“HUMMINGBIRD OIL SHE BREAST”: TESTIMONY AND RESISTANCE IN VINCENTIAN REDEMPTION SONGS

HENDRIKA HAASEN

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

September 2021

© Hendrika Haasen, 2021

Abstract

Negro Slavery Described by a Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner (1831), Shake Keane's *The Angel Horn* (2005) and H. Nigel Thomas's *Spirits in the Dark* (1993) witness to the communities and individuals who have resisted colonialism in St. Vincent. Frantz Fanon and Stuart Hall shape the analysis of how these works demonstrate that the degradation of human beings by the imperial project is overturned by the creole culture that very undertaking has made possible. Warner testifies to the use of the British legal and political systems in support of an African derived selfhood. *The Angel Horn* creates solidarity with the plight of Vincentians and promises renewal through the creolization of Indigenous and non-native cultures. *Spirits in the Dark* appropriates syncretic religious rites to redress the alienation of a modern queer Black Caribbean. Vincentian testimonies to the creation of agency out of the cultural shards of colonialism result.

Dedication

For my husband, Randy Klippenstein.

Acknowledgements

I would like to give special thanks to Professors Diana Patricia Cooper-Clark, Jamie S. Scott and Patrick D. M. Taylor for their guidance and encouragement. Elizabeth Reynolds and Indira Ganase Lall have shared with me their love of St. Vincent and Trinidad, respectively, and have provided insights and information concerning their homelands that have been invaluable to my understanding of these Vincentian texts. Andrea McMillan provided helpful suggestions as a reader of several of these chapters. My deepest gratitude goes to Randy Klippenstein for the painstaking attention with which he read all these pages, the work he did to help to improve their clarity, and for his faith in this project.

Table of Contents

Abstract ii
Dedication iii
Acknowledgements iv
Table of Contents v

Chapter 1. Introduction: Vincentian Resistance 1
1.1. Background Information 1
1.2. Theoretical Considerations 4
1.3. *Negro Slavery Described by a Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, a Native of St. Vincent's* 14
1.4. *The Angel Horn* 16
1.5. *Spirits in the Dark* 19
1.6. Conclusion 20

Chapter 2. Resistance during Slavery: Ashton Warner's Creole Testimony 23
2.1. Introduction 23
2.2. Theoretical Considerations 25
2.3. An African Sense of Self 27
2.4. The British Colonial Legal System 33
2.5. The Anti-Slavery Society Document 40
2.6. Conclusion 48

Chapter 3. Hearing Ecstasy: *The Angel Horn* 50
3.1. Introduction 50
3.2. "ROUNDTRIP" 58
3.3. "Kaiso Kaiso" 64
3.4. Conclusion 77

Chapter 4. The Self and Belonging: *Spirits in the Dark*: 79
4.1. Introduction 79
4.2. The Dilemmas 81
4.3. Rebirth into Contradictions 92
4.4. The Diasporic work of *Spirits in the Dark* 101
4.5. Conclusion 104

Chapter 5. Conclusion: Three Testimonies to Redemption 106
5.1. Introduction 106
5.2. Colonialism and its Legacy 108
5.3. Creole Resources 113
5.4. Being Subjects 119

5.5. Further Considerations 123
5.6. Conclusion 125

Works Cited……………... 126

Chapter 1.

Introduction: Vincentian Resistance

> We cry our cry of poetry. Our boats are open, and we sail them for everyone.
>
> (Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*)

1.1. Background Information

St. Vincent, a small volcanic island at the southern end of the Lesser Antilles of the Caribbean, has been shaped both by the colonial history that it shares with the region and the particular iteration of colonialism that took place there. As part of the Anglo-Caribbean St. Vincent's history is inscribed in names such as Hope, Queensbury, and Penniston. These names once referred to some of the ninety-six sugar plantations that existed by 1829 (Karl John 47) and now are still used to designate the areas of the island where those estates once stood. Enslaved labour characterized the economy during much of the period between 1783 and 1834, which began when the French ceded St. Vincent to the English for the final time in the Treaty of Versailles (1783) (Low 907) and ended when the Slavery Abolition Act came into effect.[1] This regime followed, in part, from the defeat of the Black Caribs in their war against the British occupation of the island (Karl John 45-47).[2] Today a portrait of Joseph Chatoyer, the leader of that resistance by the mixed race Indigenous and Black Maroon people, hangs over the escalator in the new Vincentian airport. The state-sponsored tourist website also points out that many of the cannons at Fort Charlotte, which was built by the British, point in-land "to defend against Caribs" (SVG Tourism Authority). Although, as of the 2012 census, only three percent of the island population was Indigenous ("Population and Demography") these references to Carib resistance indicate that this history is a significant part of Vincentian identity.

---

[1] In contrast, on Barbados, which is only 190 km east, plantation agriculture using Black enslaved labourers dates from "the late 1640s and 1650s" (Beckles 239) and lasted just under 200 years.

[2] The term "Garifuna" has replaced the term "Black Carib" in current usage.

In the poem by Shake Keane (1927-1997), "ROUNDTRIP," which begins in 1950s London among the West Indian diaspora, a Jamaican asks the narrator "what part of Jamaica / St. Vincent was in[?]" (5) The island and its unique history were not and are not well known, nor has it received the same scholarly attention as other parts of the Caribbean archipelago. This study helps to address that oversight. The fierce resistance to colonialism that reoccurs throughout Vincentian culture is an exemplary instance of human creativity in the face of oppression. This examination, inspired by that inventiveness, spans more than 150 years and starts with *Negro Slavery Described by a Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, a Native of St. Vincent's* (sic) (1831). Next, Keane's posthumous poetry collection, *The Angel Horn* (2005) reflects Vincentian experiences at home and abroad from the 1950s to 1980s. Finally, the novel *Spirits in the Dark* (1993) by H. Nigel Thomas (1947-) deals with the late colonial and early post-colonial period. The creation of a local culture within the colonial matrix has been explored in the study of other parts of the Caribbean, but the Vincentian version of that process, with its own nuances of character and expression, requires further attention. Such scrutiny reveals that it is the creole culture, born of colonialism, that leads Warner, Keane and Thomas to fashion a resistance that offers redemption to those who have known the ongoing oppression of that very same colonialism.

The exploitation of St. Vincent by Europeans brought with it many of the materials out of which these authors shape voices that speak to and of Vincentians. When they speak, Warner, Keane and Thomas insist on the agency and on the humanity of those branded as "other" and thereby reframe their place in the world that emerged under colonial conditions. Scholars have noted that the Caribbean experienced globalization long before the term developed its current meaning (Alabi 1). The arrival of the Europeans was, firstly, a catastrophe for the Indigenous population then led to the trade in enslaved Africans which was followed by the later traffic in indentured workers from Portugal, India and China. As elsewhere in the Caribbean such arrivals made St. Vincent a site for the confluence of global forces of culture and commerce. What the Caribbean people in general and Vincentians in particular have created out of that intermingling of influences and powers can serve as a model of human creativity insisting on freedom where there seems to be only bondage. Stuart Hall's BBC documentary series *Portrait of the Caribbean* points his audience in this direction by using "Redemption Song" (1980) by Bob Marley to introduce each episode.[3] Marley, borrowing from a speech Marcus Garvey gave in Sydney, Canada, sings, "[e]mancipate yourselves from mental slavery / [n]one but ourselves can free our minds" (Tattrie). When Marley sings of "ourselves" he sings for a world where too many experience "mental slavery," as the global reach of the song indicates ("Redemption Song"). Vincentians offer their own songs of the struggle for freedom. Warner, by contesting his enslavement, offers an historical example of a man who literally attempted to free himself. The poetry of the posthumous collection *The Angel Horn* moves towards ecstasy and offers liberation from the harshness of the struggle for survival. Thomas renews freedom's promise when *Spirits in the Dark* takes as its subject a queer man in a stridently hetero-normative culture, and imagines his reconciliation with himself and his community. These Vincentian versions of redemption are needed in a world that increasingly resembles an island across which the forces of a difficult history flow from all directions.

---

[3] The 1991 BBC series narrated by Stuart Hall, uploaded by Doug Edmond in 2014, is available on YouTube. This is the link to the first episode, which will lead the reader to the all the succeeding episodes: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iku9TS-3rk4.

1.2. Theoretical Considerations

Interdisciplinary in nature, this study draws upon the scholarly work of Caribbean specialists, cultural theorists and literary critics. Philip Nanton, himself a Vincentian, suggests considering St. Vincent as a frontier society. The specificity of Nanton's work leads to broad questions of how and when individuals become subjects rather than objects, and Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) provides insights into these questions that have informed much of cultural theory. Next Edward Said (1935- 2003), using Fanon, shows how the assumptions of colonialism are embedded in European literature and are challenged by native voices. Stuart Hall (1932-2014), as a cultural theorist, shows how Caribbean culture is a complex response to colonialism. Finally, Thomas King (1943-) confirms the importance of narrative in the formation of identity in his Massey Lectures.

This thesis examines *Negro Slavery Described by a Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, a Native of St. Vincent's*, Keane's *The Angel Horn* and Thomas's *Spirits in the Dark* as exemplary instances of the sort of creativity that at once typifies Caribbean literature, so much of which has been written in difficult if not harrowing circumstances, yet also displays a vernacular character. Nanton's *Frontiers of the Caribbean* is a resource for identifying that which is essentially Vincentian. What Hall says of the difference between Martinique and Jamaica is also true of the difference between St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the rest of the Caribbean, "this is no mere difference of topography or climate. It is also a profound difference of culture and history. And the difference matters" (Cultural Identity 72-73). In his examination of the "difference that matters" for Vincentians, Nanton looks for common ground among various expressions of identity while asking what the experience of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has to say to a globalized world. Querying the responses suggested by postcolonial analysis, his *Frontiers of the Caribbean* characterizes the country as an amalgam of frontiers. He objects to the focus on the metropolitan centre implicit in the "tendency of postcolonial theory to recuperate every … local difference as a subversive act of 'speaking back' [that] obscures the autochthonous nature of a movement like the Spiritual Baptists, engendered out of specific local circumstances to which outside influence is itself marginal" (Nanton, *Frontiers* 2). In the case of the writers and works I explore, however, I argue that it is difficult to distinguish the influences that originally were local from those that came from outside of the island. In fact, St. Vincent metonymizes the process by which the outside becomes the local through the actions of human beings who create *for themselves*, not for the metropole, a voice that bears witness to an insistence on a subjectivity that speaks to the world.

Consider Nanton's example of the Spiritual Baptists. This synergic Christian sect, which originated on St. Vincent, integrates practices described as African in the scholarly literature with the Protestant Spiritualist tradition and the Roman Catholic use of sacramental objects in their worship.[4] Maarit Forde, for example, lists the many parts of the world included in the Spiritual Baptist ritual of "mourning," an extended period spent in complete blindfolded darkness during which the participant experiences spiritual travel to various destinations[5]:

---

[4] Adrian Fraser's work, *From Shakers to Spiritual Baptists* supports the claim that Spiritual Baptists originate on St. Vincent (11-14). In contrast, Maarit Forde, in her article "The Spiritual Baptist Religion" identifies the group's origins as dispersed among St. Vincent and the neighboring islands (215).

[5] "Mourning" is a specific ritual practice that is distinct from mourning as the expression of grief.

> The ritually produced universe reflects the routes of slave trade, indentureship, and other forced and voluntary labour migrations to the colonial Caribbean. In addition to these nations, the spiritual world consists of biblical locations like Jerusalem, Jericho, Zion, Canaan, Egypt, and River Jordan, and local villages, markets, rivers, and beaches. The spiritual entities inhabiting this landscape are mainly African, Indian, and Chinese. (Forde 227)

The faith's forerunners, the Wilderness People of Calder Estate on St. Vincent's windward coast, were known to Methodist missionaries in or about 1846 (Fraser 11). Living within two or three generations of the beginning of plantation slavery on St. Vincent, a spiritual link to African homelands was an imaginative possibility for this group, one they bequeathed to future generations of believers. Learning about the healing power of these Spiritual Baptist practices, which also challenge colonialism, inspired my efforts to understand the presence of a similar creativity at work in the lives and the work of Warner, Keane and Thomas.

Another example of the intertwining of the local and the non-native is manifested in the history and culture of the Black Caribs/Garifuna. The genealogy and the values of the Indigenous people of St. Vincent had already been altered by global forces when they fought to repel the English. The Black Caribs, as a maroon population that had intermarried with the Indigenous people, had their own traditions of resistance to enslavement. These traditions were subsequently informed by ideals like liberty and equality that also animated the French Republic, ideals that the English, writing about the Carib Wars, assumed originated with their French allies (Shepherd 54-55). After the Second Carib War most Black Caribs were eventually removed to Central America. It is the descendants of those exiles who have been instrumental in renewing awareness of what is now known as Garifuna culture in St. Vincent. As one commentator notes "the fact that a largely African-descended population is the only population in the region to have kept the Island Carib language alive is surely one of the most spectacular stories of Caribbean history" (Forte).

The frontier, the site of porous and shifting boundaries where identities are reworked, as in the case of Spiritual Baptists and the Garifuna, is Nanton's apt metaphor for St. Vincent; it functions well *alongside* a postcolonial analysis that recognizes the multiple strands that combine and recombine in Vincentian culture. The themes of the Spiritual Baptist story and Garifuna history resonate in the work of Warner, Keane and Thomas. Again and again, under the most difficult of circumstances, people insist on shaping their own narrative, choosing what suits them best both from the languages colonialism has forced on them and from the remnants of the songs colonialism has tried to destroy.

In order to understand the challenges and aspirations of this Black subjectivity in the Vincentian context I will turn to the foundational theoretical work of Fanon. The question of who is able to act as a subject and who is relegated to being an object runs through Fanon's work and his interrogation of this issue makes him important to my work. First published in 1952, his *Peau noire, masques blancs* (*Black Skin, White Masks*) argues that the colonial condition denies the position of subject to those marked as inferior by the colour of their skin. To illustrate the Black person's internalization of the white gaze of colonialism Fanon writes of the Black Antillean's experience of living with a metropole culture which equates not only what is to be celebrated but also what is human with whiteness (*Black Skin, White Masks* 86). He tells of his own experience of the young white boy on a train in France who was frightened by Fanon's black skin. The story exemplifies the effects of that gaze. "On that day," he writes, "completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 85). Fanon interrogates the cultural assumptions concerning race that cause this alienation from the self, assumptions that were prevalent not only in France but also in his Caribbean home, Martinique. His insights are expressed in his observation that "[t]o study the relations of racism and culture is to raise the question of their reciprocal action. If culture is the combination of motor and mental behavior patterns arising from the encounter of man with nature and with his fellow-man, it can be said that racism is indeed a cultural element" (Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution* 32). The Negritude movement sought to confront racism by celebrating Blackness, a position Fanon first encountered in the person of his lycée teacher and poet Aimé Césaire. Fanon sees in this movement a force that reorients the West Indian who has been formed by the colonial culture, since "[t]hen it became real that not only the color black was invested with value, but fiction black, ideal black, black in the absolute, primitive black, the Negro. … It meant demanding of [the Caribbean] an axiological activity in reverse, a valorization of what he had rejected" (*Toward the African Revolution* 24). But Fanon decided that Negritude was not the ground on which to build a renewed identity because Blackness as a category was created in the colonial matrix. Fanon saw the definitive change from being an object to being a subject in the liberation movements of Africa when individuals came together to oust the occupier, to define their relationship to each other in that struggle and to create a new identity for themselves. Thus, Fanon offers a definition of national culture as "the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 232).

The question, then, is what do Fanon's ideas have to do with St. Vincent? Here the journey to independence was animated by the Black leadership that emerged in the labour movement, even as antagonistic political parties looked to the British Colonial Office to settle disputes over the constitution of an independent island (Kenneth John 208). The answer is illustrated in Fanon's own work and it is an answer that postcolonial scholars such as Matthieu Renault highlight. "The *subjectification* of the colonized subject in the anticolonial struggle," Renault argues, "means becoming a *subject of words*" (113). Renault quotes Fanon in this regard, "'the nation's spoken words shape the world while at the same time renewing it'" (114). Fanon's own prescription concerning what writers should do reflects, quite precisely, what both Keane and Thomas actually do: "The colonized man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 232). Fanon's optimism, one which is on display in the work of Warner, Keane and Thomas, comes from seeing the "literature of combat" itself as "the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 240).

What Fanon originally indicates and what Renault amplifies is the importance of the very act of speaking, of making claims as to what is true, as to what the past has to say to the future, as to who can belong to a place. When Warner says he is a free man he changes how he is seen by the plantation overseer who has charge of him and his English amanuensis, Susana Strickland. When Keane integrates an Indigenous past into colonial history to suggest a way into the future, he offers his readers the possibility of renewal. When Thomas imagines his character's embrace of and by a fictional version of the Spiritual Baptist community, he challenges heteronormativity in the culture. As Patrick Taylor characterizes it, Fanon calls for "the story of human freedom totalizing its situation in such a way that freedom is communicated and the oppressive situation transformed" (19). This is the vision these Vincentians share. As a theorist and as a practitioner

Fanon provides tools for understanding the shaping and renewing of their world that Warner, Keane and Thomas undertake.

Said, in his application of Fanon's analysis of colonialism to the reading of literature, first shows how the literary culture of the metropole evolved alongside imperialism. The native culture of resistance that arises at the site where this domination is enacted is also of interest to Said. First he makes the case that the emergence of the novel as a genre coincides with the period of English colonial expansion. Imperial power makes possible stories like Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). For Said it is the "prototypical modern realistic novel" that contributes to a view of the non-European world as the appropriate locus for reproducing Europe (xii). In his consideration of imperialism Said turns to *Heart of Darkness* (1899) by Polish émigré Joseph Conrad (1857-1924). Its narrator recalls the words of the novel's central character, Charles Marlow, who, while sitting on the deck of a boat on the Thames River, describes the exceptional nature of European colonialism to his fellow Londoners:

> "The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea–something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to." (Conrad)

Said invokes these words, both as the epitaph to *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) and in his discussion of the novel, but he does not address the irony of Marlow's remarks. This irony is revealed in the latter's tale of the ivory trader Kurtz, a tale of sacrifices and of bowing down to the idea of unbridled power. Marlow's story of the Congo repeats, rather than contradicts, the account he gives of the Roman occupation of Britain and the author prepares the reader for this repetition by linking Marlow's words to the novel's title. He says:

> "They were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force–nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind–as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness." (Conrad)

Marlow's reference to an "idea" in the earlier quote from Conrad is, as Said points out, representative of the British justification of their colonial endeavours as a literary cultural norm. It is important to note how that norm is actually challenged by Conrad's 1899 description of colonial practices in the Congo. In contrast, earlier novels Said examines like *Mansfield Park* (1814) by Jane Austen, take for granted British imperialism as a redemptive "idea." Here the Caribbean, with its promise of wealth through the exploitation of the labour of enslaved Africans and their descendants, becomes a plot device that allows fortunes to be restored, while the character's moral standing remains intact (Said 59).

The assumptions of English literature written in the colonial period are made plain in *Culture and Imperialism*. Liberation from the attitudes of superiority is not possible "unless the idea of empire and the cost of colonial rule are challenged publicly, unless the representations of imperialism begin to lose their justification and legitimacy, and, finally, unless the rebellious 'natives' impress upon the metropolitan culture the independence and integrity of their own culture, free from colonial encroachment" (Said 200). The focus of postcolonial scholarship comes into view here, notably the idea of "writing back" that Nanton sees as limiting, but which

Said sees as necessary in order to create a counter-narrative to European hegemony. Fanon's influence on Said is explicitly acknowledged; he says, "If I have so often cited Fanon, it is because more dramatically and decisively than anyone, I believe, he expresses the immense cultural shift from the terrain of nationalist independence to the theoretical domain of liberation" (286). Here, Said insists on the importance of stories since they are "the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history;" he sees stories as falling within this "domain of liberation" (xii). Thus, the irony of Marlow's words regarding the exceptional nature of European imperialism is echoed in the literature of the "others" who testify that the experience of being a European colony was not very different from the experience of being a Roman colony. But this is not all that the post-colonial writers have to say. Vincentian versions of the insistence on an independent identity and history can be seen in both the colonial and post-colonial period in Warner, Keane and Thomas.

Hall also works with Fanon's observations concerning the creation of identity through acts of representation, but he approaches Fanon as a theorist with a special interest in the syncretic cultural work done in the Caribbean. Hall identifies "[t]he Caribbean [as] the first, the original and the purest diaspora" ("Negotiating Caribbean Identities" 6). It is in the "complex processes of assimilation, translation, adaptation, resistance, reselection and so on" that Caribbean culture is formed ("Negotiating" 7). When they contribute to the survival of the body or the spirit Caribbean people preserve and often entwine elements of the African, Asian and European cultures that intermingle in the region. What emerges from this process is an identity that is "a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation" 68). Hall's claim highlights the importance of the acts of representation that I have chosen as constitutive of Vincentian culture. “Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past,” according to Hall (“Cultural Identity” 70). Thus, identities are created not unearthed from history. Borrowing from Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor, Hall draws our attention to the presence of three pasts that inform the Caribbean identity: the African, that was long repressed but everywhere evident; the European, which was once much valourized; and the geographically American, by which he means the location of the creolization of the first two influences (not the influence of the United States of America) (“Cultural Identity 74”). Caribbean identity is not a fixed ratio of these elements but rather a fluid construction. For example, Hall says, “[i]t was only in the 1970s that [an] Afro-Caribbean identity became historically available to the great majority of Jamaican people, at home and abroad. In this historic moment, the great majority of Jamaicans discovered themselves to be ‘black’” (“Cultural Identity” 75). He goes on to explain this change took place because of the influence of the liberation and civil rights movements of the period, the Rastafarian culture, and reggae music (“Cultural Identity” 75). This example of how representation and identity are intertwined reveals the importance of Warner’s, Keane’s and Thomas’s acts of representation for Vincentian culture.

Finally, we must consider the importance of storytelling in this process of identity formation that Hall has alerted us to. King, an Indigenous North American writer, delivered the Massey Lectures in 2003, and they are helpful resource in the consideration of narrative. Published as *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*, these lectures repeat the claim: “The truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (King 2, 32, 62, 92, 122, 153). King highlights the power of storytelling when he starts each lecture with a story about telling a story. The central, telescoped narrative is the “woman falling from the sky” Indigenous account of the creation of

Turtle Island. By also drawing upon personal experiences and accounts of the oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States, King challenges his audience to create a different relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples going forward. In addition to insisting upon the truth about stories King ends each lecture with a variation of the injunction: "Take [the story I've told you] …. Do with it what you will.… But don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now" (29, 60, 89, 119, 151, 167). King uses narrative to advance a world-view that does not privilege competition and consumption, and to propose renewed relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Warner's account of his life under the laws that legitimized slavery, Keane's celebration of the possibilities open to Vincentians and Thomas's vision of Isabella Island, a fictional setting where a protagonist can be queer and at home, embody and express analogous challenges. King's challenge to respond to the stories he tells us is a challenge that is repeated by these Vincentians, who show us that the world can be different, that we can be different if we attend to their words.

1.3. *Negro Slavery Described by a Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, a Native of St. Vincent's*

The insights of Fanon, Said, Hall and King will be taken up in the following chapters. In Chapter 2, "Resistance during Slavery: The Creole Testimony of Ashton Warner," I will argue that the content and structure of *Negro Slavery Described by a Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, a Native of St. Vincent's* bears witness to the colonial violence and rupture Hall speaks of, but also to the fact that individuals acted for themselves and others in order to resist slavery. For English anti-slavery crusaders the narrative is important because it is emblematic of slavery throughout the Caribbean. The focus of this study, however, is on the particulars of resistance to slavery among the Black population of St. Vincent using the customs and laws of that economy, which depended on the people who were enslaved there.

Warner's main argument, and his challenge to colonial power, is to insist that he is not the property of James Wilson. On March 27th 1817 Warner's name is included among the enslaved people registered to Cane Grove Estate. The line that identifies him by his first name, Ashton, notes that he is absent and under employment he is listed as "with his mother Placy in Town" ("St. Vincent 1817"). His Aunt, Daphne Crosbie, had purchased the freedom of as many of her family as she could after her own manumission. Crosbie bought Warner's mother when he was still a "child at her breast" (Warner 21). Since the custom was to sell an enslaved female with her breastfeeding infant Warner refers to the normal practices of the plantation economy to insist his aunt freed him (Warner 21). Warner and his family repeatedly use British legal institutions and their knowledge of colonial practices to argue that he is free. Wilson, questioning Warner's identity, apprehends him shortly after he appears on the registry of enslaved people. He remains on Cane Grove until he runs away in his early twenties. Through their repeated appeals to the colonial authorities his family continues to challenge his apprehension, both before and after he is returned to the plantation where he was born. Warner's own refusal to accept his enslavement, even when he resides at the plantation, is a literal embodiment of resistance.

Warner's account comes down to us because he describes the brutality of the lives of the enslaved population of Cane Grove and thus his testimony becomes important in the work to end slavery. In fact, Warner's narrative was among those that were submitted to the British Parliament as evidence of the excesses that were an endemic feature of slavery (Aljoe, "Going to Law" 358). Yet the structure the anti-slavery campaigners give to the narrative speaks to the issue of whose voice matters. Warner is introduced by his amanuensis, Strickland, who attests to the power of his testimony, which with that of Mary Prince, converts Strickland to the anti-slavery cause (Warner 11). What is achieved then by adding the reports of four white British clergymen concerning slavery in Jamaica and South Africa to Warner's description of his experiences in St. Vincent? Why do the accounts of white observers actually comprise the bulk of the pamphlet? In addition to making Warner's "Sketch of Colonial Slavery more complete" (Warner 16) Strickland also implies that these descriptions can be used to verify Warner's when she says readers will be able "to compare the details given by Ashton with those recorded by intelligent and conscientious eye-witnesses from England" (Warner 16). Yet, just as Warner's family continued to act as subjects within the restraints of the colonial law, Warner fashions a voice for himself within the constraints imposed by colonial discourse. He resists the repeated attempts to relegate him to the position of object and his narrative testifies, not only to the inhumanity of slavery, but to Warner acting as the subject in his own narrative. His story illustrates how Warner and his family fashion a resistance to slavery within the British legal and political systems. They refuse to be objects and using the tools of their colonial society insist on being subjects fighting to shape their own lives.

1.4. *The Angel Horn*

Just as Warner's act of speaking on his own behalf allows him agency and a role in how enslaved people are seen, Keane's poetry shapes the possibilities of his art form while it expresses the reality and promise of Vincentian culture. The third chapter, "Hearing Ecstasy: *The Angel Horn*," addresses this posthumous collection that includes six previously unpublished manuscripts that span Keane's life from the late 1940's to 1997 (184). The work is represented by a close examination of two of the long poems, the free verse "ROUNDTRIP" and an improvisation on the Caribbean form kaiso, better known as calypso, in "Kaiso Kaiso." In these poems St. Vincent is a place that produces a particular linguistic practice that both resists and assimilates colonialism. The poems also reflect on what it is to be Vincentian and West Indian, whether abroad or at home.

