The Creole Web
A Dasein for Digital Culture

by

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Dedication

For Chantal and Zachary

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Abstract

The creole is at once both a technological construct and a moment of interpretation, constantly negotiating time, place, and interpellations. As a product of the *Terra Incognita* of the New World, the original space of diaspora, of diversity, and of difference - the importance of Being is paramount in the construct of the creole, as is the locating of self in place.

Situated in Trinidad, the larger island of the twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, that sits at the very foot of the archipelagic Caribbean; and in which every ethnic group can claim minority status, I demonstrate that its polyculturalism; of which creolization is a manifest example; accounts for the roles of place and space and the negotiations of identity intrinsic in such societies. In Trinidad French Creole there are three verbs to be, which each serve a different function, signifying this complexity. I argue that these forms of capturing the existential nature of life demonstrate the conscious importance of being-in –the – world for the creole.

As such this project constructs the creole not as the analogue, progenitor or product of hybridity; but rather as the named, constructed technological product in whose being is indicated the primacy of the present moment, which is neither an effect of the past nor a cause of the future. Leveraging Hall's observation on the genesis of creole identity as dependent on four metaphorical presences *présence Africaine, présence Européene, présence Indienne* and *présence Americain* which in turn combined into the technologies of creation constructed on the *tabula rasa* of the New World; against Heidegger's construct of the *dasein* - the being for whom the question of being is important, the being for whom Being matters; this project uses the

construct of the creole as a technological product of place through which the world is both filtered and newly constructed.

Structured around three case studies that allow for specific claims to be made about the nature of Being as constructed through digital media practice, and to make broader claims about creole identity and ontology; each of the chapters makes use of varied qualitative methods including ethnographic interviews with media producers and users, critical analyses of society, participant observation, close readings of media texts and the discourses surrounding them, and insights from a range of disciplines including Media and Cultural Studies, African American and Diasporic Studies, Critical Race and Postcolonial Theory, Philosophy, Linguistics, and History. By constructing the creole, rooted in the Latin *creare* as the primary technological product of the global political economy of the Age of Empire created by language, collective memory and place – the *Terra Incognita* of the Americas; and offering this identity as both lens and method; this project offers a new understanding of the personal and social constructions afforded by the New World of online spaces as people continue to negotiate the intricacies of time, place, and interpellations in such unmapped or unknown spaces.

How can the creole help us make sense of performances of identity in the New World of online spaces?

CHAPTER I

Introduction

At the Mad Hatter's tea party in *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice and the Mad Hatter have a

heated and telling debate on time and its construction – with the Hatter averring " if you only

kept on good terms with him (Time), he'd do almost anything you liked with the clock. For

instance, suppose it were nine o'clock in the morning, just time to begin lessons: you'd only have

to whisper a hint to Time, and round goes the clock in a twinkling!" This notion of time, our

individual relationship with it and our ability to manipulate it to our subjective benefit has

intrigued philosophers and novelists alike for generations, for it is within temporality that we

locate identity, not as a fixed anchor but rather as a construct which in both etymological and

practical contexts, is political and dynamically transmutable.

At its most basic, this argument is supported by the reality of the construct being both

simultaneously and asynchronously subjective and consensual in nature, as Fanon reminds us in

The fact of blackness (1967); his rumination on interpellations in *Black Skins, White Masks*. In

this, he asserts that in the moment of consensual recognition, consciousness of self is in fact a

third-person experience. He argues that the self in this moment is constructed through the

implicit knowledge that one brings to the occupation of space, this knowledge in turn facilitating

the construction of place "definitive because it creates a real dialectic between [my] body and the

world." (p.258)

At the start of his opus *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger poses a provocative question:

"What is the being that will give access to the question of the meaning of Being?" to which he

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offers the concept of the dasein or selfhood of existence as an answer. For Heidegger, the dasein engenders three components of the human situation: being there in the world, being there as someone and being there for a while. The dasein then is Heidegger's construct of the being for whom the question of being is important, the being for whom Being matters. Heidegger argues that for the dasein to exist fully so that it might actually understand Being - what he refers to as the 'authenticity' of the dasein – it must first understand its relationship to time. The temporal nature of human existence is one measure, but this scale must be contextualised against the broader temporality of human existence. As the information economy continues to dictate the paths of globalisation predicated on the exchange, transfer and monetisation of personal information it is incumbent that we have a logic that can help us make sense of identity formation in the unmapped spaces that our online connections take us and in the online places that are constructed as a result of the flows of labour, capital and technology. The notions of place and space that guide this inquiry draw on Lefebvre's (1991) *Production of Space* in which he sees space as a physical and social landscape constructed through three registers of spatiality and temporality. His first register, perceived space, touches on Fanon's perspective of identity in that it is constructed out of the behavioural and emotional personal spaces of the individual as well as place-bound social activities that extend outward from the family, eventually taking into account the global economy and geopolitics - this is the world as we know it. The second register is conceived space - the world as we see it, constructed through discourses of power and visualised through ideology; but it is the third register - literally, the thirdspace, that is most cogent to this inquiry and as a foundation for logic this project constructs. This *thirdspace* is where all spaces meet - the real and the imagined, the objective, the subjective - the world as we wish it, or arguably the world as we are experiencing it in this present moment. This *thirdspace*

