Sound and Vision in the Caribbean Imaginary
▪
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Filmmaking, perhaps more than any other art form, complicates the question of national or regional affiliation. Film needs a director, scriptwriter, cinematographer, sound mixer, gaffer, producer amongst others and these may come from very different places and cultural backgrounds. The question, for example, of what exactly constitutes a Caribbean film is a vexed one and can range from issues of location, race, culture, and ideology to questions of origin and even cinematic style and technique. Mbye Cham, whose 1992 work still remains the key text for those who wish to engage with Caribbean filmmaking, cites the Guadeloupian filmmaker, Christian Lara, who stipulated five conditions "for a film to qualify as Antillean or Caribbean: 'the director should be from the Caribbean, the subject matter should be a Caribbean story, the lead actor/actress should be from the Caribbean, Creole should be used, the production unit should be Caribbean" (Cham 10). The difficulties in satisfying all these criteria may be immediately apparent, in particular for filmmakers who live outside the region, and for those who may depend on financing from a foreign producer. *Bim* (1972), for example, by Lara's account would not be designated a Caribbean film because its director and head of the production company, Hugh Robertson, was an African American and not "of" the islands (Warner *Ex-Isles* 51). But its scriptwriter, its story, its location and its actors are Trinidadian.

The title of Cham's work, *Ex-Isles*, is informed by this difficulty:

> On the whole then, Caribbean cinema seems to be a composite
> of two discrete but related entities: productions by Caribbean
> people inside the Caribbean, on the one hand, and those
> outside of the Caribbean, on the other. It is a cinema "exiles"
> from the islands/of people from the islands living in exile.
> However, the issue is not as clear-cut and unproblematic as it
> may appear from this general categorization. (Cham 9)

The problem is of course made more complex because in the history of
cinema the Caribbean has been used as a location, often an "any place
whatever", with exotic resonance; but is also a place with a history of
cinema consumption as long as the history of cinema itself. That
Caribbean indigenous cinema began to assume the right to reclaim the
representations of the Antilles, both in terms of its people and
landscape, is a story that finds an equivalence in places such as Ireland
where as Ruth Barton asserts, "the process of creating a national
cinema has been predicated on wresting the powerful practice of image-
making from the control of other filmmaking traditions whether hostile
or otherwise"(7).

Writers on Irish and on Caribbean cinema have noted the ways in
which the landscapes of the Caribbean and Ireland, because of their
lushness and beauty, become sites of such representation, and lend
themselves to a romanticisation of people and culture (Barton 7). The
reclamation of the landscape is, therefore, cinematographically an
important spatial and phenomenological element in cinema's national
counter discourses.

The establishment of the Trinidad and Tobago Film Company in 2006
added a new development to the narrative of Caribbean filmmaking,
since it is no longer true to say that the filmmaking industry in Trinidad
and Tobago, for example, is virtually nonexistent. Since 2006 there has
been quite extraordinary activity in Trinidad, in particular with the

release in that year of Yao Ramesar's feature film *Sista God* and the many short films that have been screened at the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival and on local television. Filmmaking, however, remains a tale of the interrelationship between the local and the global, with filmmakers drawing on expertise from abroad, and the strongest examples of filmmaking that may be called Caribbean still occurring outside of the region.

This essay seeks to explore differing conceptions of the Caribbean through a selection of films, beginning with the now classic *The Harder they Come* and Euzhan Palcy's *Rue Cases Nègres*. It approaches the cinematic as a form of mapping of conceptions of identity and of the ways in which place figures in identity construction. What does it mean to be a Caribbean filmmaker if one lives or works outside of the region, or indeed, as with Frances-Anne Solomon, between two spaces? How has the relation to a perceived place of origin or filiation affected the terms of engagement with art?

I have chosen to look briefly at Frances-Anne Solomon's work rather than the work of Horace Ové who lives in Britain, because her film *A Winter Tale* is a recent interpolation into the debate about Caribbean people and their construction of identity in a place that metaphorically seems to freeze their capacity to belong. Questions of multiple belongings seem to function here at the level of social commitment and responsibility. Issues of race or more significantly blackness and Caribbeaness exist alongside violence, and the voiceover at the end of the film seems to suggest that new waves of migrant peoples acerbate a condition of mistrust. The film is both a celebration of the rhizomic nature of Caribbean identity, in the Glissantian sense, and an image of breakdown (expressed metaphorically by the character who shoots himself).

