. And when it is economically necessary people from Curaçao migrate to the Netherlands. At this moment there are almost 80,000 of them living in the Netherlands and other parts of Europe, while there are only small 150,000 left on the island.

A TASTE OF COFFEE

Migration is characteristic for the Caribbean, in the Caribbean itself but also to and from abroad in every direction. But not being sure of what your homeland is. Not even being sure from what history you descended make a people insecure. That uncertainty, that not belonging, your family coming from Africa, Europe, South-America, Asia and your being part of each and therefore your being part of nothing, makes people angry.

That anger can result in lethargy, sitting under a tree and playing dominoes or using drugs. Drugs traveling from Colombia to the U.S. or to Europe often go via one of the Caribbean islands. And the poor people of the islands are easy prey for the dealers. It is like a lottery. You always have a chance to come through and get rid of your trouble.

The anger can result in aggression, growing criminal activity or cultivated into sports. Ask the police in the U.S. or in Europe and they will tell you stories about criminal activities by Caribbean youngsters. But look also at the famous baseball players like Andrew Jones and Hensley Meulens.

Anger is a very strong emotion and can also be a strong source for creativity. A beautiful example is described by Chaim Potok in "My name is Asher Lev" and in "The gift of Asher Lev". Because of his religion Asher Lev cannot become a painter. His talent is not denied, but he has to fight a hard fight for recognition and loses respect of his friends and family. At the end the rabbi, the religious leader, sustains him and makes it possible for him to become a painter. But when he is a successful painter, is settled, has a family, is accepted, the critics start telling him that he doesn't bring anything new anymore. His work is no longer of great importance. Then the rabbi takes care again. He interferes by taking away his family, making him angry again. As a man he is unhappy, as an artist his creativity is saved.

Anger about your background can result in creating a new world: a new past, a new present, a new future. Examples of all these directions can be found in the Caribbean.

new past

Very little is known about the oldest history of the island Bonaire. The Indians left drawings in the caves. A sort of language we don't understand anymore. Winfred Dania created a whole new mythology. He is deaf and dumb but tells the stories in

his paintings. A friend, a writer, writes books about the stories Dania tells in his paintings.

The Indian drawings, not only found on Bonaire but also on other islands, may also be the inspiration for Sacha Tébo from Haiti, in his paintings but especially in his bronze sculptures. He creates there a new language, known by him alone. And Stan Kuiperi from Aruba, using the different colors of the earth of Aruba in his multimedia paintings also is a scribe with a new literature.

Artists from Curaçao are in love with their old city. Punda and Otrobanda. Not only the artists though. A lot of money is spent by government and private citizens on restoration of the old houses and buildings. But the artists are not looking at the newly restored buildings but at the ones screaming for help because they almost can not stand up any more. It is the beauty in that struggle to survive, the beauty under the grease and dirt of centuries past, that inspires the artists. Is it pride for what is gone or pride for what has been? Or maybe for what could have been? And I think at this point of the paintings of Luigi Pinedo (born and living on Curaçao) or the photographs of Ellen Spijkstra (born in the Netherlands, over 15 years living on Curaçao)

A new present

Starting with observing their surroundings, locally or worldwide some artists reform that present into a present of their own. A few examples from the Dutch Caribbean. The fat black women of the island, with the broad hips and the enormous behind form the inspiration for Betty van Lange (born in the Netherlands and living for over 30 years on Curaçao) They are turning out beautifully, like dancers or dolls without changing their figures. José Maria Capricorne (born on Curaçao, living in the Netherlands) turns the world into a feast, a wedding party with pierrots who don't cry, but dance. And there are also fortunetellers to be sure. Jean Girigorie (born on Curaçao, living half on Curaçao, half in the Dominican Republic) shows the world it is a time to cry and the children, especially the little girls are the victims. Lots of paintings of crying little girls ensure her that the world takes notice of all the misery around. Ludwig de l'Isle (born and living on Aruba) keeps it quiet until suddenly an explosion of colors jump out to return to the quietness immediately.

A TASTE OF COFFEE

A new future

Sam Parabirsing (born on Curaçao, living in the Netherlands) specializes in etching. He takes examples of mythologies from all over the world and combines them, creating a new world, a new future wherein the tokens of Asia, Europe, Africa and the America's come together. Anton Vrede (born on Curaçao, living in the Netherlands) combines all sorts of birds and wild animals living in peace together. Raed Selman (born in Lebanon, living for 10 years on Curaçao) combines in his work the world of the Middle-East where he was born, the world of Europe where he studied and the world of the Caribbean where he lives into a new reality. He is a painter but also busy promoting the art of Curaçao at a special website. Yubi Kirindongo (born and living on Curaçao) traveled all over the world working as a handyman on a freighter. Nowhere could he find what he was looking for not knowing what he was looking for. Returning to Curaçao he discovered art in Germany. On Curaçao he created his own new world by converting waste into new creations. Well known for his auto bumpers turning into animals, flying birds or miraculous sculptures, he now uses all sort of metallic materials for his sculptures.

For people living in the United States or in Europe the Caribbean is a sort of paradise, thanks to the advertising of the travel agencies. Viewing these islands from the outside they have a lot of ideals other countries are only just striving for, already accomplished. People of different descents are united into new nations. Different languages are spoken in one country without causing problems, assimilation, living apart together in peace.

But the paradise is just an outward appearance. From the inside there is anger growing. The angels don't feel at home in this paradise. Not the idea of one nation and living peacefully together is the ideal, but separation is. Splitting up and eventually looking for other places with more prosperity. The grass seems always greener on an other island, in an other community. The coffee tastes bitter. That dooms the relatively young nations, but this anger gives a very strong urge to creativity for the artists.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Cola Debrot, *Verzameld Werk I. Over Antilliaanse cultuur*. Verzorgd door Jules de Palm. Meulenhoff, Amsterdam, [1985].
2. Chaim Potok, *My name is Asher Lev*. Penguin Books. [London,1992]

"Restituer. Et moi, un Adorno à la main, je voudrais reconnaître, connaître et appréhender. Avoir la clé, mais ma quête est vaine et dérisoire. Moi, l'artiste, le producteur d'images, je suis au seuil des mondes et je voudrais être le témoin du passage: un passeur. Restituer, non pas reconstituer. Restituer au plus grand nombre de Martiniquais les traces que j'ai cru avoir décélées."

(Victor Anicet, artiste martiniquais)

THE TERMS 'EXILE' and 'migration' have become conceptual buzzwords in contemporary society in which words like globalism, transnationalism, post-nationalism and diaspora are often used interchangeably in order to make a fashion statement. In the new so-called international world-order in which exchanges are taking place at different levels and through a wide variety of different mediums, and borders and frontiers are no longer hindrances—living in exile has become a way of life for many. In the introduction to *Living in a New Country*, Paul Carter argues that: "Living in a new country is not an eccentricity: it is the contemporary condition. We live as others allow us to live, creating meeting places as we go along. Such places may not be monumental, they may be nothing more than encounters, [...] yet they can form the basis of a social fabric, one that does not suppress the contingency of its community but make its migratory haphazardness the material out of which it weaves identity" (8). Many people in exile, whichever forms that exile may take, often bring with them part of the homeland, landmarks made up of many different components—be it food, music, language or art. These components function as a survival that enables those living in exile strategy to cope with the conflicts and problems that accompany geographical dispersal and migration. These landmarks become the thread out of which identity is weaved.

Being in exile is a complex situation. On the one hand, the exile may be happy because his economic or political situation might have improved considerably in the new country; but, on the other hand, he is often very homesick and finds it difficult to integrate into the new country. In a collection of poems entitled *Le pain de l'exil*, Marc Christophe, a poet in exile, describes the hardships of exile through the powerful metaphor of bread, which is a basic element of survival for many. The first poem entitled "Le pain de l'exil" reads: "Le pain de l'exil est dur / Et sa succulence amère / Comme le sel / Sur les lèvres nouveau-nées / Comme les larmes / Sur ce visage / Que j'ai embrassé / À mon départ" (2). Christophe depicts the pains and tribulations of exile.

Like the writer, the artist in exile, often 'returns' in the physical and metaphoric sense to his homeland to search for his source of inspiration. In today's society

PAINTING HISTORY IN EXILE: A GLANCE AT ULRICK JEAN-PIERRE'S HISTORICAL PAINTINGS

where reading no longer plays an important role in many people's lives, art can serve as a great learning tool. Art in its various forms is an essential part of everyday life. One of its purposes is to communicate through its different mediums and bring about an awareness of history and culture. Haitian-born artist Ulrick Jean-Pierre has been in exile for over twenty years and is currently living and working in New Orleans. He is often referred to as the Haitian Jacques-Louis David and the painter of Haitian history. I believe that he is not only a historical painter, he is also a journalist, a storyteller and a "marqueur d'histoire".

It is not a coincidence that Jean-Pierre has chosen New Orleans as his new home away from home. Louisiana and Haiti have many historical and cultural connections. Without going into many details I will mention that (Saint-Domingue) Haiti's defeat of the French in 1803 served as the catalyst for the Louisiana Purchase. Many former colonists left Haiti and migrated to Louisiana with their slaves. Once these African slaves arrived in Louisiana, they inspired their fellow slaves in America. The 1811 slave revolt of Louisiana was modelled after the 1791 uprising of Haiti. Many people currently living in Louisiana, particularly in New Orleans trace their roots back to Haiti. The Haitian immigrants who came to Louisiana between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries doubled the population and helped build Louisiana. Without these immigrants Louisiana would not be the cultural melting pot that it is today. Living in New Orleans, one feels the Caribbean connection in several ways: architecture, music, food, religion, language and the fine arts to cite a few.

Although Jean-Pierre has been living in New Orleans for the past five years, his main frame of reference, particularly in his historical paintings series, remains Haiti its past, present and future. He uses his art to tell stories and teach history. Through his paintings, he not only depicts but also critiques and ultimately contests the political, social, religious and economic plights of the Haitian people. He unveils the various cultures and influences that have shaped Haiti. Through the historical, religious and cultural elements Jean-Pierre reveals the ways in which Indian, European and African cultures have blended together. He pays tribute to these different cultures that make Haiti what it is today. At the same time, he leaves a legacy for present and future generations through his art which serves as a symbol of his awareness of the importance of Haitian history and culture.

In *Caribbean Discourse*, Edouard Glissant devotes a section to Haitian painting and he states that the painted sign is contemporary to the creole language and that the

work of art is a form of writing (461-462). In the work of Jean-Pierre, this is visible where history and historiography blend together, where “le réalisme merveilleux” (as Jacques Stephen Alexis called it) of the Haitian people’s history and legacy come alive through the canvases. As Glissant states “[La peinture haïtienne] est le signe de la communauté. La parole de tout un peuple. La mesure de son énergie. Il vaut de conclure par là cette *Poétique de la Relation* que nous avons tenté d’esquisser”. This statement aptly describes Jean-Pierre’s paintings, particularly his historical series, in which the artist represents Haiti’s identity, formation and struggle to become the first Black Republic. Through the vibrant colors, vivid symbols, shapes and images he crystallizes in a tangible manner the poetic of relation that Glissant refers to. This poetic of relation is represented in the exchange of culture between the French and Spanish colonizers. Whereas Derek Walcott has stated that “Sea is history”, in regard to Jean-Pierre’s work I suggest that “Painting is history”. I will consider a few of Jean-Pierre’s historical paintings and show how he has been keeping history alive on his canvases. I do not adhere to a particular chronological order, rather, I attempt to analyze the paintings I have chosen to discuss in terms of how they figure in Haiti’s turbulent history and how they recapture, in my view the story of the world’s first Black Republic. Of course, a work of art must be seen, felt and touched, so, my analysis is only an attempt to describe what Jean-Pierre has so brilliantly and vividly painted.

Le serment du Bois Caïman. (Revolution of St. Domingue, Haiti 1791) is the first part of the historical painting series: it was painted in 1979. On August 14, 1791 around ten o’clock at night, a group of slaves met at Bois Caïman, a meeting place in the woods where the runaway slaves were called via the conch (le lambi) by an old vodou priest named Boukman. During the ceremony the leaders pledged to fight in an insurrection. To sign this promise, Boukman sacrificed a pig and the leaders drank its blood to seal the pact. The slaves swore to become free men, even if they died in the process. The following night the maroons and slaves burned houses and killed plantation owners using machetes - and whatever else they could find- to the beat of the vodou drums. Overnight, France’s richest colony was in flames. From this revolt rose Toussaint Louverture, a former slave who became the inspired leader of the Saint Domingue revolution. Marc Christophe, in “Colonisation, la réponse haïtienne”, refers to the gathering at Bois Caïman as a mythical event that has been the backbone of Haitian identity until today. Christophe notes: “La harangue que fit Boukman aux nègres esclaves assemblés en cette nuit de tempête établit, d’entrée de jeu, les coordonnées politiques, culturelles et religieuses qui traversent encore la conscience haïtienne” (216). Christophe quotes an excerpt of Boukman’s speech: “Le

PAINTING HISTORY IN EXILE: A GLANCE AT ULRICK JEAN-PIERRE'S HISTORICAL PAINTINGS

bon Dieu, qui fait le soleil qui nous éclaire d'en haut, qui soulève la mer, qui fait gronder l'orage, enetendez-vous, vous autres, le bon Dieu est caché dans un nuage, là où il nous regarde et voit tout ce que font les Blancs. Le bon Dieu des Blancs commande le crime, et ne nous veut aucun bien! Mais Dieu qui est si bon nous ordonne la vengeance, il va conduire nos bras, nous donner assistance. Brisez l'image du Dieu des Blancs qui a soif de l'eau de nos yeux, écoutez la liberté qui parle au cœur de nous tous" (216). [The God who made the sun, who stirs up the sea, and makes the thunder roar, is ordering us to vengeance. He will help us throw down the image of the Colonist's self-proclaimed God who is thirsty for our tears, and listen to the freedom which is speaking to our hearts.] This painting depicts the slaves coming together and making a pact during this momentous event which was to become one of the highlights of Haiti's history. Jean-Pierre captures the slaves' intense desire for freedom and their promises to fight for liberty with their hearts, spirits and souls.

Slave Uprising (August 22, 1791) (painted in 1979). Although the slaves endured their despicable and miserable conditions they never accepted them. Slave uprisings occurred throughout the whole country from North to South and from East to West. By 1791, there were 500,000 slaves in Saint-Domingue. Over the years, a large number of slaves had run into the "mornes", or the mountains to flee the inhumane life in the plantations. The mountains became sanctuaries because they provided protection for maroon societies and in this way, preserved the traditional religion and cultures of African and Indians. For a period of twelve years, the slaves fought against the French so they could sing the tunes of liberty. Armed with only machetes and barrel staves the slaves became a trained army: by 1802, when Toussaint Louverture was captured and imprisoned in France's Fort de Joug, 20,000 men made up the revolutionary army. General Jean-Jacques Dessalines continued the leadership and fight for freedom. On January 1, 1804 after a long struggle, Saint-Domingue became independent and took its Indian name Haiti (meaning high land). When Napoleon Bonaparte saw his dream of an American empire defeated by this victory, he sold Louisiana to the American President Jefferson for a measly sum of 15 million dollars. This painting shows the slaves fighting in one of the many battles that led to Haiti's independence.

Toussaint Louverture Issuing the First Constitution of Saint-Domingue, 1801

Toussaint was born in 1743 on the Breda plantation in Haut du Cap in the Northern part of Haiti. He was the grandson of an African king who was captured, sold and brought to Saint Domingue. His godfather, Pierre Baptiste taught him to read and

write and his father taught him how to use medicinal herbs. Toussaint became a veterinarian and was respected by his superiors as well as his fellow slaves. He was put in charge of the Spanish army and was named Lieutenant General. In time, Toussaint became a great leader who inspired slaves to develop their taste for freedom. In 1801, Toussaint issued a constitution to end slavery: this was the first constitution proclaimed by a Black and a prelude to Haiti's declaration of independence. Vexed by Toussaint's audacity, Napoleon Bonaparte, assembled a troop in order to overthrow the island. Although he succeeded in capturing Toussaint and his whole family and took them to France, the desire for freedom was already engrained in the slaves. Toussaint did not live to see Saint Domingue gain its independence, he died shortly before on April 7, 1803. But his famous last words remain: "En me renversant, on n'a abattu à Saint-Domingue que le tronc de l'arbre de la liberté des noirs; il repoussera par les racines parce qu'elles sont profondes et nombreuses" (By overthrowing me, you have only cut down the trunk of the tree of liberty in Saint Domingue; the tree will bloom again because its roots are very numerous and deep.

Marie-Jeanne Lamartinière is a particularly fascinating painting because it depicts one woman's great contribution to the revolt. So many times, historians have conveniently forgotten the importance of women in revolts such as Haiti's. Jean-Pierre pays tribute to these women. Like writers such as Simone Schwarz-Bart, Maryse Condé and Edwige Danticat, he recognizes the fact that women were and continue to be backbones of historical revolts. This painting speaks for itself: it portrays a woman fighting on the battlefield and struggling to save another soldier's life. This painting can be considered as part of the re-writing of history that needs to take place so that great women such as Marie-Jeanne Lamartinière can take their proper places in world history books.

Battle of Vertières

On November 18, 1803 one of the decisive battles that led to the Haitian independence, took place in the northern part of Haiti. In the battle of Vertières. Dessalines' Revolutionary Army triumphed over the French army and decapitated the French General Rochambeau. Rochambeau was one of the cruelest leaders ever, he was infamous for having brought hunting dogs from Cuba and used to chase the maroon with these dogs, he was hated by all the slaves. When he was taken down by François Capois, a leader known as Capois-la-Mort (Capois, the Death) as a result of his heroic acts in the Battle of Vertières where he served as Brigand General,

PAINTING HISTORY IN EXILE: A GLANCE AT ULRICK JEAN-PIERRE'S HISTORICAL PAINTINGS

Rochambeau humbled himself and paid tribute to Capois. Until today, November 18 is a memorable date in Haiti's history and this battle is still considered a landmark.