however is not new; it has a historical analogue - the colonial Americas, specifically the islands of the Caribbean. It is on these islands that the real and the imagined, the objective and subjective were thrown together by technology and created, not hybrid or ac/culturated societies in which one culture is merely yoked to another, but rather inter/culturated societies which grew unstructured and unplanned as a result of the commingling of source cultures. Given that issues of identity in postcolonial spaces are temporal, multilayered and fluid predicated on axes of and access to power this project takes up Grossberg's (2002) notion that histories of colonialism are at the foundation of modernity and that the modern organization of states, nations, ethnicities and races are a continued rearticulation of these colonial constructions through economic and cultural relations. (p. 369) This notion is particularly suited to my enquiry as according to Grossberg, postcolonial studies forces us to negotiate with the reality that identity is not binary, but invariably complex and a political project that addresses both axes of power and access to power.

Identity, at some level infers belonging – to family groups, communities, ethnicities or nations. So, if Harris' observation at the start of this piece is true, that we in the Americas define what polyculturalism is and have as our default setting the desire to confound easily identifiable labels it would then follow that Hall's (1996) prescient observation that identity is not automatic, but rather, consensual and predicated on interpellation and representation; is particularly apt. Enter the Creole.

While the Creole is not primarily a racial construct, the negation of place apparent in the move to make the term analogous with hybrid, mestisage and other biologically derived terms has done just that. Rather, the Creole is, at once, both a technological construct and a moment of interpretation, constantly negotiating time, place, and interpellations. Specifically, I read the Creole as the manifestation of Heidegger's (1977) assertion that the essence of technology is

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nothing technological. Though there is nothing technological about the Creole and its milieu, the essence of this construct is inherently so. Captured therein is the history of the region, from 'discovery', through genocide, slavery and deprivation, to colonialism and the present post colonial conditions the region finds itself in. As a product of the *Terra Incognita* of the New World, the original space of diaspora, of diversity, and of difference - the importance of Being is paramount in the construct of the Creole, as is the locating of self in place. This phenomenological perspective allows for the appreciation of the genesis of Creole culture, people and languages and affords the opportunity to deploy cultural creolisation as the named logic of globalisation.

By acknowledging the roles of place and space and the negotiations of identity intrinsic in unmapped or unknown spaces; the Creole is constructed not as the analogue, progenitor or product of hybridity; what Kraidy (2005) sees as "the spirit of the times with its obligatory celebration of cultural difference and fusion […] resonat[ing] with the globalisation mantra of unfettered economic exchanges and the supposedly inevitable transformation of all cultures" (p.1) but rather as the named, constructed technological product in whose being can be found the resultant affordances of the various colonial projects that shaped the New World – including the United States.

Hall (1990, 1994, 2017) has made the point that diaspora cultures, including those in the Americas, will always inevitably be syncretized. Speaking to Caribbean cultural identities; and by extension; to broader cultural identities in the Americas, he invokes four metaphorical presences *présence Africaine, présence Européene, présence Indienne* and *présence Americain.* In this construct, the African presence is the site of repression, an echo of Africa lost to time and place, but present in every rhythm, inflection of language and most significantly, in our

relationship to time and technology. The European presence, he argues, must not be located as a wholly extrinsic force, it is always visible the very symbol of our modernity. The *présence Indienne* takes into account both the native First Peoples of the Americas, and the South Asians who migrated to the region. But it is the *présence Americain* that is the key for Hall in framing the Creole.

> None of the people who now occupy the islands – black, brown, white, African, European, American, Spanish, French, East Indian, Chinese, Portuguese, Jew, Dutch – originally 'belonged' there. […] The 'New World' presence – America, *Terra Incognita* – is therefore itself the beginning of diaspora, of diversity, of hybridity and difference […] The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite difference. (Hall, 1990 pp.234-235)
> In marking the New World of the Americas as a wholly new world, *Terra Incognita*;

place and space are mobilised, forcing us to negotiate with new eyes and with new methods the common spaces in which new cultures, new ways of seeing and hearing, and new meanings were made and in which the dichotomies of our difference and sameness are located.