The other film that I discuss, *Ava and Gabriel*, is about not being truly welcome in one's own space and the perilous route to inclusion given the residual presence of colonial structures identified in this film as the

coloniser, the Christian church, internalized belief systems and other institutions of control such as the army.

These historical factors are also identified by Cham for whom indigenous filmmaking became possible because of resistance movements and cultural transformations such as negritude and the later shift towards Glissant's Antillanité and Chamoiseau's and Confiant's Créolité. Cham also links events in the Jamaica of Manley-Seaga-Manley, and the New Jewel movement led by Maurice Bishop alongside the elimination of Rodney and the horror shaped by the Duvalier reign of terror as catalysts for new kinds of cinema and as forces that were instrumental in creating a climate for new and transformative and indeed competing practices that sought to change Caribbean society (Cham 3).

In seeking to reflect on the ways in which Caribbean cinema has responded to developments in Caribbean thought, I have chosen to look at films that come from different linguistic regions and represent different time frames.

The film *The Harder they Come* (1972) directed by Perry Henzell uses a specific audio-visual dynamic that emerges from the particular historic intersections of its time of production. It was produced during the heyday of the Black Power movements in the post-independence period of Jamaica and other Anglophone Caribbean islands. When it was released audiences mobbed the cinema primarily to see themselves, as working class Jamaican people, on screen (Thelwell 177). It was the first presentation of Jamaican life as an actual existence, different from the exoticised images of the Caribbean as film location.[1]

What makes this film a "Caribbean film" is in part that it signs itself as such by its mode of signification. Henzell as director made choices not simply in terms of using black Jamaican men and women, though this was a vital part of the film's success at the time of its release, nor simply in privileging the land and seascape of Jamaica, but in making the film process adapt itself to those realities. The editing of shots is an actual

part of the framework that he set up in order to create the image of the main character's, Ivan's, identity. According to Franklyn St Juste, one of the cinematographers on this film, montage allowed the construction of oppositional space and set in play the conflictual nature of Jamaican society. Ivan is a young, black, country man with a mango leaving the rural landscape and seascape for a dream that the camera sets up by moving our gaze from sea to bus to city till it rests with Ivan's eyes on the cars and billboards of Kingston. That movement is an orchestration in time and works in symphony with the lyrics to shape a particular discourse that underpins the entire movie.

The lyrics, "You can get it if you really want," act as a musical context for Ivan's dream and his construction as a cult hero of the poor, the oppressed and the downtrodden in a Jamaica riddled by violence and quickly becoming disillusioned by post-independence rhetoric. The reggae beat, however, is only one layer in the act of locating Ivan's story. The cinematic shots are set up as a contextualizing frame that works with sound to fashion a unique combination of visual and sonic music that provides a haunting and memorable experience of the thing that the audience begins to believe is truly Jamaican.

One of the most important ways in which this film becomes a signature of Jamaica is through the actual movement of bodies. The camera traces the movement of Ivan's body and becomes a record of the particular rhythms of Caribbean walk or figure. The audiovisual interplay or interconnections between sound systems and physical as well as social environment, adds a layer to what becomes an intense projection of Jamaican life.

The framing of the action and the choice of material within the frames set up reality as something we see, hear and feel through our very nerve ends in terms of the beat of the shots. This beat is shaped by the cutting and the editing together of fragments so that a particular shape of movement in time occurs. In this way, Ivan's identity as a poor black Jamaican from the country who begins to live in a dream fantasy shaped by the movies is made concrete as something that we also as

viewers and auditors actually experience through the film's movement in time. This experience embodies the political and social factors that are extant within the music itself.

An interesting summation of this may be found in Kamau Brathwaite's *History of the Voice* where he analyzes very succinctly these very factors.[2] The frustration that resides within the body politic and within the consciousness of the "hero" because of the lack of visibility and agency within the society at a time when politicians were declaring social and history-making changes is seen as the underlying cause of dissociation between reality and imagination or illusion.