Keane's poetry is important to the region because it has contributed to a recognition of the legitimacy of the forms of English that have emerged in the Caribbean. Keane's writing incorporates the vitality to be found in the regional speech of West Indians. This embrace of what became known as Nation Language found critical support in the eighties when Kamau Brathwaite "moved the boundaries of expression to their present position, and thereby liberalized the climate of taste and critical judgment in which all West Indian poets work" (Breiner 80).[6] Brathwaite's critical work championing West Indian linguistic practices is based on the poetry of the West Indies. In developing the argument for Nation Language he refers to Keane's poem, *Volcano Suite* (1979), about the eruption of St. Vincent's Soufrière in the same year. Keane is listed with other poets, including Brathwaite himself, who "have been trying to break out of the entire pentametric model in the Caribbean and to move into a system which more closely and intimately approaches our own experience" (*History of the Voice* 12). Brathwaite also lists *One a Week with Water* (1979), "Nancitori / with drums" (1972) (*The Angel Horn* 127-134) and "Shaker Funeral" (1950) (published under the title "Mistress Mucket's Funeral," *Angel Horn* 29-32) as examples of "Nation Language Poetry Texts" that his reader may wish to consult (*History of the Voice* 75, 78). He includes Keane's work in the inventory of "Nation Language / Recordings" and "Nation Language / Performances" (*History of the Voice* 72, 69). Brathwaite's critical work encouraged West Indian poets to move from imitating colonial writing to working with the local languages of their islands (Nanton, “Keane's ‘nonsense’” 73). Keane’s use of Nation Language contributed to Brathwaite’s argument concerning its vitality and was a part of the movement towards its acceptance. *The Angel Horn* bears witness to the creative energy that has fashioned the St. Vincent Nation Language out of the languages that have met there.

---

[6] Nation Language is the term Brathwaite popularized to replace terms such as dialect to describe the language used by the majority populations of Caribbean islands (*History of the Voice* 5-6).

The Angel Horn poems “ROUNDTRIP” and “Kaiso Kaiso,” testify to the optimism that Keane, in a talk in 1951, said was characteristic of West Indian writing (E. M. Keane 102).[7] At the end of Keane’s extended poem, *One a Week with Water*, the speaker believes that what Vincentians “will create, and even a’ready done start create, pon this scarred and hallowed mountaintop, could blow yo mind” (73). This attitude also characterizes *The Angel Horn*. *One a Week with Water* ends with the following image: “A yellow woman comes up nightly out of the depth-light of the Calibbean Sea. Her eyes are huge. She sees we” (Keane 74). Keane invokes those who were on the island before Europeans and Africans came in this reference to the term used on St. Vincent for the “‘pure,’ indigenous person, Yellow Carib” (Minority Rights Group International). Keane echoes Walcott’s claim that in the Caribbean “Adamic, elemental man cannot be existential. His first impulse is not self-indulgence but awe” (“The Muse of History” 357). In *The Angel Horn* Keane makes it possible for his readers to share the yellow woman’s awe and allows them to reimagine what “we” can mean. The reason for that wonder is suggested by the image from “Kaiso Kaiso” that I use in the title of this thesis, “hummingbird oil she breast” (Keane *Angel Horn* 141*)*. The hummingbird, which is “central to Amerindian mythology” (Johnson), and thus associated with the Indigenous people of the Caribbean, is enacting in a Hindu ritual practice which came to the West Indies with indentured Indians. This is one of Keane’s images of renewal, only possible because of colonialism but also undoing the grief of colonialism. As Hall and King also do, Keane constitutes Vincentian identity by imagining/imaging these possibilities at the very site of oppression. For Keane renewal comes from looking both backwards and forwards and the next work, *Spirits in the Dark*, follows a similar pattern.

---

[7] Keane is known by his full, given name, Ellsworth McGranahan Keane, when he speaks as a scholar.

1.5. *Spirits in the Dark*

Thomas's work is addressed in Chapter 4, "*Spirits in the Dark*: The Self and Belonging." In his novel Thomas reinterprets the practices of the Spiritual Baptist Church for Isabella Island, a reimagined St. Vincent. Thomas has fictionalized the faith community's practices by renaming this Afro-Christian group and by expanding their acceptance of queer sexuality. Thomas appropriates Spiritual Baptist "mourning" as a ritual of the Spiritualists, one that provides an antidote to alienation from the self. His protagonist, Jerome Quashee, must learn to integrate the cultures that came from Europe, as indicated in his given name Jerome, and from Africa, as indicated in his surname, Quashee, and "mourning" makes that possible. After travelling to a spiritual Africa the meaning of Quashee's Blackness is no longer imposed by the white gaze that Fanon identifies with colonialism, not even his own internalized version of that gaze. Jerome symbolically reverses the Middle Passage. Being led back to Africa becomes a return to membership in a community. As Jerome embraces both his Blackness and his queerness a body made whole replaces the objectified body that Fanon identifies with racism. Being inducted into African visionary experiences and Christian rebirth restores Quashee's personhood. Testifying to both to his "trials and tribulations" (Thomas 213) and his victories, which are confirmed by the Spiritualist witnesses who recognize their own journeys in his, Jerome Quashee is inaugurated into the experience of community.

In this novel the survival of one born among the Black people of the Caribbean requires a challenge to the centering of European norms and a turn to the healing and restorative powers of "the African psycho-cultural heritage" (Marsh-Lockett 30) and the community that has kept that heritage alive. Thomas enacts his own creative defiance of a colonial world view by making this authorial turn to a communal African past. This novel bears witness to both the destructive and the regenerative possibilities that a queer man encounters in Vincentian society. In the process Thomas explores "the ambiguous and sometimes contradictory spaces that inevitably exist in any culture" (Chin 139). It is in these "contradictory spaces," such as the one created by "mourning," that Jerome finds the hope that he can be a queer man doing for others and being with others. Thomas indicates that in 1968 he had to leave his home island as "there was no space in St. Vincent for someone with a same-sex orientation. One suspected of being gay was verbally harassed; one known to be gay was physically and verbally abused and barred from employment in teaching and the civil service" (Thomas, "Biographical Note"). Yet, Isabella, Thomas's beautiful island, is a place where African traditions translated into Christian rituals can start to undo the colonial legacy and homophobia.

1.6. Conclusion

Titled "Three Testimonies to Redemption," the concluding chapter returns to the common ground shared by *The Narrative of Ashton Warner*, *The Angel Horn,* and *Spirits in the Dark* as expressions of Vincentian identity. In what sense are these works testimonies? Can Ashton Warner's words, which provided evidence to the British Parliament of the conditions endured by the enslaved be linked to two works of literature? In 1833 that Parliament made the decision to abolish slavery (Nanton, *Frontiers* 75). Strickland's transcription of Warner's words was used as evidence that abolition was a moral imperative. What justification can there be to also consider Keane's poems and Thomas's novel testimony? Homi Bhabha address the question when he describes the desire for "the join" that Toni Morisson originally imagines in *Beloved*:

> When historical visibility has faded, when the present tense of testimony loses its power to arrest, then the displacements of memory and the indirections of art offer us the image of our psychic survival. To live in the unhomely world, to find its ambivalencies and ambiguities enacted in the house of fiction, or its sundering and splitting performed in the work of art, is also to affirm a profound desire for social solidarity: I am looking for the join … I want to join … I want to join. (26-27)

While Warner sought to create a link between his experiences and the will of the English people to end slavery, Keane and Thomas fashion a solidarity with their readers by creating both a version of the "unhomely world" and its alternative, a more welcoming place less battered by colonialism. What Keane's poems and Thomas's novel provide, as does Warner's narrative, is evidence of the creativity of a Caribbean culture that insists home is possible.

Unlikely resources are enlisted in this building project. Warner and his family fashion resistance to the erasure of Black selfhood within the legal and political structures of the British Empire. When, in *Spirits in the Dark*, the protagonist testifies to his visions during "mourning" to the gathered believers and villagers, Thomas's novel appropriates a Spiritual Baptist practice in order to integrate a queer Black man into his community. Both history and fiction participate in the transformation that Keane also works with his evocation of the West Indian experience in the phrase, "hummingbird oil she breast" (*Angel Horn* 141). He reimagines the disruptions of colonialism as this synergic image of regeneration that encapsulates what Warner, Keane and Thomas all do. In "The Muse of History" Walcott speaks of ways in which "the tribe in bondage learned to fortify itself by cunning assimilation of the religion of the Old World. What seemed to be surrender was redemption." He continues, "What seemed the loss of tradition was its renewal. What seemed the death of faith was its rebirth" (358). Warner, Keane and Thomas testify to the fact that what is true of religion is also true of law, language and literature in the assertion of a Vincentian identity of resistance.

Chapter 2.

Resistance during Slavery: Ashton Warner's Creole Testimony

> Still, tho our Hardships are as great as the Injustice of our Oppressors; tho our Sufferings are as many as the hated Days we live; tho all their Pleas of Right are false or short: methinks I cou'd forgive them all, did they not pretend Necessity for their inhuman Acts. They tell, it seems, the European World, we're of such base, such brutal Natures, that nought will govern us, but downright Force and Fear; That like the Horse we must be broke and rid with Whip and Spur, but with far closer Reins. Abominable Forgery! Hated Imposture! What, are we not Men? Have we not the common Facultys and Passions with others? Why else has nature given us human Shape and Speech?
>
> (Anon "A Speech Made by a Black of Guardaloupe, at the Funeral of a Fellow-Negro.")

2.1. Introduction

The Vincentian newspaper *Searchlight* posted an online article in 2019 noting the visit of Dr. Sandy Campbell to St. Vincent following the publication of *Mary Prince and Ashton Warner: Two Slave Narratives Transcribed by Susanna Moodie*, as copies of the book were provided for local libraries (Story of Ashton Warner). *Search for Identity*, primarily a collection of reprinted material about St. Vincent and the Grenadines from the mid-1960s, includes extracts from Ashton Warner's account of his resistance to and experience of slavery (Cameron 247-52). *Negro Slavery Described by a Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, a Native of St. Vincent's* (sic), the original document, specifies Warner's connection to the island in the title. The identification of Ashton Warner with St. Vincent has endured from the time his story was first published.

Warner's narrative speaks to and is an insistence on selfhood by a person who is listed in "St. Vincent and its Dependencies Slave Registry of 1817" as an enslaved person on Cane Grove Estate. This chapter demonstrates how Warner and his family, using the tools available to them in the situation that colonialism creates, not only resist being reduced to objects but make themselves subjects in their own lives and in the history of slavery. More specifically, using the theoretical framework Nicole Aljoe establishes in *Creole Testimonies*, an examination of the narratives of enslaved men and women living in the British Caribbean colonies from 1709 to1838, I will show that Warner's narrative is a particular example of a creole experience. Aljoe links work on creolization to the concept of *testimonio* and applies it to the narratives she considers as instances of speech that speak for others rather than only for the self.[8] Warner's account of his life is an example of Aljoe's "*creole testimony*" (*Creole Testimonies* 20). Having established a theoretical foundation for considering the narrative an examination of the text reveals that Warner's aunt, his mother and Warner himself show themselves to be subjects shaping their own lives and attempting to create the conditions in which others can do the same. Warner's immediate family and the other freed Black people of Kingstown embody an enduring African commitment to community that Warner's narrative testifies to as his first and most important resource in the struggle to shape his own life. The colonial British legal system, of which Warner's family make frequent and active use, is the second resource that allows Warner's aunt, mother, and Warner himself to act in the capacity of subjects before the law. Caribbean colonialism's use of labour of enslaved people led to the creation of the Anti-Slavery

---

[8] The term *testimonio* emerged in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s and "is generally defined as a first-person narration of socially significant experiences in which the narrative voice is that of a typical or extraordinary witness or protagonist who metonymically represents others who have lived through similar situations and who have rarely given written expression to them. Testimonio is then the 'literature of the nonliterary' involving both electronic reproduction, usually with the help of an interviewer/editor, and the creative reordering of historical events in a way that impresses as representative and "true" and that often projects toward social transformation" (Zimmerman 1119).

Society headed by Thomas Pringle. This situation led to *Negro Slavery Described by a Negro* being written and circulated. This document is the third resource that enabled one person who was considered to be property to be an agent. By testifying against the institution of slavery Warner made it possible for others who were seen as property to also be recognized as agents. Fanon points out that culture is created by the actions of the oppressed as they undo their oppression (*The Wretched of the Earth* 245). Warner participates in creating a Vincentian culture of resistance both through his actions and by telling the story of his life.

2.2. Theoretical Considerations

Before looking at the specifics of Warner's life story an overview of Aljoe's description of the accounts of West Indian slavery as creole testimonies highlights the features of Warner's story that are also significant for the genre created by the narratives by enslaved people. What does it mean to say of a person, a language or a narrative that it is creole? Originally used to designate whites who were born in the Caribbean colonies the meaning of the word was extended to identify enslaved people who were born on the plantations (Hall, "Creolité"14), as is the case with Warner. Creole came to be the term for "those rooted or grounded in the vernacular local space" (Hall, "Creolité" 14). As for language, accounts of the origins of Caribbean creoles indicate these syncretic forms originated with Africans and people of African descent and were formed from elements of the many languages that encountered each other as a result of the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved people (Wardhaugh 121-122). Aljoe uses the work of Caribbean scholars to consider the characteristics of the creole cultures that grew up around these people and languages. She draws on Antonio Benítez-Rojo's description of the global influences that have come to bear on Caribbean society. In *The Repeating Island* he identifies the most important factors as "European conquest, the native people's disappearance or retreat, African slavery, plantation economies, Asian migration, rigid and prolonged colonial domination" (34). Aljoe points out that as a result of these ruptures the Caribbean produced "new cultural and social forms often referred to as Creole [that] had a major impact on cultural production, especially during slavery" ("Caribbean Slave Narratives" 1-2).

After her discussion of the features of creole culture Aljoe examines how those characteristics intersect with *testimonio* to bring these concepts together. She characterizes narratives such as Warner's "as offering creole testimonies of the experiences of West Indian enslavement" (*Creole Testimonies* 20). *Testimonio* originates with Latin American critical studies as scholars examine work that, in contrast to autobiography, speaks for others while speaking of the self. George Yudice summarizes, "Emphasizing popular, oral discourse, the witness portrays his or her own experience as an agent (rather than a representative) of a collective memory and identity. Truth is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppression or in exorcising and setting aright official history" (17). Aljoe's definition of *testimonio* stresses the role of the narrator as either a participant in or a witness to events that the reader learns about because an oral account, like testimony given in court or in a religious context, becomes accessible through an intermediary who is able to create a written version of this report ("Caribbean Slave Narratives" 8). The collective nature of the narratives of West Indian slavery comes both from their form, which requires the contributions of two or more individuals, as well as their content. Aljoe notes that "the portraits … aimed to provide evidence of slave life in the West Indies by connecting and attributing the slave voice to an implied, yet corporeal, slave body" (*Creole Testimonies* 29). These features of Warner's testimony speak to both the spirit of resistance that is also seen in *testimonio* and the creativity that constitutes creole culture. Creole testimony demonstrates that the oppressed find the tools for dismantling colonialism within the matrix it has created.

Chinosole, who does not herself use the concept of *testimonio*, nevertheless makes observations in *The African Diaspora & Autobiographics* that show how African conceptions of the self overlap with the communal features of *testimonio*.[9] She argues that from their first appearance assumptions about the inferiority of Black people challenge European intellectual assumptions by expanding the meaning of self beyond notions of an individual who belongs to her/himself alone. She notes that "when the legally designated subhuman Africans of the eighteenth century stood at the podium or picked up the pen, the actions not only challenged who could be counted as human or individual, but they also altered the notion of 'self' by extending its meaning to the group" (155). The condition of enslavement intensifies the African focus upon membership in a community, since "the slave is a self that is always engaged in a kind of collective corporeal condition that makes it virtually impossible to speak of the self solely as an individual" (McBride 10). Thus, Chinosole says those who speak to us from the period of slavery "not only def[y] who [is] and who [is] not an individual but redefin[e] what [is] meant by the self … [by] their elaboration of the nature of self as both individual and collective, singular and multiple" (156).

2.3. An African Sense of Self

How does the sense of a self who is both individual and collective inform Warner's experiences and what bearing does that influence have on Warner's creole testimony? The actions of Warner's aunt, Daphne Crosbie, suggests that her identification with other enslaved people may have emerged from the extended self that Chinosole describes. Warner says of his aunt following her self-manumission, “finding it a good thing to be free, [she] wished to make all her friends free also, particularly the slaves on the estate where she was born, and with whom she had shared, in her early days, all the sorrows of negro servitude” (18). Warner tells the reader, “[A]ll the money [my aunt] could save went to purchase the freedom of slaves who had formerly been her companions in bondage at Cane Grove, or to make their condition better” (20). In addition to Warner’s manumission his aunt rescues others in her family. Disappointed that she could not secure the purchase of her brother when he was younger, she reacts to the news that the now aged man has been sold to an estate on St. Lucia by rescuing him from slavery. Even though “she had never crossed the water, or been on the great sea, … she overcame her fears, and hired a small boat, and went directly to St. Lucia” when she learned that the ill man could be manumitted (Warner 19). It is because Crosbie had done the same for her sister and Warner, the “child at [her] breast” (21) that the “St. Vincent and its Dependencies Slave Registry of 1817” identifies Warner by his first name, Ashton, and the column describing employment indicates he is “with his mother Placy in town” (317).[10] This anomalous situation, which refers to Warner’s life as a free Black until the age of ten or twelve in Kingstown, is at the centre of the dispute that causes his narrative to be written. Warner’s free life came to an end when he was seized by agents of James Wilson and returned to Cane Grove Estate.

---

[9] Chinosole is known by only a single name.

His situation, once bound to the plantation, expands the sense in which Warner participates in a collective self, the one that exists among the enslaved people of Cane Grove. Warner’s narrative has some of the features of *testimonio* because he too is objectified by the institution of slavery. In his narrative he reports not only on his own experiences, as a formerly free and then re-enslaved child and adult whose treatment was mitigated by the contention over his enslavement, but he also reports on the experience of the majority of the enslaved men and women, those in the field gang. He introduces his description of the regime under which this group works: “As I have spoken of the condition of the field negroes as being so much worse than that of the mechanics among whom I was ranked on the estate, I shall here endeavour to describe the manner in which the field gang were (sic) worked on Cane Grove estate” (33). Warner also marries, Sally, who is a member of this field gang. He describes the many physical punishments she suffers, especially after she bears their child and his care results in her late arrival for the five o’clock start of field work. The effect of witnessing all she endures is another aspect of the violence of the plantation: “It is a dreadful thing to be a field negro; and it is scarcely less dreadful, if one’s heart is not quite hardened, to have a wife, or a husband, or a child, in that condition” (46).

---

[10] The registry also identifies Ashton as “Creole,” in accordance with one of the original meanings of the word.

While Warner’s descriptions of the suffering of his community are an unambiguous example of testimony to the brutality of slavery, how his community shaped Warner’s understanding of who he is emphasizes the creole aspects of his selfhood. The African extended self is mitigated by the class structure of the colonial society in which Warner was embedded from birth. “[C]omplex aspects of class operated within slave society” (Aljoe, *Creole Testimonies* 32). These attitudes shape how Warner understands his own experiences. One day the Cane Grove manager tells Warner that there is not “sufficient job-work … about the homestall” (31) and that he will join the field gang. It is not only the prospect of having to do brutal work that makes him think he will “destroy” himself (32), it is also the change in his status on the estate. He explains, “it is always counted by negroes who have been above it, the worst of all punishments—the lowest step of disgrace—to be placed in the field gang. … I declare before

Almighty God that I would far rather die than submit to it" (32). Later, when Warner is in his twenties, the framing of the encouragement he receives from the enslaved who witness his confrontation with the manager over his refusal to work is also embedded in the existing social structure, "The other slaves told me that I had done right, for if they were in my case they would not work without wages—that, when they went to the town, all the free people were asking about me, and said that I must be fond of slavery to remain there, for I had no business upon the estate" (56-57). Before going to England and becoming involved with the Anti-Slavery Society neither Warner nor his friends challenge the buying and selling of human beings. Their contention, rather, is with Warner's particular position within the system of enslavement that has established the parameters of his life and left its mark on his self understanding.

Warner's experiences reflect Hall's observation that "in the histories of the migration, forced or free, of peoples who now compose the population of [Caribbean] societies, whose cultural traces are everywhere intermingled with one another, there is always the stamp of historical violence and rupture" ("Negotiating Caribbean Identities" 6). In fact, Hall characterizes creolization as emerging out of the violence of encounters among the cultures that met in the geographical space in and around the Caribbean Sea, as a result of which "[q]uestions of power, as well as issues of entanglement, are always at stake" ("Creolité" 16). The effect of these encounters is the production "as it were, of a 'third space' – a 'native' or indigenous vernacular space. … We must think of this emerging colonial space as … a space of unsettledness, of conquest, of forced exile, of unhomeliness" (Hall, "Creolité" 15, 18). In this space there is no possibility of a return to origins. All expressions of identity are entangled in the influence of the many cultures and the conditions under which Caribbean people came into contact with one another. Warner exists in this space.

Who is the person who has been formed by an African sense of the extended self, European social hierarchy and the violence of the plantation? How does he contribute to the invention of a tradition? What actions define his resistance? The word “foolish” becomes very important in Warner’s self-description. There is an implied development in his responsibility for his own condition as he matures. The apprehended ten or twelve-year-old cannot avoid being acted upon, but his continued subjugation as a young man results in the free Black people suggesting that he is “being a fool,” as we have already seen in the comments concerning his continuing presence at Cane Grove. The word “foolish” first appears as the description a former Cane Grove manager gives to anyone who would buy Warner, because “Mr. Wilson can give no title to [him]” (50). In the narrative Warner hears the word next in the exhortation of the current manager to “not be foolish” and to work as he had done along with “the other negroes” whom the manager describes as his equals (52). The use of this word ignites the feeling that Warner’s “heart would burst if [he] did not speak out all that was in it” (52). He takes responsibility for his own situation by declaring, “‘I will never work here again; I was a great fool to work as I did—every body says so; I will be such a fool no more’” (52). In the tradition of resistance Warner has the courage to insist that no one can compel his labour in spite of the threats of punishment. His consciousness of the brutality that surrounds him and his exceptional relationship to it is evident in his subsequent experiences with those in authority on the plantation.

Warner is inaugurated into the condition of slavery by what Benítez-Rojo identifies as its essential feature, violence (109). From the start of his life on Cane Grove Estate, however, he also finds ways to resist the use of force against him. Warner’s initial experience is not of the habitual and pervasive violence of being beaten with a lacerating cart whip, but the violence of an attack by the cooper who has charge of him: “holding me fast with one hand, he took a piece of wood … and struck me over the head again and again, till I was quite stunned with the pain, and the blood flowed from the wound" (27). Warner responds to this treatment by complaining to the white manager, and this complaint does result in an improvement in his circumstances. On the occasion that Warner is told that he is to move from working with the mechanics to the field gang, the manager seems to recognize that he is likely to lose Warner to suicide and "he soon sent after [Warner] and ordered [him] to another task" (32). When Warner is beaten over the head with a steel hoop by the manager he walks off the estate and returns to his mother in Kingstown. Motivated by the injustice of the situation he carries the bloodied hoop as evidence. This punishment had been administered after Warner had initiated and participated in the rescue of an ox. The situation results in an implied recognition of Warner's insistence on selfhood. This acknowledgement comes when the manager first sends an apology to Warner and then tells him, on his return to the estate, "[T]here is not a negro upon the estate I respect more than I do you" (56). Warner points out that if another enslaved person had acted as he had "he would be flogged to death" (57). Instead, Warner is threatened with a whipping in the future for a similar offense and such punishment is framed as the impersonal behaviour that would be required of the manager. But his resistance to slavery is powerful enough that it recasts his place within it and Warner reads the reactions to his behaviour as confirmation of his claim to being free (57).

Warner's experience is similar to one recounted at a later date in the autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Douglass resists being whipped by a "negro breaker" (Douglass 113). He refuses to accept punishment and this action fundamentally changes his relationship to slavery (Douglass 112-113). Recounting the mitigation in Warner's circumstances that resulted from his complaints after his first experience of the violence of the cooper's punishment, Warner develops an interpretation of that reaction. He explains, “Mr. Wilson, having no just claim to me, was fearful that ill usage would induce me to make my escape. I did not suspect this then, but I knew it when I grew older” (27-28). After the warning, which followed the beating with a steel hoop, Warner resists the manager with the thought, “I could make him pay dearly, when I claimed my freedom, for flogging a free man with the cart-whip” (56). Returning to the estate at the behest of his mother and aunt, Warner works only when he sees fit in spite of repeated threats. He replies aloud to the warning that he will be whipped, “You may do it as soon as you like, Mr. M’Fie, for it will only make me more resolute not to work. I have been made to work unjustly too long, and I will put up with it no more” (51). Warner finally leaves Cane Grove for the last time when the start of the cane harvest makes his ongoing refusal to work that much more precarious. Despite conditions that repeatedly deny his humanity Warner insists that he is a human being. Having been formed by the free Black community Warner resists slavery from his first experience of its brutality after being brought to the estate to the day he walks away from it. Even Wilson and his overseers have their behaviour changed by Warner’s resistance. His unique position makes it possible for him to refuse the insult of violence and to testify to his dignity as a free person.

2.4. The British Colonial Legal System

The colonial legal system is an important resource in the fight that Warner and his family undertake to be agents in their own lives. Recourse to the courts functions alongside and as an element of the Black community’s insistence that Warner is not property. Warner’s aunt and mother turn to the Vincentian legal authorities to release him from Cane Grove Estate and Warner himself seeks redress in English courts in order to return to St. Vincent as a free man. In this respect, regarding the relationship between Black people and the colonial legal system, Aljoe uses the West Indian vernacular phrase “going to law” to describe the efforts made by Crosbie and Warner's mother to prove that Warner is a free person. ("Going to Law" 351). "Going to law" is a particular instance of Black subjectivity. The laws of St. Vincent are also the context in which the evidence concerning the grounds for Warner's apprehension can be evaluated and the question can be asked, "Was Warner legally an enslaved person?" The documents that I reference in this chapter, though not conclusive, strongly point to the answer "no."

The free Black community in which Warner is raised displays an acute awareness, one that Warner is also educated in, of the role of the legal system in constituting their position in the colonial world. Aljoe notes:

> in another of the seemingly endless paradoxes inherent to the British imperial slave system, slaves—objects of property, yet human subjects—could, in certain situations, use the courts in the West Indies and in England on their own behalf, as legal agents to affirm their status as legal subjects deserving of the law's unbiased protection, and judgment. ("Going to Law" 351)

Although the legal system is organized by and for whites it too takes on a creole quality when it is accessed by the Black community. Manumission itself is governed by the legal framework that legitimizes the exchange of property and money; the bill of sale that is manumission defines membership in the free Black community. When describing the circumstances of his apprehension while at work as an apprentice Warner points out his status as a person who was able to act for himself by entering into a contract, "I … had signed the indenture myself, as a free black, by making a cross for my name" (22).