While Hall sets out a very necessary and useful frame on which theorists can construct their own interpretations of the Creole; and indeed many have done so, in most cases stopping short of naming the construct; it is the theoretical work of Gordon (2014) who, by interpreting Rousseau through the lens of Fanon, breaks with conventional thinking on the Creole as a hybrid and allows for the theorising of the Creole as both cultural identity and cultural space. Leveraging Hall's observation on the genesis of creole identity supported by Gordon's assertion that polyculturalism; of which creolization is a specific construct; to acknowledge the roles of place and space and the negotiations of identity intrinsic in such unmapped or unknown spaces; this project joins with Beth Coleman in reading race as "a disruptive technology that changes the terms of engagement with an all-too familiar system of representation and power" (p.3). By reinforcing the primacy of place or the *Terra Incognita* in this construct, it pushes back against

what Michelle M. Wright terms the *Middle Passage epistemology* - the knowledge millions use

to tell themselves they "know" they are Black because they can locate their ancestry within this

history (p.44). Arguing that such narratives position history as a product of linear time, she warns

that

> Histories of the Middle Passage tend to include only a fraction of the contributions, viewpoints, and struggles faced by Black women, Black queers, and Blacks from outside the United States (and only sometimes from the Anglophone Caribbean). Because these millions in fact make up the overwhelming majority of Black identities who understand themselves as possessing Middle Passage origins, this distortion should give us pause. Wright argues for the examination of "racial categories like blackness not as a "what" but as a "when" and "where." It is both a construct (phenomenon), even as it is also a moment of interpretation (epiphenomenal).[1]

According to Wright, physicists have theorized epiphenomenal time as "indicating the

primacy of the present moment, which is neither an effect of the past nor a cause of the future.

The "now," or this book's definition of Epiphenomenal time, corresponds to the "indeterminate,

fuzzy, hybrid reality consisting of many strands" (p.41) A notion shared by Walter Benjamin in

his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* "History is the object of a construction whose place is

formed not in homogenous and empty time, but in that which is fulfilled by the here-and-now"

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> The historical materialist cannot do without the concept of a present which is not a transition, in which time originates and has come to a standstill. For this concept defines precisely *the* present in which he writes history for his person. Historicism depicts the "eternal" picture of the past; the historical materialist, an experience with it, which stands alone. He leaves it to others to give themselves to the whore called "Once upon a time" in the bordello of historicism. He remains master of his powers: man enough, to explode the continuum of history. XVI

The political theorist Andrew Robinson provides a key to the understanding of

Benjamin's theses. According to Robinson, for Benjamin

> Homogeneous empty time passes in an eternal present which remains fundamentally the same. The new reproduces the old in a series of structurally similar moments. This experience of time arises from the constant replacement and renewal of commodities.

People experience time this way because of its technological and social underpinnings in the capitalist way of life.[2]

In stark contrast, heterogeneity is key to understanding the Creole. Polyculturalism, of which creolization is a specific construct, provides a more accurate portrayal of the transmutable nature of the dynamics of culture (and identity) than either multiculturalism or hybridity. Both multiculturalism and hybridity are hegemonic, acknowledging as they do the power relations across ethnic groups and the notions of permission and permissiveness. By taking up Coleman's prompt and mobilising Wright's construction of time as epiphenomenal, we can not only situate the Creole in the *thirdspace* identified by Lefebvre and constructed through cultural creolisation but also as a product of that space. In making this move, I join Brock (2019) in following Pacey's (1983) formulation of technology as "a three part construct of materials, organisation, and culture" (Brock, 2018). In his work, Brock supplants materials and organisation with artifact and practice and centres Blackness as a cognition, embodied in a double-consciousness that acknowledges and celebrates the *thirdspace* even in the absence of material signifiers. Where this work differs from that of Brock and others (Nakamura, 2002; Everett, 2009; Nakamura & Chow-White, 2012) however is in the construction of the creole as the primary technological product of the global political economy of the Age of Empire created by language (technology), labour and place. By placing this identity firmly without the borders of either racial or biological classification, this project works toward an understanding the new social constructions afforded by the New World of online spaces in which, according to Raymond Williams

> we have to revalue 'superstructure' towards a related range of cultural practices, and away from a reflected, reproduced, or specifically-dependent content. And, crucially, we have to revalue 'the base' away from [the] notion[s] of [either] a fixed economic or [a] technological abstraction, and towards the specific activities of men in real, social and economic relationships, containing fundamental contradictions and variations, and, therefore, always in a state of dynamic process. (NLR, 1973, p.82).