The film clip of the Italian Spaghetti Western, *Django,* (1966), that we see framed within the film, becomes another fragment that adds density to this idea. It facilitates a double sense of illusion engendering illusion given the origins and parodic relationship that the Spaghetti Western bears to the Hollywood Western and the Spaghetti Western's critique of traditional masculinist images as spawned by Hollywood. Ivan's "saga boy" pose and mirror imaging set him off as a character doomed to failure by the very model upon which his image is based. He is therefore an innocent who is already corrupted by material desire and foreign influence and a victim of false hopes and illusions, and whose belief in the capacity for self and material transformation leads to a further play of illusion leading to self annihilation. Different facets of Ivan's psychological and physical journeys are edited together to enable a collision between a rural lifestyle and a world where he willingly embodies the myth of an urban bandit, and by extension, of communal folk hero.

The use of a film within a film sets up a layer of the narrative that speaks of the economic and social causes of this transformation. These causes derive from vehicles of fantasy, that is, film in itself. The inclusion of Ivan seeing a film that will be used as a structural thread throughout the movie, allows the filmmaker to construct a system whereby dream flushes out reality. In so doing the sense of who Ivan is,

and by association who the Jamaican poor are, becomes increasingly politicized and ambiguous.

The evolving image of Ivan becoming the hero that he sees on screen is accomplished through the selection of highly charged images and spaces where fantasy seems to be generated by emotion, violence and desire. The use of such spaces evokes ideas of exoticised Jamaica, as for example where the sea becomes the imagined site in which Ivan plays out his love fantasy and later his final fatal shoot out The use of these already charged images sets up a contrapuntal play between the dream of tropical paradise long a part of cinematic history and the Caribbean as ghetto bred by economic inequality and unfulfilled desire. This interplay occurs very much at the interstices of the montage fragments in that the spectator becomes engrossed in and taken into the gaps between fragments, so that he or she is caught up in the conflict of images and ideas that play on the body, as if bodies were instruments to be played on by the director. This is a different idea from that discussed by Gabrielle Hezekiah in her use of the gap as "an experience of consciousness" (26). Hezekiah is applying philosophical principles taken from Phenomenoloy; I am using the idea of interstices as applied by Eisenstein in his theories of montage.

Several critics have explored the ways in which this extraordinary film acts on our consciousness and their inferences differ substantially. While Kamau Brathwaite celebrates "nation language" (41) and the folk, in Henzell's production, Gladstone Yearwood sees the use of Hollywood technique in the narrative structure as something of a betrayal of the black Jamaican (Yearwood 161-83). My concern here is not with these differing arguments, but with the agreement among most, if not all, critics that this film presents an image that has dominated later films and also shaped how the world and even Caribbean peoples see Jamaica and Jamaicans.

Ivan's final mimicry of the Western hero is a logical development of social dysfunction and dislocation leading to fantasy leading to cult hero leading to disaster. But the rhythm of the shots as they move also

provides the actuality of lived existence--the tempo of Jamaican life. This provides the very life energy of Jamaica that is mirrored in song and body movement, in the movement of crowds, and in the black rhythms of reggae. The actuality of existence in the hard world is given full expressive power through this interplay of sound and visual music, and at the same time a deeply political narrative is set in motion.

Euzhan Palcy's *Rue Cases Nègres* (1983), based on the novel by Joseph Zobel, also has a deep political grounding that is set in motion through specific filmic devices and language. Palcy has acknowledged the extraordinary significance of Aimé Césaire to her work and has in fact called him her "father".[3] The negritude movement founded by Césaire is referenced throughout the film *Rue Cases Nègres* thematically and in the use of visual imagery. This Martiniquan film, while addressing the aftermath of slavery (the 1930s), imagines selfhood as a thing to be acquired through education. Perhaps this is the reason that the focus is on the perception of the idyllic through a cinematographic concentration on earth and sea colours and a palette that often appears to be full of nostalgia.