King Henri Christophe and his Architect. Henri Christophe declared himself king on June 2nd, 1811. He wanted to create an empire and believed that Blacks had the power to create at the same level as the Europeans. In many ways, he was a ruthless king and was hated by his subjects because he forced them to work long hours in order to build the country, including the great Citadelle, considered as the eighth wonder of the world. He wanted to prove to the Europeans that Haitians were capable of governing themselves. In 1820, the people rebelled against him. Henri became ill and killed himself with a silver bullet on October 8, 1820. His life inspired several plays and stories including *The Emperor Jones* by Eugene O'Neil and *La tragédie du roi christophe* by Aimé Césaire.

Crucified Liberty. For me, this painting represents Haiti's past and present dilemma. Ironically enough, it was censored this past February (2001) by the African-American Museum of Art in New Orleans because of its "graphic" contents. So, Liberty was doubly crucified in all senses of the word, that is to say, both literally and figuratively. If we go beyond the naked breasts, which depicts a nurturing symbol, this painting has so many stories and histories, there are so many images that are represented, it is very rich and symbolic. The snake, symbol of life and knowledge also represents man's downfall. The two currencies, the Haitian gourdes and the U.S. dollars are competing and struggling with one another, with the U.S. Dollars winning the battle of power. The constitution is still wrapped because even though Haiti has been independent for nearly 200 years it has not put its constitution into use. A black woman on the cross of colonization with Indian and African features represents the spirit of liberty as well as Haiti's rich cultural heritage. Like Jesus Christ crucified on the cross, Haiti has been and continues to be crucified.

The crucifixion of the spirit of liberty is dated as early as 1492 when Christopher Columbus landed in Haiti and arrogantly converted the Indians as a strategy to have a successful colonization. The enslavement of the Indians led to the decimation of the whole population some decades later. The crucifixion continues when slaves were brought from Africa to America. In 1804, when Haiti declared its independence from France, the spirit of liberty was further crucified when the United States cut all international ties and put in place immigration laws and sanctions that could only lead to Haiti's demise. These are just a few of Haiti's crucifixions not to mention the U.S. Occupation that spanned from

1915-1934. International neighbors continues to exploit her, yet, in spite of all this, her spirit remains and she has hope. It is this hope that Jean-Pierre has captured, in his portrayal of the faces of the many different children that Haiti has had to let go; the ones who have died in search of greener pastures and the spirit of liberty, the ones who have been killed in all the civil wars and the ones who remain through it all. Liberty, like Haiti has been crucified but as long as she is breathing there is hope.

Conclusion

The art of Jean-Pierre can be said to be an art of awareness, of stories and history. Through the themes chosen as well as the cultural elements, through the colors and mediums used, Jean-Pierre accentuates the struggle and bravery of these men and women who gave up everything including life itself for liberty. He depicts Haiti's resistance and continuous struggle, each painting is like a book with a story, each color represents a page of Haiti's long struggle for freedom. As Glissant states in the section of *Caribbean Discourse* in which Poetic Resistance and Artistic Expression are discussed: "La parole de l'artiste antillais ne provient donc pas de l'obsession de chanter son être intime: cet intime est inséparable du devenir de la communauté. Mais cela que l'artiste exprime, révèle et soutient, dans son œuvre, les peuples n'ont pas cessé de le vivre dans le réel. Le problème est que cette vie collective a été contrainte dans la prise de conscience; l'artiste devient un réactif. C'est pourquoi il est à lui-même un ethnologue, un historien, un linguiste, un peintre de fresques, un architecte. L'art ne connaît pas ici la division des genres. Ce travail volontaire prépare aux floraisons communes. S'il est approximatif, il permet la réflexion critique; s'il réussit, il inspire" (759). Jean-Pierre uses his exile and his talent as a painter to immortalize on canvas Haiti's struggles, dreams and hopes for a better tomorrow. Unfortunately, the limited time that I have did not allow me to fully give justice to his artistic talent.

As far as his art is concerned, it is unquestionably clear that Haiti remains Jean-Pierre's primordial and primary source of inspiration. Although he is living in New Orleans, his soul and spirit navigates between Haiti and New Orleans. Although physically he is in exile, a large part of him never migrated from Haiti and this can be seen through his paintings where Haiti remains the main character and the star of his works. His paintings are a way of restoring and detecting the traces that might otherwise be forgotten and obliterated by the inexorable passage of time.

L'ISOLEMENT, NON seulement géographique, mais aussi politique et économique a été déterminant dans le développement tout particulier des cultures des pays des Caraïbes. A Cuba, en dépit d'un environnement traditionnellement multi-culturel et ouvert aux courants extérieurs, cet isolement, accru pendant la seconde moitié du XXe siècle, a été surmonté par les artistes qui ont suivi le chemin de l'exil, temporaire ou définitif. Cette « invitation au voyage »,¹ acceptée très souvent avec joie mais parfois aussi à contrecœur, leur a permis de développer leur création plastique.

La génération d'avant 1959 choisit Paris comme terre d'accueil. Amalia Pelaez (1897-1968) y arrive en 1927 après un court séjour à New York où elle expose dès 1924. Wifredo Lam (1902-1982) s'installe également à Paris à la fin des années 30 après avoir accompli ses études de Beaux-Arts à l'Académie de San Fernando de Madrid. Il s'intègre très vite à l'avant-garde européenne et fréquente notamment le cercle surréaliste dirigé par André Breton. Ces deux artistes, chefs de file de l'art cubain du XXe siècle, retournent à Cuba au début des années 40, ramenant avec eux une vague fraîche de nouveautés plastiques qui influencera la création d'autres artistes comme Fidelio Ponce de Leon (1895-1949) ou René Portocarrero (1912) qui n'avaient jamais quitté l'île. Plus importante encore que les idées avant-gardistes qu'Amalia Pelaez et Wifredo Lam auraient pu importer à Cuba, est la découverte d'une identité propre et la reconnaissance de son importance face aux canons européens. C'est en 1943 que Wifredo Lam achève son chef-d'œuvre *La jungle*, marquant ainsi le début d'une thématique autochtone dans la plastique insulaire qui cherchera à mettre en valeur le passé et le présent métis du peuple cubain (espagnol, africain et chinois), tout comme son folklore. Si cette thématique ne commence à se développer dans les caraïbes et notamment à Cuba qu'à partir de cette époque, elle était déjà bien enracinée dans certains pays latino-américains du continent, principalement en raison du poids de l'héritage précolombien.

Entre 1940 et la Révolution cubaine en 1959, les artistes inventent un nouveau langage et un vocabulaire propre tiré de leur quotidienneté, de la nature et de la religion de l'île, qui se veut exubérante, non seulement dans sa flore et sa faune, mais aussi dans ses rites, ses traditions et sa population. René Portocarrero, artiste emblématique de cette période, a rempli ses toiles de formes et de couleurs, témoignant d'une peur au vide qui caractérise nombre d'artistes de cette génération. S'il est vrai que quelques tentatives « abstrahisantes »² se sont manifestées à Cuba pendant ces années là, la représentation picturale restait principalement figurative.

A partir de 1959, le gouvernement cubain veut développer une culture populaire, qui met en scène une relecture du passé et de certains aspects des traditions, mais

LE MEXIQUE : TERRE D'ACCUEIL POUR L'ART CUBAIN

surtout les bienfaits de la Révolution. Bien qu'une certaine liberté d'expression ait été acceptée quant à la représentation, c'est le réalisme socialiste à la soviétique qui établira les paramètres des nouvelles exécutions. Néanmoins, en dépit de ces nouveaux canons esthétiques, la sensibilité métisse a su triompher de la rigidité en provenance d'Europe de l'Est.

Si les arts plastiques proprement dits sont restés à l'écart des préoccupations du nouveau gouvernement cubain (alphabétisation, santé et logement) pendant les années qui ont suivi la Révolution, ils ont poursuivi, mais à une vitesse réduite, leur développement. Face à ce panorama étroit, fortement appauvri, mais aussi à cause de différences politiques avec le nouveau régime, une première vague d'émigration, en partie composée d'intellectuels, choisit, au début des années 60, Miami, puis New York, comme terre d'accueil. Fils d'émigrés mais nés à Cuba, Felix Gonzalez-Torres (1957-1996) et Ana Mendieta (1948-1985) deviennent des figures emblématiques de la génération des années 70-80.

Rarement cité dans les ouvrages sur l'art latino-américain, Felix Gonzalez-Torres est le premier plasticien cubain exilé à transgresser les frontières des genres traditionnels, pictural ou sculptural. Il a su démontrer, d'une manière extrêmement poétique, que l'art conceptuel n'est pas exclusif de l'idéologie européenne ou nord-américaine, que la sensibilité insulaire peut aussi se l'approprier pour exprimer ses idées, ses revendications, ses sentiments. Ana Mendieta, arrivée aux Etats-Unis en 1961, fait du corps humain et de la spiritualité ses instruments de travail. Les compositions en grès qu'elle exécute en 1972 surprennent de par le mystère qu'elles renferment. Formée aux Etats-Unis, Ana Mendieta passe, entre 1973 et 1978, de longs séjours à Oaxaca (Mexique), où elle vit une rencontre avec la nature qui enrichira ses expérimentations sur la relation entre le corps et la spiritualité. Ses recherches aboutissent à des oeuvres éphémères qu'elle documente à l'aide de photographies et de films. La silhouette de son propre corps, qu'elle projette sur des éléments naturels comme la terre, les arbres ou l'eau, s'imprime sur le papier photographique, créant des oeuvres d'une étrange mélancolie.

A la fin des années 60, alors que les cubains du continent expérimentent de nouvelles voies, comme l'installation, à Cuba l'affiche s'impose comme le nouveau média, qui répond aussi bien à des inquiétudes personnelles qu'aux besoins de communication, voire de propagande, du gouvernement. Les affiches se multiplient, envahissent les rues, puis les murs des maisons et les bureaux à travers tout le pays. L'émergence, au cours des années 70, de divers mouvements plastiques

contestataires transforme de manière capitale la situation artistique cubaine. Une conscience autocritique profonde caractérise les artistes de cette génération et oblige certains d'entre eux à abandonner l'île. Cette deuxième vague d'émigration trouvera au Mexique, pays frère et ami³, le terrain propice, neutre et accueillant pour poursuivre ses recherches plastiques.⁴

Les séjours d'Ana Mendieta au Mexique ont été décisifs pour le développement de ses recherches plastiques qui l'ont fait figurer sur la scène internationale. D'autres artistes cubains, également accueillis au Mexique au cours des années 70 et jusqu'à la première moitié des années 80 n'ont pas réussi à figurer de manière significative sur la scène plastique internationale et cela pour deux raisons fondamentales : le contexte plastique du Mexique à cette époque et leur spécialisation dans les arts graphiques. D'autre part, tant Ana Mendieta que Felix Gonzalez-Torres ont grandi et se sont formés en tant qu'artistes aux Etats-Unis,⁵ alors que les artistes appartenant à la deuxième vague de migration ont été formés, tant bien que mal, sous la Révolution.

La scène plastique mexicaine des années 70 se caractérise par l'émergence de groupes d'artistes qui mettent en avant l'idée d'un art anonyme au profit d'une cause sociale. Les idées, tant plastiques que sociales, issues du mouvement étudiant de 68, trouvent dans le travail collectif de ces artistes le terrain le plus adapté à leur maturation et à leur diffusion. Les artistes cubains viennent donc s'insérer dans ce contexte anonyme mais contestataire de l'art de message. Les quelques 15 groupes qui se sont constitués à Mexico tout au long des années 70 partagent un même objectif, celui de promouvoir une conscience civique et de lutter contre l'autoritarisme exacerbé et la censure. Si les artistes cubains n'ont pas fait partie des groupes mexicains, ils ont pu travailler en toute tranquillité dans cette atmosphère impersonnelle qui a caractérisé la plastique mexicaine des années 70.

Traditionnellement moins reconnues que la peinture et la sculpture, les œuvres sur papier, et tout particulièrement les affiches, n'ont jamais donné à leurs auteurs, à quelques exceptions près, une reconnaissance significative sur le marché de l'art. Cependant, en dépit de ce panorama peu encourageant, l'arrivée des artistes cubains pendant cette décennie apporte un vent de renouveau aux arts graphiques du Mexique qui, après la prolifique production du Taller de Grafica Popular, créé en 1937, somnolaient depuis une vingtaine d'années. Les gravures, sérigraphies, lithographies, eaux-fortes, etc., que l'art de message produit dans les années 70

LE MEXIQUE : TERRE D'ACCUEIL POUR L'ART CUBAIN

sont sans conteste l'expression d'une grande maîtrise technique, mais pas d'innovation plastique.

Les années 80 annoncent une nouvelle orientation dans la plastique cubaine. Bien que restant principalement figurative, la création adopte une tendance conceptuelle. Deux événements sont à la source du développement de cette nouvelle orientation : la création du Centre Wifredo Lam, dont le but est de soutenir l'art contemporain, et celle de la Biennale de la Havane, qui cherche à rapprocher l'art cubain du reste de l'Amérique latine. Cette Biennale, créée en 1984 et conçue au départ pour les artistes latino-américains et des caraïbes, ouvre ses portes à partir de sa deuxième édition aux arts d'Asie, d'Afrique et du Moyen-Orient. De même, les œuvres et actions des groupes Volumen I, Arte Calle ou encore du Grupo Puré amorcent ce grand virage qui va lancer l'art contemporain cubain et le faire connaître internationalement vers la fin des années 80. Des artistes expérimentés comme Manuel Mendive (1944) et d'autres plus jeunes, nés et formés dans et par la Révolution, comme Kcho (1970), Marta Maria Pérez Bravo (1967), Agustin Bejarano (1964) ou encore José Bedia (1959), vont commencer à attirer l'attention des critiques, historiens de l'art et galeristes étrangers. Pourtant, Cuba reste isolée au niveau des échanges internationaux et ne compte pas encore de véritable infrastructure institutionnelle ni de marché intérieur. Un grand nombre de créateurs cherche donc l'opportunité d'exposer et de vendre ailleurs, s'éloignant, comme leurs aînés, temporairement ou définitivement de l'île.

Face à cette inquiétude artistique, le gouvernement réagit de manière stratégique, en permettant aux artistes, non sans difficultés, de sortir de l'île si la destination est le Mexique, qui dès la seconde moitié des années 80 n'accorde plus l'asile politique aux cubains et où le nombreux personnel de l'ambassade cubaine pourrait surveiller de près les manifestations et créations de ses artistes.

Il serait sans doute exagéré de parler à nouveau d'exode ou de grande vague d'émigration pour les artistes qui s'installent au Mexique au début des années 90. Néanmoins, les circonstances qui les amènent à quitter Cuba ont changé. Car vivre à Cuba ou en dehors de Cuba, pour nombre d'artistes de cette génération, n'est plus une question de militantisme politique.

A cet égard, le rôle de la galeriste Nina Menocal est capital pour l'introduction, le développement et la diffusion de l'art cubain au Mexique. Depuis sa création en 1990, Ninart Centre d'Art livre un combat sans répit en faveur de l'art contemporain

et tout particulièrement de l'art contemporain cubain. Dès cette date, Nina Menocal fait venir au Mexique des artistes, parmi eux José Bedia et Agustín Bejarano, afin qu'ils poursuivent leurs recherches plastiques dans de meilleures conditions économiques. Elle leur consacre des expositions individuelles et organise des expositions collectives dans le but d'établir de rapports entre les artistes qui travaillent à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de l'île. L'exposition *15 artistas cubanos* qu'elle présente en novembre 1991 réunit le plus significatif de la création cubaine de l'époque, notamment par la participation de Felix Gonzalez-Torres, et brise définitivement le mur invisible qui s'était dressé entre les cubains insulaires et continentaux. Une oeuvre-clé, *Diaspora des années 80 : piste d'atterrissage neutre*, composition de Cesar Trasobares (1949), artiste cubain travaillant à Miami, témoigne de l'importance de cette exposition, des retrouvailles des artistes et de leur identification, ainsi que du lieu qui l'accueille : le Mexique, terrain neutre et propice au dialogue et à la réconciliation.

Outre la promotion des artistes à travers des expositions, Ninart Centre d'Art s'est fixé comme objectif de procurer de meilleures conditions de travail à ces artistes, mettant à leur disposition des ateliers ou demandant des bourses d'études. Ainsi, Nina Menocal réussit très tôt à réunir à Mexico la majorité des artistes cubains de la génération des années 80.

L'année 1992 voit un durcissement des lois sur l'immigration au Mexique. Alors que les frontières mexicaines étaient restées ouvertes pendant une trentaine d'années, il devient de plus en plus difficile d'obtenir le visa qui permet de quitter l'île. Beaucoup d'artistes cubains déjà installés au Mexique doivent retourner dans leur pays ou passer aux Etats-Unis, comme le font Rogelio Lopez Marin (1956) et Ileana Villazon (1970). Cependant la ténacité de la galeriste ne diminue point. Les artistes mexicains et cubains seront lancés depuis le Mexique, sur la scène internationale par la Galerie Nina Menocal dans la conviction fondamentale que l'art contemporain ne doit pas être limité par ses origines géopolitiques.

Ce qui différencie les nouveaux émigrés de ceux qui ont fui la Révolution est leur ambivalence politique. Certains d'entre eux, encore marxistes, pensent que Castro a trahi la Révolution. D'autres voient le communisme cubain comme un système en décadence, mais ils sont convaincus qu'il s'agissait d'une bonne initiative de justice sociale. Quelles que soient leurs idées politiques, s'ils en ont, ils n'ont pas quitté Cuba par militantisme, mais pour développer leur art.

LE MEXIQUE : TERRE D'ACCUEIL POUR L'ART CUBAIN

En dépit du grand nombre d'artistes cubains installés à Mexico depuis la fin des années 70, de leur va et viens entre l'île et la plus grande capitale du monde, ils n'ont pas constitué une diaspora, comme l'ont fait d'autres artistes africains et caribéens, y compris les cubains, notamment aux Etats-Unis. L'expérience de chaque artiste cubain au Mexique a été personnelle et intime avec la terre d'accueil. Ils sont restés isolés et indépendants et ont profité de l'ouverture internationale que le Mexique leur offrait. Ainsi, José Bedia après deux années de résidence au Mexique, consolide en 1992 son langage plastique grâce au contact avec la nature et avec les cultures indiennes mexicaines, qu'il marie avec ses connaissances de la Santeria. José Bedia imprime sur ses toiles toute la force de la terre et la magie de l'homme qui l'occupe. S'il est resté en marge des courants plastiques mexicains, le pays lui a offert une vaste thématique qu'il ne cesse d'exploiter. De même, Agustin Bejarano, après quelques années à Mexico, affirme son vocabulaire pictural, où des personnages imaginaires, mi hommes mi animaux, s'insèrent dans un paysage urbain désolé, dans une sorte de biographie picturale.