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This is a significant and telling distinction. As I have laid out in the body of this introduction the Creole knows exactly who and what they are – technological products of place, space and time whose innate understanding of these phenomena resist the epiphenomenal interpretation of race and ethnicity constructed by the monolithic Whiteness on which North Atlantic society, and by extension, the technological world is constructed. The monolithic Whiteness that marks difference with disempowering language that situates it as baseline, such as hybrid (which cannot reproduce themselves) and locates history in relation to the dominance of this construct. Identity, at some level infers belonging. It is constructed at the nexus of temporality, spatiality, and location - each of which contributes to its veracity - it is in this *thirdspace* created out of technology and labor and structured around affinities and interests that the logic of cultural creolisation can help us unravel what it means to exist in a digital world.

It had a time – A brief history of Trinidad

Situated in Trinidad, the larger of the islands of the twin island republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the project is structured around three case studies, each of which explores the creole's relationship with being and time, for as both technological product and identity marker, the creole is constantly negotiating time, place, interpretation and interpellations. These studies allow for specific claims about the nature of Being as constructed through media practice to be made, and undergird broader claims about creole identity and ontology as a global logic. Each chapter makes use of varied qualitative methods including ethnographic interviews with media producers and users, critical analyses of society, participant observation, close readings of media texts and the discourses surrounding them, and insights from a range of disciplines including Media and Cultural Studies, African American and Diasporic Studies, Critical Race and Postcolonial Theory, Philosophy, Linguistics, and History. Following this philosophical and

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linguistic introduction, each of the studies explores one of the three components of the human situation named by Heidigger: being there in the world, being there as someone and being there for a while.

For the purposes of the analysis offered, reflexivity also requires the location of the author's identity on Trinidad. This move is two-fold, it locates this inquiry firmly in the post colonial tradition of communication studies in that it disrupts what Grossberg calls the "illusory understanding of objectivity, which assumes that rigor requires the denial of all passion and the erasure of all political commitment" and it also allows for the introduction of what Leon Anderson (2006) terms analytic autoethnographic inquiry in which: "The five key features […] include (1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis." (p.376) This political decision, to look inward at both the self and the society that shaped me is in an attempt to bring an intimate eye to the exploration of cultural creolisation and the unique societies it has created.

With a social history of less than three hundred years, the island was spared much of the genocide that hallmarked the transatlantic slave trade. There is however a complicating variable in that, as with any immigrant society, reference to ethnicity in Trinidad and Tobago should not be made synonymous with race, particularly given that the third largest ethnic group in the country proudly identifies itself as mixed. Instead, I draw on Schermerhorn's (1970) perspective on the complexity of ethnicity in the post-colonial world. In this frame, ethnicity is constructed not just phenotypically, but rather through shared histories of origin or experience; a consensual consciousness of identity and what Schermerhorn calls "a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood." (p.12.)

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Happened upon by Columbus on his third voyage to the region in 1498, the island of

Trinidad remained a minor Spanish possession with a token population for almost three hundred

years. The island's social history and foundation of the present society began with the prescient

intervention of Phillipe Rose Roume de Saint-Laurent, a Grenadian born French Creole who

migrated to Trinidad in 1781.[3] With encouragement from Saint-Laurent, a French royalist, the

Spanish Crown issued a Cedula of Population in 1783[4] to attract Catholic (French) settlers and

their retinues to the island with promises of free land in an attempt to kick-start the island's

economy. The effort was in the large part a success and led to the root of the island's unique

linguistic history, as in 1797 a British naval task force claimed Trinidad in the name of George

III. The turn of the 19th century then, saw Trinidad as a possession of the British crown, a status

it would hold until Independence in 1962, with a French-lexified creole as its *lingua franca.*

Describing the state of language use evident on the island, Aub-Buscher (n.d),[5] writes that this

French lexified creole was in effect

> the lingua franca of the working population of this British colony, spoken not only by the
> slaves who had brought it, but also learned and used by the indentured labourers imported
> from Asia after the abolition of slavery in 1838, and picked up from their nannies by the
> children of the French planters. It maintained its position into the beginning of the 20th
> century, but then was superseded by Trinidad English Creole (TEC).