 The historical and ideological frameworks of the film operate through a story of the growth of consciousness (the *bildungsroman*) of a young boy and through its location within the landscape of Martinique. The land creates a space for the projection of identity.[4] The innocence of the land is mirrored in the innocence of the boy, José, whose face sets in play an idealized vision of reality that suggests a future of possibility. In viewing the film the spectator recognizes the awe and wonder and growing awareness that Palcy wishes to privilege in her reconstruction of post-emancipation Martinique and in her adaptation of novel to screen.

The most important reconstruction of history--for this is part of the project of the film--is to be found in the scene where José, the boy, enters the hut of Medouze, the old man. The frame ensures that there are multiple signifiers of the importance of this meeting. The camera focuses on the face of the young boy and the light is made to shine in

his eyes giving a sense of his excitement and eagerness and this sets up a play of hope and anticipation that is transmitted to the audience. The frame is arranged so that there are background figures who remain within the cinematic frame even though they form no real part of the actual narrative itself. The sounds of drumming, and the earth colours, as well as the dance of these figures, are historically weighted so that the film shapes José and Medouze's meeting within the context of an Afrocentric concept of Caribbean growth, development and even essence (with all the many problems associated with this idea). The filmmaker leaves the viewer and listener with no doubt that this entire narrative segment is about the link with and the ancestral importance of Africa to the young José's development, and the importance of situating Martinique's artistic and intellectual progress within that space. The words "cric crac" add to this knowledge. Story-telling, the film suggests, forms part of our history of identity formation.

Light takes on an increased significance in this creation of the story as transmitter, since the flickering of the light here creates a colour palette that resonates with the idea of the importance of the land of Martinique to Palcy and what she represents. The way light is used as part of the language of cinema is, therefore, an element that adds to the creation of an image grounded in an idea of blackness, in particular, since light intensifies the concentration on skin colour, especially in the portrayal of Medouze and José.

The frame imbues authority to these elements and this authority lends itself to new idealized images. These are shaped on versions of selfhood and the growth of an awareness of self within an historical context of the plantation economy and the projects of colonialism, including class stratification in terms of colour and inflections of colour.[5]

The Martiniquan film associates the growth of identity or identity formation with a lost Africa that is like a lost Eden. Through the conflict of shots in the scenes between the boy and the old man it achieves a sense of the past giving way to the present, but nonetheless remains in its signifying practice imbedded within the confines of

romance. The voice and figure of the boy whose gaze is privileged and whose perception is placed at a distance from that of the rest of the society, is quite blatantly indicative of a romantic idea of the capacity of education to shape the world and to act as a means of social mobility.

The story must privilege José's progression into the halls of learning and his encounters with the wider world must not prevent this journey of discovery. The young boy's desire for learning is a hallmark of black autonomy and the camera tracks this desire through its focus on physical space, landscape and body as the story evolves on screen.

These two classic films have entered into the imagined life of the Caribbean and have been shaped by the evolving discourse on Caribbean identity. The filmmakers have used assemblage or montage to enable a re-narrating of history from particular psychological viewpoints or perspectives, but in so doing through the power of sensory projection they have created myths about the Caribbean.

This idea of re-mythologising through the myth-making art of cinema is one project of Cuban films such as Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *La Última Cena* (*The Last Supper*) that seek to raise consciousness and to construct an idea of selfhood. The reconstructions of *Rue Cases Nègres* appear subtle when placed against the overt socialist realism and political intent of this post-revolutionary Cuban film. Here the process of reassemblage occurs through an adept use of the political tool of contrapuntal montage as it came into being with the early Bolshevik film-makers.[6] Conflict becomes the mechanism for a dialectical interrogation of the evils and hypocrisy of slavery and the residual presence of colonialism.

The most noteworthy example is the scene where the Count, who rules as an apparently benevolent dictator and Christian overlord over his slaves, seeks to demonstrate the validity and justice of his actions and his power and possessions, through the acting out of the message of Christ. The slave, Sebastian, has had his ears torn off by the overseer. The Count's attempt at mimicking Christ allows the director to stage a

situation around the table on Holy Thursday so that the Christian
message is juxtaposed with the persecuted figure of Sebastian. The film
disputes the Christian myth and through the editing of the sequence
(montage) reveals Christianity to be a disabling mythology. Alea
counterpoints the very fundamental act of Christian communion or the
breaking of bread and the eating of Christ's body, with the notion of
cannibalism. What the film does is to make these key conflicts attain a
palpable reality through the use of the close up as an act of
fragmentation. The camera closes in on Sebastian's head wrapped with
a crown of bloody bandages while the Count speaks of Christ crowned
with thorns. The focus on the incredulous faces of the African slaves as
the Count explains the mystery of transubstantiation sets up the very
heart of Christian belief as analogous to cannibalism, only dressed
differently.