In fact, accommodation to the legal system of the West Indies shapes how Warner is taught to think about himself by his community. Eventually Mr. Wilson writes to suggest a compromise, one, Warner explains, that would "let me off the estate as a slave, and employ me as a free person receiving wages" (49). This option requires the posting of a part of Warner's value as human property and security for the remaining amount until his situation can be resolved by the courts. Since this arrangement is based on the assumption that Warner is an individual that can be bought and sold his friends advise him to reject it and he does. A deep understanding of the legal meaning of such an act is embedded in the reasoning Warner recounts, "my friends … told me that I had as good a claim to freedom as they had, and that I must not submit to be sold in any way, as that would be owning myself to have been justly enslaved" (49). The free Black community has a keen awareness of the enactment of selfhood in the context of the law. By the time Warner related this story to Strickland he insisted on his rights within the English legal system, showing that "knowledge of legal discourse provided slaves with a foundation to articulate a … complex and fluid subjectivity for themselves grounded in the syncretic social system of the West Indies" (Aljoe, "'Going to Law'" 374-375).

This is the context in which Warner's family acts to resist the re-enslavement of their nephew and son. They act as subjects who attempt to have the legal structures in which they are embedded override the caprice of a planter who may have been motivated to claim Warner for Cane Grove because he realizes, as he says at the time of Warner's apprehension, that before his purchase of the plantation "the best slaves had been sold off the estate" (21). The first instance of the family's failed attempts to use the law to save Warner is when his mother "entreated Mr. Wilson, if he thought he had a just claim for me, to put me in gaol till the question as to my freedom could be fairly settled" (25), which the planter refuses to do. Next Crosbie turns to the Governor of the island with the documents that support her claim to have purchased her sister and nephew. Though Warner reports an acknowledgement by the highest colonial official on the island of his aunt's right to determine what should happen to him, no restorative action results.

On another occasion, when Warner returns to town on a Sunday, his “mother and aunt … persuaded [him] not to run away, but to return to the estate, and be a good and dutiful lad to [his] master till they could obtain justice for [him]” (30). In answer to the question as to whether the family’s manumission documents were ever shown to Mr. Wilson’s attorney, Warner reports his mother answering, “‘Often and often; but there was no good to be done with him—no justice to be had’” (48). This answer attests to the persistence of a conviction that the legal system should serve Warner and his family.

In a final irony the same papers that were not acted on by the governor nor recognized by Wilson’s attorney prove sufficient when Warner does finally “run away from the estate” (58). After showing the documents to “the governor’s secretary … he [gives Warner] a pass to go to Grenada as a free man” (58). From Grenada Warner makes his way to England where he carries on the fight for his freedom, doing so for his own sake but also on behalf of the community that taught him he is free. Warner’s goal is to have Wilson, originally, and subsequently his estate recognize that it has no claim on him. By using the legal system to insist on his freedom Warner “challenges the ideology of slaves as simple objects” (Aljoe, "'Going to Law'" 368). To the end, Warner hopes to use the legal system to establish his manumission so he can fulfil his heart’s desire to return to St. Vincent as one recognized by all as a free man, and, to the end, the system fails him. Susana Strickland, Warner’s amanuensis, reports in a footnote “that it appears doubtful whether there is sufficient evidence, at least in this country, to support [Warner’s] claim to freedom” (64). In spite of this outcome the narrative presents a picture of creole agents attempting again and again to bend the world around them towards a justice that has been defined by others, guided by their understanding of themselves both as a community and as individuals who know that justice is their due. By using the legal system to insist on his freedom

Warner “challenges the ideology of slaves as simple objects” (Aljoe, “‘Going to Law’” 368), as did his family before him.

Having seen how Black Vincentians exercised their subjectivity within the colonial legal system, we can turn to the question of whether or not that system, had it functioned according to its own rules, would have recognized Warner as a free man. In addition to the evidence to the legitimacy of Warner’s claims that comes from the fact that he was granted permission to travel as a free man on the basis of the documentation shown to the governor’s secretary, is there other evidence that supports his manumission? The document that was examined by the English courts is included as an appendix to Warner’s narrative and provides a starting point. The narrative also implies some of the arguments regarding Warner’s identity that factor into Wilson’s claim to Warner. I will refer to the Slave Registry for Cane Grove Estate to settle this dispute concerning Warner’s identity. The ultimate determination of Warner’s status, however, depends on the accuracy with which he describes customary colonial practices.

The document which Strickland appends to Warner’s narrative records Crosbie’s manumission of Warner and is most likely the evidence that was deemed insufficient in an English court of law. Crosbie says that she does “manumit, enfranchise, and for ever set free from slavery and servitude, all those three negroes and two mulatto slaves, named Plassey, John Baptiste, Ashton, Margaret, and Archibald” (66). In addition, she stipulates that she has accepted “the sum of five shillings currency” (66) as partial consideration in this undertaking, completing the purchase of freedom by her family and friends. Crosbie’s X is witnessed by the document’s signatories. This document might not have satisfied the judge in Warner’s case since there is no additional documentation of Crosbie’s original purchase of Plassey and Warner. This situation is hinted at by Strickland’s comment that there is not enough evidence “at least in this country”

(64) to support Warner's claim, though the original agreement with the former owner of Cane Grove Estate may exist in St. Vincent. This manumission document is shown to the governor of the island at the time of Warner's capture, so such a document did exist at that time.

The narrative does not indicate that Plassey's manumission was ever contested and the questions related to Warner's capture have to do with his identity. Warner reports that the first instance of such issues is when "the Attorney General, who looked over the papers, … asked my mother whether she was certain that I was the very child she had at the breast when she was sold to Daphne Crosbie, and if she had any person that could prove it in court?" He adds, "My mother said that I was her first-born child; and she could bring respectable persons to prove that I was an infant at the breast at the time Daphne Crosbie bought her" (48). The issue of Warner's identity is again raised when he shows documents to Mr. Donald, the former estate manager who had apprehended him: "When I showed him my papers, he was surprised, and blamed me very much for not bringing them forward before. 'I knew,' he said, 'that you were free; but I did not think that you had any papers to show. Your name is not upon the books; but we had an old worn-out slave, called Ashton, upon the estate, and Mr. Wilson claims you under his name'" (49-50). Donald's reported response can be compared with the 1817 Slave Registry entry for "Ashton." There the only entry for the name Ashton identifies him as "absent" from the estate, "with his mother Placy in Town" and aged "12" (317). Placy is not on the registry under any spelling. The fact that Ashton is identified by his relationship with his mother confirms his identity. He can not therefore be claimed under another listing on an inventory of enslaved people. Secondly, his mother is already manumitted. The age given on the registry is two years more than Warner's self reported age at the time of his capture, which he gives as 10 (20). Nevertheless, Warner's age and identity can be linked to the year his mother was purchased. According to Simon Smith

"Wilson acquired Cane Grove from Warner Ottley in 1807" (Smith). It is just prior to the sale of the plantation that Crosbie purchases Plassey and her son (Warner 17). In 1831, the year Strickland writes the narrative, Warner is "about twenty-four years of age" (Warner 12, 16). He then would have been born in or about the year that Wilson bought Cane Grove, that is, in or about the year that his mother was purchased by his aunt. Even accepting Warner's age as reported on the Slave Registry in 1817, that would still make him only two at the time of his mother's manumission.

The remaining issue is the validity of Warner's claim that "in the Island of St. Vincent's it has always been a customary rule that the young child at the breast is sold as one with its mother, and does not become separate property till it is five or six years old" (21). Warner was certainly young enough to be considered a "child at the breast" when his mother was purchased. According to Vincentian precedents he should be considered as free through his aunt's purchase of his mother, thus making Wilson's claims to him illegal. "[S]ince he has court-sanctioned proof of his freedom, that freedom should be recognized" (Aljoe, "'Going to Law'" 368). However, the only corroborating evidence attesting to the practice of the very young child being sold as one with the mother that I have found to date comes from the narrative itself. On the occasions when Warner's documentation is accepted by colonial officials, whether that be the governor who first examines the papers and asks questions concerning Warner's age at the time of his mother's manumission or the secretary that issues the pass that allows Warner to go to Grenada, the behaviour of these functionaries seems to confirm the legitimacy of the "child at breast" argument. That Warner's status as a free Black person is not respected after the age of ten is an indictment of the colonial legal system. That Warner and his family continue to press for his freedom is a testimony to their ongoing resistance against enslavement and to their personhood.

2.5. The Anti-Slavery Society Document

While *Slavery as Described by a Slave* provides testimony as to the manner in which both the Black community and the colonial legal system enabled the emergence of Warner's intentionality, the narrative itself is an instance of creole testimony, one that enables the subjectivity it identifies. The narrative details the abuse that is fundamental to slavery and illustrates the link between violence and the emergence of a creole society. The document containing Warner's story bears the imprint of the colonial dynamic. The Anti-Slavery Society, an organization that emerges among the British middle class, reflects the hierarchy of its society and Warner's need for an amanuensis means that his document has more than one voice. These factors make the publication creole in its very nature. Meanwhile, the narrative creates Warner, the creole agent, whose testimony contributes to ending the regime of slavery.

Benítez-Rojo explores the role of violence and resistance to violence in shaping a creole subjectivity like Warner's. *Repeating Islands* analyzes the central role of coercive and corrosive force in shaping Caribbean culture. Benítez-Rojo starts with one of its first critics, Las Casas. His early description of the economic foundation of colonialism shows that he "discovered the plantation's vicious circle: the more sugar the more Negroes; the more Negroes, the more violence; the more violence, the more sugar; the more sugar, the more Negroes" (109). The centrality of violence in Warner's experience, as we have seen, begins with his capture and then includes both the casual brutality he endures and the systematic punishment he witnesses. Such brutality existed on plantations because "the African was reduced to living under an incarcerating regimen of forced labor [,] … a deculturating regime that took direct action against his language, his religion, and his customs" (Benítez-Rojo 70). Benítez-Rojo details the high mortality rate on plantations to illustrate the centrality of violence. "One of every three slaves died during his first three years of intense exploitation." On specific islands "half of Barbados's slave population had to be renewed every eight years" whereas in "Jamaica it has been observed that 40 percent of the slaves died in a period of three years" (70). These statistics suggest the conditions on Vincentian estates, since "the great majority of Caribbean nations present parallel socioeconomic structures, which were determined by the same concurrent phenomenon: the plantation" (Benítez-Rojo 38). The lists of the many deceased of all ages enumerated in the Slave Registry for St. Vincent and its dependencies indicates the violence done there to the enslaved people.[11] Warner reports that "[i]n the cultivation of the canes … work is so hard that any slave, newly put to it, in the course of a month becomes so weak that often he is totally unfit for labour" (34). Plantation labour is treated as a disposable commodity.

For Benítez-Rojo the European imposition of the plantation and its violence shaped the creole nature of the Caribbean and "the generalized historical convergences shown by the territories in the region always [relate] to that purpose" (Benítez-Rojo 38). What are the common responses to the ubiquity of the violence? The answer leads Benítez-Rojo to the concept of "an island that repeats itself" (24), because "the Peoples of the Sea proliferate …[and] [c]ertain dynamics of their culture also repeat" (16). The plantation makes "performance and rhythm, … [done] 'in a certain kind of way,' something remote that reproduces itself and that carries the desire to sublimate apocalypse and violence" (Benítez-Rojo 16). This is the performance and the rhythm of resistance and accommodation that is Warner's narrative. Benítez-Rojo says that "[c]ulture is a discourse, a language, and as such it has no beginning or end and is always in transformation, since it is always looking for the way to signify what it cannot manage to signify" (20). It is the elusive sublimation of violence that is being sought. This attempt and this failure are why créolité is a "supersyncretic culture characterized by its complexity, its individualism, and its instability" (Benítez-Rojo 46). The syncretic, complex responses that Warner's Black community mounts to his re-enslavement are also the characteristics of the narrative itself. This singular story is one of flux and change.

---

[11] The first Slave Registry for St. Vincent and its Dependencies, and the other British Caribbean colonies, was created in 1817 and served as the reference for the registry for the following years, 1822,1825,1828, and 1831,1834 combined. The registries, following that of 1817, list by name, the "Increase" and "Decrease" in enslaved people, rather than the whole population of an estate. On Cane Grove Estate, after the 1825 tabulation, the only reason given for "Decrease" is death. Digitized microfilm copies of the registers are accessible from the web page list on the "Works Cited" page.

Additionally, as Hall says, "creolization … entails inequality, hierarchization, issues of domination and subalternity, mastery and servitude, control and resistance" ("Creolité" 16). These matters arise when Warner's family challenges his subaltern position, as has been noted in the discussions of the Black community and the colonial legal system, but such issues are also embedded in the creation of the record of those experiences. The narrative illustrates the problems of domination in two ways. The first instance of the colonial hierarchy being reproduced in the narrative is in Strickland's introduction to the material that is added to Warner's narrative. She explains:

> to enable the reader to compare the details given by Ashton with those recorded by intelligent and conscientious eye-witnesses from England, I have subjoined, as an Appendix, the very important testimonies on this subject of three highly respectable clergymen of the established Church, and of an excellent Wesleyan Missionary. (16)

This addition raises questions of hegemony. Warner's recorded evidence is placed at the beginning of the tract. "THE TESTIMONY OF FOUR CHRISTIAN MINISTERS, RECENTLY

RETURNED FROM THE COLONIES, ON THE SYSTEM OF SLAVERY AS IT NOW EXISTS (capitalization in the original)" that follows comprises the largest section of the publication (2). The juxtaposition of these accounts from white clergy with Warner's implies that he is to be believed, since these men in positions of authority concur with Warner in their descriptions of the conditions experienced by the enslaved populations in British colonies. Warner's voice counts because their voices support his and the colonial hierarchy is reinscribed. Secondly, since Warner has not learnt to write, he relies on Strickland and the Anti-Slavery Society to make his story available to the public. He is also dependent on the sale of the tract to meet his immediate needs as he is "without any adequate means of subsistence" (15). Warner must accommodate himself to the hierarchies of England as he had in St. Vincent, which gives the narrative the same creole subjectivity that he himself manifests.

Returning to Aljoe and her application of the characteristics of *testimonio* to the construction of the subjectivity in the narratives of enslaved men and women, Warner can be understood as an example of

> the slave subject [who is] a mediated construct, formed in contact, conflict and accommodation with others. This reconstruction of the social subject, [is] one that emphasizes multiplicity rather than singularity …. The collective subject is not less than the singular subject, but a different subjectivity due to the different exigencies of slave life. (Aljoe, *Creole Testimonies* 55)

The collective self that emerges from Warner's narrative belongs to a community of free Black people but, through his experience of the plantation, also to a community of enslaved Black people. In the narrative he is also the subject that is produced through his contact with Susanna Strickland, his amanuensis, and Pringle, the "Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society" (Warner 4).

How does Warner's involvement with the Anti-Slavery Society shape the creole agency of his story? McBride approaches this question through consideration of the narrative as a text for an audience. He finds that the "discursive reader, which the slave implies in his or her testimony, is in fact a confluence of political, moral, and social discursive concerns that animate, necessitate, and indeed make possible slave testimony itself" (151). McBride notes that the enslaved narrator speaks as a witness to an audience that is debating slavery (151) and so Warner is formed by that debate. Specifically, it is because he has come into contact with members of the Anti-Slavery Society that Warner has the opportunity to enact his subjectivity by asserting his identity as a free person engaged in resisting slavery through his testimony. Strickland penned Mary Prince's narrative as well.[12] McBride notes that "[b]y assuming the position of narrator, Prince becomes the subject of narration, rather than its object" (86). The same can be said of Warner. Using what Strickland notes is "his own expression," Warner concludes his description of what is endured by the field gang with the exhortation, "I hope every good Englishman will daily pray to God, that the yoke of slavery may soon be broken from off the necks of my unfortunate countrymen for ever" (43). He explicitly fulfills the role of subject seeking to affect both the lives of those who read his narrative and those of the enslaved. Warner's wish can be seen as an example of what Benítez-Rojo describes as the desire to sublimate violence.

In its opposition to the accounts of those who were supporters of the West Indian planters the narrative is also an instance of a subjectivity formed in conflict. Disputation, as Aljoe says, is typical of *testimonio* and of the context that formed the narratives of enslaved witnesses. McBride makes the point that Mary Prince's statement, "I have been a slave—I have felt what a slave feels, and I know what a slave knows," (quoted by McBride 85) establishes a unique basis for her authority. Warner shares this authority; for him, as "for Prince, the experience of slavery represents a different kind of epistemology, and … one of the crises of witnessing slavery is the very problem of how to narrate slave experience to an audience outside that epistemological community of slaves" (McBride 85). As he addresses his contemporary audience the conflict Warner engages in is over the very meaning of what the enslaved workers experience.

---

[12] Aljoe points out that Mary Prince's narrative is the only text considered in *Creole Testimonies* that is well known (5). Her narrative was written two months before Warner's (*Creole Testimonies* 10). Prince endured such extensive and prolonged abuse while enslaved that she took her last owners to court in England, which led to a public controversy over the case (*Creole Testimonies* 10).

In 1834, for example, the same year that the Slavery Abolition Act went into effect, the second edition of Mrs. Carmichael's account of colonial life in West Indies was published. She bases her first volume on her experiences in St. Vincent. Like Warner, Carmichael describes the work of manuring the cane fields, and what she claims is the preferred method of transporting the manure:

> [Manure] is carried … by negroes, from the pens, in light wicker baskets. These they carry on their heads. … Their carrying manure in this way appears disagreeable work; but they laugh at the stranger who supposes it to be so to the negro, because it would be so to him; the truth is, in so far as cleanliness is concerned, the negro is perfectly indifferent; these sort of things do not affect their personal comfort. (105)

Warner's knowledge of slavery offers those who read his words a challenge to Carmichael's claims. He speaks from a knowledge that he makes available to those who want the truth about what his fellows endure:

> When they are manuring the ground, the slaves are forced to carry the wet manure in open baskets upon their heads. This is most unpleasant as well as severe work. It is a

> usual occupation for wet weather, and the moisture from the manure drips constantly down upon the faces, and over the body and clothes of the slaves. They are forced to run with their loads as fast as they can; and, if they flag, the driver is instantly at their heels with the cart-whip. (36)

The conflict over slavery brings Warner's narrative into existence. By describing how the field gang must work and how they are punished the narrative exists to undo these conditions. In describing the reality of the tasks the field gang is forced to engage in Warner is a subject who not only prevents the erasure of particular experiences endured by the enslaved workers but who undoes their misrepresentation.

The narrative indicates that Warner has already been as compelling in person as he hopes to be when his words are read. His testimony had one of its first effects on Strickland and created the precondition for the narrative coming into existence. Warner has an additional field of agency within the anti-slavery movement and in her introduction, Strickland attests to the influence of Warner and Price:

> The entire change in my own ideas, in regard to slavery, was chiefly effected (sic) by the frequent opportunities … of conversing with several negroes, both male and female, who had borne in their own persons the marks of the brand and the whip, and had drank the bitter cup to its dregs. To their simple and affecting narratives I could not listen unmoved. The voice of truth and nature prevailed over my former prejudices. I beheld slavery unfold in all its revolting details; and, having been thus irresistibly led to peruse the authentic accounts of the real character and effects of the system, I resolved no longer to be an accomplice in its criminality, though it were only by keeping silence regarding it. (10-11)

Further, the encounter with Strickland creates the circumstances in which Warner has a voice that both describes and shapes history. Through Strickland the creole culture that formed Warner is heard. The very possibility of his speaking depends on others. As Aljoe argues, however, the individuals who generate the first-hand accounts of West Indian slavery can be heard: “The singular voice is not just wishful thinking … but rather is part of the implied autobiographical contract, which assumes a transparency between narrator and author.” The effectiveness of these testimonies requires a “transparency and authenticity” that the editors “attempted to inscribe it into the narratives” (“Caribbean Slave Narrative” 4). Strickland assures her readers, “I have adhered strictly to the simple facts, adopting, wherever it could conveniently be done, [Warner’s] own language, which, for a person in his condition, is remarkably expressive and appropriate” (15).

What, then, is revealed by Warner’s voice? Warner also becomes more intensely aware of the suffering of all the enslaved. He is first a witness arguing for his own right to freedom, but then becomes the man who seeks the freedom of all the enslaved by testifying to the violence they endure. Strickland notes that Warner “feels his importance in the scale of humanity” (14), a humanity he shares with his wife, Sally; with her parents who bless their marriage; with Ben, beside whom he lives as a boy; and even with the cooper, who is “very cruel to those of his own colour who [are] placed under him” (26). This humanity is at odds with slavery.

Angelo Costanzo points out the “inhumanity caused by the British slave law” that Warner and Mary Prince detail, and he sees their descriptions as part of a “broader attack upon the entire British legal establishment—its laws, courts, procedures, and especially its selfish and apathetic members” (quoted by Aljoe in “Going to Law” 371). Warner’s narrative was among those “submitted before Parliament as evidence of the excesses inherent to and facilitated by the system of enslavement" (Aljoe, "'Going to Law'" 358), the evidence that "played a positive role in Parliament's decision to pass the Emancipation Act in 1833" (Aljoe, "'Going to Law'" 373). Warner's final identity is as a voice that pushed colonial society towards accepting the humanity of the enslaved population and according them freedom.

2.6. Conclusion

Since March 27, 1817, Warner's name has been listed among the three hundred and forty people who were registered as the property of James Wilson on that date. Since March 1, 1831, an account of Warner's life has existed in print. Today his voice speaks through those pages to give life to the name Ashton and he speaks, as a proxy, for the remaining 339 people on that Slave Registry who are also identified, for the most part, only by their first names. His testimony invites readers to ask about all the stories that were never told by the people who are represented by the thousands of names in the other registries of the enslaved people of the West Indies and by the millions of names on the inventories that exist, may have been lost or were never created in the colonial Caribbean.

Warner shapes and renews his world out of the materials that colonial society has brought together. The African traditions of community are expressed in Warner's original manumission by his aunt, Daphne Crosbie. Once she has bought her own freedom her life-work is to do the same for as many others as possible in her family and on Cane Grove Estate. The British colonial legal system is the institution through which Warner's aunt and mother seek to undo Warner's re-enslavement. When this effort fails, Warner hopes that the English courts will do what the colonial courts failed to do. Finally, Warner hopes to effect a change in his own life and the lives of others through the auspices of an anti-slavery society. He leaves *Negro Slavery Described by* *a Negro* as testimony to all he and his family did to fight for freedom. In the creole world of Hall's creative space Warner bears witness to a Vincentian culture of resistance to oppression.

Warner's opposition to the erasure that is slavery is enacted on four planes. The first plane is the record of how those who were entrapped by slavery attempted and sometimes succeeded in emancipating themselves and others through the routes the legal structure afforded them. The second level is the story of insisting on selfhood within the reality of enslavement, in spite of the attorneys, the overseers and those who owned plantations who all insisted that such a selfhood did not exist. The third plane of resistance is that of providing a counter-testimony to the false claims of the pro-slavery writers. Fourth, as Benítez-Rojo says, this resistance participates in the performance and rhythm that begin to fulfil the desire to sublimate apocalypse and rupture in the act of giving an account of oneself. In the oft quoted words of Fanon, "the nation's spoken words shape the world while at the same time renewing it" (*A Dying Colonialism* 95). Warner shapes and renews the world, the Caribbean, St. Vincent.

Chapter 3.

Hearing Ecstasy: *The Angel Horn*

Love moves to claim / to claim our secret name.

(Shake Keane "The Angel Horn," from *The Angel Horn*)

3.1. Introduction

The Vincentian Ellsworth (Shake) McGranahan Keane (1927-1997) is included in *Contemporary Poets of the English Language*.[13] In this 1970 reference book, Keane explains why he no longer considered himself a poet; since 1965, he says, he had felt "[j]azz … seem[ed] a more appropriate form for what [he] wish[ed] to express" (Murphy 587). The 2005 posthumous collection, *The Angel Horn*, shows that when Keane returned to writing poetry a few years after making this statement, he found a way to integrate jazz and poetic sensibilities. The poems created over the course of forty years and published in *The Angel Horn* (1) include many examples of the skill with which Keane, as he said in 1970 of his early poetry, "attempt[s] to understand and re-structure poetically the tragedy, hope, conservatism, and ecstasy of peasant and folk life" (Murphy 587). The poems that are the focus of this study, "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso," testify to "the tragedy, hope, conservatism and ecstasy" of the lives of Vincentians in a variety of situations.[14] In doing so they "claim our secret name" (Keane "The Angel Horn," *The Angel Horn* 182), the one name the listener and the speaker of the poems share. What Shoshana Felman says of Paul Celan's Holocaust poetry can be said of these Keane poems: they strive "toward the Du, the you, the listener, over the historical abyss from which the singing has originated and across the violence and the unending, shattered resonances of the breakage of the word" (37). In Keane's case the bridge between poet and audience also provides access to the possibilities that the broken word has brought into the open. Philip Nanton characterizes Keane as experiencing "'joy' and 'delight' [which was] manifested in an underlying optimism" throughout his life (*Riff* 84). The ecstasy Keane both sees and creates is made up of the joy of communion with the other.

---

[13] Keane, like many Caribbean people, was best known by his nickname, Shake, the name he also used as a performer and poet. Keane's critical work appears under the name Ellsworth McGranahan Keane.

[14] Quotes from *The Angel Horn* using capital letters indicate Keane's decision to capitalize both individual letters and whole words or phrases in the title and in the text.

"ROUNDTRIP," written in the decade that accounts for the largest number of poems in the collection, opens *The Angel Horn*. The poem's speaker lives in England, from "AROUND 1950" (line 1) (S. Keane, *The Angel Horn* 3) until his return to St. Vincent twenty years later. Taken from "The Wisdom Keepers" section of *The Angel Horn*, the 1973 poem "Kaiso Kaiso," is written "in the voice of … [a] traditional language form" (125).[15] In fact, the title "Kaiso Kaiso" refers to a type of song that later became known as calypso. In these two poems Keane continues the resistance to colonial domination that is a feature of St. Vincent's identity. What Linda Craft says of testimonial literature of Central America, that it is part of a nation building project and "can even coexist with poetry" (22), can be said of what Keane does in these poems. "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso," create a renewed sense of self but also, like testimony, a renewed sense of community. Keane undertakes this work using the shards of the cultures that colonialism has brought to bear on Vincentian lives.

---

[15] From this point on page references to (S. Keane *The Angel Horn*) will be collected at the end of the sentence and identified where necessary as (*Angel*).