Comme les hirondelles, les artistes cubains ont trouvé, lors de leur migration hors de leur « cage invisible », une terre d'accueil au Mexique. Pendant les années qui ont suivi la Révolution cubaine, le Mexique est le seul pays hors du bloc communiste où les artistes cubains peuvent aller librement. La langue ayant resserré davantage les liens entre les deux pays frères. Après la disparition de l'Union Soviétique, alors que l'île se trouvait plus isolée que jamais, le Mexique a continué à accueillir les cubains en quête de liberté. Ainsi, cherchant à établir un équilibre entre enracinement local et légitimation extérieure, les artistes cubains installés au Mexique y ont trouvé une ouverture exceptionnelle vers l'art international. Aujourd'hui, le travail de Geysell Capetillo (1973), Ulises Gonzalez (1963), Angel Ricardo Ricardo Rios (1965), Leandro Soto (1956), José Bedia et Agustin Bejarano témoigne de cette expérience nomade et multi-culturelle qui caractérise encore l'esprit cubain.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Cf. Cuahonte, Leonor, « Invitation au voyage : l'art cubain à la fin du siècle », Portulan, Ed. Vents d'ailleurs, Châteauneuf-le-Rouge 2000, pp. 157-160.
2. Terme utilisé par Michel Seuphor pour désigner les premières tentatives d'abstraction dans la sculpture encore figurative. Cf. Seuphor, Michel, La sculpture de ce siècle, Dictionnaire de la sculpture moderne, éditions du Griffon, Neuchatel, Suisse, 1959, p. 53.
3. Le Mexique est le seul pays de l'OEA à ne pas céder aux injonctions américaines de rompre avec Cuba. Tout au long des années 60, 70 et 80 les frontières avec le Mexique sont restées ouvertes aux ressortissants cubains.
4. Le Mexique avait déjà fait preuve de solidarité avec les intellectuels fuyant des pays aux régimes totalitaires, comme l'Espagne au début des années 40, lorsqu'il accueille massivement des artistes et des intellectuels espagnols réfugiés de la Guerre Civile, comme Max Aub, Luis Buñuel, Leon Felipe, José Horna, Margarita Nelken ou Remedios Varo.
5. Felix Gonzalez-Torres passe son enfance et réalise ses études d'art plastiques à Puerto Rico, Etat Associé des Etats Unis.

THIS PAPER WILL FOCUS on the issue of identity and gender in the work by Caribbean women artists, which stress cultural roots while employing current artistic trends. These contemporary artistic manifestations of women artists working in the Caribbean reflect or project cultural roots, product of recent migratory patterns as well as of earlier migrations such as African but which are alive. Other cultural problems faced by women artists of the region may be addressed as related to their artistic production and exhibition.

This lecture is the beginning of a research on the subject, which will include a wider representation of women artists of the Caribbean, islands as well as a wider philosophical context.

The concept of intentionality inherent in the work of art by means of the creative process has been a wide concern of aestheticians. As spectators we have to reflect upon such a concept of artistic intention in order to grasp content and subject matter. We approach works of art in a wide scope of media, ranging from the traditional to the technological, based on contents and/or statements that stem from the political, cultural, individual and even from a so-called "globalization" process to which the artist responds. In this contemporary world in which tribalism has emerged in a continuous struggle with the idea of "globalization", we are forced to reexamine artistic concepts in a new light. The images inherent in the artwork present reveries and statements of consciousness, both collective and individual. They constitute the main source of information in our search for existential significance. Images stemming from millenary indigenous myths as well as from the significant African roots are constantly revived in contemporary artworks of varied media in a new context. A profound involvement in Afro-Caribbean mysticism seems to be a constant component in Caribbean thought.

The complexity of the creative process is more evident when multiple socio cultural situations occur in places like the Caribbean Region. If to such circumstances is added the fact that the artist is a woman and furthermore living in foreign land, the artistic process may increase in complexity. My contention is that gender and individual considerations besides the cultural array: given culture of attitudes, beliefs, desires, theories and other aspects, in their very complicated extension, may enhance creative possibilities.

Should we address Caribbean art employing the phenomenological approach, as spectators we would have to "extract" meaning from the work of art itself and from the circumstances by which it came to existence. By putting into brackets previous

MULTI-CULTURAL APPROACH TO ART BY CONTEMPORARY WOMAN ARTISTS OF THE CARIBBEAN

knowledge and experience, especially that which is extrinsic rather than intrinsic, we may start our own methodology for a valid aesthetic judgment. A large portion of intuition and feeling may accompany cognitive grasp of artistic meaning. If we intend to evaluate art from the region by applying theories and trends foreign to this geographical localization, the path may lead us too far or perhaps could be misleading.

Paul C. Taylor (in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.57, No.1, Winter 1999) refers to "antiracist aestheticism" on his study which exposes how the "white dominated culture has racialized beauty", and how beauty concept or schemes are based in terms of white beauty and of the characteristics of people consider white are more likely to have. Marie Helen Couvin from Haiti in her woodcut print *Madona aux mains blanches*, (Madona with white hands) stresses precisely the racial identity conflict which results from centuries of discrimination. The late Puerto Rican artist Cecilia Orta from the generation of the fifties and who studied in Mexico is considered a pioneer in the struggle against prejudice and racism as well as discrimination for being a woman.

If we began a search in time and space we as spectators may be able to find meaning in contemporary art of the Caribbean islands, and perhaps very profound philosophical statements which stem from cultural roots. Caribbean women artists may transfer religious beliefs and activities to artistic and creative experience. The women artists' intention is unique in that consciousness creates the image stemming from the emotional spiritual aspect of a complex ancestral religious experience. The intellectual aspect completes the process: the female artist is able to convey her ideas within the framework of contemporary society.

Among the female artists who have successfully incorporated her feelings and commitment to the African descent, is **Valerie John** from Martinique. The thick layers of paint in colors evoking ancestral religious roots convey a profound search for identity within a contemporary language. The constructions of **Chantal Matezua**, also from Martinique, evoke a spiritual force. Similar ideas are expressed by **Petrona Morrison** of Jamaica.

A responsible analysis should be based on those intrinsic values and characteristics of the region. Among those we can mention the highly complex migratory patterns throughout the islands which persisted for centuries. These groups brought various cultural traits which have been incorporated within the Caribbean nations. The Indigenous groups of the Pre-colonial period whose symbols still demand a

presence in art, (by Puerto Rican living in New York **Nitza Tufino**) were followed by Europeans and the African slaves who moved throughout the islands and who have maintain the essence and coherence of the region. The intricate imagery of **Marta Perez** (Puerto Rico) exposes the complicated juxtaposition of cultural symbols. Although different in presentation but similar in concept is the art of **Barbara Prezeau** from Haiti. **Luz Severino's** imagery relates to such ancestral symbolism (Dominican Republic).

More recent migrations from the East have incorporated new elements still to be assessed. Such enrichment and versatility may be appreciated in the works by female artists of Asian origin like **Idrani Nayer Gall** of Barbados and **Margaret Chen** of Jamaica, to mention just two.

Caribbean women artists deal with a large scope of problems as individuals and reflect them in their artistic manifestations. Prestigious editor and AICA Southern Caribbean Vice-President, Dominique Brebion refers to the fact that for women artists to achieve a higher level of recognition is still weak as compared to men (ArtTheme, October 2000, Martinique) In the best book published up to now on Caribbean Art, Verlee Poupeye analyzes the Contemporary art by women from various standpoints of feminine identity as well as cultural traits.

Self confrontation has been widely approached by women artists. The work of Martinican **Monique Mirabel** as well as **Belids Ramirez** from the Dominican Republic is significant. Among the highly distinctive manifestations is when the female artist deals with her own body as means of conveying her ideas. Cuban born **Ana Mendieta** who suffered until death in the United States, explored performance as a means of identity and gender confrontation in ways never exposed before. Working with her body and incorporating various self made artifacts, is young artist from Trinidad, **Suzane Dayal**. Following, instead, Mendieta's path in having been through similar situation as a child extracted from her country is Cuban-Puerto Rican **Rosa Irigoyen**. Various individual interpretations are presented by Cubans **Dania Fleites Diaz**, **Isolina Limonta** and **Belkis Ayon** recipient of a major prize at the XII San Juan Biennial of Latin American and Caribbean Graphics. **Susana Herrero** (Puerto Rico) bases her art in the male figure while **Mari Mater O'Neill** developed a self exploration by employing figures similar to comic books.

The geographic condition of the islands force artists to search for new experiences and knowledge either as students or as professional artists. The horizon is set mostly in Europe and the United States but when there is a different and perhaps more

MULTI-CULTURAL APPROACH TO ART BY CONTEMPORARY WOMAN ARTISTS OF THE CARIBBEAN

profound concern, it has been sought in Africa. Meanwhile artists from Aruba and Curaçao may look towards The Netherlands because it is more possible, artists from Martinique and Guadeloupe may go to France, and Puerto Ricans either go to the US because of student scholarships or to Mexico and Spain because of cultural ties. Nevertheless, wherever they go artists tend to reinforce nationality.

Maritza Davila, Puerto Rican who has raised a family in the US, ties cultural symbolism to the concept of continuation in her family. Artists like Dominican **Rosa Tavarez** spent several years in New York which were important for her development although her international prestige has emerged since her return to her country. **Ines Tolentino** married and lives in France but the Dominican Republic remains her national identity as a artist. **Nora Rodriguez** returned to Puerto Rico from France after several years marked a successful international reappearance since she confronted rejection as an Latin American artist because Puerto Rico does not hold an Embassy, not being a sovereign country. Puerto Rican **Myrna Baez** spent part of her youth in Spain as well as **Natividad Gutierrez** who married and remained there, but both have maintained a liason with the island. **Carmen Inen Blondet** and **Ana Rosa Rivera** studied in the US while **Maria Elena Perales** and **Haydee Landing** studied in Mexico showing such influence in their art.

Exposed to contemporary art trends but conveying cultural ideas are female artists like **Jocelyn Gardner** and **Analee Davis** from Barbados and **Alida Martinez** from Aruba. These artists have successfully employed a wide variety of media including installations and performances. Similar experience is shared by **Dhara Rivera**, from Puerto Rico, successful with installations since the late seventies and **Ana Rosa Rivera**. **Anaïda Hernandez** is one of the few Puerto Ricans to break the barrier in the US with an individual exhibit at the New Museum by invitation.

Reflecting the situation of migration throughout the Caribbean Region, we can analyze the variants of women artists from other countries who have established in the region. **Consuelo Gotay** (Puerto Rico) spent several years in Santo Domingo teaching printmaking. **Barbara Lane** from the US lives in St. Eustacius. From the Netherlands we find **Yoonne Van Gogh** and **Krista Van Der Meyden**, who live in Curaçao, **Osaira Nuyale** who works in Aruba and **Helen Carnet** in Saba. Puerto Rican contemporary art is an example. Representing Puerto Rico at international events we find foreigners who have established themselves in the island by either marriage or other circumstances such as political or economical. Such is the case of American **Jennifer Allora** married to and art partner of Cuban born **Guillermo Calzadilla** who has represented Puerto Rico at the Sao Paulo Biennial. Other foreign

artists who have integrated and represented Puerto Rico as well are **Susana Espinosa** from Argentina, **Zilia Sanchez**, **Maria Antonia Ordchez**, **Myriam Zamparelli** and **Rosa Irigoyen** from Cuba, **Toni Hambleton** from Mexico and **Betsy Padin** from the US.

The particular political situation of Puerto Rico has been a constant concern for a great majority of artists exposed either in their creative statements or as individuals. Women are no exception. Artists like **Myrna Baez**, **Dessie Martinez**, and **Dhara Rivera** as well as younger generation like **Marta Perez Garcia**, recipient of the Grand Prize at the XIII San Juan Biennial of Latin American and Caribbean Graphics (2001), have been constant in their commitment for independence.

Caribbean women artists have had a significant role in establishing relationships and common elements in the art of the region. By bringing their cultural traits and integrating their art to national cultures while employing a contemporary language they have definitely made a meaningful contribution to society. One painter has been successful in this respect, **Alison Chapman-Andrews**, from Barbados.

This presentation is not meant to be exclusive but rather just a sample of the female creativity which will be explored in further research.

I

IN RECENT YEARS, I have become increasingly fascinated by the history of Caribbean artists working in Europe and America who continue(d) to produce art rooted, or resonating in a Caribbean experience. I have found that the manner in which many of these artists are inserted into "mainstream" art historical discourse, often with minor footnotes to their pre-migratory histories, to be a bit troubling, cultural hegemony in the guise of inclusion.

Artists such as Felix De Rooy of Curacao, Hervé Télémaque of Haiti, and Janine Antoni of the Bahamas: All made conscious decisions to migrate from their countries of birth to the metropolises of Amsterdam, Paris and New York respectively. In each case, one could suggest that this decision might be indicative of the artist's desire for a type of personal and cultural emancipation facilitated by a romantic belief in a cosmopolitan identity that operates beyond the nationalistic space.

But while terms like *cosmopolitanism*, along with "tropes and paradigms" such as *creolite*, *métissage* and *hybridity* have sought to describe complicated relationships that continually shape the Caribbean, at the same time they have also served to *romanticize* and mystify the region because of their ability to be easily *repositioned* in ways that reveal their simultaneous power to erase the economic, racial, class and cultural inequalities at the roots of the phenomena they seek to describe². By engaging CLR James' concept of art in the text Beyond a Boundary, and considering it in relation to the work of Janine Antoni, this paper seeks to complicate romanticized views of *Caribbean art*, visioning it as historically and culturally encoded with an internally articulated meaning that incorporates a recognition and embrace of the dialogic space that formed and continues to inform the region as a culturally dynamic space.

II

In the text Beyond a Boundary CLR James questioned the manner in which aesthetes failed to recognize that sports had the potential to move beyond the realm of entertainment to become a form of populist art. What I find interesting, is James' call not only for a reconsideration of sport as an art form, but "*the people who watch them*" as an integral part in the art making process.³ This concept of art takes it out of its isolation as artifact into a constantly shifting dynamic, reestablishing the role of the seemingly distanced audience in the making of *art*.

In articulating this vision, James recognizes a simultaneity of being in the form of the cricket player, who, even though he is in a personal battle on the oval ("One individual

"WHAT GOOD ARE ROOTS IF YOU CAN'T TAKE THEM WITH YOU?"

batsman faces one individual bowler"4), is no less representative of a social group. Frantz Fanon had described a similar condition in *Black Skin White Masks* where he felt responsible at the same time for his body, race, and ancestors.⁵ However, James suggests that "(T)his fundamental relation of the One and the Many, Individual and the Social, Individual and Universal, leader and followers, representatives and ranks, the part and the whole,"⁶ is reconciled within cricket, foreclosing the possibility of Fanon's psychosis of a divided self.

James expands his case for the game as art by describing its significant form, tactility, movement, emotiveness and beauty. He considers the cricket oval as a creative crucible, where the battle between batsman and bowler occurs at its center: The audience remains on the periphery and the art making occurs in the exchange between audience and players. In an attempt to reconsider the construction of a Caribbean art historical discourse, James' case for cricket can become quite useful. He stated that "West Indians crowding to the Tests *bring with them, the whole past history, and future hopes of the islands.*"⁷ His concept of art, rooted at a center of the oval, radiates and becomes powerful because of its dialectal relationship to what exists outside of it and acts on it externally.

Because James locates art within a dialogic dynamic between artists (cricketers) and audience (fans), his work contains the metaphor that enables one to see how a late twentieth century cosmopolitanism articulated by James Clifford (where an individual can be "partly rooted in local cultures, partly positioned in global networks"⁸), can work dialectically between conceptualized centers and peripheries without letting go of the regional referent. One can therefore contend that *if* the work of Caribbean born artists working abroad is "*rooted in local cultures*" though "*partly positioned in global networks,*" the possibility of their being theorized into a regional artistic discourse, by expanding the local to include the global, becomes evident. Unlike Paul Gilroy's famous contention, in this context, not only would it matter *where you are from, but also where you're at.*⁹

What then of Janine Antoni? Does she and or her work challenge an open, yet located concept of Caribbean art? Rather than creating art rooted in the local and resonating in the global sphere, does Antoni's fierce embrace of the universal necessarily mean that she has taken a position of refusal for the particular, her antillanite? An approach to these questions should consider how Antoni's work has been perceived in her native space, the manner in which she has been inserted into mainstream art historical discourse, and moreover seek to interrogate the relationship between the art object or media (often times Antoni herself) and its audience.

III

Janine Antoni was born to Trinidadian parents in the Bahamas in 1964. After completing university degrees at Sarah Lawrence and the Rhode Island School of Design, she chose to remain in the United States. Of her work Antoni has stated that she is "interested in everyday body rituals and converting the most basic sort of activities - eating, bathing, mopping - into sculptural processes."¹⁰

This unorthodox approach earned the artist almost instant international recognition in the early 1990s. One of the most important pieces to be exhibited at this time was *Gnaw* (1992) which consisted of two 600 pound cubes, one of chocolate and one of lard. The artist suggests that this piece was born out of a simple desire to chew on a huge chunk of chocolate. After having it cast, she proceeded to do just that biting and spitting out the chocolate and repeating the process with the cube of lard. With the pieces she spat out, Antoni made lipstick and chocolate holders, which she placed near the cubes in a display case.

For the performance piece *Loving Care*, 1993-95, Antoni soaked her hair in dye and proceeded to mop the gallery floor with it. In reference to this work, Dan Cameron proposed that Antoni's process of hair dyeing and act of mopping, was a wry comment on what women have subjected themselves to in order to fit schizophrenic societal definitions of youth and beauty.¹¹ If one considers the space in which the work is being performed and the complex mix of references Antoni evokes, one can extend Cameron's observations of the work into a discussion of the use/abuse/value of women(s)-(work) in "western" culture.