The filmmaker sets up a resonance of 'affective' images that begin to
tell stories of their very own and that suggest towards the end through
the use of a tracking shot that privileges movement, (the
running/movement in space of the runaway slave) that the story of this
region or this place, Cuba, is something that is moving or leaping into
something else. In other words that the story is not finished, but in
process. The film self-consciously uses the vehicle of fragmentation as
a political tool to provide a sense of the clash of cultures, the lie
inherent in stories that act as accretions on the true spirit of the people
and in that complex interplay seeks to usher in a new Cuba.

Ava and Gabriel, the film by Curaçao filmmakers Felix de Rooy and
Norman de Palm, subtitled "Un historia di amor," (1990), is also
politically motivated and seeks to explore the concept of Caribbeaness
through art itself. It begins with an artist drawing a line which self-
consciously focuses our attention on the nature and significance of
visual art. The artist figure becomes a self portrayal of the filmmaker de
Rooy and of his concern with homosexuality and religious bigotry.
Susan Felleman has explored the ways in which autobiography
functions within the figure of the artist in film and her analysis of the
ways in which painting becomes an extension of sexual desire and

power relationships is an interesting avenue for exploration here, in particular in the ways in which *Ava and Gabriel* plays with the gaze and the naked body (140-57).

The film also privileges the act of seeing as a key idea within the overall discourse in that when Gabriel and Ava first meet in rather abrasive circumstances, it is Gabriel's gaze that is privileged; again, when he sees her praying within the deep space created by colour and camera angle as well as multiple internal frames it is his look that is foregrounded. How the Caribbean and its people are seen accrues incremental significance both through the central motif of painting and the weave of ways of seeing that the film embroiders. This weave allows the filmmaker to deploy African cosmoligies and thought and to engage with the possibility of a truly hybrid nation; one where the crosspollinating processes of acculturation and inter-culturation, as Brathwwaite has defined them, might lead to the true fluidity of creolisation (*Contradictory Omens* 6). Like Brathwaite, de Rooy's mother remains Africa.

The film is set in Curacao of 1948 and is a social commentary on race relations and the sensitivity of the Antilles to colour nuances. The viewer sees iridescent rainbow colours that are both heavenly and of the Antillean earth linking the material fact of the land and its light with the preoccupation of its people with inflections of colour. It situates its discourse within the context of church bigotry, which the hierarchy calls "tradition," but which is seen as class and race prejudice within the context of the debate about the validity of a black Madonna.

The positioning and angle of the camera also shape a discourse on power relations and sexual desire. In particular, this film uses several shots from below and from above in dramatic divisions of space that are also subversive comments on established hierarchies as for example the shot from above in the school yard which suggests a point of view that fashions an hierarchical structure that diminishes these children and makes them participate in education and religious systems that

have little relationship to their lived existence (as seen through Gabriel's eyes).

The film also suggests that the past is a ghostly and powerful present that leads to a sense of dislocation and an absence of logical relationships (Deleuze 68-97). The haunting nature of the past is constructed through a mirror image or reflection in the painted icon of the Virgin Mary (which is a a portrait of Ava) and through the portrait of the governor's wife, both of which become surfaces that reflect the fraught relationship between a past of colonialism and a present that exists in terms of creative endeavour as a site of possibility. The past is then the very hardened ideas of race expressed by the Bishop in his refusal to entertain the idea of a black Madonna and equally the inherited prejudices of a society that is racially stratified and intolerant of black/white sexual intercourse as well as same sex desire. The figure of the Virgin Mary in *Ava and Gabriel* is deliberately appropriated as an enigmatic form and force. The image of the Virgin becomes a transgressive space when she is painted as a mulatto or coloured woman and thereby temporally reverses the whiteness associated with racism. Her figure then develops a force field through which colour prejudice can be analysed. This is made quite explcit at the end when after his death (murder) Gabriel's painting is whitened over.