This chapter will begin with a short account of both Keane's life and the scholarship relevant to his poetry. Philip Nanton, his friend and fellow Vincentian, provides biographical information and identifies the particular experiences that shaped Keane as a poet. Nanton's insights draw, in part, on Keane's own critical work, as does this chapter. In a 1951 talk, "The Contribution of the West Indies to Literature," Keane identifies optimism as a central feature of Caribbean poetry. In a later interview Keane also acknowledges the influence of modern poets such as T. S. Eliot on his work. Laurence A. Breiner, in *An Introduction to West Indian Poetry*, speaks to the impact of Eliot in the Caribbean and how this influence is folded into the undertaking that is West Indian poetry. This scholar also provides a description of the region's poetic process: "[t]he operation of the creole imagination in its own space, at home in the Caribbean is best described as *bricolage*—the inspired tinkering that ingeniously works with what is at hand" (200). Keane's writing is an instance of such bricolage. A return to Nanton, focusing on his understanding of the Vincentian respect for a "man of words," provides a context for *One a Week with Water* and this background serves as an introduction to the reading of "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso." The influence of jazz on both Caribbean poetry and Keane's work, as discussed by Keane, Breiner and Nanton, leads into the detailed examination of the "inspired tinkering" of "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso." The poems both testify to the ruptures of colonialism and imagine a renewed Vincentian identity that heals those wounds.

Personal circumstances had a bearing on Keane's writing. His childhood gave him a love of books and music. Keane was taught to play the trumpet by his father and he performed publicly from a young age. In his early twenties, while working as a teacher of French and music, Keane published two collections of poetry that were influenced by English poets but addressed Vincentian themes. In 1952, he left for London to study literature (Nanton, "Real

Keane"). There Keane encountered other West Indians of the Windrush generation who, as Commonwealth citizens, were allowed to travel to England on British passports after World War II to seek employment ("Windrush Generation"). Work as a musician overtook both formal literature studies and Keane's poetry writing. Gaining fame as a jazz improvisor and a skilled musician, Keane played the trumpet and flugel horn for twenty years in England and Europe (Nanton, "Real Keane"). From 1952 to 1959 he was variously a contributor, presenter and producer for the BBC radio program, *Caribbean Voices*, which included poetry and jazz (Murphy 587).

In 1972, the government invited Keane to return to St. Vincent to head a ministry of culture. The position was short-lived as the party that was elected two years later disbanded Keane's department, so he took a position as a secondary school principal (Nanton, "Real Keane"). *One a Week with Water*, an extended poem, was completed in 1976 and dedicated in part to those who were Keane's students at that time. It was published in 1979, having won the Cuban Casa de las Americas prize for Anglophone poetry (Nanton *Riff* 82). Both "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso" were also written in this period. In 1981 Keane left St. Vincent for New York, where he wrote the title poem of *The Angel Horn*, as well as "Book Four – Palm and Octopus" and "Book Six – Brooklyn Themes." He resided in the city until his death, from ill health, during a 1997 tour of Norway (Nanton, "Real Keane"), leaving behind his jazz recordings, published and unpublished poetry and his early thoughts on West Indian literature.

In his critical work of 1951 Keane discussed the development of writing that could be identified as West Indian. He recognized the emergence of a regional language, language which came to be very significant in his own work and in the poetry of the region, as discussed in

Chapter 1. At this earlier time, he argued that "a strong West Indian idiom is being evolved … and at present the West Indianism is to be found mainly in the *atmosphere* of Caribbean writing, the spirit of it" (E. M. Keane 102). Keane saw a spirit of joyful optimism (102). He still referred to the "obvious limitations of dialect," but he had already recognized "that certain subjects, or rather the *approach* to certain themes may be best handed in dialect" (E. M. Keane 105). By the 1970s Keane had embraced Nation Language and helped other writers to see its literary potential. Linton Kwesi Johnson, for instance, reports that hearing Keane read "Nancitori" in the 1970s helped the dub poet to find his Jamaican voice ("Launch of *Riff*"). This verse play about the spider trickster Anancy, included in *The Angel Horn*, moves from Standard English to Vincentian Nation Language to an evocation of African song. The alternative rhythms that Kamau Brathwaite identifies with Africa and labels Nation Language in 1984 had already found their way into Keane's poetry when Brathwaite coined the term.

Breiner's observation that Caribbean poetry is an instance of a culture of *bricolage* provides a context for the choices made by poets as they grapple with the influences from Europe, Africa and the Americas. In *An Introduction to West Indian Poetry* Breiner details the interplay of effects from the European literary traditions, the persistence of an African identity through West Indian folk practices, and the emergence of Caribbean identities. Keane's poetry demonstrates just such mixed origins. Keane's British colonial education required proficiency in Standard English and immersion in the British literary canon. Referring to his early work Keane cites the influence of T. S. Eliot, Walt Whitman, and English poets of the nineteen thirties (Murphy 587). The hegemony of English had becoming troubling for Keane by the time he writes the 1973 poem "Private Prayer." He asks, "[w]hy I don't dream / In the same language I live in" (lines 10-11) (*Angel* 15). But which language is used for dreaming and which is used for living? The confusion is not resolved. The problem of “good English” is suggested by the poem’s ambiguity. The unease Keane conveys is not his alone. Breiner shows how from the mid-twentieth century forward the poetic forms inherited from Europe created “a sort of Foucauldian epistemic misfit” which produced in West Indian writers “a new consciousness that their perception of their surrounding was mediated by ‘the filter of English eyes’” (108).

The turn to Africa, as an alternative to Europe, becomes a turn to what Africa has become in the Caribbean. While the Black Power movement was a factor in this reorientation, some nationalists, recalling the interest of Black intellectuals in Africa earlier in the century, objected to the “slavish importation of the North American version of ideas which had actually originated in the Caribbean of Césaire, Fanon and [C. L. R.] James” (Breiner 188). The turn was to Africa as a presence in Black Caribbean culture, the Zion evoked by Rastafarianism or the almost lost origin of Anancy stories. The reappraisal of Standard English resulted in a turn to “an ‘African’ aesthetic of transient performances and disposable artifacts (the carnival mask was often proposed as a touchstone)” and to a rejection of the “associations of print.” As a result “[i]n the early 1970s … ‘orality’ and ‘orature’ … were becoming powerful shibboleths” (Breiner 189). “Kaiso Kaiso,” a poem that uses the oral tradition of calypso to create a free verse poem is written at this time, offering one possibility for reconciling performance and print and suggesting the role of the Americas as a place for such reconciliations.

The reformulation of Africa in the Caribbean suggests an integration that is part of the creole culture of the Americas. It is not only Africa but also European and Asian countries of origin that are reimagined. Breiner sees the Americas as the place where poetry, as Derek Walcott proposes in the “Muse of History,” can be “a successful confrontation with fictions about the past [that results in] successful *bricolage*” (Breiner 204). Keane also challenges conventual versions of origin stories and Nanton shows how Vincentian folk culture contributes to the poetry that results.

Using a local term identified in a sociolinguistics study of the importance of verbal performance in rural Vincentian culture, Nanton calls Keane a "man-of-words" (Nanton, "Keane's Nonsense" 87). Both the performances of these village 'men-of-words' and some of Keane's poems, as with "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso," use humour to address oppressive situations. The humour serves to "challenge the authoritative, the closed and the serious, by privileging the 'unofficial,' the *carnivalesque*" (Nanton, "Keane's Nonsense" 74). While Nanton's observations concern *One a Week with Water*, folk culture and rural sensibilities offer alternatives to middle class conformity in other Keane poems as well. Nanton argues that *One a Week with Water* "demonstrates the nature of folk culture's oppositional *and* regenerative role, not just for certain elements of the society but for the whole of a society" (Nanton, "Keane's Nonsense" 75). The turn to folk culture as a resource allows Keane, as a member of the middle class, to access the authority of lived experiences that informs testimonials. "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso" both suggest regeneration for the island and the region because newly combined elements of the world as it is allow the community and the individual to imagine a better world. In keeping with the "obsession with identity" that Keane said characterized his earliest poetry (Murphy 587), both the group and the individual understand themselves anew. As with the Vincentian "man of words" Keane illustrates "that a culture is being formed out of a combination of accident and tradition. This process of formation … is chaotic, at times repetitive, but it is also creative" (Nanton, "Keane's Nonsense" 89). The examination of "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso" bears out Nanton's claim, and shows how this process is also jazz-like.

Keane and Breiner speak to the general influence of jazz on poetry and Nanton links jazz and delight in Keane's work. In a 1992 interview Keane explains how jazz can be seen in the structural features of particular poems. Nanton quotes Keane:

> "There are certain kinds of structure, certain habits, that all jazz men seem to have, and if you find a poem that uses what would parallel those habits you might say, for example, that is a jazz poem. For example the riff, the repeated phrase, that happens in jazz a lot. Then you have the sudden juxtaposition of certain elements. Then there is the feeling that the poem is improvised . . . although . . . the structure just leaps out at you and the care and craftsmanship is there . . . but some [poems] are highly crafted but don't strike you as highly crafted."("Keane's Nonsense" 78)

These observations also suggest the structure of the Keane poems discussed in this chapter. Breiner looks at the specific influence of jazz on Brathwaite's poetry, which in turn shaped English Caribbean poetry. Brathwaite's writing shows that "[w]hat a jazzman does with the old standards is for [him] also a model for what the West Indian poet, indeed any (post-)colonial poet, can do with Standard English and its tradition" (Breiner 203). Nanton considers Keane's verbal play, which also reflects elements of folk culture, as a jazz element. Describing "the deft and original … linguistic improvisation" in Keane's poetry, Nanton also notes that "the linguistic vivacity and playfulness … privilege a sense of celebration" (*Riff* 92, 99). In spite of the pitfalls in his life, joy, delight and playfulness, qualities found in both his music and poetry, were important to Keane (*Riff* 84, 99). "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso" illustrate how improvisation can be craftmanship in the cause of creating ecstasy.

3.2. “ROUNDTRIP”

Reflecting Keane’s experience of living in London and returning to St. Vincent, “ROUNDTRIP” is concerned with the evolution of identity in the speaker and a group of his compatriots as they experience the challenges of both being abroad and at home. This poem is an example of the improvisational quality Keane was able to achieve in free verse, where what seems to be the simple collection of reminiscences is revealed to be a set of variations on a theme. In form and content the poem celebrates the bricolage that is the Vincentian identity that develops both as a reflection of and in opposition to the island’s colonial history. In “ROUNDTRIP” Vincentian diversity emerges from the cross currents of history experienced by the characters in England and on the island, including currents which uncover the persistence and significance of indigeneity locally and within the region.

Multiple ethnicities characterize these Vincentians, reflecting the enslaved populations brought from Africa, the indentured populations brought first from Portugal and then from India, and the population that benefited from this movement of people. The speaker introduces himself and his friends as they adapt to the cold in London: “Our fingers were different-coloured / especially without gloves” (lines 13-14) (*Angel* 3). Although we are told that “[i]n those days the Caribs didn’t come into it much,” (line29) Keane draws attention to the Indigenous member of the group, the only person named from the beginning, by identifying him as “a Carib from Owia named Nero” (line 23) (*Angel* 4, 3). Once the Vincentians have returned home, the speaker, in what is presented as an afterthought, also tells the reader, “(Oh I forget to tell you all the time / one of us white)” (line 209-10) (*Angel* 10). However, from the start these people are “the fingers of one hand” (line 4), and at the end of the poem Nero’s words return to this motif as he identifies the group as “he five finger” (line 249) (*Angel* 3, 14). In “ROUNDTRIP” the speech of this diverse band of Vincentians reflects both who they are individually and as a group, and where they are.

The experience of life in London and the encounters with people from around the world are reflected in the language “ROUNDTRIP” uses to describe those experiences. The poem uses Nation Language more frequently after the return to St. Vincent. In the first 204 lines, Standard English is the norm, the shared colonial language, with an occasional nod to Nation Language. In the first stanza, the verb in the line “we really uses to do that,” (line 6) contributes to establishing the group’s Vincentian identity as they count their five fingers (*Angel* 3). One adaptation to everyday English speech suggests others when the speaker draws attention to the fact that the Vincentians drank beer “out of a big glass -- / later we called it a mug” (lines 11-12) (*Angel* 3). The identity and the speech of the speaker and his friends are further shaped by the influx of the Windrush migrants, so the group “had long ago stopped calling [them]selves Vincentians / because the family name had changed to Westindian” (lines 152-53) (*Angel* 8). A language of solidarity develops and the speaker says, “[b]y instinct we started to call ourselves / Sisters and brothers / (But nobody can peace and love sweet like a Jamaican)” (lines 178-80) (*Angel* 9). Keane juxtaposes Standard English and the West Indian lexicon, giving the reader the experience of the speaker’s speech continuum while celebrating Nation Language with a turn of phrase. The 1970 return to St. Vincent is marked by the local pronunciation (een), speech rhythms (**so**) and grammar (we smiles) the speaker uses to describe the problems of readjustment: “Well we not settlin een **so** well / But we smiles a lot when we think about the family” (lines 211-12) (*Angel* 10). The use of Nation Language is common in the second half of the poem but it is not the only change in language that reflects changes in circumstances. Responding to problems resulting from the return to St. Vincent the youngest and the oldest members of the group, each for their own reasons, “lef cool so go buy a new book / name Teach Yourself Spanish” (lines 254-55) (*Angel* 14).

In “ROUNDTRIP” it is suggested that the anti-colonial, social justice movements of Latin America, which later produced *testimonios,* are influencing mid-twentieth century Vincentian identity. Hence the need to learn Spanish at the end of the poem comes after evidence of the influence of other anti-imperial and anti-racist struggles. In part because of the ethos of the multi-ethnic immigrant community in London and in part because of the experience of British racism the Vincentians/West Indians reformulate their connection to the past and reimagine their future. The mix in London includes “[t]he Chinese … Spanish people … Indians-and-so … Africans” (lines 30, 38, 42 and 47) (*Angel* 4). Suggesting the influence of the Negritude movement, Vincentians discover a past shared with Africans who “knew where there were drums / if you asked them” (lines 54-55), while the Vincentians “let the Africans into the secrets / of the Calypso” (lines 86-87) (*Angel* 4, 6). This exchange is before “the Westindies came to London” (line 61) (*Angel* 5). After their arrival “Our Youngest thought of calling himself ex,” (line 136) the speaker cheekily indicating both the influence of the Nation of Islam and the Black Power movement on the man’s identity and the end of his relationship with a Norwegian girlfriend (*Angel* 7). “A Bermudan feller” (line 140) introduces the analyses of James Baldwin in light of a prior experience of American police brutality that has left the man with “a limp in his left shoulder” (line 144) (*Angel* 7, 8). Baldwin’s understanding of racial violence heightens Black consciousness. The speaker says that the group would still have been calling themselves West Indian “if it wasn’t for that blow on the left shoulder” (line 154) (*Angel* 8). Blackness also becomes an expression of the solidarity of the oppressed, so that those who represent them become interchangeable, whether they are national leaders or calypsonians. Versions of a "similar dream" (line 167) are occurring in which West Indians look "like Pandit Nehru / Nkrumah Angel Davis Mau tse Che / Julius Nyereretung a Hungarian peasant / and the Mighty Sparrow / all at the same time / and all of them had black fingers" (lines 160-65) (*Angel* 8, 9).

The speaker testifies to a British racism that becomes intolerable and triggers the completion of the roundtrip. The "English landladies [who] claimed / their neighbours didn't like them renting us rooms" (lines 130-31) (*Angel* 7) are an initial manifestation of the problem. The anti-Caribbean violence of the 1958 Notting Hill riots is lifted out of its historical context ("Notting Hill Riots 1958") and alluded to in the poem's testimony to contemporary attacks on racialized people. The particular day "the African chap ran into The Pub / bleeding from a riot in Nottinghill Gate," (lines 182-83) precedes the 1970 decision of the group to return to St. Vincent (*Angel* 9). In response to the violence, the West Indians ask the "African chap … if he still knew / where [they] could get the drums," (lines 192-93), and when he replies "he would have to go home for them …[they] begged him while he home / to see if he could find [them] the history too" (lines 194-96) (*Angel* 9). Their twenty years in England have changed how these five Vincentians see themselves and they decide "[t]hat night … / to take some of the history / and the drums / and go back home" (lines 197-200) (*Angel* 9). Their "ROUNDTRIP" is a geographical, historical and cultural round trip, undertaken in hope of renewal, through reclaiming what was lost due to the Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans. The revival of an Indigenous past, available only in fragments, delineates another leg of that same roundtrip.

This past is accessible through a bricolage of experiences that reoccur in the poem, and that reveal the recurring themes that contribute to its structure. The introduction of Nero begins the interweaving of the past and the present. He is "[t]he Oldest [who] would weep from time to time / for home" (line 21) (*Angel* 3). The importance given to the capitalized word "Oldest" and the reference to time suggests the period of the exile of Black Caribs, the Indigenous combatants who resisted English occupation of St. Vincent. The sorrow of the present is given a historic echo. The capital "O" also resonates with the same letter in "Owia," which is a small village of the descendants of the few Carib non-combatants that continued to live in St. Vincent. As Keane notes, paying attention to this history is not common on the island or in the region, but it recurs in the poem. By putting Nero at the centre of the Vincentian group the poem attests to the history which almost eradicated the Carib people of St. Vincent. However rumors of Caribbean Indigenous culture can even be heard in England. Like an improvisational jazz solo, the intensity of the global connections that uncover this past continue to increase until they reach a crescendo of specificity centering on one building in St. Vincent:

> one day a Black Carib guy from Belize
> walked into the family pub
> and held up his finger
> Doku the African said this guy was an Amerindian
> (after inspecting the finger)
> and an Indian chappie from Mauritius
> named Dupont
> said it was true
> His French girlfriend said she had heard
> There was a Carib stone
> In the Carnegie Public Library in K/town St. Vincent[.] (lines 111-21) (*Angel* 7)

At home, against and within the cross currents that become the experiences of the Vincentian returnees, the Indigenous past continues to gain importance, as seen in their appreciation of "a book / by Earl Kirby our local archangelist / with all the carib stones in it) (lines 260-63) (*Angel* 12). As a result, “the youngest one of us … / can draw carib stones quite nicely (lines 263-64) (*Angel* 12). The young man’s interests show global influences that the speaker seems quite unable to unravel:

> **He** doing a correspondence course
> in **community development**
> And he lately write Hong Kong for the external exam
> in yoga and Karachi[.] (lines 292-95) (*Angel* 13).

But the most important correspondence is with “a young lady / in Venezuela / name Maria Amalivaca y Pedros,” (lines 297-99) who “[t]he Carib guy from Belize / write say she must be have Amerindian blood” (lines 231-32) (*Angel* 13). In fact, the name Amalivaca alludes to Venezuelan Indigenous mythology; it refers to the father figure who, along with a mother figure, repopulates the world with Caribs after a great flood (Munoz). The importance of the woman’s last name is emphasized when Keane starts the next stanza with “AMALIVACA now” (line 237) and the poem moves towards dancing and marriage and reconciliation (*Angel* 13).

In spite of the historical wounds that manifest themselves in the lives of the speaker and his friends, the ending of the poem suggests renewal since the young woman “starting to have married on she mind” (line 248) (*Angel* 13). She is considering opening a dancing school in St. Vincent while the youngest “smile-dance dem Reggae records” (line 243) (*Angel* 13). Sorrow is being replaced by joy and “Nero claim everything does have to dance / when it hear certain sounds” (lines 245-46) (*Angel* 14). Nero has wept and cried but now “bawlin” is not a synonym for these words; it is a shout of joy over what he sees in the group of five Vincentians who have shared the roundtrip journey of the poem:

our Oldest … bawlin
seh wha de hell he five finger
only smilin smilin so for
Yesterday[.] (lines 248-51) (*Angel* 13)

The "Yesterday" of line 251 is also the "Yesterday" Nero and the youngest went to buy the book "Teach Yourself Spanish," (lines 255) a tactic by which Keane unites the past with the future that will be informed by that past (*Angel* 14). The promise of marriage between the youngest of the Vincentian group and the woman with deep ties to the Carib past is a promise of renewal. New formulations of liberation are in the air. Keane fulfills his own requirements for a truly West Indian poetry and suggests an optimism that bears witness to the tragedies of history while it also reclaims the models for resistance that the past offers. While recognizing the many ways his group of Vincentians experience exile Keane sees the possibility of home and ecstasy.

3.3. "Kaiso Kaiso"

What colonial history has torn apart is continually reassembled in an attempt to realize a new whole. In "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso" joy comes from glimpsing that hope. Whereas "ROUNDTRIP" juxtaposes the history and the analyses that reflect the influence of Europe, the United States and Africa with the persistence of a local Indigenous presence in the search for renewal, "Kaiso Kaiso" embraces a thoroughly Caribbean position. While "ROUNDTRIP" shows the influence of Eliot's free verse, "Kaiso Kaiso" also shows Keane's mastery of the original form of calypso. In both poems the vision of those who look forward is shaped by a look backwards at "the features of every ancestor" (Walcott 354), which includes those of the Indigenous people. In "Kaiso Kaiso," Keane pays homage to the form of his poem by setting it in Trinidad, the home of kaiso, though the poem's persona straddles Trinidad and St.

Vincent. Keane offers a tribute to calypso masters by referring to Lord Kitchener and the Mighty Sparrow, but he also honours them by offering an improvisation on their form.[16] By reproducing kaiso's original attack on the established order and by upending sense and nonsense, to borrow from Nanton, Keane acknowledges his debt to calypso while demonstrating his ability to expand its parameters.

In the title "Kaiso Kaiso" Keane signals the poem's tone and its relationship to tradition. According to Errol Hill, the word "kaiso" evolved from a common interjection that can be traced to the West African, Hausa language. This word travelled with Hausa speakers to Trinidad and became a widely used expression of an audience's approval of a singer's performance, and evolved further from variations on the word "kaiso" to "calypso" (Hill 361-62). The title of Keane's poem indicates that he is reaching back to the origins of the calypso form and that he will also give his audience a pointed, but entertaining, commentary set in Trinidad. The opening lines reveal that he will be scrutinizing the conflict between female, "woman santapee [who] must more than bad" (lines 3-4) and male, "man santapee" (line5) (*Angel* 135). Keane suggests that the reimagined relationship of woman and man can also be a renewal of the relationship between the creative voice and the place where that voice finds its language. Resistance to oppression in this poem bears witness to a social change in which female and male are not the adversaries commonly found in calypsos, but co-creators of the future. This vision is informed by a reclaimed pre-colonial wholeness as well as features of the cultures colonialism has forced together in the Caribbean. This ideal female/male relationship symbolizes the hoped-for renewed relationship between the place that shapes the poet and the poet himself.

---

[16] Lord Kitchener is one of the Caribbean's best-known calypsonians and has been crowned King of the Trinidadian Carnival Road March more often than any other competitor. He "is also a master storyteller famed for witty narratives that comment on politics and race and gender relations in Trinidadian society" (Leu, Lord Kitchener 876).

The Mighty Sparrow is "known as the Calypso King of the World." He is credited with modern performance innovations such as using a microphone. He is the "[m]aster of the social commentary and double entendre forms" of the genre (Leu "The Mighty Sparrow" 971).

Keane anchors “Kaiso Kaiso” in the particulars of Trinidad both to insert his poem into the originating culture of calypso and to legitimize his use of Trinidadian references, bawdy and otherwise, that are employed in the poem to frame the relationship between women and men. Details that set this poem in Trinidad include the speaker’s reference to Wrightson Road, which is in Port of Spain, and Tunapuna, a small town east of the city (Ganase Lall). The opening image of “man santapee / (who) learn to do sand-dance / and fireman and so” (lines 15-18) situates the poem within the local Nation Language tradition, “santapee” being a form of the word centipede (Winer 784) (*Angel* 135). The poem references the Trinidadian carnival tradition through the fireman character who suggestively carries his shovel before him in the parade (Winer 347). The “Dry River” of line 27 refers to the concrete drain in Port of Spain, located in an area associated with prostitution (Ganase Lall), where the speaker is “passing the bamboo / and the tambu,” (line 28-29) the percussion instruments with phallic overtones that developed in Trinidad after the banning of drumming in 1881 (Brown) (*Angel* 135-36). “Sagomes money” in lines 92 and 113, is a reference to an important Trinidadian business family (Ganase Lall), and the lines, “[a]ll the money running / like water gone Venezuela” (lines 123-124) describe both the economy at the time the poem was written (Ganase Lall) and the geographic location of the island (*Angel* 138, 139). The character Urmilia appears in line 167, referencing the Trinidadian Indian community whose ritual practices are alluded to: the women “used to oil their breast / and smooth out their lovely hair / watching their father dhoti / drying out in the air” (lines 169-172)

(*Angel* 140). In addition to firmly grounding the poem in these particulars of its Trinidadian setting, Keane also moves to give his poem a resonance with St. Vincent, and by doing so suggests the relevance to all of the West Indies of the poem's vision of a partnership between women and men.

Keane reminds the reader that St. Vincent is also present in his poem through his use of "tray-lay-lay," in lines 41 and 72, as the term that can mean inexpensive sewing material, women's clothing, or much more suggestively, genitalia, usually female. Tray-lay-lay is the Vincentian version of the term (Reynolds) with the same meaning that is represented only in the forms "taylaylay" or "twailailay" in the *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago* (Winer 885). Keane may be reminding the reader that "Kaiso Kaiso," with its thoroughly Trinidadian context, nevertheless is written by a Vincentian who, when he is playing with the conventions of calypso, says "tray lay lay." This linguistic variation is one example of the improvisations Keane works on calypso conventions and he works another when he pays tribute to the established masters of the form.

The homage Keane pays can also be read as a challenge to the primacy of Lord Kitchener and the Mighty Sparrow as the kings of calypso. While honouring the tradition Keane also makes way for his alternative kaiso. Lord Kitchener is identified in lines 65 and 66, which address an errant young male, "You think it three four time / Kitchener have to rhyme" (*Angel* 137). While the speaker derides this "[c]hild" (line 47) for not knowing that four-four time characterizes calypso ("Musical styles"), Keane also acknowledges the standard bearer of the form (*Angel* 137). Keane's contact with Lord Kitchener in England gave him intimate knowledge of the master's proficiency with both rhythms and rhymes, which Keane alludes to here ("Shake Keane"). Later homage is paid to the Mighty Sparrow in the repeated line, "**If Sparrow say so is**

so” (lines 148 and 173) (*Angel* 140). However, Keane’s poem does not yield all ground to the masters, and the speaker of the poem suggests his own prowess in the stanza:

> It had a time
> Woman used to horn you
> If you couldn’t bang pan
> Or strum cuatro
> **When woman say yes**
> **They mean me[.]** (lines 149-154) (*Angel* 140)

Not only is the speaker musically proficient but his relationship to women may override that of Sparrow’s. Although the Calypso King’s “almost proverbial” claim (“The Mighty Sparrow First Flight” 12) is repeated, that assertion, “**If Sparrow say so is so,**” rhymes with the equally bold statement, “**For when woman say no / They mean no**.” The line immediately preceding shows that this “no” is addressed to “college boys,” (line 180) but is it also just possible that a woman may say no to the Mighty Sparrow, while she would always say yes to the speaker (*Angel* 141)? Such an outrageous suggestion can only be hinted at in rhyme, but Kitchener and Sparrow provide the model for every calypsonian who asserts the supremacy of his own talent. In this poem that talent allows Keane to offer a view of women that does not equate them with their “tray lay lay.” These subtle hints that Keane is offering a new point of view in “Kaiso Kaiso” are supported by the next set of variations this jazz poet works on the use of the calypso term, “sans humanité.”