In the 1993 work *Lick and Lather*, Antoni cast 14 classicized busts based on her image, 7 in chocolate and 7 in soap. She then changed and erased details of the busts through the processes of licking and lathering. In exhibition, the busts were placed on simple columns and arranged in two rows facing each other. Critics have suggested that one of the important aspects of this work (along with *Loving Care*) is that Antoni "is using her body as both the subject/object of her representation, but also the creative force behind the process of subject/object(ification)."¹² In these works one clearly recognizes art that is in dialogue with histories of performance, conceptual, minimalist and feminist art practices. One can posit that by inserting herself into a new cultural space, Antoni is inevitably impacted by the history of that space. But what many Caribbean cultural workers find disturbing is that besides the steady practice of noting her birthplace at the end of art historical publications, any history prior to the artist's freshman year at Sarah Lawrence becomes a floating signifier and is never interrogated, seemingly exiling her past and severing her connection and possible relevance to a Caribbean space.

“WHAT GOOD ARE ROOTS IF YOU CAN'T TAKE THEM WITH YOU?”

I contend that this discursive practice has enabled Antoni to inhabit an ambivalent space where she is able to be re-positioned as a universal artist, theoretically without race, nation or roots. Such ambivalence has easily served as precedent for writers to continually insert Antoni into a specific (western) American trajectory of art history. While this tradition no doubt speaks to a large part of her artistic formation, it cannot be accepted as the full story, though presented and institutionalized as such.¹³

An effect of this type of re-editing in this cultural terrain is that Antoni's visually indeterminate racial heritage has resulted in the erasure of race, Caribbean culture and ethnicity from discussions of her work, opening it up to a myriad of interpretive possibilities. But at the same time the problem is that this editing and *repositioning* has been extremely successful *in erasing race, culture and ethnicity from the discussion of her work* circumventing what I believe could be a potentially rich engagement of Antoni's art.

In an extensive review of texts, I found no critical discussion of Antoni's ethnic/racial or cultural heritage until Ewa Lejer-Burcharth's extensive 1999 essay "*Antoni's Difference*". In reference to **Lick and Lather** Lejer-Burcharth notes:

The varying degrees of defacement defamiliarize the self as such, defining it as unintelligible, as a site of oscillation between resemblance and disguise, between recognition and misrecognition. Both the contrast of colors, brown and white, and the meanings of the materials, the rewarding chocolate, an object of desire, versus the purifying soap, an instrument of purge, metaphorize alterity and play of difference within the self. Moreover, the contrasting materials articulate that play of difference in terms of racial identity, through the trope of "race" as skin color. (This is also an issue of relevance for Antoni, who was born of parents of different color in the Bahamas, where she also grew up).¹⁴

This paragraph represents a pivotal moment in critical discussions of Antoni's work, but even here, the artist's cultural and racial/ethnic heritage is bracketed as an aside and never engaged beyond these lines.

Following Lejer-Burcharth's tentative lead, take another look at *Lick and Lather* and consider the juxtapositions of chocolate and soap. Think about the process of casting one's image and then licking and lathering it and the implications of this in relation to Freud's analysis of narcissism in women,¹⁵ and Antoni's engagement in what she describes as this cliché of narcissism. Consider how one might encounter this work

in situ, walking in the space between and the effects on the senses. Consider the biting process used, keeping in mind how Stephen Nichols has described eating as “one of the few social acts, perhaps the only one, that combines the private, the intimate, and the gregarious in a manner that permits artists to maneuver between various options, from ritual solemnity to the *carnavalesque*.”¹⁶ Consider more deeply the material and social history of chocolate and particularly soap and how it, as Stuart Hall observes in the essay *Spectacle of the Other*, became a commodity linked to Empire and justifying imperial expansion.¹⁷ With this in mind, one could argue that Antoni’s use of these mediums to cast her form and insert it into a gallery space is thus notable partly because of the history these materials embody, but also their relationship to the histories that *she*, as a mixed race, Caribbean born, migrant woman artist embodies. Should this be bracketed as an aside if artistic content inhabits the artist’s body?

I would argue that in some ways Antoni’s work exhibits a self-conscious manipulation of the visible and invisible identity markers referenced by her body. Antoni has stated that sexuality and eroticism are important aspects of her work and while she understands that this can become a voyeuristic act, she contends that she is able to work against this gaze by employing *auto-erotic* processes.¹⁸ However, her success in controlling this gaze might be questionable. Though Antoni’s use of desire to capture her audience has a history of its own in feminist and Caribbean based performance culture,¹⁹ one is not always certain exactly what is transformed, questioned or resisted beyond this point, least of all by an auto-erotic approach to the work. *Loving Care*’s success lies in its dense content in contrast to its seeming formal simplicity, but works such as *Tender Buttons* (1994), might not first appear to resonate as well.

In this work, Antoni cast her nipples in solid gold and made the castings into twenty sets of twin brooches, complete with velvet boxes and certificates of authenticity.²⁰ Generally, these disembodied nipples have been read simplistically as manifestations of the artist’s failure to resolve feelings of disconnection and longing for her birth mother. But because they are self-consciously cast from Antoni’s own breasts and sold for \$2500.00 a pair, one cannot help but sense the artist’s full awareness of how she is placing herself into the discourse, offering up these disembodied simulacra’s as commodity- albeit not for the average consumer.

By commodifying this specific body part, Antoni’s actions evoke Stuart Hall’s notion of *disavowal*. In the work she is in Hall’s words, “indulging and denying,” using the fetishistic desires of her art world audience as a “strategy for having it both ways:

"WHAT GOOD ARE ROOTS IF YOU CAN'T TAKE THEM WITH YOU?"

for both representing and not representing the tabooed, dangerous or forbidden object of pleasure and desire."²¹ In process, she plays the mischievous Shakespearean Puck *and* the Caribbean *mas*: performing the role of the trickster whose character and exploits in Native American and African derived cultures, "mocks, shatters and re-forms the overly clear structures of the world and the overly-smooth images of the mind ...In her, the double-sidedness of reality reveals itself..."²² Antoni is selling simulacras of her golden Creole nipples to those who can afford the dream. There is a painful joke embedded in the way the history of these relations is being re-presented here, which Antoni is arguably fully cognizant of. In these buttons Antoni is not resisting culture as Lejer-Burcharth later assumes, but through her process she is creating a critical space for the engagement of historically shifting identity markers and the influence of commodity culture on their re-making; a conversation I would argue she began with *Gnaw*.

At this juncture, Antoni might seem completely removed from CLR James' notion of art and thus the foundation of what this essay has conceptualized as a model for a Caribbean artistic discourse. It might appear that I am reading Antoni as a migrant forever displaced, disconnected to and dismissed from a Caribbean audience- so vital in James' concept of art.

However, rather than excluding Antoni from this project, I posit that paradoxically, because she inhabits a liminal space, she embodies a type of Caribbean cartography that's reflected in her work. As Cameron notes, in her art Antoni uses her body in ways that affirm it as "a provisional boundary through which identity flows, a heterogeneous site of the play of difference(s) inhabited by the forces that make and unmake the self,"²³ a characteristic that is at the very heart of Caribbean cultural formation. Even though writers in the "metropole" continue to document and discuss her work in a way that denies through absence, cultural connections and an artistic heritage outside of the "mainstream"; and even though in these records, Antoni *might appear* not to challenge these assumptions, texts must be written that *complicate* such neat appropriations and provisional denials by including her in the *ongoing discursive* formation of Caribbean art.

In a 1996 article entitled "Women in Art: Five Bahamian Artists" Antoni is quoted:

The unadulterated natural surroundings of the Bahama Islands have been the greatest inspiration for my work. ... A childhood spent collecting shells, making sand castles and cleaning conch nurtured the imagination. A certain cultural physicality or physical expression,

especially in music and dance, has made me think about the body differently. Junkanoo and Carnival have also left a lasting impression.²⁴

More recently, in a conversation with Marcel Odenbach, Antoni responded to the question “Have you ever done a piece *only* about the Bahamas?” by stating:

No, but my experience of growing up in the Bahamas is at the core of my work, although this has never been addressed critically. When I first came to America, I became painfully aware that my body language was inappropriate. This situation is what brought me to use my body as a tool. Carnival has also been a huge influence... the influence of the Bahamas is integrated into the content...²⁵

Though the first statement is rife with romantic nostalgia, in the second statement, the artist vocalizes what the first statement implies, that there is a need to critically reconsider Antoni’s work in the context of the artist’s Caribbean cultural heritage. Perhaps it is time to take her at her word and more extensively examine the possible influence of Junkanoo and Carnival aesthetics on her use of unusual materials and the physically performative nature of her expression. It would be particularly interesting, if Antoni’s work is reconsidered in relation to the experience of Caribbean women and their relationship to American body aesthetics and consumer culture; and also the effect of these factors on the making and unmaking of the region.

IV

This essay grounded a conception of Caribbean Art in James’ populist vision because it effectively articulates what art can do. Reconciling Antoni and other migrant artists to this space and discussing their work in ways that seriously examine the region within it, enables a discourse that embraces what Edouard Glissant describes as the region’s *poetics of relation*, without ignoring the simultaneous legacies of displacement and divisions that have shaped the region’s *antillanite* or Caribbeanness.²⁶

What good are roots if you can’t take them with you? When I consider the term *Caribbean art*, I see a cosmopolitan aesthetic that navigates through the romance of the region and links art history with the ethics of a socio-economic history of the Caribbean. I see scholars *acting out* and developing a discourse that embraces the dialogic nature of the region’s cultural formation in order to navigate a strategic identity in the economic age of globalism. This is a counter-hegemonic act, because it can serve to suture the roots of artists such as de Rooy, Télémaque and Antoni to a Caribbean audience and space; roots, which in their apparent absorption in the universal, might appear to have been severed.

"WHAT GOOD ARE ROOTS IF YOU CAN'T TAKE THEM WITH YOU?"

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Kwame Anthony Appiah "Cosmopolitan Patriots" *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins Eds. (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) 91.
2. Belinda J. Edmondson "The Caribbean: Myths, Tropes, Discourses" Intro. *Caribbean Romances: The Politics of Regional Representation* Belinda Edmondson, Ed. (Charlottesville: UVA Press, 1999) 1.
3. CLR James *Beyond a Boundary*, with an introduction by Robert Lipsyte (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) 195.
4. James, 196.
5. Frantz Fanon *Black Skin White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967) 112.
6. James, 197.
7. James, 233. Though one must acknowledge the historic specificity of James narrative, I would argue that very little has changed in terms of what Caribbean people feel is at stake during these Test matches. When James claims that he has "no wish to be liberated from the past, above all, I do not wish to be liberated from its future"(59), he recognizes an inability to quarantine history and that in spite of the rhetorical implications of the "post", the past will always be present in "post-colonial" cultures. The Test matches played between the West Indies and England during the summer of 2000 and the rapt attention given to the matches- at least in Jamaica where I was conducting research, supports this claim. Even if one didn't completely understand the game, the embodied replay of a Biblical tale in a colonial context, made the stakes quite clear.
8. Amanda Anderson "Cosmopolitanism, Universalism and the Divided Legacies of Modernity" *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins eds. (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) 273.
9. Paul Gilroy "It Ain't Where You're From, It's Where You're At...: the Dialectics of Diasporic Identification" *Third Text* 13, (Winter 1991): 3-17.
10. Laura Cottingham, "Janine Antoni: Biting Sums Up My Relationship to Art History," *Flash Art* Vol. 26, No. 171 Summer 1993, 104-105.
11. Dan Cameron "Habeas Corpus" *Janine Antoni: Slip of the Tongue* Nicola White and Brenda McParland (eds) Glasgow and Dublin: Center for Contemporary Art and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, 1995.
12. The parentheses are my addition. Cottingham, 104.
13. In my opinion, Jennifer Fisher's essay "Interperformance: The Live Tableaux of Suzanne Lacy, Janine Antoni and Marina Abramovic," *Art Journal* 56 (Winter 1997), is only one of many examples of such insertion.
14. Ewa Lejer-Burchart "Antoni's Difference" *Differences* 10 (Summer 1998) 129-170.
15. While I am not a Freudian scholar, Emily Apter's discussion of eroticism in the late 19th Century in the essay "Splitting Hairs: Female Fetishism and Postpartum Sentimentality in the Fin de Siecle" is useful to consider here in relation to Antoni. Apter discusses Freud's contention that women compensated for their lack of a phallus "in pregnancy, child rearing, or a kind of mediated narcissism in which they projected their own bodies through the gaze of a male fetishist "look"(Apter, 168). I would argue that Antoni's work pulls these ideas to its center and upends it. Emily Apter "Splitting Hairs: Female Fetishism and Postpartum Sentimentality in the Fin de Siecle," *Eroticism and the Body Politic* Lynn Hunt ed. (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991) 164-190.

16. Stephen G. Nichols "Seeing Food: An Anthropology of Ekphrasis, and Still Life in Classical and Medieval Examples" *MLN* Vol. 106, No. 4 (September 1991): 818.
17. Stuart Hall "The Spectacle of the Other, Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices" Stuart Hall ed. (London: Open University, 1997) 240.
18. Trippi, 150.
19. See Gina Ulysse's essay "Uptown Ladies and Downtown Women: Female Representation of Class and Color in Jamaica" *Representations of Blackness and the Performance of Identities* Muteba-Rahier, Jean ed. (Westport, Conn. and London: Bergin and Garvey, 1999) 147-172.
20. This work might reference the work of Gertrude Stein who wrote an extensive piece employing household objects that might be considered potentially fetish objects entitled "Tender Buttons."
21. Hall, 267-68. There is of course a danger here. Such actions resonate with arguments proposed by Graham Huggan with regards to post-colonial writers, working in the metropole. Huggan argues that these writers recognize that the value of their work as a commodity depends on a certain exotic appeal, (and for Antoni we can extend it to an exotic feminine appeal). Huggan notes that these writers run a risk of becoming complicit with the cultural imperialism they claim to denounce. Graham Huggan, "The Postcolonial Exotic: Salman Rushdie and the Booker of Bookers" *Transition*, Volume 0, Issue 64 (1994) 24. However, considering the nature of the developing discourse on her work, I would argue that Antoni's work doesn't depend on it, but uses it in her work as content.
22. Allan J. Ryan *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Seattle: U. of Washington Press and Vancouver/Toronto: UBC Press, 1999) 8. Milla C. Riggio has observed in relation to carnival that the "act (of playing mas- a metaphor for the way in which Trinbagonians live their lives) is fortified by calypso's tradition of social criticism satirizing everything from government, racial prejudice and ethnic stereotypes to gender and sexual repression." In the 19th century, it became the music of a trickster culture that drew on the influence of the satirical performances of the Egungun people. With the mas form of the Pierrot Grenade character, Afro-Trinidadians would take the opportunity of Europeanized celebrations to use this "festive music" to play instruments of resistance to cultural domination, simultaneously threatening and containing the threat of violence in ritualized encounters." Milla C. Riggio "Resistance and Identity: Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago" *The Drama Review: The Journal of Performance Studies* V. 42 No. 3 (T159), (Fall 1998): 8.
I argue that Antoni's has brought this type of "mas" cultural performance into the sanctioned spaces of galleries and museums.
23. Cameron, 1995.
24. Lynn Sweeting "Women in Art: Five Bahamian Artists" *Welcome Bahamas* (Nassau: DePuch Publications, 1998) p. 109.
25. "Advertisement For Myself: Marcel Odenbach in conversation with Janine Antoni" *Performing Arts Journal* 21.2 (1999) 33.
26. Adlai H. Murdoch "(Re)Figuring Colonialism: Narratological and Ideological Resistance" *Callaloo* V. 15, No. 1, 1992, p. 3.

Exile is distressing, but actually having the possibility of return may be more distressing still, for it will call into question the comforting fictions that one has lived by for many years.

Gustavo Pérez-Firmat, Life-on-the Hyphen: The Cuban American Way

THIS ESSAY IS ABOUT my translation of Dominican-American code switches in the United States - the mode in which images, signs and icons are transposed into new contexts. Especially in the context of a new city, code switching becomes the marker of how fixed roles in history can be transformed to build a post-national identity. In Junot Díaz's *Drown* (1997), the author keenly showcases these transpositions through the narrative of Yunior's coming-of-age experiences starting at the Dominican Republic into the United States. Also, the artwork of the contemporary painter Freddy Rodríguez, specifically his exhibit *En esta casa Trujillo es el Jefe*, depicts this experience of translation from the perspective of a visual intellectual conscious of his place in a historical narrative. Through their creative work, they present the immigrant experience by reusing and reshaping visual and intellectual symbols representative of the national identity, such as the geographic shape of the island, the flag and the figure of "El Caudillo" Rafael Leonidas Trujillo. In recycling, Díaz and Rodríguez reinterpret their cultural and historical past and redefine their identity not simply as Dominicans but also as Americans. They take the readers to the position of eyewitnesses to the reconstruction process of the official history in order to liberate a community from its dislocated (e)state.

The production of art and literature is the best outlet for this reconstruction process as opposed to traditional historical, fact-oriented texts. While the motherland encompasses the purity of an unambiguous past, the new cultural and intellectual space tints it with fresh ideas and "changes very like those time produces" (Mann 4). The processes of referring to the past, in Díaz's and Rodríguez's works, indicate a need to recreate and yet destroy certain elements of the official history. To talk about the Dominican past is to return to 1937 when the massacre against Haitians and people of Haitian descent marked the beginning of an era and the erasure of the former. Its history and culture have been defined through violence ever since. *El Masacre se pasa a pie* by Freddy Prestol Castillo, a pioneer testimonial novel Dominican, is the first successful attempt to articulate the genocide during this period. Prestol Castillo wrote in the form of a journal while serving as a federal judge in the border province of Dajabón, which was later published in the form of

THE DOMINICAN DIÁSPORA: REDEFINING NATIONAL ICONS

novel years after the death of Trujillo. The national identity was clearly forged in 1967 during the monstrous endeavor to define a physical and ethnic boundary between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Unlike *El Masacre se pasa a pie*, *Drown* and *En Esta Casa Trujillo es el Jefe* break away from this literary tradition of national discourse-like texts. Although Díaz and Rodríguez have to return to the past, they create anew discourse. Through art and literature, national icons are transformed and readapted to the community's reality in exile. *Drown* and *En esta casa Trujillo es el Jefe* show how many Dominicans in the diáspora depend on visual memories in order to understand their immediate surroundings. These visual memories become a language that is composed of a flux of symbols deliberately displaced in multiple places and spaces. Language - as art - is always foreign, never equal to a given reality connected to a mother tongue or national language. Thus, Díaz's characters' use of 'Spanglish' or code switching is a clear example of the exchanges generated in the diáspora where cultural amalgamation is a constant. Also, Rodríguez's collages become even more representative of this recycling of symbols in the process of reconstructing a post-national identity. Social production in the diáspora is the creation process of linguistic and visual symbols, which ultimately make up meaning. They transpose complex signs into accessible described images bringing them to a universal realm. Through a careful exercise of translation, we experience a new form of literature and visual arts, which creates discourse across nations, cultures and languages.