The cessation of the transatlantic slave trade[6] ten years after the British capture of the

island (1807) saw Trinidad's newly installed creole population subject to successive waves of

migration of Chinese, Irish and Portuguese indentured labourers; each group of which left their

mark on the language. Following Emancipation in 1838, beginning in 1845 a sustained flow of

indentured labourers from South Asia that lasted until 1917 brought to the region as a new labour

force; formed a significant cultural and language community at this time in Trinidad whose

influences are most evident in everyday TEC. These words speak not only to the enigma that the

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arrival of these various waves of immigrants presented to the population of the island but also to

the burgeoning culture, what UNESCO (2002) refers to as "…the set of distinctive spiritual,

material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and all it encompasses,

in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and

beliefs" of the island.

As a child, I would often be sung to sleep by my father's aunt, one of the last generation

of Trinidad's native trilingual speakers, equally fluent in Trinidad French Creole (TFC), Trinidad

English Creole (TEC) and a Standard English (SE) native not to the region, but rather to

England. That she chose TFC as the language to soothe me to sleep and this lullaby in particular:

Do do petit popo,

Petit popo pas fait dodo

Do do petit popo,

Petit popo pas fait dodo

Do do petit popo,

Petit popo pas v'lez dodo,

Si vous pas dodo, petit popo,

Mako chat allez manger 'o.[7]

as the language of her intimate expression to my infant self speaks to the changing ecology of

Trinidad at that moment and her attachment to the *disappearing* place of her youth, Trinidad at

the turn of the 20th century. This locating of self in place and place in turn as time is a significant

component of the Creole identity, as is the eternal present that this consciousness of self in time

engenders and the emotional connection that place has with the psyche of the region and its

diaspora make the task of a cultural analysis both intriguing and potentially provocative;

presenting the most cogent construction of the political power of the creole identity. The creole language that is the lingua franca of Trinidad and Tobago – Trinidad English Creole (TEC), can illustrate this political power.

To demonstrate this power, I deploy Mufwene's 'complementary hypothesis' in which "the only influences in competition [for the genesis of a creole] are the structures of the lexifier and the substrate languages" (p.89); This example aims to show the effect of place on the development of Trinidad English Creole as it superseded the TFC as a lingua franca at the turn of the 20th century; and how language is adapted to serve the needs of its speakers as their social circumstances evolve. Mufwene asserts that feature selection may be predicated on new ecological conditions in a space or place. He writes that ecology is "the ethnographic setting in which the lexifier (the displaced population) has come into contact with diverse languages (other populations) whose structural features (genes) enter into competition with its own features." (Mufwene, 85). By studying the ecological shift at the turn of the 20th century in Trinidad, it is hoped that we improve our understanding not just of Trinidad English Creole, but the work it does in cementing identity. This ecological shift from TFC to TEC occurred through the relexification of the TFC verb phrases as repurposed for use in the TEC, the header of this section being one such example. Winer, in her seminal *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad and Tobago* (2009) terms *it had* as "an introductory phrase indicating the existence of something in the past." While Winer notes the equivalence to the SE phrases *there was, there were* she notes the specificity of the genealogy of the phrase as a direct structural translation of the French *il y avait* (literally, it there had) in which the adverb *there* locates time as place. The inherent referencing of time as place in such a structure speaks to the complexity of being in a place such as Trinidad where the verb *to be* takes on a complexity of its own. Aub-Buscher (n.d)[8]

in her analysis of the grammar of TFC, makes the point that while most of the features of the language imply that TFC has a grammar simpler than that of French (its lexifier language), there are aspects that are more complex than both the French and English grammars that inform both TFC and TEC. By noting the existence in TFC of three verbs *to be* which each serve a different function, she signifies this complexity. That forms of the existential nature of life continue to be marked in the grammar of TEC demonstrate the continuum between the acrolectic form of SE present in Trinidad and the basilectic form which is accounted for by the relexification of TFC into TEC forms which are homophonic to the SE.

In TEC these forms are represented by *da, a,* and *does. Da* according to Winer (2009) is a copula or equating *be* verb, equivalent to the SE *is/are. Me Gaad, dis da really big building far true.* (Winer, 280) Although she notes that the origins of its use are obscure, she attributes its development to influences drawn from similar patterns in West African languages. That the cessation of the British slave trade essentially coincided with the British occupation of Trinidad signals that this use must have come to TEC through TFC. *Da* is also used as a topical existential *be* verb, used at the beginning of a sentence or clause. Winer sites it as the equivalent of the archaic SE construction *be+it*, - but it is structurally equivalent to the French *C'est (that is)* as in *Da no you property.* It can also be used to mark continuing, progressive or habitual action – *Ebery maning-ebery nite, dem shap full peple; hafe da quarrel, hafe da fite, an terra hafe da tuan up lafe.* (Winer, 2009) *A* does tremendous work in TEC. At once a directional preposition and a verb, *A* is used to locate both person and place - *Me rise very early, go a Belmont,* indicating as it does the notion of being in a place in its deployment as a locative preposition – *Trouble da a bush, but annancy bring him a house* As a verb to be, *A* is also often deployed either as an equating verb equivalent to the SE *is/are* or as topical existential *be* verb in much the