An examination of Keane’s improvisations on the “the popularized [calypso] refrain, *sans humanité*, … ‘without human pity,’” (Saunders xxv) supports a reading of the poem as a vision of the renewal of the relationship between women and men, between the poet and the West

Indies. The phrase “sans humanité” originated in the Trinidadian stick- fighting arena where it was used to urge the fighters to attack their opponents without mercy. Once the expression was integrated into calypso performances it came to be used as a celebration of the superiority of the singer and as an invitation for the audience to participate in acknowledging that superiority (Saunders xxiii). The phrase has complex thematic possibilities, as Patricia Saunders notes, especially when the absence of human pity is expressed in “relation to the ‘humour’ which stems from the perversities of reality, so common in many calypso songs” (xxv). Like many calypsos, Keane’s “Kaiso Kaiso” is an example of “humour in the face of … dire circumstances,” (xxv) the circumstances that often characterized the relationship between women and men. Originally, as detailed below, light-hearted rhymes set the tone for heterosexual relationships, but that attitude is undercut later by the dire circumstances that can result from these liaisons. The fate of women and men, and their offspring, hangs in the balance as they struggle to reconcile a need for respectability and a desire for pleasure in a world without pity, a condition rendered by variations on the word and theme as “sans humanity” (line122) “**sans humanité**” (lines 135-38) or “sandimanite” (line 219) (*Angel* 139, 142).

At the end of the first two sections of “Kaiso Kaiso” Keane uses “**Sandimanite**” (line 46) conventionally, that is to mark the conclusion of a set of equally conventional verses concerning the sexual tension between women and men (*Angel* 136). In the first of these two sections “**Sandimanite**” comes after a description of the “woman santapee” (line 3) and the “man santapee” (line5) who fail to observe the restraint of lent, traditionally forty days of abstinence from conjugal relations, that is expected to follow the bacchanal of carnival (*Angel* 135). Instead “they cause a consternation” (line 9) as their lewd behaviour is on display from the nightclub district of the capital, which is “all down Wrightson road,” (line 11) to the streets of a small village, so that “all Tunapuna / turn inside out / **in the lenten season!**” (lines 12-14) (*Angel* 135). The first use of “**Sandimanite**” (line 46) also creates an important resonance with the preceding verse (*Angel* 136). The word rhymes with the end of three lines that warn girls that “when the boys come out to play” (line 38) they must “watch [their] tray-lay-lay” (line 41) since the boys will “… sting [them] like a sting-a-ray” (line 45) (S. Keane, *Angel* 136). The reference to “sting-a-ray” reaches back to the stinging “santapee” of the first verse and it has an aural link to “sandimanite.” The humour of the warning to “daughter” (line 39) and to “friend” (line 40) concerning the boys’s “sting-a-ray” comes in part from the rhyme and also from the double entendre of the lines “watch you tray-lay-lay / run a mile and a half” (lines 41-42) (*Angel* 136). This traditional calypso pun refers to the tendency of the dye in taylaylay cloth to run, while “run” is also what the girls are urged to do in response to the boys’s sexual overtures. The advice is not expected to be heeded, given that in the next line the girls are told, in bold, to “**aaks** [the male] **when what is their intention**” (line 43) (*Angel* 136). “**Sandimanite**” (line 46) is the word that concludes this description of the carnivalesque relations between men and women and the warnings to the young against such relations (*Angel* 136). Here it is a celebratory refrain, but the following stanzas suggest the lack of pity in a world characterized by the difficulty of reconciling prudence and sexual desire, of reconciling the concerns of respectable women with the behaviour of errant men.

The second of the opening sections of the poem that end with “[s]andimanite” (line 90) deals with the sexual behaviour of a young male (*Angel* 138). He is admonished to change his ways since he is “winding up so” (lines 47-48) that he is squandering his opportunities. This “[c]hild don’t … care to learn” (line 67) (*Angel* 136, 137). Sex is his only interest, and even during lent he is rabidly “singing / forty day / bout the creature / from the black lagoon” (lines

50-54) or “playing with [his] tray-lay-lay” (line 72) (S. Keane, *Angel* 136, 137). But the speaker’s warnings are in vain and he concludes “[t]he Doctor paying to learn” (line 89), that is, this child who thinks he knows best will only learn from his mistakes (*Angel* 138). This description of wasted potential occasions the second use of the expression “Sandimanite” (line 90) (*Angel* 138). As an ending to this section of the poem the word does not suggest the earlier bold celebration. Here, while the speaker satirizes the male child, Keane also suggests that the world will not take pity on youthful foolishness, nor will it be kind to the speaker, a man who recognizes the child’s problems among others.

Keane ends the third part of the poem with “sans humanity” (line 122), a variation of the phrase which, by mixing French and English, offers a gloss on its meaning (*Angel* 139). This third transition, “without humanity,” suggests, for now, that responsibility for the intractable problems that this section of the poem enumerates lies with those involved. The first verse of section three starts with the word “[s]uppose,” (line 91) which is repeated in that stanza and is used to introduce two later stanzas (lines 93, 100, 103) (*Angel* 138). Each time what follows is a rather desperate suggestion for righting problems, sexual and otherwise. For instance, the speaker suggests to the youth squandering the chance of an education that his rescue could come through another young man who might share his learning: “[s]uppose fowlcock was to go / to university and so / [i]t don’t have so much reason why / he couldn’t teach you to crow” (line 106) (*Angel* 138). Interspersed with these musings, in a context that is very different from the earlier sexual conflict, are references to the importance of a female presence: “**Mooma without you / I don’t where to go**” (lines 98-99) (*Angel* 138). The speaker is “sweating upside down,” (line 120) because he is working hard, but his efforts are no remedy for the absence of a mother figure, nor do they address the many problems he sees (*Angel* 139). At this point the speaker takes stock of the conditions young and old are living in and he sums up that they are “sans humanity,” (line122) (*Angel* 139). This single line stanza creates a transition to the next section of the poem that describes even more severe difficulties.

The fourth section suggests the worst of all possible worlds as both “the weeds drying / on top the lagoon” (lines 129-30) and “the tent-pole / river-child / and sparrow drownding” (lines 131-32) (*Angel* 139). In this portion of the poem “**sans humanité**,” the historical form of the phrase, is a line in the last verse, in contrast to earlier instances where the phrase is independent of the previous and following stanzas:

> **Mooma**
> **without you**
> **you see how these children behaving**
> **sans humanité**[.] (lines 135-38) (*Angel* 139)

No longer a refrain the statement of lament is given additional intensity by the bold type. The loss of the mother and the loss of humanity go hand in hand. The possibility of the playful use of the phrase of the first section of the poem has been abandoned and the humour of the earlier sparring between women and men has disappeared. The mood of the poem is not comic when the speaker describes the possible fate of children born of the earlier sexual encounters, that is the poor “river-child and sparrow drownding / [f]loat up like a black kaskadura” (line 132) (*Angel* 139). The speaker’s now obscure interlocutor has to decide “[w]hich one-o’-dem [he’ll or she’ll] be saving” (line 134) (*Angel* 139). Here the poem testifies to situations that are no longer a matter of individual responsibility, for who can stop a drought or a flood. The speaker confronts the impossible choices women and men accept or avoid and the oppressive situations that are beyond them. His search for an alternative to this world without pity forms the remainder of the poem. The final variation on “sans humanité” will occur in a context that shows its much-reduced significance in a world where something different from this colonial struggle is imagined and proposed, though not actually realized.

The way forward starts in the past and the promise to the listener and the interlocutor is “**You can beat that time / If you listen to GOOD passeo**” (lines 141-42) (*Angel* 139). The time that is to be recreated through the rhythm of the traditional paseo starts with the period that existed “before humming-bird / learn to suck mango” (lines 140-41) (*Angel* 139). Since the mango is not native to Trinidad (Trinidad … Mango Festival) Keane is referring to the period before colonization changed the lives of Indigenous people, who, according to popular culture, believed ancestral spirits resided in hummingbirds (Johnson). In fact, Trinidad is sometimes referred to as “the land of the hummingbirds” (Festa). Four of the verses that follow repeat the opening line, “It had a time” (lines 144, 149, 155, and 166) (*Angel* 139-38). There is renewal in the past, and not just the pre-colonial past, but also in the more recent history of the island when

> nice-belly mamma
> sell a million roti
> to slide all she children
> to Panama[.] (lines 155-159) (*Angel* 140)

The traditions that indentured workers from India brought to Trinidad and St. Vincent after emancipation are not denigrated, as was historically the case with calypsos, (Saunders xxxiv) but celebrated, following the lead of the Mighty Sparrow who also “**say so**” (line 173) (*Angel* 140). In fact, the ritual of Indian women “oil[ing] their breast” (line 169) will become an Indigenous practice in the speaker’s ideal world (*Angel* 140). Strengthened by the example of various people who have made a home in the Caribbean the speaker can imagine a beckoning future, one that will come “[s]ooner than forty year,” (line 187) a period that resonates with the deprivations that characterize the observance of the forty days of lent (*Angel* 141).

The eight lines detailing this future are repeated twice, the only repetition in the poem, in contrast to the many repetitions that are characteristic of calypsos. This future will start when “lizard and santapee / play tambu bamboo” and “fix their hair / in cane row,” (lines 189-192) in an invocation of the opening section of the poem (*Angel* 141). Keane offers a Caribbean version of the lion lying down with the lamb, in this case while they tend to each other’s grooming. The “humming-bird [who] oil she breast” (line 194) brings together the Indigenous and indentureship periods (*Angel* 141). The speaker flies with “Florence … to look for chine-mango” (lines 195-96), folding together influences from England, China and India. The vision ends with a different refrain than “sandimanite” (*Angel* 141). It ends with “**You can beat that time / If you listen to Good passeo**” (lines 205-06) (*Angel* 142). Here the pun on the words “beat that time” suggest that the cultural elements that the past has brought together can be re-combined to create a future that is an improvement on that past. The vision of what is possible is set in a place that transcends the Trinidadian particulars of the earlier part of the poem. Actually, no island is this paradise, which the final section of the poem makes clear as it returns to the question of the current relationship between woman and man.

The idealized future/past that has been proffered is compelling but the end of the poem returns to the conflicted present. The speaker’s final interlocutor eclipses the “woman santapee” (lines 3) of the opening lines (*Angel* 135). He first only suggests joining forces with this woman, “So me and you girl,” (line 207) but grows in confidence in this partnership as an established fact, “So is me and you girl” (line 220) (*Angel* 142). However, in a testimony to the abuse of women this “girl” first needs to “[d]ry [her] nose and soothe out [her] hair” (line 211) (Angel

142). She and the speaker also live in a world where the population is increasing “[u]nder the mountain crying and [while] your mooma crying” (line 214) (Angel 142). It is a world where “sandimanite” makes one final appearance, in reference to the “college boys” (line 216) who, in contrast to the speaker, only “can lime-and rhyme / [o]ne way one time a year” (lines 216-17) during Carnival (Angel 142). These boys “[d]on’t know no how / [h]ow to raise off their sandimanite coonoo mask” (lines 218-19) (Angel 142) and may be the perpetrators of the abuse the “girl” suffers. Here the word “sandimanite” has been reduced to being a modifier of “coonoo,” a word that describes the worse than foolish (Winer 248, 504) young men whose relationships to women are limited to the destructive stereotypes of some carnival masks. In contrast to the “college boys,” the speaker is offering the “girl” a relationship that has not been seen before in this poem. In the final verse, the speaker is no longer proclaiming his own superiority as a womanizer or a Kaisonian, and is instead suggesting that the woman be a partner with him in creating a new era:

> So is me and you girl
> And after one hundred and forty year girl
> And the mountain crying out this new tambu time girl
> And your mother crying for no reason she have to cry
>
> Flookooks
>
> Bring your banja and all your nice cool thing
>
> Over here by me

And let we sing

And let we do Some stupidness[.] (lines 220-28) (*Angel* 142)

By referring to the one hundred and forty years between the end of slavery and the writing of the poem, the speaker suggests that by joining forces this man and this woman are able to embody the true freedom of emancipation in this "new tambu time." Here the poem uses one of the techniques of testimonial narrative by making concrete an aspect of the historical world, in this case the abolition of slavery, in order to intensify "attempts to persuade the reader of the legitimacy of the author's specific conceptions of these processes" (Whitlock 24). Keane has his audience imagine that emancipation can mean replacing the conflict between women and men with this partnership that will characterize a new era. In a final pun the word "crying" now indicates a joyful exclamation by the mountain, and in a final irony the mother is crying in relief that she no longer has any reason to cry over what will become of her daughter. The capital "S" of "Some" in the last line suggests the significance of what the "girl" and the speaker might create together in spite of the fact that what calypsonians accomplish is often dismissed as "stupidness."

With the young women's entanglement with the suffering and promise of her world she is a symbol of that world. Keane's poem bears witnesses to the past and present, the hardship and joy of the Caribbean. His "kaiso" is a variation on the form that celebrates and renews the Caribbean interplay of cultures. It ends with the optimism that Keane sees as characteristic of West Indian literature. He celebrates the language and the forms that are available to the poet who recognizes the possibilities that the Caribbean has put at his disposal to make something that is not a second hand song but is rather a new kaiso.

3.4. Conclusion

Keane's pleasure and delight in the creative process energizes both poems as he repeatedly reproduces transformations, so that a passage from "ROUNDTRIP" can serve as a focus for summing up the themes and the methods that unite "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso." The returned Vincentians in "ROUNDTRIP" hear from one of their London West Indian friends, "[t]he Jamaicachynee chap," (line 282) (*Angel* 12) that

> He now writin a bible
> Title
> Solid Rock Underneath The Archipelago
> S R U T A for short [.] (lines 284-89) (*Angel* 13)

In Sanskrit "shruti" means "what is actually heard" (perhaps because it is shouted in this poem) and refers to the Hindu sacred texts that are considered divine revelation (Britannica). "SRUTA" is the bricolage by which a Hindu term is alluded to by a "Jamaicachynee chap" who identifies it with the word for Christian scriptures, while incorporating plate tectonics. "SRUTA" is an instance of the inspired tinkering that creates the solid rock underneath "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso." In both poems the precolonial past is melded into the history and culture that have come more recently to the Americas and have created the St. Vincent, Trinidad and Caribbean of Keane's poems. In Keane's work, these elements create the solidity of the Caribbean plate. The archipelago appears to be a scattering of islands buffeted by greater powers. What can be heard by those who, charmed by the play and the humour of Keane's words, are willing to pay attention is that there is a deeper reality. "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso" do testify to the forces that create rupture, separation, conflict. These forces, however, are not given the last word. Like the witnessing "texts from the 'other side'" such as Warner's narrative, these poems also "offer a site of political and ideological struggle, heterogeneity, and vitality" (Craft 15). In the end, the meaning of "bawlin" and "crying" are both transformed from their associations with grief to associations with joy. "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso" bear witness to the union of the past and the future, of woman and man, of poet and place that can create the possibility of ecstasy. Felman quotes Celan's reflection on the relationship between those that testify and those that receive the testimony of poems. He says, "A poem, … as a manifest form of language and thus inherently dialogue, can be a message in a bottle, sent out in the (not always greatly hopeful) belief that it may somewhere and sometime wash up on land, on heartland perhaps" (Felman 37). This heartland is where "love moves to claim … our secret name."

Chapter 4.

The Self and Belonging: *Spirits in the Dark*:

> Jerome knew that by the time the spirit called you, you knew that life itself was a contradiction.
>
> (H. Nigel Thomas *Spirits in the Dark*)

4.1. Introduction

Spirits in the Dark (1993) by H. Nigel Thomas (1947-) is a work of contradictions about a world of contradictions. The protagonist, in himself and in his name, Jerome Quashee, holds together the disparate worlds that came together to create the society that is Thomas's fictionalized representation of St. Vincent, Isabella. The name "Jerome" evokes the Europe of the colonizers while "Quashee" signifies the African ancestors. The first chapter of the novel describes the experiences of a protagonist who has already recognized the need to make peace with the opposites in his life, but most of the novel is a testimony to the life journey that precedes this realization. Thomas gives an account of how his character becomes Jerome by way of conforming to the rigors of the normative expectations of colonial society regarding language, education, work and particularly his sexual orientation. The author thus illustrates the creation of the white mask that Frantz Fanon describes in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). The black skin of the protagonist is represented by his last name, Quashee. This family name foretells the ways that Quashee is so at odds with the requirements of the schooling and employment of the Black middle class that he experiences psychic breaks. The toll of these contradictions leads to the character's turn to becoming Jerome Quashee. He is a person who is reconciled both to himself and the larger Black community that is a witness to his renewal through the Spiritualist rite of "mourning." Just as Isabella is Thomas's reimagined St. Vincent, the Spiritualists are the Spiritual Baptist denomination fictionalized.

The novel itself also reflects the contradictions that it explores. In spite of finding the inspiration within the culture of St. Vincent to construct a vision of islanders who can recognize that queer sexuality is life-giving sexuality, Thomas makes it clear that Isabella is not St. Vincent. Though Jerome Quashee's experience of rebirth comes about through his participation in African derived rites, Thomas gives the last word in the novel to William Butler Yeats. In *Spirits in the Dark* it is "an obscure miracle of connection" ("The African Presence in Caribbean Literature" 73) as Kamau Brathwaite has described the experience, that saves the protagonist. Participating in an African past allows Jerome Quashee to experience a self that approaches wholeness by reconciling him to the contradictions that are created by colonialism and encoded in his name. This rebirth is Thomas's act of resistance to colonial erasures of the Black and queer self, undertaken using all the tools that colonialism has made available.

The genre through which Thomas presents his witness to liberation is at odds with the subaltern's production of *testimonio,* which is often framed as an alternative to the novel, especially the *bildungsroman,* which is a term that has been used to describe *Spirits in the Dark.* The novel does, however, belong firmly to the tradition of religious testimonies. When McKinley Melton quotes a clergyperson connected with an American Black church, some of the similarities between *testimonio* and testimony are striking, "In testimony, the individual speaks about what he or she has experienced and seen, then offers it to the community so that the experience becomes part of the community's experience. The reality is bigger than the individual. It has meaning for the whole" (7). This description fits the testimony that is the climax of the novel and is apt for the novel itself.

4.2. The Dilemmas

Fanon’s insights in *Black Skin White Masks* into the othering of the Black body in colonialism and the process by which whiteness becomes the marker not only of what is normative but what is valorized, offer a powerful tool for understanding Jerome’s displacement from himself and from society as a racialized and queer individual. As Fanon notes, the moral development of the Black person in colonial societies, when what is good is white and what is evil is black, becomes simultaneously the inscription of alienation, “Moral consciousness implies a kind of scission, a fracture of consciousness into a bright part and an opposing black part. In order to achieve morality, it is essential that the black, the dark, the Negro vanish from consciousness. Hence a Negro is forever in combat with his own image” (150). In the West Indies of the novel during the late colonial and early independence period, the distance between the idealized self of the hegemonic class and the individuals who are in the majority, people represented by Jerome’s parents who are estate workers, is marked in three ways. The space is defined by the language a person speaks, the education a person receives and the work a person does. Jerome’s embrace of the language, learning and labour of upward mobility leaves him emotionally stranded. His performance of the identity of the white mask repeatedly slips and his identity as Quashee asserts itself. An additional stratum of estrangement from himself is created in Jerome by the fact that he is a queer person in a society that treats homosexuality as a perversion. Understanding how these four features of Jerome Quashee’s lived contradictions are the causes of his psychological and spiritual disintegration is the goal of the current section of this chapter.

Jerome explicitly rejects his mother tongue at an early age and this decision shapes what relationships are possible for him with his original village community. The choice of Standard

English is intertwined with his embrace of colonial education. Thomas has chosen a first name for his character that is emblematic of scholarship in the Christian tradition since it alludes to St. Jerome who translated most of the Bible into Latin. Thomas's Jerome goes to the library at the age of six and insists on reading "'[a] book'" (5), in spite of the librarian's objections that he is too young and too small to do so. Jerome manages to convince her that he is a "bright boy" (Thomas 5). As a result of his desire to read, Jerome also learns a lesson from this woman "about bad English and good English and decide[s] that he [will] speak good English, the English the librarian [speaks]. Not the English his mother [speaks], for she [says] mantain and t'ing" (Thomas 6).[17] The importance of Jerome's decision is highlighted by Fanon's observations that "[t]o speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (8). Jerome's father recognizes the significance of this identification with the weight of European civilization and tries to counteract it. "His father did not like all this reading" and he warns his son, "All this blasted White man l'arning! It not everything, you know. An' it not even the truth" (Thomas 6-7). As a young student he is told by his teacher that "respectable people don't speak dialect" (Thomas 11) and this is the lesson Jerome accepts. As Laurence Breiner explains "in the West Indies the hierarchies of color, social class, and economic status reinforce one another so thoroughly that use of creole was not merely a generalized sign of lower status but a fairly precise measure of status" (164). Eventually Jerome's speech so alienates him from his childhood Black community that as an adult he is not able to interact with the villagers in Compton, because, as his mother tells him, "yo' so stiff, an' yo' always talk like a Englishman. Yo' don' know how people hate yo' fo' that" (Thomas 154). As this point Jerome's visits home are limited to Christmas and Easter and his situation is summed up in Fanon's observation that "the more the colonized has assimilated the cultural values of the metropolis, the more he will have escaped the bush. The more he rejects his Blackness and the bush, the whiter he will become" (2). Jerome's younger brother recognizes the transmogrification that is signaled by this rejection of the speech of their parents: "Brother Jerome, you are an Isabellan but you can't speak the language!" (Thomas 154).

---

[17] "Mantain" is how Jerome's mother pronounces the word "mountain".

Deciding for Standard English comes with deciding for the world of books and education, in spite of the incongruities of that world. The limitations of "[w]hite man l'arning" that Henry Quashee warns Jerome about are made explicit in Carol P. Marsh-Lockett's analysis of *Spirits in the Dark*:

> [Colonial education] shapes students by providing them continuity in a social order based on exploitation. In so doing, this education coerces both teachers and students into conforming to an authoritarian structure in which norms of excellence or even acceptability are located in the vested interests, experience, and value system of the colonizer as opposed to those of the colonized. (24)

By the time Jerome is in the seventh standard he is very much aware of the short comings of colonial education as represented by his teacher, Miss Anderson, who is a Black Isabellan from a background similar to that of her students. Miss Anderson's performance of Fanon's white mask can be read into her behaviour when she exercises her authority as a teacher most severely with the disadvantaged Black children, those who resemble the child she was. Miss Anderson is confronted by the estate worker father of the child she had punished by using a strap on the girl's calves. It is only then that she stops doing the same to other children who are also late during the cane harvest because "the children have fo' carry their parent food" (Thomas 9). While the father’s threats of violence curb the teacher’s use of corporal punishment, it is his comments, “You is nobody,” and “Yo’ better find out who yo’ father is,” that so undermine Miss Anderson’s position in the school that she leaves at the year’s end. As a student Jerome is aware that “the blackest and smallest students got the most [lashes]” (Thomas 8) from this teacher. Yet she is the gate keeper, the teacher of “[*s*]*tandard seven* [where] [d]reams started and died” (Thomas 9). Jerome does eventually earn a scholarship to secondary school in spite of the interference of Miss Anderson whose actions require him to repeat his last year of elementary school.

It is Jerome’s query concerning Miss Anderson’s colonial account of the trade in enslaved Africans that keeps his name off the scholarship list the first time he is eligible. The question he asks, “‘Miss Anderson, what’s so clever a bout tricking Black people?’” (Thomas 10) reflects the trickster connotations of his Quashee last name. This name connects Jerome to the African Caribbean and the self that lies beneath his identification with the Eurocentric world view of his schooling. In the West Indies the name Quashee encompasses a complex range of meanings, as Patrick Taylor explains:

> The “Quashee” or “Sambo” stereotype, the image of the bungling but obedient fool, lost in the quagmire created by the colonizer’s domination of time, is nothing but a racist stereotype. On occasion the colonized might internalize this image, losing themselves in the role. More often the colonized merely pretend to be foolish; role-playing becomes a strategy for survival, a form of pragmatic resistance. Sambo and Quashee were tricksters whose activity was only one step away from rebellion, for they sought to outwit and dupe the master, though in a camouflaged way, so that they would not themselves be defeated

> in the process. It was in trickster folktales, in particular, that the cunning behavior of the trickster-slave was encoded and represented for the instruction of the community. (133)

Jerome's question, which "[h]e asked … thinking his father would want him to" (Thomas 10), does put his teacher in the position of not being able to answer. Her only recourse is to order him out of the classroom because the question references his teacher's other claims concerning the credulity of Africans. Unfortunately, in this situation the trickster does not prevail, as is sometimes the case in the folklore (Taylor 140). This incident foreshadows an even more significant instance of the Quashee side of Jerome's character insisting on asserting itself when he is at The Expatriates Academy.

In this school, whose very name excludes boys like Jerome Quashee, he encounters Miss Hunt who is quickly renamed Miss Blunt by her students. Miss Blunt is a poorly educated young white woman from the American south. Although her incompetence is not typical of Jerome's teachers, her position is emblematic of that of whites at the school and on the island. As Jerome muses about her situation, he concludes that "the White parents could not bring themselves to do anything about Miss Blunt. For one thing, she was White and they had to show solidarity" (Thomas 81). Jerome is caught when, as Miss Blunt's mini skirt rides up while she writes on the board, he makes "signs at her bottom" (Thomas 89) in imitation of a white student. Again, the trickster must pay for his transgressions, and Jerome Quashee's refusal to behave deferentially in this situation results in his expulsion from school and possibly from the only type of life his choices have prepared him for. He is not engaged in rebellion, but Jerome Quashee does move beyond the feigned acquiescence that is necessary in a school where whites are not only the majority of teachers but also the majority of students. His father, Henry, understands the motivations but not the lack of prudence that govern his son's behaviour, "Yo' can win scholarship, yo' can come firs' in class, an' yo' still don' know yo' can' make *bacra* know what yo' think? Yo' think cause I laugh, cause I use fo' work on they estate, cause I live 'pon they land, I like them? No sah! But I don' ha' for tell them that, and I don' ha' fo' show them that" (Thomas 95). Jerome Quashee compares his own actions to that of another Black student, Philip, who "always [knew] how far to go and then [slip] back into silence" (Thomas 96) and recognizes the lack of finesse in his defiance of proper behaviour. The significance of this acting out, with its sexual connotations, is suggested by the comment Jerome's brother, Wesi, makes concerning the incident many years later, "Yo' didn' even stop to think yo' mighta get lynched" (Thomas 156). The response to Wesi's observation seems to be that the trickster will not always tolerate repression.