Through new linguistic and visual metaphors, the authors and artists in the diáspora have a major role in the construction of a post-national identity. They take the task of translating "to release in [their] own language that pure language which is under the spell of another to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work" (Benjamin 80). Through a cohesive and inclusive narrative of the past and present, Díaz and Rodríguez wittily liberate the Dominican national discourse from many taboos. Their new interpretation of this traditional discourse is composed of the context in which their works are being produced. These facts demonstrate that the production of art does not occur in a vacuum. Instead, this new post-national art is not confined to national traditions. This art is the product of displacements of peoples.

Currently, Díaz and Rodríguez are in a deracinated state that reduces their self to basically nothing in a community of faceless alien beings. As narrators and translators, they construct a Dominican fictional history based on reality. Whereas Prestol Castillo finds the necessary tools to come to terms with the present in

relation to the past, Díaz and Rodríguez have to negate the official story. They rely on an *official* history to recreate a national discourse representative of a diáspora by transforming founding symbols of the nation in every feasible way. Figures become a means and not the subject matter. As an intellectual, Rodríguez's art is about bracketing certain instances in time through visual simplicity but with complex ideologies as its foundation. His technique of mixing different materials and images resonate to other artistic trends that coincide with his intentions. Despite his obvious historical references on his canvases, Rodríguez artwork is still about aesthetic impressions. Through collages, Johns also seeks new alternatives to exhibit/expose a fresher image of what America is. Leaving aside the somber and solemn nature of a flag, as Johns, he presents a fine aesthetic piece (i.e., the American flag). More so, the use of a national icon speaks of the culture as an artistic expressive conglomerate.

Rodríguez's representation of the regime is quite interesting in this aspect. He provides an alternative means to explore Dominican identity after Trujillo. In the oral and written traditions, the Trujillo era has been viewed from two standpoints: the glory of a totalitarian dictator or the trauma of a victim. Instead of blaming Trujillo for the past tragedy, Rodríguez focuses on the aftermath of the situation, in order to bring a better understanding of the Dominican present reality in and outside the nation.

Many aspects of the regime have become the tools of Rodríguez's artistic work. As "National Symbol" shows, the nation's most important icon, the flag, is placed in close relationship with the era's ideology. The flag is right underneath the logo EN ESTA CASA TRUJILLO ES EL JEFE normally written on a plaque in most Dominican homes' front doors. This kind of plaque became popular about the year 1955. Nevertheless, the collage brings a third, foreign flavor into the picture: New York Times paper clippings, symbolic of the American reality influencing the Dominican identity; and lottery tickets, an old symbol of the fickleness of fortune. Thus, introducing hybrid elements intelligently interrupts the narrative of internal politics. Rodríguez indicates that the Dominican nation is composed of other integral aspects of society, such as the arts. When observing the artist's use of red covering the bottom part of the collage, where the newspapers and lotto tickets are located, expresses the effect of the dictatorship on aesthetic expression. The color of blood spilled during the tyranny resembles how everything in the nation, from the media to entertainment, was marked with violence. This canvas removes the idea of nation from its pedestal-like position and encourages the viewer to reconsider the value of national icons. In paintings like "National Symbol," Rodríguez follows the lead of

THE DOMINICAN DIÁSPORA: REDEFINING NATIONAL ICONS

contemporary American artists, such as Jasper Johns. Johns painted a series of American flags to present the most important American national symbol in a formal yet aesthetic form. He takes fixed cultural icons out of their given place in society in order to challenge the viewer's understanding of culture itself. Likewise, Rodríguez's work is an exploration of the Dominican history in a formal, aesthetic structure.

Rodríguez's evocation of themes on the life of any Dominican throughout history is quite evident in "The Great Farm." The viewer is presented a "work [that] transforms itself into a field of visual tension where the organic flowers fight for their space with the rigid newspaper sheets" (Arneus 13). This collage illustrates the artist's struggle to find a voice on the canvas. Mostly dominated by violence, as Prestol Castillo's description of the massacre, its symbolism is easily recognizable in a Dominican context - mainly yellowish on the upper part, the newspapers deepen and made opaque the colors of the flowers. Yellow may represent hunger and fear: realities present during and after Trujillo's regime. On the other hand, the newspapers juxtaposed with the flowers can be representative of the power of print media on the fragile Dominican nation. The island-paradise is overshadowed by the advertisements for gallery shows on the pages of the New York Times as the background. The thick black border between the two halves of the painting is clearly identified in yellow as 'half-island' that is flanked by other three smaller paintings. The subtext seems to indicate how the idea of the nation is simply a façade. These newspapers are not simply decorative pieces. They integrate the author's own reality. "The Great Farm" is indeed a culturally charged piece. Its colors attest to the reality of the country. This collage displays a hybrid mixture of the Dominican identity. He represents a new and transcultural interpretation of the Dominican community through the diáspora vision. From the diáspora, to understand the Dominican community as a flux of cultures is feasible and permissible as opposed to the traditional concepts of the nation in the Dominican Republic.

On the same note, Rodríguez's work finds a partner in the native land. From the Dominican Republic, Tony Capellán is working with multiple techniques of painting, but mainly creating magnificent site-specific installations. These installations look to express the current position of Dominicans in the native land where recycle is a keyword to describe the many transformations in the population. At first, the re-using of ordinary objects (e.g., slippers, gold necklaces, etc.) indicates the influence of capitalism. But to recycle is in fact an attempt to remember and forget the past simultaneously. His work illustrates the past in various ways as his

installation “La bandera de los ahogados” (1996). This installation has the same shape of the Dominican flag - a white cross with blue and red fillings. Damaged shoes and slippers replace the blue and red colors of the flag, in order for Capellán to convey the horror of those who drowned trying to flee from the country through El Canal de la Mona to Puerto Rico. He pieces back elements of the past while not deforming its shape intentionally.

This act opens up the possibility of new interpretations of the Dominican dictaduras and begins the founding of new ideas for a younger generation. By recapturing the past in his works, Capellán is able to present the past in a new light through innovative installations. Because of his creative work, Capellán displaces Dominican history by taking national symbols out of their usual contexts: Newspapers, history books and broadcast news. Junot Díaz is also able to see the transformation of the official history in the narration of a family saga. In *Drown*, the reader encounters the ups and downs of Yuniór’s relationship with his father. This father figure is representative of what the life in the old Dominican Republic (governed by Trujillo) was. The father is an imposing figure that provokes fear and anger, but it is above all loved. The values established under his father’s ruling are defied by the silence promoted by his mother, an archetypal figure, another object. The mother encompasses all the fears of the narrative, a Dominican discourse now being articulated. In the course of his narrative, Díaz is able to present the immigrant experience with an American flavor without undermining the importance of the native tongue in the development process. Junot Díaz provides us with new tools to understand Dominican history, which seems gestated by Trujillo’s 31-year-dictatorship and the revolution of 1965. *Drown* is in fact the first creative piece to express the major concerns of the Dominican diáspora. As Díaz mentioned at a recent talk (Díaz, “Speaking in Tongues” n. pg.), he aims to create characters with no historical authority to state what the past truly was.

His text exhibits dirty language used by most characters while still rendering tenderness to a now more complex narrative. The coarse language fragments the text as the nation’s population state of identity currently is. Also, it is impossible not to rely on a violent language to describe how, for example, a pig ate the face of an eight-year-old child from el campo. This cruel and disgusting tragedy is symbolic to the rest of the characters’ emotional health. As the chapter on his life from la capital to el campo is titled, this novel is about a long wait to be repaired, holding on, “Aguantando.” Each character has a reason to be angry with life, but as the narrator indicates, “Anger has a way of returning ... a whirlwind, a comet, a war” (Díaz 206-207). In *Drown*, the relationship of father and son is based on the figurative

THE DOMINICAN DIÁSPORA: REDEFINING NATIONAL ICONS

understanding dictated by society, but their interaction is also one of "cómplices-enemigos." This tension does not cease becoming representative of one about power relations of any State.

By relying on the official history and retelling the Trujillo's saga, in their own way, Díaz and Rodríguez are able to stop a vicious cycle with the past. They articulate how the Dominican identity is based on primary oppositions. These works clearly reinterpret the Dominican cultural and historical past in order to build a Dominican-American identity that space or place does not limit. In order to achieve this Dominican and American identity, the diáspora history must be transformed and recreated many more times. The reconstruction process occurs both from the native land and the foreign (new home) land. The Dominican-American will fluctuate between the new Anglo culture and the Caribbean sounds trying to resemble that 1.5 generation of Dominicans and Americans without demarcating a piece of land as home, but the space in which cultures may flow.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Arneus, Alejandro. Freddy Rodríguez: In This House, Trujillo Is Chief! New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Jersey City Museum, 1999.
2. Balaguer, José Joaquín. La isla al revés: Haití y el destino dominicano. Santo Domingo, RD: Editora Corripio, 1998.
3. Bakhtin, M. M. "Discourse in the Novel." Modern Literary Theory: A Reader, 3rd edition. Ed. Philip Rice & Patricia Waugh. New York: Arnold Publishers, 1996.
4. Bischoff, Dan. "Loathsome Glory: Exhibit Recalls Dominican Dictator." The Star Ledger 19 December 1999, sec. 4: 4.
5. Capellán, Tony. Interview conducted by Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé and Tony de Molla. 1 August 2000.
6. Danticat, Edwidge. The Farming of Bones. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.
7. Derby, Lauren. "Haitians, Magic, and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900 to 1937." Comparative Study of Society and History (V. 36, July 1994), pp. 488-526.
8. Díaz, Junot. Drown. NJ: Riverhead Books, 1997.
- . "Speaking in Tongues: Latin Authors Write the City." Fordham University. New York, 11 April 2001.
9. Fanon, Frantz. Black Skin, White Masks. Trans. Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press, 1967.
10. Flores, Juan. Divided Borders: Essays on Puerto Rican Identity. Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 1993.
11. Fusco, Coco. English is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas. New York: The New Press, 1995.
12. Hall, Stuart. "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology'." Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Literary Theory: An Introduction. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.
13. Kryzaneck, Michael and Howard Wiarda. The Politics of External Influence in the Dominican

- Republic. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1988.
14. Mann, Thomas. The Magic Mountain. Trans. John E. Woods. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.
 15. Murray, Gerald. "Population Pressure, land, tenure and Voodoo." Ed. Eric B. Boss. Beyond the Myths of Culture: Essays in Cultural Materialism. New York: Academic Press, 1980.
 16. Núñez, Manuel. El ocaso de la nación dominicana. Santo Domingo, RD: Alfa y Omega 1990.
 17. Pérez-Firmat, Gustavo. Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994.
 18. Prestol Castillo, Freddy. El Masacre se pasa a pie. Santo Domingo, RD: Taller, 1991.
 19. Price-Mars, Jean. Ainsi Pala L'onclo. Trans. & Intro. Magdaline W. Shannon. Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1983.
 20. Ramos, Jorge. Detrás de la máscara. Miguel Hidalgo, Mexico: Editorial Grijalbo, 1998.
 21. Roorda, Eric Paul. The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945. London: Duke University Press, 1998.
 22. Schrempp, Gregory. "Making/Breaking: Notes on *Writing Culture*." Journal of Folklore Research. (June 1993) pp. 101-107.
 23. Shannon, Magdaline W. Jean Price-Mars, the Haitian Elite and the American Occupation, 1915-1935. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1996.
 24. Smith, Dinita. "The Secret Lives of New York: Exploring the City's Unexamined Worlds." New York (December 11, 1989), pp. 34-41.
 25. Sommer, Doris. One Master for Another: Populism as Patriarchal Rhetoric in Dominican Novels. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983.
 26. Torres-Saillant, Silvio. Caribbean Poetics: Toward an Aesthetic of West Indian Literature. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
 27. Wucker, Michele. Why the Cocks Fight: Dominicans, Haitians, and the Struggle for Hispaniola. New York: Hill and Wang, 1999.
 28. Zentella, Ana Celia. Growing Up Bilingual: Puerto Rican Children in New York. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997.

THE DOMINICAN DIÁSPORA: REDEFINING NATIONAL ICONS

MIGRATION IS INEXTRICABLY associated with the construction of otherness in Black texts of the early twentieth century, especially the work of Eric Derwent Walrond (1898 -1966), one of the earliest literary historians of the Diaspora. Among these writers, Walrond achieves the most extensive mapping of diasporic landscapes, especially in his critically acclaimed *Tropic Death* (1926).¹ Both his fictional and non-fictional texts address place of origin, language, and customs, in addition to ethnicity, as consistent markers of alterity. In respect of these concerns, Walrond's sojourn in colony and metropolis served as a model for his fictions, having himself experienced Barbados as "mud-head," Panama as "chombo," the U.S. as "nigger," and "monkey chaser," and the U.K. as "darkey."² Walrond offers his experience of Harlem as an example of his own familiarity with otherness:

I went to New York. I settled in the Harlem Negro quarter. I found the community fairly evenly dominated by Southern Negroes and West Indian emigrants. A wide cleavage existed between the two groups. The West Indian with his Scottish, Irish or Devonshire accent, was to the native Black who has still retained a measure of his African folk-culture, uproariously funny. He was joked on street corners, burlesqued on the stage and discriminated against in business and social life. His pride in his British heritage and lack of racial consciousness were contemptuously put down to "airs."³

In the tales, published between 1952 and 1957 when he was a voluntary patient at the Roundway Psychiatric Hospital in England, Walrond reimagines these colonial and metropolitan landscapes retrospectively as sites of fragmentation, placelessness and otherness. These texts incorporate and yet transcend the seminal paradigm of Fanon and other intellectuals, which proposes that Europeans assign the status of "other" to non-Europeans, primarily on the basis of skin color, to suggest additional bases for the construction of otherness. In assigning this status, Fanon argues, Europeans solidify their own self-imposed ranking at the pinnacle of some cultural hierarchy.⁴ This is consistent with the notion - as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998) put it, that the self-identity of the colonizing subject is inextricable from the altered of colonized others" (12). It is through "othering" that both identities are constructed. In traditional colonial discourse this process of identity formation has as its corollary a series of binary oppositions predicated on those very assumptions of cultural superiority and inferiority: Self/other, civilized/barbarian, master/servant, to name a few. Additionally, as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin contend, such theorizing asserts the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view.

MIGRATING TO OTHERNESS IN THE LATE FICTION OF ERIC WALROND

Walrond engages more modern constructs of identity in his later and less known fiction to problematise this paradigm. In these his final narratives, Eric Walrond looks inward to reinscribe and destabilize traditional paradigms based on race. His settings for the most part are new "diasporas" occasioned by social and economic realities of the early decades of the twentieth century, with their attendant anxieties and new binaries. Walrond proposes that the movement between islands and territories replicated those images and representations that characterized colonial discourse, specifically the theorizing about the relationships between the center and the periphery, ultimately resulting in the interchange of denigratory and essentialist constructs of identity among diasporic peoples themselves.

In some ways the Roundway narratives suggest a contracting rather than an expanding vision; social realism is the primary mode in these fictions; the experiments with the gothic and naturalist modes that characterize *Tropic Death* are replaced by a more direct engagement with the essentialist and stereotypical racial and ethnic images and representations. This focus is not entirely new in Walrond's work, however. "The Yellow One," "The Wharf Rats," "The Palm Porch" - all stories from *Tropic Death* and the title story from that collection, all delineate processes of othering within diasporic communities, and for the most part, as in the Roundway pieces, their destructive personal and social outcomes. As in the earlier collection, at times the specificity of Walrond's inscription of the caste and color differences of his characters and of the resulting tensions implicates him in the ideology of his times.

These social tensions constitute Walrond's main focus in the Roundway tales. For example, "The Coolie's Wedding," (1953) set in British Guiana, thematizes fragmentation, placelessness and racial antipathy among diasporic peoples. A Hindu's lack of accommodation in Caribbean society is emblemized by his lodgement in the cellar beneath the young protagonist's house where he has sought refuge in retreat from the plantation world. The failure of the Hindu community's efforts at cultural assimilation is indicated by the collapse of the vehicle conveying a bridal party to the Christian wedding, and by the objectification of this group through the anthropological gaze of the Afro-Guyanese characters, in particular, a servant girl. Through this gaze, the efforts at acculturation are denigrated as grotesque mimicry, in the most conventional connotation of that term.

"A Piece of Hard Tack" (1953) offers very similar paradigms of inter and intra-racial antipathy in yet another Guyanese setting. Here the generosity and openness of an empathetic observer towards Amerindian "bucks" are subverted by the hostility

initiated by one equally disenfranchised and marginalized. Again the anthropological gaze is extended, this time to a community "othered" as an inferior, unprogressive and superstitious race. That this group, endures even more lacerating forms of exile and fragmentation in this Caribbean setting despite its status as an indigenous people, is the occasion for Walrond's subtle but trenchant irony. That in both stories it is Afro-Guyanese characters who adopt and transfer the colonialist constructs of identity to other subject peoples is evidence of the balance that Walrond brings to his discourse.