The iconic presence of the Virgin Mary opens up several possibilities through the use of painting as a vehicle of meaning. Colour is used in a painterly sense and in an ideological sense. It splits our perception of the Antilles into a concrete image of the pervasive ideology behind colour prejudice and the magical and sublime beauty of an ideal dream of equality of all colours and races: the rainbow dream. The rainbow and iridescent flow of colour which the townspeople see in the Church and which is further played out in the use of colour throughout the film, suggests that the film is constructing an ideal image of colour relations for the Dutch Caribbean.

Colour also introduces the idea of contemplation and is therefore a vehicle of thought and contemplation. This is quite overtly cued

through the predominant use of blue; blue is the colour associated with the Virgin Mary and also a colour that suggests a celestial passage and presence that leads to contemplation. The film through its persistent low angle shots also encourages a contemplative mode as we are constantly placed in a position where as spectators we are looking up and beyond our normal point of view. At times the dominant perspective is not that of the spectator or how he or she sees, but rather the viewpoint of the mural itself through the radiating light and colours that emanate from the work of art. This light flows through a wide angle that diminishes as it approaches the viewer. This reversal of point of view, according to Angela Vacche in her work *Cinema and Painting*, is exemplified in the use of the Russian icon in Tarkovsky's films to create a reversal of the logic of human perspective and human perception (Vacche 134-60). It is possible to suggest that a similar effect occurs here in the film *Ava and Gabriel.*

The use of rainbow colours in the scene where the women and young priest see an iridescent image of the iconic Virgin attains a further intensification of meaning when it becomes associated with the Gay Pride Flag, a flag that also uses the colours of the rainbow. The transformation of perception is therefore the true object of the film.

There is another icon in this film. The film opens with a naked figure, revealed as a boy, who is obviously native and perhaps Amerindian. He is carrying an iguana. The figure of the iguana poses a counter discourse to the religious ideas represented by Christianity and is also an opposing and mysterious force within the film's narrative. According to de Rooy it is

> introduced as one of the vehicles for the Alma Sola, for the devil, for the power. But the iguana was also a symbol of fertility, of sexual power, of manhood in Almacita, and this is made very clear there. The crucifixion of the iguana in *Ava and Gabriel* is the symbolism of Caribbean culture which has crucified its African elements for Christian values and, therefore, broken the strength of the culture. (Cham 354)

The iguana is introduced through earth colours but becomes magically linked to the figure of the Virgin through colour. The iguana here locates the film within a process of indigenization or the nationalist desire to shape a discourse specific to the place. Colour becomes imbued with other symbolic dimensions specific to Amerindian colour codings and as the film progresses the use of colour gains deeper significance in its referencing of Orisha rituals.

Colour in *Ava and Gabriel* is used monochromatically in certain key scenes in which hate, revenge, sexual bigotry and sexual jealousy are allowed to spill over into violence and hate. The colour blue, for example, complicates the idea of Christianity and the Virgin Mary as representative of love and peace. Significantly, the blue of the Virgin's robe fills the entire frame in the scene where Maurice, the gay man, is beaten and where Gabriel is attacked in his studio and brought to the Governor's mansion and we see his apparently lifeless figure. However, blue is also identifiable as a New World reference to the Orisha Goddess, Yemoja, who represents maternity. She is also the goddess of the elements, in particular the sea, water and the wild wind. Thus the Virgin mother and the Orisha mother merge into each other. The directors appear to be attempting a complication of Christian and Western iconography in their envisioning of a new world order and their refutation of any one reading of the film.

Colours are used to evoke feelings and thoughts about situations and the historic prejudices that inform these situations. The use of intense colours and of the play of light also forces vision to move beyond mere seeing into deeper forms of reflection and transcend thought itself. In the scene where Ava and Gabriel become lovers the colours are predominantly purple, red and amber and therefore overtly suggest passion and sexuality. However, in Christian iconography this reddish purple is also associated with the passion of Christ and moves the viewer's contemplation towards Gabriel's death at the hands of Ava's jealous white fiancé, Carlos Zarius, as a parallel example of the

scapegoating of a victim in order to preserve a particular social construct, belief system or political power.