In spite of Jerome's experience and awareness of the hypocrisy and short comings of many of the people he is educated by, they define the contours of the mask he must wear in order to be employed in the civil service and join the middle class. His mother makes it clear why this choice is tenable. The opportunities afforded by colonial education are the only alternatives to the harshness of the lives of the working class. Although Jerome's parents, Comsie and Henry, have stable and respected social positions within their village, as landless estate workers dependent on the goodwill of the planters, their income is so precarious that his mother is willing to sacrifice Jerome's integration into the community and even the family, in return for the possibility that Jerome may escape his parents's fate. She supports his turn to education when she asks her husband, "Yo' want him fo' work in Mr. Manchester canefield like me and you?" (Thomas 6). After learning about the inopportune question Jerome had asked Miss Anderson Henry wants Comsie to buy Jerome a hoe, the essential tool of agricultural workers. She replies, "Yo' don' think Jerome done pay enough fo' this?" (Thomas 11). After his first year of secondary school Jerome realizes that “[t]he low pay of the villagers and their fear of White people told him that slavery hadn’t quite ended” (Thomas 23). As an adult Jerome understands the alchemy of the colonialist, “They found a veritable Eldorado in black flesh, they still do. … [B]lackness is the source of gold-creating power” (Thomas 52). Jerome’s escape from this existence requires the masking of his Quashee self.

Hanovertown, the capital, is identified first with Jerome’s secondary education and then even more completely with his work for the colonial civil service. The nature of this employment is represented by his first “supervisor … (who) was a supercilious woman who had completely remade herself in the image of British acceptability” (Thomas 148); she is an image of order and repression and she has erased anything that is spontaneous or natural. Jerome also becomes an illustration of Fanon’s “arsenal of complexes that germinat[e] in a colonial situation” (14). Jerome sees his situation as an extension of the conditions that shaped his society: “*Several years after he had joined the civil service, he’d reflected on how unhappy he was although he did not have to worry about the basic things that bothered the majority of Isabellans; and he’d written in his journal that ‘all emancipation ends in slavery / too subtle for the emancipated to see’*” (Thomas 23).[18] Having access to *Black Skin, White Masks* at the Hanovertown library, Jerome is able to recognize in himself the complexes Fanon identifies. After meeting each other at work Jerome has a sexual encounter with a woman he believes is white. During a short blackout he chokes the woman while he is ejaculating. He explicitly comes to associate this experience with his resentment of “whiteness as a reference point,” and “he wonder[s] when he [will] stop being a shadow of England and a person in his own right” (Thomas 159). How Jerome understands his own behaviour reflects Fanon’s claims when he says, “We have just seen that the feeling of inferiority is an Antillean characteristic. It is not just this or that Antillean who embodies the neurotic formation, but all Antilleans. Antillean society is a neurotic society, a society of ‘comparison’” (165). Thomas attests to this dilemma. While Jerome’s foothold in the world that is modelled on whiteness is precarious, and he has an awareness of the psychic toll of living there, it is the place he belongs to by default, given his earlier choices for both Standard English and education and the fact that he seldom returns to the countryside.

---

[18] Throughout the novel extended use of italics by the author indicates a change in the temporal point of view of the third person narrator.

Jerome Quashee does not let his mask slip at work but his awareness of the part he plays and that played by others keeps him at the edges of the world defined by his work. He does occasionally refuse to behave as expected. When a co-worker, who is believed to be a homosexual, lodges a complaint against the man who slapped him, Jerome confirms the complainant’s account. The other workers reproach Jerome, “You don’ know how to see and not see and hear and not hear? Imagine that, losing his job cause he slap a buller!” (Thomas 200) After fifteen years in the civil service, at Wesi’s insistence, Jerome qualifies for and applies for a significant promotion. When he is denied the position the deputy minister cites two reasons, “that job calls for a lot of social know-how and people-managing, and we don’t think you can do that, at least you don’t show it.” The second reason is his “nervous breakdown” (Thomas 164). The mask does crack under the pressure of Jerome’s life in Hanovertown, though not in the work place itself and the mask still manages to hide his sexual orientation.

Beneath the outward conformity that starts with the adoption of the “proper word” for “mantain” (Thomas 6) and continues with the passes in four exams that allowed him to qualify for his civil service work, lies Jerome’s continual performance of heteronormativity. In fact, Ian Smith links Jerome’s childhood turn to the language of the librarian, with its implications for the hegemonic position of Standard English, to other questions of what is normative, “Jerome's preoccupation with ‘good’ and ‘bad’ English functions here as the symbolic grid against which notions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sexuality are redefined and exposed as an uncritical acceptance and internalization of colonialism's worst legacy” (8). Jerome’s alienation from himself is due both to being racialized and to having a sexual identity that falls outside the norms of his society.

Fanon’s analysis of what it means to be Black has been linked by Gamal Abdel-Shehid to what it means to be male or female and his ideas elucidate Jerome’s situation, providing a context for the perception of homosexuality in Antillean society. This link can be made in spite of the fact that Fanon said he had not observed the presence of overt homosexuality in Martinique, and suggested that Martinicans who were homosexuals in France were so for transactional reasons (139). Building on the work of Angela Davis concerning the link between racism and hypersexuality Gamal Abdel-Shehid’s analysis of gender explains how normative sexual identities develop in racialized individuals. “Racism,” Abdel-Shehid says, “functions to actively create gender identity” (2). Fanon’s analysis of the construction of Blackness in opposition to whiteness is replicated in the construction of the hypersexualized Black, male or female, in opposition to the gender “normative” white, male or female. Abdel-Shehid’s points out that for Fanon, the “dissolution or fragmentation of the psyche for the colonized [is] due to their inability to create themselves as subjects” (11). Thus, the colonized individual, seeking to reclaim her or his sense of self from its erasure in a society dependent on slavery, internalizes the performance of idealized versions of gender and sexual identity by the white ruling class. Davis points out that the planter class distinctions between female and male were out of reach for Black people as women and men were equally subjected to the demands of field work on the plantation (Abdel-Shehid 12). “[R]acism, [therefore], draws its sustenance from its ability to actually construct the seemingly normative category of gender" (Abdel-Shehid 11) that is seldom attainable for Black people. Fanon says of the Antillean, "The black man wants to be white. The white man slaves to reach a human level" (3). Femaleness and maleness as well as humanity are defined from without for colonized individuals, and all three remain out of reach because of the physical and sexual exploitation and violence that characterize slavery and is a continuing legacy of colonial societies. In these conditions heteronormativity becomes the only socially acceptable sexual expression for racialized individuals. Jerome experiences same sex desire in a culture which only recognizes one version of legitimate sexuality.

As a young man at the start of his life in the capital Jerome "want[s] friends with whom he c[an] share ideas," and he develop[s] an "interest in stripping away masks, to get to the essence of things" (Thomas 149). The irony here is that Jerome's interest in stripping away masks does not extend to the one he has constructed to hide his sexual orientation. When Jerome throttles back the possibilities for same sex encounters, he frames his decisions as being motivated by a desire to protect his mother. While staring at the handsome man who offers him love Jerome "*remember[s] Boy-boy and the pain his mother and Boy-boy's cousins and sisters were living through. Never. Never will his mother ever have to face that on account of him. And he ... stifle[s] his desires over the years*" (Thomas 95). In Jerome's acts of repression "Thomas suggests that … the pervasive category 'heterosexual' is the operative surrogate for 'colonial' in an equally fierce program of sexual abjection and control. Like any ideological practice, the category 'heterosexual' is deployed as simply there, invisible, beyond question, not requiring explanation" (Smith 9). Even Jerome's first experience of same sex arousal takes place in the context of overhearing a strident insistence on heterosexuality by a group of boys making claims about their sexual conquests, including rape (Thomas 12). From the times when he was sexually aroused as a teenager and he was "*embarrassed by his reactions … and … he'd … turn his back*" (Thomas 96), to his adult rejection of the advances of other men, Jerome keeps his mask firmly in place. For "*twenty-seven years*" (Thomas 95), from the time of starting work in the capital, he keeps his promise to spare his mother.

Thomas intertwines the description of the ways Jerome conforms to the expectations of his society and the manner in which Quashee sometimes balks at them with references to the impossibility of continually living with these internal divisions. The first mention of mental illness, which occurs in chapter three, foreshadows the ongoing struggle Jerome Quashee will experience, "*Roly-Poly died while [Jerome] was recovering from his first breakdown*" (Thomas 17). By the time this initial psychic collapse takes place Jerome's queerness has been only a source of distress in his life. His father, even though he does not acknowledge his son's homosexuality, understands that Jerome's choices are untenable and he sees the breakdown as inevitable, "Yo' can' full a pot and set the fire going under it full blast and not expect it fo' boil over. Nobody can live the way he live. He not interested in women. Everything is book, book. You can' eat book and yo' can' hug up book. If yo' don' control the fire under the pot, it will dry out and burn up" (Thomas 157). Jerome realizes that "[s]ince he had sex with no one, all this aggression was redirected at himself" (Thomas 157). During his second hospitalization, imagining what might be said if he were to commit suicide, Jerome puts his self-diagnosis, one that encompasses the many ways he erases himself, in the mouths of the Compton villagers, "that is what happen to them when them want fo' pretend them is what them is not" (Thomas 165). He finds his "*fighting spirit*" (Thomas 166) during this second episode and it is his last hospitalization. The "three minor breakdowns" that follow are dealt with by staying with his mother "until he felt sufficiently confident to resume his life" (Thomas 166). Timothy Chin notes the confrontation with the “the patriarchal, heterosexist, and Eurocentric ideologies that constitute the particular legacy of the Caribbean colonial experience” in Thomas’s portrayal of Jerome’s periodic psychic disintegration (138). Ian Smith’s observations concerning Jerome’s experiences as a teenager are also applicable to his recurring psychological problems: “from Compton, his home in the country, to Hanovertown, the capital, and back after his expulsion … a repeated circular geography … suggests a stasis, an entrapment within an unresolved paradigm” (4). The reader becomes a witness to the destructiveness of the denial of the queer self. Thomas’s tale, however, like those of the story tellers who kept the African trickster narratives alive, offers hope, if not instruction, to his reading community that the roles assumed for the sake of survival may be superseded by a more authentic self.

4.3. Rebirth into Contradictions

Having considered the resonance between Fanon’s description of the white mask and the life of the character Thomas has created, I now want to explore how liberation from this life of constraints, which is also a Fanonian theme, requires a change in how those contradictions are viewed. I will detail the growth in Jerome’s self-understanding and use Lily Cho’s work to define diaspora studies as an interpretative framework for these developments. There are hints as to what a more liberated life looks like when Jerome considers the lives of Sprat, a transgender market vendor, and that of his own brother Wesi. A conscious turn to Africa is required in order to reshape Jerome’s identity. An encounter with Yaw, a Ghanaian that Jerome meets because they are high school students participating in a cultural exchange program, suggests some of the features of an alternative to an orientation to Europe. But finally, it is Jerome’s turn to the Spiritualists that allows him to testify to a self that is rooted/routed to Africa and can speak to and of the Black community.

The route to Africa lies through the ritual of "mourning."[19] Thomas uses "a definitive ritual of Spiritual Baptist worship" (Duncan 109) as the transformative experience for his protagonist. For Spiritual Baptists "mourning" is essentially an extended "period of prayer and fasting" (Duncan 109). During this time "one grieves (or mourns) for one's sins" (Zane 194). Spiritual Baptists undertake "the period of ritual seclusion in the mourning room during which the pilgrim traveler journeys in the spiritual world" (Zane 194). On these travels the pilgrim receives guidance and healing through "mystical visions and encounters with beings in the spirit world" (Duncan 109). Spiritual Baptist destinations include "the ancestral lands of Caribbean working people—historically, Africa, India, and China, as well as the biblical lands such as Canaan" (Duncan 109). Such journeys may also lead to places in St. Vincent (Zane 194). These destinations suggest the healing of history and of the self. For Thomas's purposes, however, Jerome's rebirth requires only one destination, Africa.

Cho's thinking is a resource for linking the Spiritualist "mourning" ritual in Thomas's novel to the mourning that is characteristic of diasporic writing. For Cho, referencing Brathwaite, diaspora is not only defined by what has been endured as a result of the loss of a homeland, but also by the process of recovering and remaking the past as an emblem of a self that is a subject rather than an object. "Diaspora … emerges from deeply subjective processes of racial memory, of grieving for losses which cannot always be articulated and longings which hang at the edge of possibility. It is constituted in the spectrality of sorrow and the pleasures of 'obscure miracles of connection'" (Cho 14). Jerome Quashee lives where he is born, but he was born into the diasporic community created by Atlantic slavery. No actual return to Africa is feasible but

---

[19] I am using "mourning," in quotation marks, to distinguish the specific ritual of the Spiritualists from the word mourning as it is commonly used.

Spiritualist “mourning” allows for a symbolic journey to the homeland. Jerome’s “obscure miracles of connection” eventually allow him to reject the definition of who he is that has been constructed by colonial society. He finds a new self, one that approaches wholeness, in the process of creating links to a past that he makes rather than remembers.

When he starts high school, Jerome observes one model for living with contradictions in the relationships between Sprat and the other vendors at the street market in Hanovertown. This man’s very presence in a space which is normally the preserve of women, points to his gender fluidity. Thomas’s description of Sprat encapsulates the co-existence of opposites in his person, and the reference to the Quashee/Sambo trickster is further evidence of the liminal space this man inhabits:

> Among the six women was a man who the buyers and non-buyers said was the biggest woman of the lot. They called him Sprat. He had an enormous frame and was over six feet [t]all. He was not fat. His face was broad and the colour of fresh asphalt. His huge red, bulbous lips resembled Sambo’s. He arched forward slightly, was pigeon-toed, and had a big, projecting backside. (Thomas 21)

Jerome reports that Sprat participates in exchanges, typical of those among the market women, in which when he is told, “Go long, woman, yo’ pussy bigger than mines.” He replies “Is you’ husband that tell yo’ so” (Thomas 22). Jerome also notes, however, that on an occasion when Sprat was sick and not in his usual place, “three of the women had been to see him. One said he would be out the next week and she was buying supplies for him that day” (Thomas 22). What Jerome witnesses is that “there are relations of professional and personal reciprocity binding Sprat and the other vendors together–existing social relations which pose a contradiction to the homophobic ideologies that serve to position him as ‘other’” (Chin 140).

Although, as a student, Jerome is not ready or able to find the hybridity within himself that would allow him to integrate what he needs from the world of The Expatriates Academy with a more authentic expression of who he is, his brother does manage this balancing act. When his brother earns a scholarship to study at the same school Jerome attended, Wesi inhabits a space in Hanovertown while maintaining his connections to Compton. Certainly there is less strain on Wesi because he is heterosexual. He accepts the language of the villagers and he also does not reject the work of cultivating the land, as Jerome had done. These choices link Wesi to the tradition in which "tropical agricultural was mastered by Africans and brought to the New World by them" (Thomas 42). Jerome notes that rather than join the national cricket team, which he is invited to do, and devote himself to that quintessentially colonial sport on the weekends, "Wesi wanted to be home in Compton – probably to screw the village girls. [But] Wesi also cultivated three acres of Miss Bensie's farm and occasionally burned his own coals" (Thomas 155). While arguing with Jerome Wesi uses the language of Compton to support his refusal to give up his sexual liaisons, but he also quotes Pascal, "*le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connait point*" (Thomas 156). ("The heart has its reasons which reason does not know.") Jerome feels he will be able to reveal the truth about himself to Wesi, when the time comes, because "his brother was the first person he knew that understood and accepted contradictions" (Thomas 156). Both Sprat and Wesi offer alternatives to the choices Jerome has made and "these sites of ambiguity and contradiction–which often reflect how 'differences are actually lived and negotiated–are, paradoxically perhaps, the ones that can potentially enable new forms of social and cultural relations" (Chin 139).

Jerome eventually does find his own way to live as a queer Black man in spite of the hegemonic narrative that makes it difficult to inhabit this identity. He does so, using all the resources available to him, by doing the diasporic work of creating a vision of an African world that becomes his foundation for a sense of community on Isabella. Because Jerome Quashee is one of the few Black students at The Expatriates Academy, he has the opportunity, during his encounter with a visiting Ghanaian student, to form an African counter narrative to the one created by his education. It is his fluency in the English language that makes Fanon and other postcolonial texts accessible to him. When Jerome participates in "mourning" he builds on these earlier experiences to do the work of a diasporic subject, who creates, out of the conditions imposed by the loss of home and the tools of the colonizer, a sustaining experience of both grief and connection. Thus, Thomas opens his novel with Jerome beginning the Spiritualists's ritual of "mourning," and the destination of his journey has already been inscribed on his imagination. Pointer Francis, who leads Jerome through the experience explains to him, "When people come to me to make the journey, they already have a idea o' where they want to go" (Thomas 211). Jerome's longing is for Africa and the seeds of that desire are sown in his encounter with Yaw, the student from Ghana.

What Stuart Hall says is true of "[t]he African diasporas of the New World" in general, is true of Jerome in particular. He also has to experience a "symbolic return to Africa" ("Negotiating" 9) in order to find his place in the present. Meeting Yaw allows Jerome to see his own community, including his parents and their work, as part of a history and a culture that was ruptured by slavery. Yaw offers Jerome an alternative to the colonial narrative of the "gift" of white civilization: "What you mean civilized? You call White people civilized? … People who burn people in ovens. You know the Belgians killed three million people in the Congo because they couldn't collect rubber fast enough for King Leopold's needs?" (Thomas 35) Yaw answers Jerome's anxiety over the oft repeated colonial trope of cannibalism, "we don't eat people. White people try to teach us, even in Africa, that one reason they stole our continent was because we ate people. … Our historians say that that's the worst lie the White man ever told on Africa" (Thomas 57). Yaw insists, speaking of his own people, that "Ashanti is a great nation" (Thomas 35). As an adult reflecting on his experiences with Yaw, Jerome considers the contradictions embedded in the contrast between Yaw's understanding of his history and the situation he is in, "*If you weren't a member of some tribes, it was as if you weren't human. ... If Yaw had come from Ashanti slaves, he wouldn't have talked like that; he wouldn't have heard about Isabella Island, let alone visit it*" (Thomas 36). Jerome also learns that Yaw's fate is a sad counterpoint to the faith he had in the future of Ghana, when a fellow former student shows Jerome "*the article in* The Nation *shortly after Yaw had been arrested*" (Thomas 32). In spite of the shortcomings in his narrative of Africa, Yaw's enthusiasm for the evidence of the persistence of African culture on Isabella Island informs Jerome's experience of the homeland he encounters during "mourning."

During the trip to Compton, made at Yaw's insistence, this African visitor models a respect for and integration into Compton and the Quashee family that Jerome himself does not realize until after he completes his journey with the Spiritualists, who include Jerome's father. He hears an invocation, addressed to Yaw, that is very similar to one he will hear during "mourning." Beulah Quammie, "who was high up in his father's religion," asks, "Boy, yo' come fo' claim yo' own. Is what yo' have fo' teach we? We done forget 'most everything" (Thomas 43). In answer Yaw tells trickster tales, "the story about how death came into the world because of Anansi's greed and how Anansi outwitted the Python" (Thomas 45). Yaw also joins in activities that the Black middle class disapprove of and takes a turn at playing the steel pan and hunts for manicoux. He and Jerome join Comsie and Henry in working the land. While Yaw revels in the presence of Africa in the village life of Compton, “Jerome [begins] to wish the time could go faster,” but he tells himself, “He wasn’t jealous of Yaw. Why should he be jealous of Yaw?” (Thomas 46) It will be many years before Jerome’s unease is replaced by a sense of belonging to the world from which he is now separated but in which Yaw has membership.

“The mourning house” (Thomas 174) is the site of the work Jerome does to enter a new phase of his life that integrates him into his diasporic community and his sexual identity. Readiness for this undertaking is signaled by his possession by the spirit, and Jerome “knew that by the time the spirit called you, you knew that life itself was a contradiction” (Thomas 177). The call coincides with “the first time … he understood the meaning of humility” (Thomas 173), which allows Jerome to enter into the suffering of his ancestors, but he is also filled with a “deep sadness, … a sadness for the whole human race” (Thomas 186). He has the experience of the Esosusu, “the real name” (Thomas 176) of the Spiritualists, and of those who have gone before him, of “grieving for losses which cannot always be articulated” (Cho 14). Pointer Francis makes explicit this confrontation with grief when he explains the history of the Spiritualists:

> “Young people nowadays look like they know what fo’ swallow in the White man teachings and what fo’ spit out. In my time yo’ had to swallow everything in public an’ yo’ spitting out was in private. That is why the Spiritualists exist. And we had to spit out for a long time – my parents before me, and their parents before them, all the way back to slavery time” (Thomas 168).

Marsh-Lockett describes Jerome’s experience as a decolonization of the mind during which a spiritual experience serves as an antidote to the psychic disruptions of colonial education and expectations (30). After Jerome completes the period of instruction, he enters the cave-like space below the mourning house to complete the main part of his journey. This move underground is foreshadowed by Jerome's understanding of his need to return to his mother's care when he experiences his minor breakdowns, "*This constant return to the womb. Home to regain sanity. Baptism. Sleep. … 'This cave. Our coffins. And finally the earth*'" (Thomas 166). Pointer Francis explains that being under the earth will require Jerome to find his light within since there is none coming from without. This experience also counteracts the creation of the white mask. Being "buried in darkness" (Thomas 182) removes awareness of Jerome's black skin. While experiencing the journey to Africa, the meaning of Jerome's Blackness is no longer imposed from without, as is the case when Fanon describes the experience of being objectified by the young white boy who is frightened by seeing a Black man (84). The meaning of Jerome's Blackness is allowed to emerge from a vision of his grandmother rather than from his internalized version of the white gaze. She makes it possible to reverse the Middle Passage by leading her grandson back to Africa and community. In a place that his grandmother's spirit insists is not heaven Jerome participates in ritual practices. He is addressed, in an echo of the greeting Yaw received, with the words, "'Welcome among us from the uprooted ones across the water. May you learn a lot from us and may you teach us a lot'" (Thomas 203). There is a reciprocity in Jerome's vision that points to the direction his life must take, one that will integrate him into the community that he had been estranged from until he turned to the Spiritualists. Jerome's experience is of the idealized Africa of the diasporic subject longing for home. In the description of his visions "forgotten connections are once more set in place," as Hall says. "Such texts restore an imaginary fullness or plentitude, to set against the broken rubric of [the] past" (Hall "Cultural Identity" 225). His grandmother fulfils Jerome's diasporic need to be stitched into a past that is not a memory but a response to the needs of the present. She tells him she came “[s]o you can see wha’ people could be if them only make the effort. The ancestors say yo’ looking fo’ truth and they send me to teach it to yo’.” (Thomas 209)

This truth must include acknowledgement of his queerness and Pointer Francis confronts Jerome with the erasure of his sexuality, “Yo’ see what yo’ did with yo’ life? Yo’ put the sex part o’ yo’ life ‘pon a trash heap just fo’ please society. If yo’ did live in the South o’ the United States, yo’ would o’ paint yo’ self white?” (Thomas 198). Pointer Francis’s implied point, that one cannot escape one’s race, “presupposes a homologous argument based on granting cultural agency in the domain of sexuality: that the [situation] … in the American South with its history of virulent racism is the equivalent challenge to passing as straight in the equally virulent heterosexist West Indian culture” (I. Smith 6). “Pointer Francis’s positive reaction to his sexuality” (Thomas 201) and the assurance that the new pointers are chosen because “[t]hey have fo’ be people what slow to condemn others” (Thomas 214) allow Jerome to become integrated into the Black community that awaits him as he testifies to his visions at the gathering of Esosusu that “includ[ed] his father” (Thomas 215). Nevertheless, the advice of Pointer Francis concerning how frank Jerome should be about his sexuality is that “people is always growing, some faster, some slower. But most o’ the brethren ain’t grown enough fo’ understand why you is how yo’ is and fo’ accept yo’ as yo’ is” (Thomas 213). Having reconciled himself to the need to live with such contradictions, Jerome’s testimony uses Pointer Francis’s suggestion that he sum up what he had to overcome with the phrase, “After many trials and tribulations” (Thomas 213).

Jerome’s account of his visions is very similar to “[t]he testimony of praise” of American Black churches that serves “to report survival, to declare the goodness of God and divine triumph over one’s proverbial storm” (Melton 8). In this tradition “[t]estimonies require the presence of witnesses, people who have also seen or experienced God's work, and who, as they hear another's testimonies, are able to certify or attest to the truth of God's activity in that person's life" (Melton 7). Jerome also experiences the affirmation of his rebirth. After he bears witness to his visions they are affirmed when Deputy Pointer Andro declares Jerome "a living part of the Esosusu body" (Thomas 217). In this state even Jerome's colonial education can become a resource to be shared with others as he plans to go "help teach at the literary centre near where [he] live[s]" (Thomas 213). He is able to look forward to a future in which he is known by others and does for others. The "ethical approach [that] includes recognition of interdependence and reciprocity between Self and Other" (Craft 12) is a feature of Jerome's new understanding of himself. The formulation of his attitude is taken from Craft's description of Central American testimonials. Both cases illustrate Hall's point that "[f]ar from only coming from the still small point of truth inside us, identities actually come from outside, they are the way in which we are recognized and then come to step into the place of the recognitions which others give us" ("Cultural Identity" 8). Realizing that a life lived in community will not be without its own difficulties Jerome Quashee can now, nevertheless, live as a person who inhabits both parts of his name.

4.4. The Diasporic work of *Spirits in the Dark*

Thomas himself is also doing diasporic work as a Vincentian born Canadian writer who lives in Montreal and writes of a home that he imagines. It is not one that existed on St. Vincent in 1993, when *Spirits in the Dark* was published, rather it is a home that Thomas brings into existence on Isabella, the beautiful island that is his creation. Like the spirit of Jerome's grandmother who indicates that she has created a version of Africa "so [her grandson] can see wha' people could be if them only make the effort" (209), Thomas creates a vision of what a

West Indian island could be, a home with some space for a queer man to be himself. In fact, by having Jerome comment on "the islands that were Isabella's size: Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada" (155), Thomas emphasizes that his island is not St. Vincent. The Esosusu, with their round, thatched roof structures are not the Spiritual Baptists, whose places of worship have four corners "represent[ing] … not only the physical layout of the church but of Spiritual Baptist cosmology as well" (Duncan 104). Thomas is reimaging the tradition he knows, including its use of testimony. He has a predecessor who was steeped in the culture of the American Black Church. "Writing within and against the testimonial tradition, Baldwin demands the right to define his own identity, thereby laying the foundation for a legacy in which others might do the same" (Melton 9). The realities of St. Vincent and of Spiritual Baptist practice provide the material with which Thomas does the same work as Baldwin and Pointer Francis; he makes it possible for people to renew their lives because they experience a new vision of how those lives can be led.

The possibility of renewal points back to Fanon. Ato Sekyi-Otu explains that "[f]rom the beginning, the central question for Fanon was always that of releasing possibilities of human existence and history imprisoned by the colonization of experience and the racialization of consciousness" (17). Thomas's novel, which alludes to and has so much in common with *Black Skins, White Masks*, is a decolonizing text that celebrates both Black individuality and Black community. Jerome Quashee's burdensome colonial self dies and he is reborn into a more liberated queer self. In his praxis, Fanon's focus was on national liberation, but the quest for freedom from oppression can be extended to other spheres and Jerome Quashee finally is able to loosen the bonds around his sexual identity. He can create a self that incorporates the contradictions he must live with. In Thomas's novel, Fanon's stated desire, "to liberate the black man from the arsenal of complexes that germinated in a colonial situation" (14), is realized by an active and creative unpacking of the past in the service of making a worthwhile future.