This theme of fissure among diasporic peoples of different races, ethnicity and "nationalities" extends to "Bliss" (1953), "The Loan" (1953), "The Two Sisters" (1953), and "Wind in the Palms" (1954). "Bliss" tells the story of the difficulties of social adjustment and self-acceptance encountered by a protagonist whose father is of "Spanish Indian admixture." In "The Loan," conflict is precipitated by a "Chombo" protagonist's temerity in transgressing social boundaries to confront a "Spaniard" (native Panamanian) publicly about the repayment of a loan. In the understated manner of these late tales, Walrond suggests how the "Chombo" participates in that ideology by which he is himself demonized and designated "other." In "The Two Sisters" and "Success Story," a Black Barbadian woman transgresses social and familial codes by marrying a mulatto man from "Mudhead" country. The protagonist of "The Wind in the Palms," a man of mixed ancestry, is beset and fragmented by racial anxieties, and self-denial until his incipient growth towards self-acceptance. Coolie is the "dougla" product of an African and East Indian union whose social suppression of his mother signals his own partial self-erasure :

From his East Indian father whom he'd never known Coolie had derived certain physical attributes of which he was rather proud. Beneath the velvet darkness of his skin was a faint trace of yellow: But if Coolie's bronze skin and soft wavy hair set him apart from his mother's people, he was still not quite on a par with a "brown man" with his mixture of European blood. And so to secure admission to the society of "brown men" and their women-folk among Colon's immigrants Coolie had perforce to fall back upon the line of his nose bridge. It was so fine and delicate a line, despite the horsey width of the nostrils, and the degree of respect which it could command was potentially so great that Coolie had come to look upon it as his chief asset when the time came for him to marry.... "No, me son, all me picknee dem must 'ave me own-a-nose, an' de gal me teck to de alter she no must bring dat nose?"

MIGRATING TO OTHERNESS IN THE LATE FICTION OF ERIC WALROND

As in this tale, Walrond's subtle narrative strategies function throughout the collection to undermine these essentialist constructs of racial identity and the complementary binary opposites that dominate the colonial discourse, delimiting self-representations. Many of these tales such as "A Piece of Hard Tack" and "The Coolie's Wedding" employ detached narrators through whom the author communicates his judgement of these racial antagonisms and anxieties. The autobiographical flavor of the stories suggests the impact the author's own experience of racial antipathy within Caribbean landscapes and the popular representations of race and nationalities may have had on young Walrond.⁵

"A Piece of Hard Tack" is yet another of Walrond's narrative that subverts the inherited images of subject groups, this time the "aborigine bucks" in a British Guiana setting. In this tale, Walrond subtly undercuts the claims and constructs of the othering character as he does throughout these fictions.

The modes of reference and representation that typify the exchanges in these tales, in the words of Ashcroft (1998), "emerged from a colonial discourse that privileged the idea of racial purity and justified racial discrimination by employing the quasi-scientific precursors of physical anthropology to create a complex and largely fictional taxonomy of racial admixtures" (136). The resilience of such modes of address therefore is a concession to pejorative colonial constructs of identity by which all subject or former subject peoples are denigrated. As demonstrated in the Roundway narratives, particularly those set in the Caribbean, this aesthetic is implicated in the resilience of a colonial taxonomy that arranges various racial groups and mixtures in some hierarchy.

Walrond's interrogation of this ideology gestures towards more contemporary notions of identity formation, subverting ideas of self / other dialectic as theorized in traditional colonial discourse. His fiction contests essentialist notions that assume that specific groups or categories of persons possess features exclusive to all members of those categories which distinguish them from others. In modern times, these suppositions have been displaced by more fluid theories that emphasize hybridity and transculturation. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, hybridity refers to the creation of transcultural forms within contact zones created by colonization (118-121). New synergies arise in the interchange between cultures in where cultural influences are not always or only in the direction of colonizer to colonized. In such circumstances as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin referring to Bhabha (1974) observe, the claims of cultural purity and the self / other binaries become untenable. This is the light in which the social and personal conflicts found in the

late stories, for example, "Wind in the Palms," "A Piece of Hard Tack," and "The Coolie's Wedding," especially should be read.

As is the case with *Tropic Death*, Walrond's engagement with such important social issues suggests a divergence from a Harlem aesthetic that situated him in opposition to W.E. B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey on the question of the social utility of art, and the obligations of the Black artist to his community. Both race leaders insisted on the importance of writing the race in a manner beneficial to its image and its progress, while Walrond contended that the quality of Black writing would only be compromised by its capitulation to "propaganda." Subsequently, Du Bois would abandon the Harlem movement when it appeared to jettison this social agenda,⁶ and Garvey⁷ would vilify those texts - *Tropic Death* included, that appeared to represent Black life in a less than complimentary light, perpetuating historical stereotypes. Yet it is misleading to suggest a single, simple aesthetic at work in Walrond's texts, for despite the more explicit reassertions of "artistic freedom," articulated especially in *Negro World* and other publications,⁸ throughout Walrond's texts, and especially in the later fiction, there is a subtle destabilizing of colonial hegemony, and an interrogation of its corrosive and disabling constructs. Rejection of otherness in all its guises and variations becomes the nucleus of an philosophy that values racial and social inclusiveness and cohesion, a vision that transcends the Pan-Africanist philosophy he had once shared with Marcus Garvey.

More traditional paradigms of otherness are also inscribed in these narratives, especially those set in England during the second world war. These tales depict Europeans in relationships of dominance and superciliousness involving characters of all races and racial mixtures who are occasionally "exoticized," as the narrator-protagonist of "Strange Incident" (1956) observes: "Even as transient non-whites of whatever variety - colonial war workers, English mulatto evacuees or West Indians in the R.A.F. were such a novelty I had a feeling that when they did put in an occasional appearance they possessed for the local folk all the interest of an exotic, war-time phenomenon" (44).

Chombo, mulatto, nigger, mestizo, dougla, buck, Bush Negro, darkey; the racial taxonomy of the times influences the representations and self-representations of diasporic groups in the Roundway narratives. Walrond asserts that the subversive and creative potential of the "contact zones" is compromised and undermined by the influence of a derogatory colonial discourse, and its underlying assumptions. Such constructs among peoples with a common experience of exploitation, minimize the opportunity for genuine intercourse and negotiation, and the

MIGRATING TO OTHERNESS IN THE LATE FICTION OF ERIC WALROND

development of vibrant communities. Walrond would appear to propose a redefinition and reconstitution of the diasporic self by subject peoples themselves, as counter-discourse to colonial ideologies which, acknowledging and accepting diversity and difference, would represent the basis for the construction of such communities.

The Roundway tales also reinforce the impression of an ambivalent relationship between Walrond and those communities he had abandoned fifty years earlier, an impression created throughout *Tropic Death* where diasporic predicaments are exacerbated by natural as much as by social realities. Even at this stage Walrond's imagination never claims England as home, despite the tenor of those late political pieces which sometimes characterize the author as a bitterly disillusioned colonial. On the other hand, in the Roundway pieces Walrond inscribes the natural landscapes of the Caribbean as significantly more paradisaical than he does in *Tropic Death*⁹ to emblemize the potential to be squandered through antagonistic interaction associated with colonial discourse.

The Roundway collection reveals Eric Walrond transcending the Pan-Africanist creed he once shared with Marcus Garvey to articulate an even more inclusive vision. The common experience of diaspora and colonialism rather than simple racial affinity is proposed as the point of convergence for Black Atlantic peoples, even as Walrond locates the obstacles to the achievement of cultural diversity within cohesiveness, and to the possibility of self-reconstitution and the development of a new society, within the resilience of an insidious discourse.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Tropic Death. New York: Boni & Liveright, 1926. Contains ten short stories set in the then British West Indies, especially Barbados, where Walrond spent a few years - the exact number is uncertain- before traveling to Panama around 1910. The publication of this text was hailed as one of the highlights of the Harlem or Negro Renaissance in which Walrond played a significant role as writer and literary editor of Marcus Garvey's Negro World. Largely on the strength of this text, Walrond was awarded the Guggenheim prize for 1929. The promised texts were never published.
2. "Mud-head." A derogatory term for Guyanese. Born of Barbadian parents (and not, as many critics allege, of a Barbadian mother and a Guyanese father), Walrond grew up in Georgetown, Demerara which is known for its low lying coastal zones, its dikes and its equatorial climate. "Monkey-chaser." A pejorative term used by African Americans to characterize Black West Indians during the early years of Caribbean migration to the U.S. "Combo." or "chumbo." A derogatory term for Black West Indians in Hispanic countries.
3. "White Man, What Now?." Spectator (April 5, 1935): 562
4. Black Skin, White Masks. (New York: Grove Press, 1967):93).
5. The protagonist of "A Piece of Hard Tack," and the mother figures of "The Coolie's Wedding" and "The Servant Girl" recall Ruth Walrond, Eric's mother, who relocated from Barbados to British Guiana after marriage. None of the stories is closer to the facts of Walrond's experience than "Two Sisters" and "Success Story," although from all evidence William Walrond was born in Barbados. The boys in all the stories are clearly drawn on Eric Walrond himself.
6. See for example, David Levering Lewis, W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century. (New York: Henry Holt, 2000) 153-182.
7. See Robert A. Hill, ed. The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, vol. vii (Berkeley: UCLA Press, 1983): 239
8. See, for example, "Developed and Undeveloped Negro Literature: Writers Desert Great Field of Folk-Life for Propagandism." The Dearborn Independent (May 13 1922): 12
9. See Carl A. Wade, "African American Aesthetic and the Short Fiction of Eric Walrond: Tropic Death and the Harlem Renaissance." CLA Journal XL11, 41, 1999, 417:422.

INTUITIVENESS IS SOMETHING that has always been associated with artistic production. What I shall attempt to do is expose the notion of intuition to a different light to that we are accustomed. Even though the Caribbean has sizable populations of peoples of African and East Indian descent the traditions of thought from these two cultures have remained marginalized in Caribbean tertiary institutions, in spite of post-colonial postures to the contrary. In other words, bodies have been transported but the insights of their pre-colonial heritage are still treated with great suspicion and skepticism. The light that I want to use as illumination for my reflections on intuition and its importance to art and art criticism will be borrowed from those marginalized traditions of knowledge, specifically from the science of Yoga, African visual traditions, and from European gestalt theories.

Let me first define what I mean by intuition. Modern European scientific tradition, which has as the corner stone of its practice rational skepticism, tends to restrict intuition to sense perception, and, when it operates in higher registers, to uncontrollable unreliable hunches, gut feelings, or instinct. Understandably, this scientific tradition marginalizes any knowledge source that has relied on intuitive processes or has investigated them to reaches it does not comprehend. In its equation of cognition it continues to demean sense perception as simply a source of raw material for the rational faculties, to which all cognitive processes are assimilated, and not as a mental terrain of concept formation. Its antipathy to both lower and higher intuitive processes places it at loggerheads with Eastern traditions of knowledge, which, while giving rationalism and skepticism a place, nevertheless place a higher value on intuitive processes and are certain that they can be highly developed.

According to these traditions intuition can be defined as knowledge by direct perception, by being one with, by identity. It secretly directs and informs all other forms of knowing. Therefore Aurobindo states,

The power of intuition acts in us at present for the most part in a covert manner, secret and involved in or mostly veiled by the action of the reason and normal intelligence, so far as it emerges into a clear separate action, it is still occasional, partial, fragmentary and of intermittent character.
(Aurobindo, 1990).

The disciplines that powerfully facilitate the development of intuition are the arts. On this Aurobindo was unequivocal.

Art . . . is suggestive, and the intellect habituated to the appreciation of art is quick to catch suggestions, mastering not only, as the scientific mind does, that which is positive and on the surface, but

PONDERING THE ROLE OF INTUITION IN CARIBBEAN AESTHETICS

that which leads to ever fresh widening and subtilising of knowledge and opens a door into the deeper secrets of inner nature where the positive instruments of science cannot take the depth or measure. This supreme intellectual value of Art has never been sufficiently recognised. (Aurobindo, 1922)

However, the question is why do we need to focus more on the development of our intuitive faculties at this time? I will present below two reasons, one drawn from Indian traditional perspectives on historical cycles with specific reference to our times, the other from critical observations of developments in Western culture in the last century.

In contrast to mainstream 'Western' notions of history, which conceive of civilization as developing from technologically and scientifically primitive periods to the sophistication of the modern, the Indian tradition conceives of planetary evolution as affected through a spiral of cycles called Yugas. Within the ascending and descending periods of these cycles there are four phases, also called Yugas, each of which is characterized by generalization of certain kinds of knowledge. Two points made by Swami Sri Yukteswar in *The Holy Science* (1971, however, first published in 1894) are important to this paper. He states that we are in an ascending arc of the evolutionary spiral, and he describes one of the key characteristics of Dwapara Yuga, the phase we are currently in, as one in which "the human intellect can comprehend the fine matters or electricities and their attributes which are the creating principles of the external world." Dwapara Yuga is the second phase in ascending order, or third in descending, of that evolutionary spiral. According to Sri Yukteswar then, in this phase a more comprehensive knowledge of the subtle electrical sub-atomic forces that structure phenomenal reality will be available to humanity. That knowledge will make clearer, is beginning to make clear, the relationship of mind to matter and will see an increase in development of our intuitive faculties. The implication of the fact that we have recently entered this phase is that there is a mixture of, indeed a tussle between, the socio-cultural formulas of the preceding phase with those pertinent to the emergent "new" one.

Integral to this seething period of change is the massive investment in lifelike representation and, in contrast, the meager value given to its counter tendencies in visual media and practices. While all the arts are important to the development of our intuitive sense, the scale of the problem created by visual mass media and the isomorphic relation they have to the real environment, to the issue of its tendency to absorb us in appearances, makes visual manipulative development critical to education now. The relationship of the "primitive" traditions of visual

representation to their more technologically sophisticated photographic counterparts and their importance to our modern situation was not lost to some observers. Contemporary societies face formidable cultural challenges resulting from the widespread consumption of photographic imagery. The latter is perhaps both a symptom and sustainer of materialistic tendencies. The situation has provoked from Rudolf Arnheim the following observation on the problems inherent in photographic representation.

There is a curious ambiguity in the striving towards lifelikeness. While it leads away from convention, from simplified, petrified generalities to the freshness, complexity, and concreteness of direct experience, it also induces the mind to lose itself in the intricacies of the particular and thereby distracts it from active understanding and participation, which must be based on the grasp of generalities. Plato first warned us of this danger, and thinkers and artists have been aware of it ever since, . . . (Arnheim, 1966).

There is an irony here. Plato, in order to warn his fellow Athenians and Greeks of their dangerous distracting preoccupation with surface reality, made his critique by adopting a philosophic position based on his understanding of African aesthetic norms of Egypt; or at least so some, quite rightly I think, would contend. In this latter day the critique and counter balance of the same preoccupation was derived again from African sources, only this time around West African ones. Some would argue that this is really indicative of the stability and continuity of ideas across Africa, from East to West and past to present. What the Cubists realized through their deconstruction of realistic appearances, is a knowledge we see inherent in Ancient African Egyptian culture - hieroglyphic writing could not have emerged without it - and in the West African cultures that stimulated 20th century European artists to review their investment in "realism." I would go further, postmodern philosophical positions that speak so much about the constructed nature of identity are really an example of verbal philosophers catching up with visual ones. Apart from these positions being part of a general African aesthetic, they were also thoroughly explored in India where skepticism towards the reality of phenomenal appearances was entrenched in almost all its pre-Islamic philosophies, Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist. It is also not surprising that in a racially mixed and multiethnic society like India, where the doctrine of rebirth has been the norm, that the constructed nature of identity was thrashed out seasons ago, and not just within intellectualist parameters, but were complemented by profoundly self-transformative practices subsumed under the term "Yoga."

PONDERING THE ROLE OF INTUITION IN CARIBBEAN AESTHETICS

Be that as it may, the Caribbean, Africa, India, where ever we may be, all can be, and are now, as subject as our European selves to the distractions inherent in photography or life-like representations. However, there was something, a complex of attitudes or characteristics, in their cultural traditions that restrained these non-Western cultures from investing heavily in the kind of extreme imitation of appearances that became the norm in Europe. Reflecting on the current situation Arnheim was forced to ask whether modern man with all his technological progress is in any more ready contact with deeper realities. To which he answers:

The addicts of photography seem highly distracted. They think less well. Their ever stimulated curiosity makes them lose themselves in the capillaries of the particular rather than move on the mainstream of life. Photographic information, potentially a magnificent source of knowledge, seems to serve as a powerful distraction from insight. The mere exposure to the visible surface of the world will not arouse ideas unless the spectacle is approached with ideas ready to be stirred up.
(Arnheim, 1966)

At the heart of the modern dilemma delivered to us so clearly by Arnheim is an insufficient supply and inadequate generalization of the contemplative attitude and a limited development of our intuitive critical and creative skills, and these are precisely the mental skills that will be required of us the deeper we move into Sri Yuktेशwar's Dwapara Yuga.

We need a general focus on the training of people in the contemplation of form, natural and manmade, at the basic perceptual levels and the subtle imaginative ones, so that they would be less susceptible to the seductiveness of phenomenal reality and life-like representation of it. The continuous distracting onslaught of moving images, whether in virtual or 'real' visual form, or when retrieved to consciousness by verbalization, require as a stabilizing counter the moment of stillness, immobility, and abstraction provided by the more technologically 'primitive' traditions of visual art. These, in conceptual or abstract forms, deconstruct reality at the perceptual, or lower intuitive level, and in facilitating rumination by their unchanging aspect, stimulate the emergence of ideas latent within ourselves; in a word they encourage contemplation. Visual art criticism and artistic production are decidedly the disciplines where this kind of knowledge and skill is developed: not exclusively, but their role is pivotal to counter the influence of the negative effects of the excessive consumption of photographic representation which reinforces a preoccupation with superficial experience, with titillation. We may experience all manner of fantastic things in the virtual reality chambers of Star Ship Earth, if they don't awaken within us some hint of our untrammelled being, of inner realities of personal self and environment, then

it is simply one more block in our tower of Babel and not a link in the chain that connects us to Deep Being.