Through colour combinations and the use of colour as a complex web of meanings and associations, Felix de Rooy forces the filmic images to resonate with the problematic of race and identity in Curaçao. The film thinks through these issues by opposing the brilliant hues of clothing and light on the figures of the musicians at the Governor's ball, for example, with darker hues of the figures in whom power is traditionally invested. It uses white symbolically both to depict white hegemony and as an oppositional thread running through the entire work suggesting perhaps the wisdom that might develop through the new relationships and languages delineated in the work. Colour goes beyond a painter's palette because these colours resonate and move in time. Colour used cinematically suggests that the language of words and even images cannot carry the full burden of the problem of identity in Curaçao. Racism and colour prejudice as well as homophobia are so inexplicable that they are also linguistically inexpressible.

Moreover, the use of such an intense palette within this film makes the past reverberate in the present in a very real sense. The past, 1948, evokes images that are lived experiences in our present reality, not simply a chronicle of a finished past. These problems, therefore, are made contemporaneous and elicit a questioning in the here and now.

Colour, as it is used within the temporal dimension of the film, becomes a language that not only problematises the presence of a Catholic icon: its historical and spiritual significance, but also links religion with racism and with power relations within the political sphere. It asks why should the Madonna not be black? What authority assigns colour to a spiritual presence? What is the relationship between race and power in Curaçao? These questions seek to arrive at answers through the play of colour and its symbolic and religious significance within Orisha cosmology and Christianity. The film uses these and several other language systems (including Papiamentu), which de Rooy has explained as part of his project of hybridity (Cham 357).

Frances-Anne Solomon's *A Winter Tale* continues the Antillean preoccupation with race and community or belonging, but the location is changed to Toronto and the problem here, is that of shaping a group and an ethos of responsibility within the social complex. The murder of an innocent forces the community into a discourse on violence and the need to counteract violence to achieve new relationships between Caribbean peoples in the diaspora. The poster of the young boy is placed strategically as a repeated icon that fixes the narrative on the consequences for the future if communites do not come together in dialogue and take responsibility for self-anlaysis and self-healing. Migration is foregrounded as a battleground for the Caribbean person in the formation of nascent communities.

These five films from the Anglophone, Hispanic, Francophone and Dutch Antilles and from the Caribbean diaspora, deal with preoccupations of race, sexuality, collective identity and the raising of consciousness. Their agendas suggest a desire to respond to the problems of identity wherever here may be and a thinking through of the complexities inherent in the meeting of different peoples in the Caribbean as global village (a familiar concept now), or through the Caribbean person as traveller, migrant or simply not really secure at home.

ENDNOTES

[1] See Keith Warner's *On Location: Film in the Anglophone Caribbean* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

[2] Kamau Brathwaite, *History of the Voice* (London: New Beacon Press, 1984) 41. See n. 53. "*The Harder They Come* (Kingston 1972) marked a dislocation in the socio-colonial pentameter, in the same way that its music and its stars and their *style,* marked a revolution in the hierarchical structure in the arts of the Caribbean. At the premier, the traditional 'order of service' was reversed. Instead of the elite, from

their cars moving (complimentary) into the Carib Cinema watched by the poor and admiring multitude, the multitude took over---the car park, the steps, the barred gates, the magical lantern itself---and demanded that they see what they had wrought. 'For the first time at last' it was the people (the raw material) not the 'critics', who decided the criteria of praise, the measure and ground of qualification; 'for the first time at last', a local face, a native ikon, a nation language voice was hero. In this small corner of our world, a revolution as significant as Emancipation."

[3] Palcy speaking to the audience in Toronto, July 2009, Caribbean Tales Festival.

[4] J. Michael Dash spoke on this topic of landscape in this film at a lecture given at The University of The West Indies, St. Augustine in 2006 (circa).

[5] A very interesting fictional version of the importance of colour in social relations and relations of power is to be found in Erna Brodber's 2007 work *The Rainmaker's Mistake* (London: New Beacon Press).

[6] See Jean Antoine-Dunne with Paula Quigley, *The Montage Principle* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004) for essays on this period of the development of the art of montage.

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