There is a double return in *Spirits in the Dark*. Jerome's return to a place that is not Africa is mirrored by Thomas's return to the place that is not St. Vincent. Hall describes the creative possibilities represented by the past:

> No cultural identity is produced out of thin air. It is produced out of those historical experiences, those cultural traditions, those lost and marginal languages, those marginalized experiences, those peoples and histories which remain unwritten. Those are the specific roots of identity. On the other hand, identity itself is not the rediscovery of them, but what they as cultural resources allow a people to produce. (Hall "Negotiating" 14)

Thomas's turn to the actuality of life in St. Vincent transforms his roots into a "cultural resource" for the creation of a renewed identity that exists on the imagined Isabella. Marsh-Lockett sees Thomas's portrayal of Jerome as "an authorial act of resistance" (22) and the account of Jerome's experience of acceptance by Pointer Francis can be read as a defiance of traditional reactions to homosexuality in the West Indies, especially as it is expressed in the churches. As a result, Chin points out, Thomas is diversifying class, gender and sexual orientation in the representation of Black experience. He has written a text that "reflect[s] the way anti-colonial/imperial discourses need to be conceptualized in the context of the present historical and cultural situation" (Chin 135-136). By seeing the possibilities within Vincentian culture for understanding that wearing a mask of heterosexuality is akin to wearing a white mask, Chin sees Thomas as one of the writers who have "cleared a discursive space for the articulation of an 'indigenous gay/lesbian subjectivity" (136). Thomas's exploration of "the ambiguous and sometimes contradictory spaces that inevitably exist in any culture" (Chin 139) demonstrates how Vincentian society may simultaneously reinforce and challenge the attitudes to queerness created by the colonial legacy. What happens in these spaces in the novel testifies to how the balance can shift in favour of a challenge to existing norms. Describing the work of a queer testimony Melton says it "offers evidence of the potentially liberating impact of a sexual discourse of resistance, which allows a queered subject to refute charges of inferiority or sinfulness, often rooted in the power of their personal testimony" (11) What is accomplished through personal testimony is also accomplished by Thomas's novel. In keeping with such a reversal, Chin calls for "a critical practice that goes beyond simple dichotomies–us/them, native/ foreign, natural/unnatural–a practice that can not only affirm but also critique 'indigenous cultures in all of their varied and inevitably contradictory forms" (140). Such a practice is modelled by this novel's reworking of the homeland into a place that can be a true home.

4.5. Conclusion

The Jerome Quashee of the last chapter is not only reconciled to his full name, he can now embrace the totality of his life with its many contradictions. The Esosusu celebrate this rebirth into all of himself with their new brother. The praise house song unites the believers; their common ground is the understanding that all parts of their lives are essential:

> Glad for the sun; glad for the rain;
> Glad for our joys; glad for our pains;
> Glad for our coming; glad for our going;
> We are glad; we are glad. (Thomas 216)

This Esosusu song is not nostalgia, nor utopia. It is diasporic work. By witnessing to his "mourning" experience Jerome binds himself to his community and offers hope to others that they can also experience gladness. In fact, during Jerome's celebration Pastor O, who came to Isabella as an Evangelical preacher and a closeted homosexual, experiences a "powerful possession" (Thomas 219). Pointer Francis explains, "Fo' over fifteen years that American White man been after me to point him but the spirit didn' ever go near him. It got him tonight though" (Thomas 219). He finally is ready for "mourning." The spirit moves as it will. Jerome's "sadness for the whole human race" (186) at the time of his experience of possession foreshadows the expansiveness of the spirit that guides "mourning." Thomas's move at the end of his novel returns us to Fanon, who says in *Black Skins, White Masks,* "At the conclusion of this study, I want the world to recognize, with me, the open door of every consciousness" (181).

Thomas's novel can be seen as "a kind of conjuration/divination," or, more precisely, as coming "from the same magical/miracle tradition as the conjur–man" (Brathwaite "The African Presence in Caribbean Literature" 91). This product of "conjuration/divination" is a story that can bring change while it simultaneously imagines open doors that the writer has not yet experienced. Thomas places himself among the conjurers who have preceded him, including those from Europe, by having Jerome reference Yeats while recalling what he has learned from "mourning." "*Old clothes upon sticks to scare birds*" (Thomas 219), the last line of *Spirits in the Dark* reworks "[o]ld clothes upon old sticks to scare a bird," Yeats's original formulation in "Among School Children" (2). Thomas himself has assimilated "the features of every ancestor" (Walcott 354) in the process of witnessing to Jerome's final insight that "taking care of the pain is probably all, the only thing, that matters" (219).

Chapter 5.

Conclusion: Three Testimonies to Redemption

> I would argue that the process of creolization … is what defines the distinctiveness of Caribbean cultures: their 'mixed' character, their creative vibrancy, their complex, troubled unfinished relation to history, the prevalence in their narratives of the themes of voyaging, exile, and the unrequited trauma of violent expropriation and separation.
>
> (Stuart Hall, "Creolité and the Process of Creolization")

5.1. Introduction

What is true of the Caribbean in general is true in a particular way on St. Vincent. There a common pattern links examples of a Vincentian spirit of resistance to colonialism and its legacy in *The Narrative of Ashton Warner*, "ROUNDTRIP" and "Kaiso Kaiso" by Shake Keane and *Spirits in the Dark* by H. Nigel Thomas. The works that have been the focus of this thesis show how the degradation of human beings caused by the imperial project is overturned by the creative use of the resources that are at hand because of the variety of cultures that very project has brought together. Warner, Keane and Thomas's inventiveness offers their readers the same challenge as the one issued in Thomas King's Massey Lectures. These Vincentians offer us the chance to live our lives differently because we have heard their stories of redemption. All three accounts testify to situations in which human beings are reduced to objects. In Warner's narrative the circumstances under which the owner of Cane Grove Estate claimed that Warner belonged to him reflect the dehumanization that was at the centre of the plantation economy. Keane describes conditions, typical of the period from the 1950s to the 1970s, which can be described as "sans humanité" that existed abroad in England, in the wider Caribbean and at home on St. Vincent. Thomas writes of the alienation from the self of a person who is a Black and queer Caribbean in the second half of the twentieth century. The redress that is found by Warner, Keane and Thomas comes from the specific and in some cases the unique combination of cultures that are present because Europeans sought to exploit the land of St. Vincent. These resources include, but are not limited to, colonial law, an Indigenous presence and syncretic religious practices. In the historical record, in poetry and in narrative fiction there are Vincentian testimonies to the efforts of those who, though relegated to the position of an object, insist that they are subjects, human beings with agency. Warner, Keane and Thomas are witnesses to the creativity by which colonial conditions in St. Vincent have been mined for the resources needed to reclaim personhood from erasure. These three texts are works of resistance and make specifically Vincentian contributions to Caribbean culture.

Stuart Hall in "Negotiating Caribbean Identities" speaks of the recent global difficulties with "the issue of cultural identity as a political quest" (4). His comments explain why Vincentian voices are relevant beyond their place of origin. Hall "suggest[s] … that despite the dilemmas and vicissitudes of identity through which Caribbean people have passed and continue to pass, [they] have a tiny but important message for the world about how to negotiate identity" (4). Further, Hall points to "those historical experiences, those cultural traditions, those lost and marginal languages, those marginalized experiences, those peoples and histories which remain unwritten," that are the roots of the identity that emerges from "what they as cultural resources allow a people to produce" ("Negotiating Identity" 14). This thesis has explored both the originating cultural resources of these three texts and the contributions to Vincentian identity made by Warner, Keane and Thomas. Kamau Brathwaite says that within the variety of individual styles of "African-influenced artists" he expects to find and understand patterns that show "how the work of all relates together in a mutual continuum" ("The African Presence in

Caribbean Literature" 95). Such a continuum exists among these Vincentian works and the improvisation that Brathwaite sees as typical of Black/African literature can be seen in their creativity. The motif is one of turning to Vincentian resources, be they customs, laws, history, displacements or rituals, that offer the possibility of overcoming oppression in the creation of personhood.

5.2. Colonialism and its Legacy

As the first feature of the shared pattern, the authors's clear-eyed portrayal of colonial conditions roots the hope for a life that is better in a profound understanding of the damage done by European imperialism. Benítez-Rojo links the region's history with what he sees as its most salient feature, the plantation, which he describes as "the big bang of the Caribbean universe" (55). The Warner family's experience is a particular instance of Benítez-Rojo's "big bang," of the universal, unspeakable injustice of slavery. The assault that was Warner's apprehension is not only an important individual story, but also testifies to the colonial violence that continues to reverberate in the second half of the twentieth century in the work of Keane and Thomas. The narrative of a person who is claimed as property is followed by poetry and narrative fiction. As Bhabha explains, "the work of testimony is 'enjoined' in other discursive frames" (26). Keane and Thomas complement what Warner does. They invite the reader to "engage in imaginative acts that compel the reader to bear witness to what is happening to others with insight, 'in one's own body'" (Whitlock 180-81). Keane asks his reader to confront, with him, the struggle over what it means to be Vincentian, West Indian and Black in the England of the fifties and sixties and then the difficulties of simple survival in the Caribbean. Thomas enjoins his reader to imagine the alienation that Fanon has described as typical for Black Antillean people, set in a society modelled on St. Vincent in the pre- and post-independence era. His Isabella Island is a place where homophobia is prevalent. Thomas's innovation is to extend the Fanonian analysis of exile from the Black self to the rejection of the queer self.

The *Narrative of Ashton Warner* is an apt starting point for this analysis of Vincentian literary identity as it provides direct evidence of the conditions endured by both the free and enslaved Black populations. Warner's testimony shows, as Fanon says of the descendants of enslaved Africans, that the regime became internalized as a lens through which the victims of colonialism came to see themselves in relation to its categories. Black people's identification with the structure of slavery was most explicitly addressed in the discussion of Warner's experience of facing the prospect of becoming a member of the field gang. That his change in status was as significant as the brutal working conditions as a reason for Ashton's dismay over this change in his life, speaks to the internalization of the colonial hierarchy. To be a member of the field gang was to be among the lowest of the enslaved plantation workers. The whole Black population understood themselves in the colonial matrix; the reaction of the free Black people to Warner's subjugation attested to the internalization of its divisions. The use of the word foolish revealed the harsh judgement of those of Warner's friends who described him using this term of derision because he continued to live as an enslaved person. It speaks to the pervasiveness of the disparagement suffered by the enslaved population that even some of those who knew enslavement themselves spoke of Warner as a fool.

With maturity Warner developed an understanding of slavery that allowed him to stand further apart from the plantation system of objectification and this was the Warner who, in England, recounted the brutality of slavery for the sake of its abolition. This was the Warner who was a witness to the physically crushing work of the field gang. This was the Warner who testified to the cruelty of the plantation regime and reported, "I have seen people who were so sick that they could scarcely stand, dragged out of the sick-house, and tied up to a tree, and flogged in a shocking manner; then driven with the whip to the work" (Warner 39). He testified to the degradation inflicted upon the enslaved as the degradation of those he knew as persons. These people did not carry manure on their heads in wicker baskets because they were indifferent to the filth running over their bodies. From Warner we learn they did so only because of violence. When the English courts concluded that Warner's manumission by his aunt was not sufficient evidence of his having been freed, Warner's legal position as an enslaved West Indian made him the one among his fellows. He accepted the responsibility of speaking for others while speaking out for himself; he participated in the act of giving testimony.

Warner's story is emblematic of the nation's history. Keane has located his poetic representations of that colonial legacy in the Vincentian particularities of "ROUNDTRIP" and in the Caribbean world of "Kaiso Kaiso." In chapter three the diasporic speaker of "ROUNDTRIP" is identified as one of the unhomed both as a foreigner in England and as a returnee to St. Vincent. The ruptures of "Kaiso Kaiso" focus especially on the tensions in the relationships between men and women caused by the dire economic circumstances many Caribbean people face. In this poem late colonialism has produced a situation that Keane describes as "sans humanité," one characterized by the struggles between women and men, the old and the young, those dutybound and those led by desire.

First "ROUNDTRIP" signals the trajectory of its speaker in the title but the fulfillment of both the hopes associated with leaving for England and those generated by return to St. Vincent is elusive. The speaker recounts the experiences, like the cold weather and lexical subtleties, that signal to him and his Vincentians friends that they are not at home in Britain. Many English people do not accept the speaker and his compatriots as part of their society, including the landladies that will not rent to Black West Indians. But it is the racial violence, metonymically represented by the poem's "Nottinghill Gate" attacks (lines 182-83, Keane *Angel Horn* 9), that are the most blatant expression of a British anti-Black racism so virulent it sparks the return leg of the poem's roundtrip. There the returnees encounter the problems of living in a place that has changed during their time away, an absence which has also altered the five friends. In spite of gathering over "local overproof" the group is marked as foreign, and their meetings are referred to as "a pub," by their community (lines 219, 214, Keane *Angel Horn* 10). "ROUNDTRIP" illustrates that being at home is not achieved through a physical move, even if it is to the place of one's birth.

The difficulties in "Kaiso Kaiso" are the fundamental issues that underlie the struggles the friends in "ROUNDTRIP" share with their neighbours. Whereas in the later poem only Nero weeps in "Kaiso Kaiso" the mountain weeps since the setting of the poem is the fallen world. The commentary on local issues that is typical of calypso is expanded by Keane to a view of Caribbean life as characterized by conflict. Although very specific Trinidadian references anchor the poem to the place kaiso and calypso originated, Keane's use of Vincentian Nation Language expands the scope of the poem to all the West Indies. In this world struggle characterizes a woman's life to such an extent that "[i]t have / so much reason why / woman santapee / must more than bad" (lines 1-4, p. 135). In response "man santapee / … / they cause a consternation" (lines 5,9, p. 135), since the men, at least those of the "santapee" variety, are not concerned with the consequences of their actions. In addition to the problems of sexual relationships the young do not heed the advice of their elders and the speaker concludes, "Lord you see how these children behaving" (line 102, p. 138). And beyond concerns over the wasted potential of young boys who won't study to secure their futures because sex is their only interest are fundamental concerns over the helpless “river-child and sparrow drownding / [who] Float up like a black kaskadura” (lines 132-133, p. 139). A struggle over access to the basics required for survival characterizes most of the relationships in “Kaiso Kaiso.” The description of those conflicts progresses from the playful versions presented in the guise of Carnival characters to the desperation of situations in which even “the scape-boat rolling upsided down” (line 128, p. 139). Today’s scarcity is the legacy of the dispossession experienced by those with whom Warner shared the condition of slavery; West Indian poverty is the actuality attested to by the imagery of Keane’s poems.

In *Spirits in the Dark* the main character, Jerome Quashee, escapes material hardship through his entry into the Black middle class as a civil servant. In this novel the violence of the plantation has been sublimated into the psychological distress of self-alienation that results in both the major and minor psychic breaks Jerome endures. The colonial conditions characteristic of the period both prior to and following independence privilege behaviour, including the use of Standard English and the pursuit of education, that exiles Jerome from his home community in the country-side. Folded into these performances of the hegemonic norm is the erasure of Jerome’s queer identity by repeated denial of its existence.

Chapter four explores the theme of identity through an analysis of the last name that Thomas gives his protagonist, Quashee, which is shown to be an allusion to the stereotype that is associated with this name in the West Indies. The move contextualizes Jerome’s dehumanization as a Black man within the racism that is associated with the pejorative use of the Quashee moniker. The name is associated with a view of the enslaved person as a “pathological liar; he or she was also [seen as] distrustful, lazy, lacking in judgment, childlike, happy-go-lucky, cruel and revengeful” (Taylor 131). Jerome’s father, a man of gravitas who, of course, also carries the name Quashee, describes his own performance of laughing in the presence of the planter class and acting as if he enjoys the company of those he is beholden to for his livelihood. The name's association with the trickster evasions and dissembling that are required in the colonial situation are celebrated in traditional stories and acknowledged in Thomas's novel. The need to perform a version of the self that is less than who one is for the sake of survival is the oppressive condition testified to by *Spirits in the Dark*.

5.3. Creole Resources

In the difficult situations that have been reviewed above Warner, Keane's speakers and Thomas's character uncover the resources that they need to mount an opposition to enslavement and to the aftermath of that condition. The second shared feature of these three works, as chapters two, three and four show, is that in *The Narrative of Ashton Warner*, "ROUNDTRIP," "Kaiso Kaiso" and *Spirits in the Dark* the resources for undoing colonialism are taken from the matrix that colonialism has created.

What resources did Warner find in his circumstances? The first and most important was the persistence of African values of solidarity expressed in the commitment to family and community embodied in his aunt, Daphne Crosbie. Crosbie's devotion to her kin was demonstrated in her efforts to free her family from slavery, whether it was Warner and his mother or Crosbie's aged, infirm brother. Her sense of community extended to those with whom she was enslaved and she devoted herself and her resources to improving their circumstances. Warner's place in the Black community of the capital also helped him develop a sense of self, one influenced by this group's understanding of what it meant to have been manumitted. That Warner was able to see himself as a free person was due, at least in part, to the community that taught him to reject the plantation manager and overseer's view that he was the property of the estate. While this community's chiding that Warner "must be fond of slavery to remain [at Cane Grove], for [he] had no business upon the estate" (Warner 56-57) can strike a reader as harsh, these words speak to the fierceness of the community's insistence on Warner's status as a free Black man. When he walked away from the plantation Warner was acting on the understanding of himself that he first received from his family and that was reinforced by the larger Black community of Kingstown.

Warner and his family also made use of the resources of the British legal establishment. There are several examples, two of which are recalled here, of interventions that took place within the legal system. The first instance was when he was purchased as an infant along with his mother and the second occurred when Warner was about twelve years old during his apprehension by the owner of Cane Grove Estate. The laws that allowed for the buying and selling of human beings were used by Crosbie to free her sister and Warner, the breast feeding child. When Wilson seized Warner his aunt and mother turned to the legal system, a process known at the time as "going to law" (Aljoe "Going to Law" 371), hoping that Crosbie's purchase of the child would be recognized. The family believed that the Vincentian magistrate would uphold the validity of the earlier transaction. When Warner finally took matters into his own hands by escaping Cane Grove, he obtained a pass to travel "to Grenada as a free man" based on the papers he took to the governor's secretary (Warner 58). Warner and his mother were realistic about the limitations of the legal system from which they sought redress. Warner said of the West Indian lawyers, "it is all one to them whether you are right or wrong; they only care for the pay" (Warner 47). Yet, in spite of experiencing this indifference, Warner continued to hope that his right to live as a free man would eventually be recognized. When Warner turned to the British legal system his amanuensis reported that Warner "had come over to England on purpose to establish his claims to freedom" (Warner 12). Warner's narrative, as Nicole Aljoe points out, was among those to "explicitly announce themselves as substitutions for and anticipations of court testimony" ("Going to Law" 358). Warner's unrealized hope was that his undertakings in England would make it possible to return to St. Vincent and his family as a lawfully free man.

The legal system that included the British Parliament also provided Warner with the opportunity to be a subject, by contributing to the fight to abolish slavery. Colonialism created the need for The Anti-Slavery Society led by Thomas Pringle and it is due to its efforts that Warner's narrative is still available and his testimony against the brutality suffered by the enslaved population has been preserved. When written "the narratives themselves were envisioned and created as legal documents intended to provide the truth of slavery so that 'the good people of England might hear from a slave what a slave had felt and suffered'" (Aljoe "Going to Law" 357). Warner's evidence was submitted to parliament during the debate over abolition that resulted in the Emancipation Act of 1833; he played a role in bringing about abolition using the structures that originally allowed for slavery.

Whereas we have seen that Warner found resources in the heritage of an African sense of community and the legal and political systems of the British Empire to resist the oppression of enslavement, chapter three shows that Keane found his resources in the Caribbean itself. He turns to the Indigenous past, a move repeated in the two poems, and one that Keane draws special attention to in "ROUNDTRIP." The reclamation of an ongoing Amerindian presence is enfolded in an optimism that Keane, as a critic, identifies as typical of Caribbean writing. A counter-narrative to the situations that turn the calypso refrain "sans humanité" into a description of island life is created within a creole culture. As an artist embracing and renewing the kaiso and calypso forms created by Trinidadians, one of Keane's most important resources is the creative tradition he is shaping. The language and the artistic expression that emerged from the admixtures of Indigenous, African, Asian and European forms in the colonial matrix are the materials out of which Keane crafts his poems of resistance.

At a time when, as Keane himself says, “the Caribs didn’t come into it much” (“ROUNDTRIP” line 29, p. 4) he saw in the living remanent of the mixed race Indigenous and maroon people who resisted the imposition of British plantation slavery a resource for facing the troubles of the mid-twentieth century. In “ROUNDTRIP” the one Carib member of the group of Vincentians who join the Windrush exodus from the Caribbean to England is identified by name and by the Carib village he comes from. His sorrow, both abroad and at home, is emblematic of what the group experiences. His joy functions similarly. The renewal of St. Vincent, as is the case for the city-states of Shakespeare’s comedies, comes with the prospect of marriage. The union that ends “ROUNDTRIP” brings the Indigenous world that Maria Amalivaca y Pedros and Nero belong to together with the reggae of Jamaica and the Spanish language of Latin America “in the yard” (line 240, p.14) of the Vincentian groom. There the bride will establish a dance school. Keane makes “AMALIVACA,” both the bride’s and the mythical Amerindian forebear’s name, the centre around which these other elements of identity coalesce.

In “Kaiso Kaiso” the renewed world’s touchstone is the specifically Caribbean image “the hummingbird oil she breast” (Line 194, p.141). Emblematic of the three works under consideration, I have chosen this line for the title of my thesis. By layering the reference to the East Indian religious ritual practice of applying oil to one’s body over a symbol of indigeneity, the hummingbird, Keane suggests the healing of the ruptures of colonialism. By situating this image in the context of a new Eden, he expresses his optimism that the best parts of the cultures that intersect in the Caribbean and on St. Vincent can create a new whole from the turbulence of the past. “ROUNDTRIP” and “Kaiso Kaiso,” while attesting to the reasons that exist for weeping, end with tears of joy.

The collisions of colonialism also make available the language and poetic forms that Keane uses. The free verse structure of “ROUNDTRIP,” borrowed from the innovations of poets such as T. S. Eliot, comes to Keane via his interest in a literature initially dominated by the European cannon. The kaiso/calypso form of “Kaiso Kaiso” developed from the African griot tradition. The refrain “sans humanité” is a French phrase that was originally used during the stick-fighting competitions linked to African rituals (Saunders xxvi). Keane acknowledges a debt to the calypso practitioners who are his contemporaries in his invocation of both Lord Kitchener and the Mighty Sparrow. They are also the products of and innovators within the traditions which made it possible for “the calypsonian [to provide] a voice which was a call to battle, to expression and recognition of the Self” (Saunders xxvi).

The language Keane uses is his most important poetic resource, the one that most explicitly reflects Caribbean history. In “ROUNDTRIP” the five Vincentian friends go from “sitting down in a pub somewhere” (line7 p. 3) to being the reason the word develops a new meaning when they return to St. Vincent. There “people calls it a pub” (line 214 p.10) when the group of former émigrés meets. Here is a metonymic example of the process by which the language of the metropole is played with and reshaped to carry the meanings of those subjected to its power; Nation Language is being born. The locally created variation on the Standard English meaning of the word “pub” illustrates how language evolves so that “seh wha de hell” (line 249 p. 14) is marker of Vincentian identity. In “Kaiso Kaiso” the particularity of the pronunciation of the term “tray-lay-lay” allows Keane to both pay respect to the calypso tradition in which the term “tay-lay-lay” often occurs and to introduce a subtle but significant variation on common practice. “Kaiso Kaiso’s” heavy reliance on Nation Language is a celebration of the rhythms and sound that have been brought together on St. Vincent. Keane wrote as “increasing nationalism and independence [led] to acceptance of this mother-tongue ... [and] the slow scholastic identification of the formative role of elements from African languages [made] West Indian nation language acceptable as a language” (Breiner 165). Keane’s contribution to the embrace of Caribbean speech is an example of how the culture of the island and the region has been shaped by his poetry.

The resources that Thomas draws on for *Spirits in the Dark*, like Keane’s, also are specifically the products of a Caribbean heritage. Thomas’s choices for his protagonist’s name, Jerome Quashee, reveal the importance of both the European influences, which were long seen as dominant, and the presence of African cultural elements, whose effects were long covert. In this novel the education system of St. Vincent provides access to the intellectual preparation that contributes to the possibility of a critique of colonialism, albeit for only a few Black students. The Spiritual Baptist movement, which preserves African spiritual practices within a Christian denomination, provides Thomas with a model to redress the alienation from the self that a Fanonian analysis uncovers. Opposition to the legacy of colonialism, in the case of *Spirits in the Dark*, follows the tactics used by Warner and Keane of using stratagems that already exist in Vincentian culture.

In spite of the fact that its purpose is to serve the interests of the colonial elites, education can provide opportunities to undo oppressive situations. Because Jerome Quashee attends Expatriates Academy he has opportunities to hear narratives that challenge the claims of European superiority. He reads Richard Wright, the Black American who exposes the racism of a hegemonically White world. From a Ghanaian student who refutes the claim that Africans practiced cannibalism, Jerome hears of an African continent of great kingdoms. Thomas gives his protagonist a thirst for reading from a very young age and while this choice creates emotional barriers it also opens intellectual doors. Thomas puts the works of Frantz Fanon in Jerome's hands, giving him the resources to understand his alienation from himself as a Black man.

Whereas the tools that help Jerome analyze his situation are connected with the white world the healing he requires comes through African inspired traditions. This is the Africa that Hall, speaking for the Black people of the Caribbean, says 'we must return to–but 'by another route'–what Africa has become in the New World, what we have made of 'Africa': 'Africa' as we re-tell it through politics, memory and desire" ("Identity and Diaspora" 132). The ritual of mourning as practiced by the Spiritual Baptists of St. Vincent and fictionalized as a Spiritualist rite in *Spirits in the Dark*, allows Jerome to experience the visionary Africa through a sense of connection to his ancestors. A new identity enables Jerome both to hope for better for himself and to be part of a community. It emerges from the experience of meeting the African elect, those willing to live a life in which the welfare of the other is as important as one's own. The centrality of the community for African and African-descended people, which is evident in the devotion of Warner's aunt to her family and friends, is echoed in Jerome's experience with the Spiritualists. During mourning they attend to his every need and then welcome him as a member of their church on the completion of his spiritual journey. Jerome uses the means offered by both Europe and Africa to undo his alienation.