We cannot look forward to any diminution in the pervasive use and consumption of virtual-reality representation in the near future. And, despite Arnheim's concern about photographs crowding out words in books, I think he would be the last to underrate the value of a solid visual education, given the general thesis of his text *Visual Thinking*. A redefined visual art education is critical to the development of our intuitive faculties and understanding, will foster more contemplative attitudes, will make for more meaningful reading, and will, I contend, lead us to deeper living. Anticipating the dilemma that Arnheim saw swelling around him, and sensitive I am sure to the phase of change that Sri Yukteshwar speaks of, Rishi Aurobindo made the following observation:

It is more and more perceived that knowledge of phenomena increases, but knowledge of reality escapes this laborious process. A time must come, is already coming, when the mind perceives the necessity of calling to its aid and developing fully the intuition and all the great range of powers that lie behind our vague use of the word and uncertain perception of its significance. In the end it must discover that these powers can not only aid and complete but even replace its own [the rational intellect's] proper action. (Aurobindo, 1990)

The current despair over poor reading skills tends to provoke reaction in the form of a call for more reading of books and more school time for verbal language disciplines. However legitimate those concerns may be they perpetuate the habit, powerfully entrenched in education, of conflating verbal dexterity with thinking, and more problematically with creative or productive thinking, and even more profoundly erroneous, with connection to deeper vital being. Excessive emphasis on verbiage - that is what words really amount to when the ideas behind them are shallowly digested, not vitally felt - is no solution to the widening void of meaning we feel engendered by the centrifugal forces of the whirling virtual reality ride we boarded in 15th century Europe. Neither does it offer stability and security in a situation where migration has been a central factor in the realization of how shallowly founded an assemblage of borrowed parts identity is, until it is connected to some deeper tract of validation in our being. Like it or not we have to return to a situation similar to the hieroglyphic one where there is a greater intimacy between vision and word, intuitive perception, comprehension, and expression. One of our

PONDERING THE ROLE OF INTUITION IN CARIBBEAN AESTHETICS

repeated failings as contemporary societies has been our inability to recognize that our older traditions of visual art practice incorporate tendencies that are critical to the proper assimilation of ideas that run counter to those of their virtual-reality limb: tendencies toward abstraction and conceptual play, tendencies that take up the body, mind, vision and word, person and perceived world into a circuit of dynamic intuitive cognition. This cannot be accomplished within the configuration of disciplines that we have today. Their reconfiguration, incorporating a deeper understanding of intuitive processes and the insights that have transformed visual arts in the last century, with softer boundaries and diminished egotism, should replace the disciplinary paradigms we currently use. If we don't I fear we will be stuck in the frustrating situation of stifling hierarchies that currently beset us.

It should be clear that I believe it is possible to generalize a more contemplative and intuitive attitude, that it is possible to make them more the norm than the exception. Aspects of African and Asian cultures convince me not only that it is possible to extend contemplative and intuitive attitudes to the humblest of social context. One could not want a better example of that kind of extension than Dogon society, with its profound knowledge of astronomy and its sense of astronomy's connection to the profound questions of existence. Similar examples can be found elsewhere, where the use and comprehension of conceptual visual form is not the privilege of just an elevated few. The overlap and impact of such localized use of visual language with and on the global context and visa versa, and the heightened importance given to personal realization and expression, have made the meaning of visual images more fluid, decidedly more elusive to restricted conventions of interpretation. The situation demands the cultivation of deeper reaches of intuition. The art critic and the discipline of art criticism functions as an important mediator in this instance, and it is in the person of the art critic and the discipline of art criticism that deeper intuitive analytical skills can be honed. However, society is generally afraid and reluctant to entertain the position I am advancing here. Most orthodox educators will feel that I am handing society a ticket to a limbo of premodern illiteracy and groundless mysticism. I, of course, don't think so. A decrease in verbosity need not be a symptom of illiteracy; it may instead be evidence of deeper command of thought and more potent use of word. And a consciousness adaptive and receptive to more fluid contexts of meaning need not be symptomatic of shallowness, but may be indicative that its subject is more aware of the universal and specific, global and local, aspects of meaning in a work, and of the connection between the two. In effect, the person with deepened development of intuition will be less insecure amidst the currents of images and ideas that swirl around him or her. They would have found a more solid ground of meaning, which transcends specific conventions of interpretation even while shining through them.

What are some of the obstacles hindering or deflecting the development of intuition? Aurobindo gives us a broad idea of them.

The mental powers immediately proceed to lay hold on these things [intuitive insights] and manipulate them or utilize them for our mental or vital purposes, to adopt them to the forms of the inferior knowledge to coat them up or infiltrate them with the mental stuff and suggestion, often altering their truth in the process and always limiting their potential force for enlightenment by these accretions and by this subdual to the exigencies of the inferior agent, *and almost always they make too little or too much of them, too little by not allowing them time to settle and extend their full power of illumination, too much by insisting on them or on the form into which the mentality cast them to the exclusion of the larger truth that a more consistent use of the intuitive faculty might have given* (italics mine). (Aurobindo, 1990)

How has this occurred in the history and tendencies of art criticism? The modern ego of art seems the main culprit here even in postmodern trappings. It appropriates endlessly to sustain its claims of progress, keeping art criticism at the lower and higher reaches distracted with the discipline's ego postures. All claims to have broken or blurred boundaries become dubious as our critical gaze, confined to "fine art" and fixed on designated boundary breaking artist, reinforces the distinction that was supposedly eroded. Avant-garde projects to reconnect art with every day life turn quickly into modernist tactics for reclaiming hierarchy and distance. Gita Kapur (1982) wiser after much enthusiasm for avant-garde gestures and manifestos, recommended the example of the Indian *silpin* - their term for the artist craftsman - as perhaps more realistic an investment in social transformation through art. We need to turn our gaze on the less dramatic transformers of convention. If in the lower reaches of our visual education this means taking on board the understanding advanced by gestalt psychologists that concept formation takes place in perception, requiring therefore the reconfiguration of disciplinary boundaries to incorporate the knowledge possessed by the visual arts, then at the higher reaches it means acknowledging in practice that the boundaries have changed by looking beyond "fine art" to how visual creators are shaping everyday contexts, not just the rarified ones of galleries. It also means that we must return to a deeper contemplation and examination of the works of visual artist to ascertain their depth of intuitive insight. The depths indicated by Aurobindo. Two examples of that kind of insight are available to me, one personal and the other not.

First, the personal one. There is a painting of mine, *Paradise with L'Ouverture*, that is a profound response to an identity problem I was having at the time it was painted.

PONDERING THE ROLE OF INTUITION IN CARIBBEAN AESTHETICS

Though at the time I did not realize how profound a response, indeed that it was a response. As a Caribbean student of African descent one's self-esteem received paltry support from art history text or in general from history text. According to most of the text available to me at the time, and certainly according to all the mainstream text, Africa clearly had contributed very little to world civilization. None of the art history books gave the impression that Egypt was even in Africa, far less that ancient Egypt could be a black African culture. One got the impression that it was Middle Eastern and that you were reading about a Semitic culture. While these questions about African histories weighed on me I produced *Paradise with L'Ouverture*, which contains two African figures, a male and a female, against a landscape background that has three hill-pyramids. The three hill-pyramids were meant to suggest both the east coast of Barbados and the three pyramids of Giza. Much of my reading of esoteric literature had convinced me that ancient Egypt had profound spiritual knowledge to which the pyramids related, but I had no notion then of Egypt as an African culture. The painting clearly suggested otherwise. My intuition responding to my profound crisis of self-esteem had connected me to a source of insight about my African heritage that was not available conventionally.

The other example is from the works of Picasso, in particular those in which he returns to a Greco-Mediterranean past, especially his Minotaur series. Prior to these works Picasso traversed the various phases through which he came to understand the formal principles of African art: the so called Negro Phase, in which he understood nothing of the principles which informed African sculpture; the analytical and synthetic phases through which he, with Braque, elaborated those principles to himself and his culture; and afterwards the phase in which he played with those principles with great fluency, characterized by such works as *Three Musicians*, *Baboon and Young* and so on. We tend to think that that's where Picasso's communication with or about African culture ends. My contention is that his intuitions about African culture did not end with his grasp of the formal principles of African aesthetics. Other levels of information about African culture continued to be elaborated through his Greco-Mediterranean and Minotaur series; once, as Aurobindo said, we do not insist too much on "the form into which the mentality cast them to the exclusion of the larger truth that a more consistent use of the intuitive faculty might have given."

Picasso's Minotaur character is certainly an occasion for his reflection on masculine sexuality and on himself, but it too has ancient connections to Egypt, and through Egypt to Africa generally. The Greek story of king Minos and of the Minotaur is held by some scholars to be mythological indications of the colonization of Greece by Egypt (Bernal).

Indeed the ancient Egyptian deity Min is a bull god associated with fertility. Though his counterpart in Greek mythology is held to be Pan, the fact that Minos is associated with a bull on one hand and with a deity symbolized by a ram on the other can be explained by the fusing of the Egyptian deities Min (bull) and Amon (ram) in the 11th century BC. In Volume II of his *Black Athena* (1991) Martin Bernal has quite persuasively explored the relationship of Cretan/Greek and Egyptian bull cults, and Pharaohs and Egyptian colonization of Crete to each other.

West African elucidations of the same complex of ideas are available to us via 20th century African scholars like Lucas (1970) and through the anthropological studies of Marcel Griaule. In his *Conversations with Ogotemmél* (1965), intrigued by the cosmological information he had been given by the old sage, Griaule came to realize the correspondence of Dogon ideas to Greco-European myths embodied in the Zodiac. However, they throw some light on the ram bull deity conflation.

The ram with the calabash-sun on its head, alternating with a bull similarly equipped, had excited his curiosity. Rams with spheres on their heads carved on the rocks of North Africa had already caused much ink to flow; some said they came from Egypt, others said it was the other way around. Many had identified the circle between the horns with the sun. All these speculations, which never got beyond the stage of hypothesis, were suddenly illuminated by a new light coming from regions whose contribution to the problem could not have been foreseen. . . .

In the whole complex pattern the idea of the Zodiac was only one item in a thousand, but there was something exciting about it. Had the Africans their own coherent explanation of the symbol of the Zodiac, whereas the Mediterranean peoples had only the most childish notions about it? (Griaule, 1965)

Griaule ironically is in a position similar to Plato. His encounter with African culture made him wonder whether his African sources had access to profounder and more coherent explanations of European myths than he did. Plato was more certain that they did. What cannot escape us in the above quotation is the very overlap of ram and bull symbols in Dogon mythology similar to that spoken of by Bernal. It seems quite plausible that Picasso in his contemplation of African sculptural forms perhaps intuited more about African culture than we thought or would like to admit.

What this means is that art criticism must look more closely at the works of artists. We must not be carried away by fads and fashions that proliferate in the name of boundary pushing. I am well aware that at the very least I am asking critics to step out of the

sociological enclosures preferred today into hermeneutic and psychological ones, or better yet to a reincorporation of them into the critical process. The most risky step however, is into the parapsychological field, which attempts to study intuitive processes objectively and to the depths of Eastern traditions. I do not know what lies in that path. However, Caribbean critics should not ignore it but should be open to it despite mainstream academic prejudices that would keep it marginalized, making sure that when we do examine it we equip ourselves with the compasses of its Western, African, and Eastern forms.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Arnheim, R. (1966). *Toward a Psychology of Art*. Berkley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.
- . (1969). *Visual Thinking*. Berkley and Los Angeles. University of California Press.
2. Bernal, M. (1991), *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* Vol. II. New Brunswick, New Jersey. Rutgers University Press.
3. Diop, C. (1991). *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology*. Chicago Lawrence Hill Books.
4. Ghose, A. (1921). *The National Value of Art*. Pondicherry. Aurobindo Ashram.
- . (1990). *The Synthesis of Yoga*. Pondicherry. Aurobindo Ashram.
5. Griaule, M. (1965) *Conversations with Ogotemmêli: An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas*. London. Oxford University Press.
6. Lucas, O. (1970). *Religions in West Africa and Ancient Egypt*. Apapa. Nigerian National Press.
7. Kapur, G. (1982). Changing Self-Image Of The Indian Artist in *The Visva Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. 46, number 1, 2, 3, and 4. Bolpur, Piyushkanti Dasgupta.
8. Yogananda, P. (1995). *God Talks with Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita: Royal Science of God-Realization*. Los Angeles. Self-Realization Fellowship
9. Sri Yuktेशwar. *The Holy Science*. Los Angeles. Self-Realization Fellowship.

IN THE 1960S at the height of revolutionary social movements throughout the world there emerged in Latin America and the Caribbean a group of filmmakers whose work, inspired by political change was eventually accompanied by a self-reflexive analysis of their struggles. What would come to be known as Third Cinema can therefore be examined not only through film but also through the essays, manifestoes and declarations of the filmmakers. Much of the acclaim for the idea of a Third cinema is given to Argentinians Fernando Solanas and Octavio Gettino who first published their views in their essay "Towards a Third Cinema" but equally important are the contributions made by the Cubans Julio Garcia Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema", Tomas Alea "The Viewer's Dialectic" and Bolivian Jorge Sanjines "Problems of Form and Content in Revolutionary Cinema".¹ While not exhausting the literary output of Third Cinema these documents represent major theoretical positions of the movement which challenges by its articulation an international system of aesthetics that marginalizes art from the so-called "Third World".

The importance of examining texts and manifestoes of cultural practitioners in whose geographical proximity we are located, whose histories of colonialism we share and whose artists face similar struggles as national cultures adopt differing political strategies and trajectories cannot be stressed enough. My interest is in examining the ideas that emerged from the experience of a revolutionary process in the region and to gauge the usefulness of its methods for contemporary practice and thought. I will argue that Third Cinema, though making a unique perspective on aesthetic practice in the region, ambiguously proposed an anti-aesthetic while leaving open avenues for the redefinition and/or further development of the idea of the aesthetic.

Manifestoes, ultimately if not always, emerge from passionate practitioners of art dissatisfied with the cultural environment in which they find themselves. Inadvertently, it may be to protest the increasing commodification of work interpreting it as "entertainment" or labor with no direct relation to true political process or it may be designed to affirm a new vision of artistic expression likely to be viewed as a radical departure from traditional practice. In addition, a cinematic movement as part of a culture of the visual may suggest perspectives of critical and social relevance. Solanas and Gettino allude to the impetus of their ideas and their questions regarding the production, distribution and exhibition of films as motivated by:

"the existence of masses in the worldwide revolutionary plane...A new historical situation and a new man born in the process of anti-

REFLECTIONS ON THIRD CINEMA: THE ANTI-AESTHETIC OR TOWARDS A THEORY OF SENSATION

imperialist struggle demanded a new revolutionary attitude from the filmmakers of the world.”²

Given the historic events of the 1980s with the fall of the Eastern bloc and the seeming demise of socialist political projects throughout the world, we appear to have reached a kind of fin de siècle if you will, for at this moment the economic landscape is so dominated by international corporate entities in search of larger and larger markets, a trend described as globalization but bearing the characteristics of a higher stage of capitalism, artists of the developing world seem once again forced to seek the means to be born again, seeking new inventive strategies of production, distribution and exhibition in the new economic configuration. For if we follow the pretexts of the third cinema theorists and practitioners who argued rather cogently that cinema was indisputably critical to the development their societies, an analysis of the present socio-historical context of production would suggest that all creative activity must be utilized in the struggle and determination of Caribbean nation states.

First, it was important for the Third Cinema filmmakers to recognize the problems they were confronting. They were members of revolutionary societies and they were committed to the goals of political liberation for all people in the developing world. Hence, they believed it was important that cinema assist in the revolutionary process by conveying critical knowledge to the masses the people regarding their societies. Solanas and Gettino acknowledged that prior to revolution, political work did not include artistic activity and that in the minds of intellectuals there was a separation of politics and art. These were the conditions nurtured within the political culture prior to the revolution and given sanction by the upper classes whose maintenance of the status quo was linked to their allegiance to forces of cultural imperialism. If the intellectual of the new revolution identifies the political objective to liberate the society from the yoke of political oppression, a process of de-colonization, then cinema practice as an aspect of culture would contribute to this project by engaging the intellectual creative labor in attaining its own liberation from the models and values of the agents of cultural imperialism, in essence the Hollywood system.

The concern was therefore bound up in the idea of a national culture, a culture defined as the culture of the “people” forcing Third Cinema filmmakers to address the responsibility of filmmaker to the audience. The challenge was to gain access to the audience with alternative cinematic ideas recognizing that the means of production, distribution and exhibition still remained under the tight control of the Hollywood industry. The audience fed a steady diet of Hollywood escapist fare,

conveying bourgeois ideology and produced with huge budgets, what the practitioners call First cinema, remained alienated from the reality of their condition. Such was the success of these models that the filmmakers would warn that any attempt to reproduce revolutionary ideas within the Hollywood structures of production, distribution and exhibition was surely to fail.

“The mistake was due to taking the same approach to reality and films as did the bourgeoisie. The models of production, distribution and exhibition continued to be those of Hollywood precisely because, in ideology and politics, films had not yet become the vehicle for a clearly drawn difference between bourgeois ideology and politics.”³

Hollywood cinema patrons were conceived as passive consumers, objects expected to imbibe the history and worldview of the bourgeoisie, a cultural construction condemning them to inaction.

The strategy Third Cinema adopted was to identify the language or form, or more specifically the aesthetic that would make the audience or people the subject and create films that could provide a more relevant historical view of reality.⁴ This had been attempted by practitioners of Second Cinema in Europe known as the auteur or art cinema but the problem remained one of political commitment, the filmmaker's mere tinkering with form was limited, its inability to convey liberation ideals still obstructed by the bourgeois system of production. It is a Third Cinema, operating outside the dominant mode of production that possessed the potential of achieving the goal of liberation, through the ultimate reconciliation of form and content. Third Cinema thus utilizes the means at its disposal, an albeit low budget means; sixteen millimeter rather than thirty-five millimeter films, filmmakers fulfilling multiple roles on the production as it demands, what was called guerilla tactics of filmmaking. It would extend into screenings at non-traditional exhibition sites, discussions with audiences, presented in association with other arts and other non-traditional activities.

A cinema of revolution therefore sought the destruction of the image as created by the Hollywood cinema. In other words the classical Hollywood structure as a reference for all cinemas as a perfect cinema had to be replaced.⁵ In its place what was to be constructed was what Julio Garcia Espinosa called an “imperfect cinema”. The revolutionary film was to account for the transformation of the world and not a mere interpretation of the world as is and the filmmaker's duty was to seek and discover his own cinematic language. In effect, Third Cinema in evolving from a

REFLECTIONS ON THIRD CINEMA: THE ANTI-AESTHETIC OR TOWARDS A THEORY OF SENSATION

concern with the practice of cinema encouraged its filmmakers to be involved in the search for new forms and structures. Third Cinema however, was careful not to espouse what I term a "fixed" aesthetic. That is it never prescribed what that form had to be. It privileged continuity in experimentation. In film after film, discovery and exploration was to be emphasized. Espinosa himself says:

"Imperfect Cinema is no longer interested in pre-determined taste, and much less in 'good taste'. It is not quality which it seeks in an artist's work. The only thing it is interested in is how an artist responds to the following question: What are you doing in order to overcome the barrier of the 'cultured' elite audience which up to now has conditioned the form of your work?"⁶

The goal was therefore to find alternative forms of expression rooted in the history and memory of the folk, finding imperfect forms for the expressive traditions of the people.