same way as *Da*; one signal difference however being *A* ability to be used as a topical or copula verb that can be used at the beginning of a sentence in an emphatic construction of the state of being: *a tired she tired. Does* is, according to Winer (2009) a verbal marker of habitual action. While homophonic to the SE, *does* in this construct is based on several West African languages that "mark the habitual and the continuous with the same marker." (Winer, 2009, p.302) – *A man does be glad to have nice people like you to keep a l'il company with.* When used in conjunction with *be, does* indicates a common habitual action. Winer notes this use: *The watchman there says, I does be seeing things and hearing things right there among the dead.*

That these forms and their use all can be found in and are constitutive of the TEC definition of the verb *is* speaks to the sensitive and nuanced relationships that creoles have with time and place – as both people and languages. Using Mufweme's Founder Principle as a lens, TEC, as with other creole languages is indicative of the place that formed it – the people, their society, their history, and the common purpose that binds them together – sharing their experiences and in doing so, constructing a culture and a place of belonging.

The philosophical approach to temporality inherent in such language formation speaks to the consciousness of the creole condition to time, place and space and forms the basis of the theoretical analysis of the three case studies that form the substance of the project.

Whose F in fault is a critical technocultural discourse analysis of the Trinidadian General Elections of 2015 that works to interrogate the notion of being there as someone.

The Corridor of Uncertainty uses cricket and mediatized sport to interrogate the notion of being there in the world for the West Indian, my constructed creole.

No Scene – Music, identity and be/longing is both critical cultural analysis and ethnographic look at a rock band from Trinidad, seeking to construct a frame for an appreciation of what it means to belong when existing on the periphery having been there for a while.

The project closes with a discussion of the findings and the broader implications of the research. For example, it is difficult to fathom the consistent framing by the media of difference as measured against what have become labelled "American values" – religion, skin color, national origin- as weapon or problem until one understands the social dynamic at play. This portrayal serves to keep people of color on the outside of society looking in and by so doing, maintains a status quo to which everyone; on either side of the hyphen; subscribes. This is where looking becomes watching and where fear resides. Building on the frame of this research, I suggest an identity construction predicated on place in a polycultural space. By this I mean identities that are constructed as American, no hyphen warranted – identities located in the experience of being in the New World and accounting for all of the presences in the Americas

CHAPTER II
Whose F In Fault Is It?

A Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis of Media

and the Public Sphere in Trinidad and Tobago

While it lacks the pervading dominant culture construction that pertains in the United States, it is argued that Trinidad and Tobago also lacks a "…transcendent national culture that results in the formation of national consciousness and loyalty to the nation." (Cudjoe, 2011); which in turn leads to the promulgation of what may be considered to be practices devoted to maintaining the rootlessness of the immigrant society by pressing "separate demands upon the body politic and the body social and a continuous demand for proportional representation." (2011) I argue in this chapter that this continuous demand for proportional representation predicated on a politics of race and, to a lesser extent religion; in fact creates a culture of visibility and performative identity that has traditionally been captured in the Carnivalesque nature of Trinidadian society in particular (Liverpool) but which has since become entrenched in the adoption of memetic culture to comment on global, local and regional news; and the almost seamless transition of this performance of self into the online spaces of platforms and apps.

In both etymological and practical contexts, identity is political. At its most basic, this argument is supported by the reality of the construct being both simultaneously and asynchronously subjective and consensual in nature, as Fanon reminds us in *The fact of blackness* (2009); his rumination on interpellation.[9] Hall (1990, 1994, 2017) made the point that diaspora cultures, including those in the Americas, will always inevitably be syncretized.

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Speaking to Caribbean cultural identities; and by extension; to broader cultural identities in the Americas, he invokes four metaphorical presences *présence Africaine, présence Européene, présence Indienne* and *présence Americain.* In this construct, the African presence is the site of repression, an echo of Africa lost to time and place, but present in every rhythm, inflection of language and most significantly, in our relationship to time. The European presence, he argues, must not be located as a wholly extrinsic force, it is always visible the very symbol of our modernity. The *présence Indienne* takes into account both the native First Peoples of the Americas, and the South Asians who migrated to the region. But it is the *présence Americain* that is the key for Hall in framing the Creole. The *présence Americain* being the land, place and space on which worlds collided "where the fateful/fatal encounter was staged between Africa and the West" following the displacement and genocide of native populations.