5.4. Being Subjects

The final element in the pattern that unites Warner's narrative and the writing of Keane and Thomas is that all three texts insist upon personhood. Warner's narrative is a text of resistance because with the help of others Warner made himself known as a subject in the fight against slavery. Keane is a poet who offers optimism as a response to the troubles that come with being a Black, West Indian Vincentian. Thomas shows that there are intellectual and spiritual traditions within Caribbean culture that can be the bases for the undoing of alienation and homophobia. This turn to personhood is a turn to testimony where "[t]estimony takes us to … that 'global heritage' of post-colonialism: the struggle to imagine new humanisms" (Whitlock 10). The activism and social change that Gillian Whitlock links to such "new humanisms" is modelled by Warner and promised in Keane and Thomas.

Warner's name has not shared the obscurity that exists around the other names that are part of the Vincentian Slave Registry of 1817, which identifies him by his anomalous situation of residing with his mother in Kingstown. Warner entered into history and established himself as an individual through his personal narrative. He provided evidence of the conditions endured by enslaved people on Cane Grove Estate, both as to their general character and in their particular instances of degradation. Warner saw his position as one who was offering testimony for a class of people who could not speak for themselves. "Since the experience of slavery itself is inaccessible to nonslaves, the rhetoric of authenticity, which pervades the slavery debates, requires witnesses and testimony that approximate the value of that irretrievable experience. Put another way, it takes a witness for the 'truth' to be told" (McBride 95). Warner fulfilled that role. As his amanuensis said, he was motivated by "a sincere wish to benefit those whose severe sufferings he had witnessed, and whose severe labours, in part only, he had shared" (Warner 13). His testimony, submitted to the parliament that voted to end slavery, extended Warner's fight for his freedom to a struggle for the liberation of all held in bondage in the British empire (Aljoe "'Going to Law'" 373). The individual who lives in the pages of his narrative insists on his dignity and resists the ubiquitous punishments of the plantation. Even the Cane Grove overseer acknowledged the respect Warner gained. He understood himself as a person with rights and acted accordingly, walking away from Cane Grove and making his way to England to pursue those rights. Warner defined himself as a subject in a world that considered him an object.

More than one hundred years later Keane testifies to the vitality of the poetic voice that emerges from the place he was born. He reiterates the selfhood that exists among those whose home is a little-known island of the Lesser Antillies. By drawing attention to specifically Vincentian features of its Nation Language Keane provides a particular example of identity making through language. Through allusions to the island's Carib past Keane anchors his hope for redemption to the particular history of St. Vincent. The near extinction of the Caribbean Indigenous population is recognized but juxtaposed to the enduring evidence of a pre-contact culture and the existence of a contemporary Amerindian and Carib presence. What Marlene Nourbese Philips says of the role of the calypsonian and of Caribbean societies is also true of Keane and St. Vincent. It is one of the

> societies in which the harsh melodies of loss and exile and be/longing for a re/turn are repeated over and over again in different keys and at different intervals. Societies in which these melodies come from different societies and cultures, some of which, like the African and the Asian carry with them polyphonic and polyrhythmic musical traditions. Fugal societies in two senses of the word–both dissociative and polyphonic. And it is the calypsonian that has the potential to heal the former and allow the polyphonies to grow. (91-92)

Keane's poems reclaim both the far past as represented by Vincentian petroglyphs and more recent Indigenous history as essential elements of a contemporary creole culture that looks to a more human and humane future. "Because language is basically social, the text turns outward," as in “ROUNDTRIP” and “Kaiso Kaiso,” so that “the writer works to restore human dignity. Ethics, urgency, and a utopian vision drive the witness/writer’s production” (Craft 4). The joy of solidarity is the music of these poems.

Keane’s turn to the past in order to renew Vincentians’s view of themselves, is replicated by Thomas. He finds it necessary to fictionalize St. Vincent to create the circumstances in which Jerome can be accepted into a Spiritualist congregation and be encouraged, by a member of its leadership, to accept his queer identity. This authorial decision recognizes that the acceptance of homosexuality that Thomas imagines did not yet exist in the St. Vincent of 1993, the year the novel was published. What Thomas achieves, however, is to show that the bases for a change to existing Antillean attitudes towards queerness exist within the Black intellectual tradition as represented by Fanon. In fact, Thomas joins Fanon in striving “to liberate the black man from the arsenal of complexes that germinated in a colonial situation” (14). Thomas’s contribution to Caribbean literature is to extend the Fanonian concept of the white mask as analogous to the construction of a heteronormative mask by a person who is queer. Thomas also draws on the spiritual tradition of Black people. The character who represents one of the fullest expressions of wisdom, the Spiritualist Pointer Francis, makes the comparison to Fanon explicit. He challenges Jerome to accept his sexual orientation by creating an analogy between painting one’s black skin white in the American South and attempting to pass as heteronormative on Isabella. The opportunity to heal the self that has been wounded by the experiences of estrangement and self-hatred through the caring ministrations of the community are extended to a queer man. When Thomas gives Jerome the experience of reclaiming his African, Quashee self from the stereotypes of colonial assumptions about the inferiority of Black people the author affirms the personhood of all those to whom the name has been applied as a racist epithet. In *Spirits in the*

Dark the name Quashee represents a man who knows and who accepts himself. The novel talks back, not to the metropole alone, but to "any institution" that would render queer people "voiceless, marginalized, or contained within narrowly defined representations of their identities." *Spirits in the Dark* is among the "black queer testimonies [that] shatter the silence that would otherwise cost …lives" (Melton 23).

5.5. Further Considerations

Could the pattern that Warner, Keane and Thomas follow be a resource for a study of other Vincentian cultural productions? Describing the impact on Jamaicans of Rastafarianism and its turn to Africa, Hall says that "this metaphor … [allowed] a whole people symbolically [to reengage] with an experience which enabled them to find a language in which they could re-tell and appropriate their own histories" ("Negotiating Identity" 13). A similar Vincentian vernacular might be identifiable, one that incorporates pan-Caribbean influences into the island's unique history as Keane and Thomas have done. Keane's has a poem about Spiritual Baptists, "Mistress Mucket's Funeral," and "Garifuna" is the title of a Thomas short story, indicating that these writers have a common interest in two groups that are strongly identified with St. Vincent. Such spiritual and historical influences in other Vincentian works may indicate the presence of a pattern similar to that found in Warner, Keane and Thomas. The historical record also might provide evidence of instances in which other members of the enslaved population, like Warner and his family, acted in the cause of their own emancipation. Explorations of Vincentian culture could include not only literary productions but newer media, such as film, as the following more detailed discussion of such possibilities suggests. As Aljoe says in her discussion of the creole characteristics of Warner's testimony, "creolization accepts the fact that issues such as identity and culture are never absolutes but always a process of connection and tensions along a continuum of other possibilities that grew out of the Caribbean's colonial history" ("Creole Testimony" 20). What other testimonies on that spectrum are to be found in the culture of St. Vincent?

Hall draws attention to the reservoir for Caribbean narratives. He says the great asset is a "return to the beginning [which] is like the Imaginary in Lacan–it can neither be fulfilled nor requited and hence is the beginning of the symbolic, of representation, the infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search, discovery" ("Cultural Identity" 80). The original fountainhead of creativity is found in Warner and "the beginning" is a source of inspiration for Keane and Warner. What other versions or visions of the beginning exist? What other testimonies to resistance emerge? What other discoveries allow one to imagine lives lived differently?

A broadened investigation might begin with a study of other writing by Keane and Thomas. *Angel Horn* has seventy more poems concerning Vincentians at home and abroad. *One a Week with Water* and *The Volcano Suites*, though difficult to find, are important works by Keane. As for Thomas, he continues to turn to Isabella Island and the Caribbean as a homeland for his characters in later novels. *Behind the Face of Winter* (2001) contrasts the lost home, Isabella Island, with life in Montreal. A novel about the recovery of lost identity, *Return to Arcadia* (2007), suggests in its title a continuation of the themes of *Spirits in the Dark*. Thomas also addresses the issue of homophobia in *No Safeguards* (2015), set in part on St. Vincent itself.

In addition to the possibility of examining additional work by Keane and Thomas there are three other works that may confirm or challenge the thematic pattern discussed in this thesis. Two poetry collections, *Island Voices from St. Christopher and the Barracudas* (2014) and *Canouan Suites and Other Pieces* (2016), provide an opportunity to examine Nanton's writing and to assess Keane's influence on his friend and biographer. The third work, the documentary film, *Yurumein, Resistance, Rupture and Repair: The Caribs of St. Vincent in the Caribbean*, suggests in its title a strong correspondence with the themes I have been exploring.

5.6. Conclusion

Walcott, in "The Muse of History," says "as we grow older as a race, we grow aware that history … is a kind of literature without morality, that in its actuaries the ego of the race is indissoluble and everything depends on whether we write this fiction through the memory of hero or of victim" (370-71). The works chosen for this project are testimonies to heroes, first to the actual individuals who were Ashton Warner and his family and next to the fictional characters who people Keane's poems and Thomas's novel. There are more memories of Vincentian heroes to ponder. There are more Vincentian heroes to remember. There are, as with King in *The Truth about Stories*, more witnesses to how lives can be lived differently.

Works Cited

Abdel-Shehid, Gamal. "Gender and Racialised Form: Reading Fanon through Angela Davis." n.d. email received by Hendrika Haasen from Pablo Idahosa.

Alabi, Adetayo. "Introduction: The Caribbean and Globalization." *The Global South*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2010, pp. 1-8. www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/globalsouth.4.2.issue-2. Accessed 14 March 2021.

Aljoe, Nicole N. "'Going to Law': Legal Discourse and Testimony in Early West Indian Slave Narratives." *Early American Literature,* vol. 46, no. 2, 2011, pp. 351–381.

—. "Caribbean Slave Narratives: Creole in Form and Genre." *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2004. <scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/anthurium/ vol2/iss1/1>. Accessed 24 Feb. 2020.

—. *Creole Testimonies: Slave Narratives from the British West Indies, 1709–1838*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Anon. "A Speech Made by a Black of Guardaloupe, at the Funeral of a Fellow-Negro." From a Letter from a Merchant at Jamaica to a Member of Parliament in London, Touching the African Trade. London, 1709. *DRS Digital Repository Service.* North Eastern University Library. <hdl.handle.net/2047/D20238861>. Accessed 5 Jan. 2021.

Beckles, Hilary McD. and Andrew Downes. "The Economics of Transition to the Black Labour System in Barbados, 1630-1680." *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World,* edited by Hilary McD. Beckles and Verene Shepherd, Markus Wiener Publishers, 2000, pp. 239-252.

Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island*. Translated by James Maraniss, 2nd ed., Duke University Press, 1996.

—. “Three Words Toward Creolization.” *Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature, and Identity*, edited by Kathleen M. Balutansky and Marie-Agnès Sourieau, translated by James Maraniss, University Press of Florida, 1998, pp. 53-61.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Comp. ProQuest Ebook Central. Routledge, 2004. ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/york/detail.action?docID=653022. Accessed 03 March 2020.

Brathwaite, Edward Kamau. *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Angelophone Caribbean Poetry*. New Beacon Books, 1984.

—. “The African Presence in Caribbean Literature.” *Daedalus,* vol. 103, no. 2, 1974, pp. 73-109. www.jstor.org/stable/20024205. Accessed 21 April 2021.

Breiner, Laurence A. *An Introduction to West Indian Poetry*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Shruti”. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 27 Feb. 2015, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shruti. Accessed 2 March 2021.

Brown, Ernest D. “Carnival, Calypso, and Steelband in Trinidad.” *The Black Perspective in Music*, vol. 18, no. 1/2, 1990, pp. 81-100. www.jstor.org/stable/1214859. Accessed 18 Jan. 2021.

Cameron, Norman. “Ashton Warner's Account of Slavery.” *Search for Identity: Essays on St. Vincent and the Grenadines*, edited by Kenneth John, Baldwin King and Cheryl L. King. Kingstown: Kings-SVG, 2006. pp. 247-52.

Carmichael, Mrs. A. C. *Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Coloured and Negro Population of the West Indies*. 2nd ed., London, 1834. <catalog.hathitrust.org /Record/009733805>. Accessed 17 Dec. 2020.

Chin, Timothy S. "'Bullers' and 'Battymen': Contesting Homophobia in Black Popular Culture and Contemporary Caribbean Literature." *Callaloo,* vol. 20, no. 1, 1997, pp. 127-141. www.jstor.org/stable/3299295. Accessed 14 Nov. 2018.

Chinosole. *The African Diaspora and Autobiographics: Skeins of Self and Skin*. Peter Lang, 2001.

Cho, Lily. "The Turn to Diaspora." *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 17, no. 11, 2007, file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/13229-24743-1-PB.pdf. Accessed 13 Nov. 2018.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. The Project Gutenberg, 2009, www.gutenberg.org/files /219/219-h/219-h.htm. Accessed 19 Oct. 2020.

Craft, Linda. "Testimony in Theory and Practice: Issues of Postmodernism, Subalternity, Decolonization, and Nationalism." *Novels of Testimony and Resistance from Central America* , University Press of Forida, 1997.

Douglass, Frederick. *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. Arcturus Publishing Ltd., 2018.

Duncan, Carol B. *This Spot of Ground: Spiritual Baptists in Toronto*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008. books-scholarsportal-info.ezproxy.libraryinfo .ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/en /read?id=/ebooks/ebooks3/upress /2014-10-22/1/9781554580859#page=121. Accessed 4 May 2021.

Fanon, Frantz. *A Dying Colonialism*. Translated by Haakon Chevalier, Grove Atlantic, 1994.

—. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam, Pluto Press, 2008, abahlali.org/files/__, Black_Skin__White_Masks__Pluto_Classics_.pdf.

—. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Constance Farrington, Grove Press, 1963.

—. *Toward the African Revolution*. Translated by Haakon Chevalier, Grove Press, 1967, Fanon _Frantz_Toward_the_African_Revolution_1967.pdf.

Felman, Shoshana. "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching." *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1992, pp. 1-56. www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/books/edit/10.4324/9780203700327/testimony-shoshana-felman-dori-laub. Accessed 25 July 2021.

Festa, Jessica. "Trinidad: The Land of the Hummingbirds." *Epicure and Culture*, 15 May 2013, epicureandculture.com/trinidad-the-land-of-the-hummingbirds/. Accessed 02 June 2021.

Finneran, Niall, and Christina Welch. "Mourning Balliceaux: Towards a Biography of a Caribbean Island of Death, Grief and Memory." *Island Studies Journal*, vol. 15, no. 2, Institute of Island Studies, 2020, pp. 255–272. doi:10.24043/isj.121. Accessed 3 March 2021.

Forde, Maarit. "The Spiritual Baptist Religion." *Caribbean Quarterly*, vol. 65 no. 2, May 2019, pp. 212-240. www.hnet.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=41305. Accessed 17 Sept. 2020.

Forte, Maximilian C. "Review of (Director) Andrea E. Leland, *Yurumein* (Homeland)." *H-Caribbean, H-Net Reviews*, June 2014, www.hnet.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=41305. Accessed 17 Sept. 2020.

Fraser, Adrian. *From Shakers to Spiritual Baptists: The Struggle for Survival of the Shakers of St. Vincent and the Grenadines*. St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Kings-SVG, 2011.

Glissant, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing, University of Michigan Press, 2010.

Ganase Lall, Indira. Email to Hendrika Haasen. 12 Feb. 2021.

Hall, Stuart. “Creolité and the Process of Creolization.” *Creolizing Europe: Legacies and Transformations*, edited by Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez and Shirley Anne Tate, Liverpool University Press, 2015, pp. 12-25.

—. “Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation.” *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, vol. 36, 1989, pp. 68-81. www.jstor.org/stable/44111666. Accessed 26 March 2019.

—. “Negotiating Caribbean Identities.” *New Left Review*, no. 209, 1995. newleftreview-org.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/issues/i209/articles/stuart-hall-negotiating-caribbean-identities. Accessed 29 June 2021.

Hill, Errol. “On the Origin of the Term Calypso.” *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1967, pp. 359-367. www.jstor.org/stable/850271. Accessed 3 Feb. 2021.

John, Karl. *Land Reform in Small Island Developing States: A Case Study on St. Vincent, West Indies 1890-2000*. College Station, Texas, Virtualbookworm.com, 2006.

John, Kenneth. “The Political Crisis in St. Vincent.” *Seach for Identity: Essays on St. Vincent and the Grenadines*, edited by Baldwin King, Kenneth John and Cheryl L. A. King, Kingstown, Kings-SVG, 2006, pp. 207-222.

Johnson, Kim. “How to Name a Hummingbird.” *Caribbean Beat*, November/December 1998, Caribbean Airlines, www.caribbean-beat.com/issue-34/how-name-hummingbird #axzz6m0VykNj9. Accessed 9 Feb. 2021.

Keane, Ellsworth McGranahan. “The Contribution of the West Indian to Literature.” *BIM* vol. 4, 1951, pp. 102-106.

Keane, Shake. *One a Week with Water*. Havana, Casa de las Americas, 1979.

—. *The Angel Horn*. Philipsburg, St. Martin: House of Nehsi Publishers, 2005.

King, Thomas. *The Truth About Stories*. House of Anansi Press, 2003.

“Launch of Riff: the Shake Keane Story by Philip Nanton.” *YouTube*, uploaded by Papillote Press, 7 Feb. 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANehsC28xoI&ab_channel=PapillotePress. Accessed 20 Feb. 2021.

Leu, Laorraine. “The Mighty Sparrow.” *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Latin American and Caribbean Cultures*, edited by Daniel Balderston, Mike Gonzalez and Ana M. López, Routledge, 2000, pp. 970-71. taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/books/encyclopedia-contemporary-latin-american-caribbean-cultures-daniel-balderston-mike-gonzalez-ana-lopez/e/10.4324/9780203435328. Accessed 18 Jan. 2021.

—. “Lord Kitchener.” *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Latin American and Caribbean Cultures*, edited by Daniel Balderston, Mike Gonzalez and Ana M. López, Routledge, 2000, p. 876. taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/books /encyclopedia-contemporary-latin-american-caribbean-cultures-daniel-balderston-mike-gonzalez-ana-lopez/e/10.4324/9780203435328. Accessed 18 Jan. 2021.

Low, Sidney, and Frederick Sanders Pulling, eds. *The Dictionary of English History*. London, Cassell, limited, 1885.

Low, Sidney, and Frederick Sanders Pulling, eds. *The Dictionary of English History*. London, Cassell, limited, 1885. books.google.td/books/about/The_Dictionary_of_English_History.html?hl=fr&id=mSIPAAAAYAAJ&output=html_text. Accessed 25 Sept. 2021.

Marsh-Lockett, Carol P. “The Colonial State as Supreme Being: Visions and Revisions in H. Nigel Thomas ‘Spirits in the Dark.’” *South Atlantic Review*, vol. 62, no. 4, 1997, pp. 18–31. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3200743.

Marshall, Bernard. “The Black Caribs—Native Resistance to British Penetration Into the Windward Side of St. Vincent 1763–1773,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 19, 4, pp.4-19. DOI: 10.1080/00086495.1973.11829167. Accessed 17 Feb. 2021.

McBride, Dwight A. *Impossible Witnesses: Truth, Abolitionism, and Slave Testimony*. New York University Press, 2001.

Melton, McKinley E. “Baldwin and the Broken Silences of Black Queer Men.” *James Baldwin Review,* Volume 2, 2016, Manchester University Press and The University of Manchester Library, pp. 6-27. dx.doi.org/10.7227/JBR.2.2. Accessed 28 July 2021.

Minority Rights Group International. *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - St Vincent and the Grenadines.* 2007, https://www.refworld.org/docid/4954 ce54c.html. Accessed 06 April 2021.

Munoz Garcia, Yanira and Alberto Iglasia Ortega. “El advenimiento de Amalivaca, una leyenda guyanesa en Mar-tí.” *Mendive*. *Revista de Educación,* S.l., vol. 3, no. 3, June 2005, pp. 181-184. //mendive.upr.edu.cu/index.php/Me. Accessed 28 Feb. 2021.

Murphy, Rosalie, editor. *Contemporary Poets of the English Language*. St. James Press, 1970.

“Musical styles - Trinidad and Tobago.” *BBC Bitesize,* www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/ztp49j6/revision/4. Accessed 18 Jan. 2021.

Nanton, Philip. *Frontiers of the Caribbean*. Manchester University Press, 2017.

—. “Real Keane.” *Caribbean Beat*, March/April 2004, www.caribbean-beat.com/issue-66/real-keane#axzz5YidJCbvC. Accessed 16 Feb. 2021.

—. *Riff*. Papillote Press, 2021.

—. “Shake Keane's ‘Nonsense’: An Alternative Approach to Caribbean Folk Culture.” *Small Axe*, 14, 2003, pp. 71-92.

—. “Shake Keane's Poetic Legacy.” *The Society For Caribbean Studies Annual Conference Papers*, edited by Sandara Courtman, 2000, //community-languages.org.uk/SCS-Papers/olv1p2.pdf. Accessed 26 Feb. 2020.

“Notting Hill Riots 1958.” *Exploring 20th C. London*, www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/server. php? show=conInformationRecord.161. Accessed 27 Feb. 2021.

Philip, Marlene NourbeSe. “Fugues, Fragments and Fissures: A Work in Progress.” *Music, Memory, Resistance: Calypso and the Caribbean Literary Imagination*, edited by Sandra Pouchet Paquet, Patricia J. Saunders and Stephen Stuempfle, Ian Randle Publishers, 2007, pp. 75-93.

“Population and Demography.” *Statistical Office, Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning, Sustainable Development, and Information Technology, Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*. n.d., stats.gov.vc/stats/?page_id=786. Accessed 5 April 2021.

“Redemption Song.” *Soul Music*. BBC, 27 Dec. 2017, www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b09jvlnk. Accessed 10 Sept. 2020.

Renault, Matthieu. “Rupture and New Beginning in Fanon: Elements for a Genealogy of Postcolonial Critique.” *Living Fanon: Global Perspectives*, edited by Nigel Gibson, Palgrave McMillan, 2011, pp.105-116.

Reynolds, Elizabeth. Email to Hendrika Haasen. 10 Jan. 2021.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage Books, 1994.

Saunders, Patricia J. “Mapping the Roots/Routes of Calypso in Caribbean Literary and Cultural Traditions.” *Music, Memory, Resistance: Calypso and the Caribbean Literary Imagination*, edited by Sandra Pouchet Paquet, Patricia J. Saunders and Stephen Stuempfle, Ian Randle Publishers, 2007, pp. xv - xlii.

Sekyi-Otu, Ato. *Frantz Fanon's Dialectics of Experience*. Harvard University Press, 1996.

"Shake Keane." *LKJ Records— Linton Kwesi Johnson*, lintonkwesijohnson.com/lkj-records-artists/shake-keane/. Accessed 4 Feb. 2021.

Shepherd, Charles. *An Historical Account of the Island of St. Vincent*. London, 1831, Google Books, books.google.ca/books?id=DLUNAAAAQAAJ&pg=PR17&source=gbs_ selected _pages&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=true. Accessed 10 Sept. 2020.

Smith, Ian. "Critics in the Dark." *Journal of West Indian Literature,* vol. 8, no. 2, 1999, pp. 2-9 . www.jstor.org/stable/23019787. Accessed: 14 Nov. 2018.

Smith, Simon D. "Slavery's Heritage Footprint: Links between British Country Houses and St Vincent Plantations, 1814–34." *Slavery and the British Country House. Swindon, UK: English Heritage,* 2013, pp. 59-70.

"Story of Ashton Warner, an enslaved Vincentian, republished in Canada after almost 200 years." *Searchlight*. 15 Feb. 2019. <searchlight.vc/searchlight/news /2019/02/15/story-of-ashton-warner-an-enslaved-vincentian-republished-in-canada-after-almost-200-years/?fbclid=IwAR0YwuuHEAjb6f22JCmxrsshmCYa289W8ZGqPAnU5w F7NZi9oFfu2C5D6wM>. Accessed 1 Dec. 2020.

"St. Vincent 1817." *Former British Colonial Dependencies, Slave Registers, 1813-1834.* www.ancestry.ca/imageviewer/collections/1129/images/CSUK1812_133738-00316?ssrc=&backlabel=Return. Accessed 8 Dec. 2020.

SVG Tourism Authority. *St. Vincent and the Grenadines*. n.d., /discoversvg.com/index.php/de/ stvincent/around-st-vincent/south-coast/205. Accessed 09 September 2020.

Tattrie, Jon. "The African Nova Scotian Roots of Bab Marley's 'Redemption Song.'" 03 Feb. 2017, *The Canadian Encyclopedia, Historica Canada,* www.thecanadianencyclopedia.

ca/en/article/the-african-nova-scotian-roots-of-bob-marleys-redemption-song. Accessed 8 March 2021.

Taylor, Patrick. *The Narrative of Liberation: Perspectives on Afro-Caribbean Literature, Popular Culture and Politics*. Cornell University Press, 1989.

"The Mighty Sparrow First Flight, Liner Notes." media.smithsonianfolkways.org/liner_notes/ smithsonian_folkways/SFW40534.pdf. Accessed 20 Jan. 2021.

Thomas, H. Nigel. "H[ubert] Nigel Thomas: Biographical Note." 2014, H. Nigel Thomas Offical Web Page, hnigelthomas.org., Accessed 15 March 2021.

—. *Spirits in the Dark*. House of Anansi Press, 1993.

"Trinidad and Tobago's Mango Festival Celebrates the King of Fruits." *Repeating Islands*, 19 June 2013, repeatingislands.com/2013/06/19/trinidad-and-tobagos-mango-festival-celebrates-the-king-of- fruits/#:~:text=Known%20as%20the%20%E2%80%9Cking %20of,vitamin %20C%20and%20beta%20carotene. Accessed 20 Jan. 2021.

Walcott, Derek. "The Muse of History." *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature,* edited by Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh, Routledge, 1996, pp.354-358.

Wardhaugh, Ronald and Janet M. Fuller. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. 7th. ed., John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015.

Warner, Ashton. *Negro Slavery Described by a Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, a Native of St. Vincent's. With an Appendix Containing the Testimony of Four Christian Ministers, Recently Returned from the Colonies, on the System of Slavery as it Now Exists*. London, 1831. www.docsouth.unc.edu/neh /warner/warner.html. Accessed 9 Nov. 2020.

Whitlock, Gillian. *Postcolonial Life Narratives: Testimonial Transactions*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

"Windrush generation: Who are they and why are they facing problems?"*BBC News*, 31 July 2020, www.bbc.com/news/uk-43782241. Accessed 16 Feb. 2021.

Winer, Lise. *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago: On Historical Principles*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009.

Yeats, William Butler. "Among School Children." n.d. *Poetry Foundation,* www.poetry foundation.org/poems/43293/among-school-children. Accessed 19 April 2021.

Yudice, George. "Testimonio and Postmodernism." *Latin American Perspectives,* vol. 18, no. 3, 1991, pp. 15-31. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2633737. Accessed 27 Nov. 2020.

Zane, Wallace W. *Journeys to the Spiritual Lands: The Natural History of a West Indian Religion*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

Zimmerman, Marc. "Testimonio." *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods,* edited by Michael S. Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman and Tim Futing Liao, Sage Publications, Inc. 2011, p. 1119. dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412950589. Accessed 19 July 2021.