While it has often been described as an aesthetic, Third Cinema's positing of a socio-historical approach prompts a re-evaluation of what is aesthetics and by extension whether filmmakers who fall under Third Cinema rubric can create a peculiar form to identify and affirm its identity. There was no indication that the filmmakers' search should end with the discovery of a specific form. The search was a critical part of the process. Third cinema seemed therefore, while not doing so explicitly, to be anti-aesthetic, preferring to forgo the prescriptive, preferring to forgo the colonizing formulations of First cinema practice, much unlike European philosophical discourse. While this paper is not an attempt to review critical aspects of aesthetic discourse, it is important to point out that the notion of the aesthetic is foremost a construction of taste that within Western philosophical discourse has contributed to a crisis of knowledge, privileging values that prove essentialist and exclusionary at best. Terry Eagleton in his book *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* says:

"The aesthetic is at once the very secret prototype of human subjectivity in early capitalist society and a vision of human energies as radical ends in themselves which is the implacable enemy of all dominative or instrumentalists thought."⁷

Eagleton warns of the aims of aesthetic discourse, that while championing the autonomy of the artist, this practice works to provide bourgeois society with the ideological subjectivity to fulfill its goal of exploitation.

This has not however discouraged the search for the aesthetic, even in the face of

calls for the abandonment of such goals. Yet there is something of value for groups excluded from mainstream practices to seek alternative strategies and positions relating to the form of their media. While it serves the cultural goals of the particular group it fails in its universal application and for this reason Clyde Taylor proposes in his *The Masks of Art*, that we abandon the discussion of the aesthetic. We are certainly questioning the use of aesthetics when we enter into a discussion of Third Cinema and though Taylor finds Espinosa a ready ally in his argument, Taylor's reduction of discussions of form in Ousmane Sembene's film "Ceddo" is disappointing. He refers to the filmmaker's use of close ups or the placement of a stationary camera as a minimalist approach to the medium, using this as an example of an artist ignoring the urge to alternative form.⁸ Taylor takes in my estimation a rather simplistic view of art making in general and filmmaking in particular, ignoring the workings of the film apparatus and the potential of the medium for creating complex representations and renderings of human existence in space and time. In effect without a thorough analysis of the formal elements of the film the argument making the aesthetic irrelevant is weakened. There may be greater value to Taylor's work in addressing the question then as to "how" the image breaks the aesthetic contract. This would initiate an in-depth analysis of the visual form, providing more concrete grounds for making an assertion to abandon the aesthetic.

Still it is the call for an adoption of new form that more than distinguishes Third Cinema and it is Jorge Sanjines in "The Problem of Form and Content in Revolutionary Cinema" that provides evidence of an aesthetic, what I call a theory of sensation. This filmmaker argues that the problem of form is directly related to the issue of audience objectification. While arguing that in Third Cinema, the individual protagonist is eclipsed by the communal approach and therefore a subjective approach to reality, that is filmmakers working with the people, thereby reducing the difference of cinema reality to actual reality, his essay does not methodically nor seriously address the inherent problem of form and content of the revolutionary cinema as its title proposes. What we can glean from Sanjines in this focus on subjectivity however, is a veiled call to utilizing the experience, the sensation of this rebellious process of an imperfect cinema in the form of the film itself. The aesthetic expression must include room for audience response and for the only legitimate way for this to occur is perhaps to encode the people into the film. The film in negating the aesthetic as we know it, appears to create a new aesthetic by inserting the self-reflexive community protagonist - suggesting new form, complex in its construction. Espinosa himself argues that revolution will provide the opportunity to move beyond the elitist construction of taste, which is the aesthetic, giving the spectator not the role of passive viewer but active participant. "For us then, the revolution is the highest expression of culture because it will abolish artistic culture as a fragmentary human activity."⁹ That is to conceive of the audience is to relate the experience of the audience to the form of the film.

REFLECTIONS ON THIRD CINEMA: THE ANTI-AESTHETIC OR TOWARDS A THEORY OF SENSATION

Art as a means to discovering knowledge of culture and human society begins with the acknowledgement by the viewer having received the sensation or experience of the film elements, visual and aural, followed by the activity of conceiving or making meaning out of the way in which these sensations are presented. Espinosa himself felt that imperfect cinema had no struggle to find an audience because it provides an experience that integrates "the intelligence, the emotions, the powers of intuition"¹⁰. The revolutionary mission of the filmmakers forced them to appreciate the role of sensation and the process of knowledge formation through form. The evidence of the success of these films was however utopian in that they sought spectator motivation to revolutionary action:

"The active role of knowledge is expressed not only in the active leap from sensory to rational knowledge, but what is even more important, in the leap from rational knowledge to revolutionary practice...the practice of transformation of the world."¹¹

There are no guarantees that the masses will not adopt similar values as the bourgeoisie. Tomas Alea prefers the term contemplative as against active spectator.¹² However we can read Third Cinema as suggesting a theory of sensation located in the relationship between maker, text and spectator and therefore concerned with moving towards a more complete definition of aesthetic activity. This is the only concrete evidence we can have of the active and not passive spectator. Third Cinema also reminds us that the original conception of the aesthetic had nothing to do with the construction of taste but with knowledge communicated through sensuous response. In its original conception it was differentiated from reason, it was a corporeal logic. For ultimately we are talking about the nature of the aesthetic, about experience located within a particular space and time and there exists no perfect language to convey this. What Third Cinema suggests is that aesthetic experience begins with sensation and is mediated by reason, a process that is imperfect. What, then, given the present historical conditions within which postcolonial cinema finds itself, do the ideas of Third Cinema contribute to our artistic process and discourse? Third Cinema reminds of the importance of adopting social, cultural and historical critiques to the study of artistic practices including filmmaking and that these practices are indelibly linked to political development and the construction of the nation in the world economy. In addition, given the increasing domination of Hollywood cinema throughout the world any viable opposition is directly related to the search for form, including alternative modes and strategies of production, distribution and exhibition (especially with technology becoming more accessible). Such a process may assist in the discovery of identity and a unique expression of

Caribbean reality. Third Cinema also warns of the dangers of founding a fixed aesthetic whose objective is to construct a hierarchy of tastes, thereby initiating a re-assessment of aesthetic discourse and exploring aesthetic experience as sensation. Finally, the origin of Third Cinema was a result of filmmakers confronting dominant systems of production utilizing theory to assist in the project. Theoreticians should therefore, in addressing issues of aesthetics, seek to work closer with practitioners to fully realize the benefits that may accrue from a dialectics of theory and practice.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Fernando Solanas and Octavio Gettino, "Towards a Third Cinema" Julio Garcia Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema" in Michael Chanan, ed., Twenty-Five Years of New Latin American Cinema (London: British Film Institute, 1983), pp. 28-33, Tomas Gutierrez Alea "The Viewer's Dialectic" (Havana, Cuba: Jose Marti Publishing House, 1988) , Jorge Sanjines and the Ukamau Group, "Problems of Form and Content in Revolutionary Cinema" in Jorge Sanjines and the Ukamau Group, Theory and Practice of a Cinema with the People (CT: Curbstone Press, 1989), pp.38-53 The documents are collected in Martin T. Martin, New Latin American Cinema: Volume 1, Theory, Practices and Transcontinental Articulations (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997). All further references to Third Cinema documents will be made from this collection.
2. In Martin, p34
3. Ibid, p34
4. When one speaks of form with reference to the film one considers not only the narrative structure of the film but too mode of production and the elements of visual culture including spatial and temporal aspects of composition and editing.
5. For a discussion of the form of the Classical Hollywood cinema see David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)
6. Ibid, p 82.
7. Terry Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p 9.
8. See Clyde Taylor, The Mask of Art: Breaking the Aesthetic Contract - Film and Literature (Indiana University Press, 1998) p 263.
9. In Martin, p78.
10. Ibid, p 80.
11. Ibid, p55.
12. Ibid, p125.

SOME TWENTY YEARS ago I was showing a series of Puerto Rican posters to two North American curators. To my surprise, when I finished the demonstration they told me that there was only one poster that seemed really Caribbean to them. Rafael Ferrer, the only artist in the batch that lived outside of Puerto Rico, designed that poster. This fact really intrigued me. What made Ferrer's poster different from the others? Was it the artistic quality, the image, the use of colors? Or all of the above? Definitely Rafael Ferrer was at that moment the most vanguard and one of the greatest Puerto Rican artists. The image was powerful, the colors were brighter, but why was he the only one recognized as Caribbean by these two curators?

Rafael Ferrer was the first Puerto Rican artist who set residency in New York where he has had an impressive career; front page articles, in ARTS, Art in America and articles in all major North American magazines. The first Puerto Rican artist chosen for the Whitney Biennial, 1968. His piece, a series of ice blocks covered by straw caused a commotion both at the opening night when they melted and by the critiques afterwards. Ferrer really was a pioneer of installations in New York. In 1993 after almost 30 years of vanguard works he turned back to painting in a more traditional way. Francisco Oller's retrospective triggered that decision, as he personally told me. Ever since Rafael Ferrer has made a series of primitive-like paintings, full of color and harmony that makes a diagnosis of the Caribbean. These very nostalgic paintings were done in the Dominican Republic, but they really show or were portrayals of the Puerto Rico he left in the 50's. For many years, only one artist on the island was painting with such a bright palette. For many years I questioned many times, why? We are a tropical island full of colors; why were so few artists reflecting the obvious reality? Are they blind and don't see the world surrounding them? Was it the colonialism that made us suffer alterity? Or was it the North American influence? Again why can the artist living in New York capture those colors? Many of these interrogations, were and are still unanswered. Some, I will deal with in this conference.

It is important to note that since the 50's the Puerto Ricans have created what has been called the "aerial bridge". This bridge connects New York with San Juan. Our artists have participated in this mobility for the past five decades. Some have residencies in both places like Martorell, others have moved permanently even though, all have kept a continuous link between the two islands. (Rafael Ferrer, Pepon Osorio, Diogenes Ballester, Anaida Hernandez, Arnaldo Morales just to mention a few). Others like Jaime Romano, have settled in Washington and today they move even further. Julio Rosado del Valle spends summers in Barcelona and winters in Puerto Rico; this is the other painter that was capable of capturing the

THE COLOR OF THE DIASPORA

tropics in his paintings during the 80's. Thanks to the Alfonso Arana grant an artist spends one year in Paris, this is the case of Nora Rodriguez Valles.

The second eye opener was in 1986, the case of Jaime Romano. After living for ten years in New York and Washington he returns to Puerto Rico in 1986. During those years he created a series of abstract paintings most of them based on literary or musical themes. After nine years in the States he became completely nostalgic for the Caribbean light, even though he visited the island constantly. The last works he did in USA were oil pastels, both *La orilla melancolica*, 1984 and *Region Emereente*, 1985 are full of color and light that resemble the tropical forest and the air. The nostalgic search for the light seems, in this and many other cases, to engender a feeling of brighter colors. At that time he confessed to me that he needed to return to Puerto Rico to capture the light and colors that were fading in his memory, but I never noticed the colors fading, on the contrary the last paintings he did in Washington were full of bright colors. As soon as he returned he commenced a series of paintings, he was completely energized by the new light and colors that burst into his eyes. The first two paintings he did were brighter than ever. One after the other he painted reds, oranges and many colors exploding in the canvasses. His first paintings were full of energy, powerful strokes and a freer palette. At last he was painting the Caribbean light, after ten years waiting to have this experience. But the most extraordinary thing happened, the more he observed his surroundings, the clearer the truth came out. He discovered that the brighter the light the colorless it is. So, by the forth or fifth completed study of the tropical light, only light was showing and color had disappeared. His next paintings were very similar to those done by the Venezuelan painter Armando Reveron. He also moved to a bright tropical escapade and was also blinded by the strong Caribbean light. It has taken Romano many years of studying the light to really capture a sense of tropical warmth. But color has never been the same. He has even created many very dark paintings in the last 15 years.

The third case that impacted me was that of Nora Rodriguez Valles. In 1991 she won an Alfonso Arana scholarship to spend a year in Paris. Being a young woman (34) she was instantly impacted by two things: the old paintings in the Parisian museums and the yearning for her country. Soon her paintings became greener and rougher, she started damaging the surface and scraping the colors so other tones and hues became visible. *En la sala de mi casa*, a green sofa in the shape of the island of Puerto Rico becomes a clear reference to the homesickness. Telephones with beating hearts instead of the numbers and Parisian landscapes with tropical colors, were part of this series of bright colors paintings done by Nora Rodriguez Valles while in Paris.

All of them have a bursting color and a sense of tropical ambiance that was not in her previous paintings and that have never been again. For the past five years she has been working in three series. The first deals with the nationality, another with the night scene and the third with her house up in the mountains. The series of notebooks that appear to be done by a child, captures impacting messages that questions what we are and all the confusion of being a two-cultured nation. These powerful paintings that deal with identity, self-recognition and the confusion aroused by our special political system, have no color, they are basically monochromatic. Probably done to add drama to the theme. The series that deals with the pool game are darker and only lighted by artificial light, which is logically understood. But the series inspired by the mountain house or the countryside, are not that bright in color. In them she represents the experience of roving through the tropical forest, the experience of living in the mountains and moving from the city to countryside, the special scenery of the landscape. Why don't these have the same colors as the ones done in Paris?

Now, there are many interrogations. Three painters, three different generations, three different cities but all had the same experience and all had the same results or tendency. Why did their palette become more realistically Caribbean while living abroad? Why, for the two that live now in Puerto Rico, their palette became lighter or darker upon their return? Is it the intense tropical light that forces them to change the colors? After many thoughts, reflections and considerations I came to a conclusion. The answer seems elementary: "the color of the memory is more exact than that of the eye". There was no doubt in my mind; this is it. But then I started to interview a group of Neurologists. All three of them concluded that, "memory is not realistic" memory changes and remembers the things according to the desire of the character. There is no such thing as the true or real memory. They told me that everything comes back changed, increased by the desired or decreased. All agreed that artists have a special eye that can remember colors better than the common human being but no studies have been done that can prove my thesis. So, here I am trying to prove a thesis that has no scientific base.

At the moment, the cause for this phenomenon according to the neurologists seems to be purely emotional. Name it nostalgia, melancholy or homesickness. But, aren't the musicians capable of remembering notes and reproducing them exactly as they heard them many years before?

After the frustration caused by what the neurologist told me I remembered Proust's statement that "memory compensates for the lack of stimuli". My only option now is

THE COLOR OF THE DIASPORA

to do a deeper study on phenomenological or other philosophical theories. Memory can compensate...

At this point of the investigation I can only conclude that the phenomenon of the brighter color of the Diaspora exists. I have seen it in many painters. It is real. What causes it, pure and sole nostalgia or do the artists really possess a different technique for salvage, rescue and retrieve information from their minds? Can this information be freed from other outside interference. I really believe that nostalgia is what drives artists to search for original colors, but I have the feeling those colors must be installed or programmed in the memory as pure as the musical notes are in the musicians' minds. I can't prove it. What I am presenting here is based on just a gut feeling or a sixth sense. This paper is then only a provocation to the audience and a reason for me to keep on investigating.

In August 1998 AICA Southern Caribbean organised a three-day symposium in Barbados devoted to Caribbean Art Criticism. This event was the first of its kind in the anglophone Caribbean and participants immediately inquired as to whether there would be a second.

For us, the question was not "if", but "how often". AICA Southern Caribbean is a small regional organisation, with limited financial resources, that is determined to create a dialogue between artists, critics and curators across the Caribbean. The opportunity to partner the symposium with the University of Central Florida through the initiative of Dr Gladstone Yearwood provided the timing and venue.

This symposium was held in conjunction with a curated exhibition of contemporary art drawn from the English and French Caribbean which was installed at the University of Central Florida Art Gallery. We believe that this was the first occasion that work from the region was exhibited in the United States within the context of such a critical discourse.

These proceedings form part of the documentation of the symposium that was hosted at the University of Central Florida; the other being an illustrated catalogue to the exhibition that is available with two critical essays by Dominique Brebion and Therese Hadchity. These are reproduced in English, French and Spanish. The proceedings from our first symposium are also still available.

From its beginning, AICA Southern Caribbean has recognised that it has an important role to play in the development of resources that are available for the study of the visual arts of the region. The keynote address and subsequent essay by Kamau Brathwaite has significantly contributed to the meeting of this challenge.

We wish to thank Kamau, not only for sharing his experiences with us on the day but of subsequently expanding those vignettes into the essay, *GROWIN UP W / OUT ART?* This is sure to become a classic text in the understanding of art in the Caribbean.

As we prepare to host the International Congress of AICA in Barbados during November 2003 please bookmark our web-site at www.aica-sc.org to access all information on the activities and publications of AICA Southern Caribbean in English, French and Spanish.

Nick Whittle
General Secretary, AICA Southern Caribbean

The AICA Southern Caribbean Symposium, Migration and Caribbean Diaspora, would not have been possible without the generous support of many individuals and organisations.

SPONSORS:

Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, Barbados
Central Bank of Barbados
Alliance Française, Barbados
Barbados Investment and Development Corporation
Director Regionale des Affaires Cultrelle (DRAC) Martinique
University of Central Florida
University of Central Florida Art Gallery
National Art Gallery Committee, Barbados

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Dominique Brebion
Alissandra Cummins
Therese Hadchity
Kevin Haran - UCF Art Gallery
Allison Thompson
Nick Whittle - overall co-ordinator
Gladstone Yearwood - co-ordinator UCF

SPECIAL THANKS:

Mervyn Awon
James Carmichael
William Cummins
Michael Hinds
Janet Kilbride



association internationale des critiques d'art
international association of art critics
asociación internacional de críticos de arte