Though he was not speaking specifically of Trinidad and Tobago, a twin island republic that sits at the very foot of the archipelagic Caribbean; and in which every ethnic group can claim minority status[10] he certainly could have been. Perhaps the most polycultural in the Caribbean,[11] Trinidad and Tobago society demonstrates a tolerance and acceptance of the type that celebrates Christian, Hindu and Muslim holy days as national holidays and celebrates its embrace of diversity by marking itself not as a 'melting-pot' but rather, as a *callaloo* - a highly favoured local dish made up of very distinct ingredients that when blended together lend their individual qualities to the overall flavour of the dish. However, these subtleties and nuances serve as a reminder that in a country that has enshrined in its national anthem, the promise of equality for all that "the politics of 'race', racism and ethnicity is invariably socially complex, politically and culturally contested, and historically on the move" (Cottle, 2006,p7)

Trinidad is a bacchanal

This chapter will frame the ethnic situation in the country through the lenses of the media and the public sphere and then problematize this position with the use of creole theory and ethnic blame discourse to make clear the impact that each has on identity construction and place-making.

In the polyglot society that is Trinidad and Tobago, there is a complicating variable in that, as with any immigrant society, reference to ethnicity in the country should not be made synonymous with race, particularly given that its third largest ethnic group proudly identifies itself as mixed. Instead, I draw on Schermerhorn's (1970) perspective on the complexity of ethnicity in the post-colonial world. In this frame, ethnicity is constructed not just phenotypically, but rather through shared histories of origin or experience; a consensual consciousness of identity and what Schermerhorn calls "a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood." (p.12.) This perspective allows for the consensual identification of the individual in the context of this polycultural society, this framework of consensual identification becoming fundamental to understanding the mass media in the country as it plays a significant role in leading and shaping national discourse and opinion. In Trinidad and Tobago, the balance of power between the dominant ethnic groups who in turn identify with the dominant political parties (PNM for the Afro-identified, UNC for the Indo-identified) is decided by the financial support of the smaller minority groups - European, Arab, mixed primarily - whose economic power, stake in media ownership and societal status outweigh their numbers. The local media as a result, exists as the discursive fiefdom of the two major ethnic groups, African and East Indian (which together total 80% of the population) by dint of sheer population size. Having accounted for the two major ethnic groups - African and East

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Indian, as the *defacto* controllers of the Trinidad and Tobago media and the public sphere this chapter engages the work done on what Romer et al (1997) refer to as "…the social construction of conflict and the discourse that surrounds discussion of ethnic difference". Given the complexities of possible ethnic identities in a creole space such as Trinidad and Tobago, the framing of minority interests and the imbalances of political, economic and social power visible in the country as the conjuncture of a colonial past and contemporary patterns of deprivation and discrimination[12] becomes cogent as contextual evidence for Altschull's (1984) 'second law of journalism'.[13]

In the absence of a dominant or even an emergent national culture therefore, the media landscape is a study in niche markets, a site of expression for racial bias and contention[14]. For the purposes of this study, responding to the major sites in which this racialised discourse is occurring – the media is defined as the press. Trinidad and Tobago has three daily newspapers – The Trinidad & Tobago Guardian - established in 1917 as part of English media baron Lord Thomson's colonial media assets - and now the eponymous foundation of Guardian Media Limited (GML), the local media arm of the locally-based regional conglomerate ANSA MCAL; and which along with the newspaper, also comprises 9 radio stations, a television station and an electronic billboard company. Though traded on the Trinidad and Tobago Stock Exchange, the majority of ANSA MCAL is still privately held by the local family of Arab descent that form its Executive level. As with the Guardian, the Daily Express - established in 1967 by journalists fired from the Guardian after industrial action, is also part of an integrated media group, in this instance - One Caribbean Media (OCM), a regional media group spanning Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Grenada that encompasses radio and television broadcast, live news streaming and print. OCM is a publically held company traded on both the Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago

Stock Exchanges whose major shareholders, and the majority of whose shareholders reside in Trinidad and Tobago.[15] The newest of the local dailies, the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, began in 1993 in an attempt to break the established dominance of the two established dailies. Billing itself as the "People's Newspaper" Newsday's arrival dictated wholesale design changes across the medium, with the Guardian in particular, dropping its traditional broadsheet design for a tabloid orientation to combat Newsday's commercial threat. It is a privately held company. All newspapers have online editions, updated daily. This fact, combined with the Guardian and Express forming parts of larger media groups is what led to the methodological decision to define the media as press given that the digital artifacts of these publications are available online as an archive for analysis and interrogation.

Market Facts and Opinions, a local market research organization, does an annual media share survey under the auspices of the Advertising Agencies Association of Trinidad and Tobago - based on the 2013 survey, the most recent one available for report as the survey is held behind a paywall; the Express holds the clear circulation lead with 48% of the market, the Newsday follows with 36% and the Trinidad Guardian with 16%. Seeking a better understanding of the media landscape in Trinidad, I asked an acquaintance and colleague from half a life ago to sit and chat with me over some food and liquid refreshment about the current situation.

Elena

A journalist, cultural critic, and published novelist; Elena reflected on the state of the media in Trinidad:

> From a fundamental perspective, the media in Trinidad is very Port -of- Spain centric and very afro- creole, in spite of the fact that there are so many journalists of different ethnicities in the newsroom - the newspapers, tv and radio all come across as very afrocentric. Except of course for the purely Indian channels, stations and publications. There is a lot of racial bias, one - in the stories we cover and, two - the way that we cover those stories. You won't necessarily see overt racism but how it might play out is - if

something is happening in an Indian context [sic] it will be reported as an Indian story and so on - there are markers that we use. So yes, the media is definitely racist.[16]

When we first sat down, our conversation began with the concept of belonging. Trinidadians have the habit of indicating identity through racial or ethnic descriptors and I asked Elena, "There are people who see these demarcations as people bestowing inclusivity on others by noting difference, do you see this as counterproductive?" "Of course not, a Trinidadian is multicultural by definition, so no! Being Trinidadian allows for a multiplicity of identities within that classification. I call myself an Afro Trinidadian in spite of the way I look." Looking at her pale skin, straight nose and thin lips she sensed my incredulity at this construction and self - deprecatingly noted

> Even though I could pass as white, no one I know would believe it. I claim an Afro identity because none of my other ancestral groups claimed me. Growing up, my father always talked about his blackness, and my mother always talked about her blackness; but in a kind of negative way because her family is very light-skinned and my mother was not. She was taught to be ashamed of her blackness.

> So does this Afro-Trinidad identity stand in the way of a Trinidad identity for you?

> I would say that there is a set of my Trinidadian identity of which a subset is my Afro-Trinidad identity. As a matter of fact, the first thing on my bio is Elena is a writer from Trinidad in the same way that V.S. Naipaul - even though he doesn't say he is Trinidadian - the first line in his bio is that he was born in Trinidad.

> So he establishes himself in a place, and I establish myself in a place and therefore are so positioned.

> Hear nah, hear nah, let's put it this way *J'ouvert* morning, I love *J'ouvert*, I adore *J'ouvert* when you walking down, through town on a *J'ouvert* morning, you apprehend your Trinidadianness in a very visceral, physical way of belonging in a landscape - look mih pores raising up - belonging in a landscape and fitting into a place and being part of a people because…yuh know why? When yuh hear that *shhkkk, shhkkk, shhkkk, shhkkk* …

Unable to contain myself around the infectious nature of the rhythmic sounds she had begun to make, I found myself joining in and soon in my mind's eye I saw the image she was sketching, the dim light of the *fo' day morning* illuminating the thousands of bodies, painted,

muddied, oiled, sweaty moving together syncopatedly "*shhkkk, shhkkk, shhkkk, shhkkk*" she continued:

"YOU BELONG HERE!" she exclaimed,

> and you are part of that *shhkkk, shhkkk, shhkkk, shhkkk* and it moves yuh, it moves yuh heart…it's a very special time and as a Trinidadian when I experience it it is a transcendental experience.

To the uninitiated, Trinidad's Carnival fits each of Bahktin's four senses of the Carnivalesque in that there is familiar and free interaction among people as they come together in *carnival misalliances* where they indulge in eccentric or socially unacceptable behavior without consequence. What Bakhtin's observation of the Carnivalesque does not account for however, is the creole condition that lies at the basis of any identity or cultural construct in the Caribbean. Trinidad's Carnival tradition is the fallow field from which the country's cultural identity has grown. Rooted in the celebration of indigeneity mandated by the creole condition, Carnival has always been the site of resistance, the space in which the *Présence Africaine, Présence Européene* and *Présence Americain* have negotiated their own claim to belonging. Liverpool (1993) identifies the festival as a " syncretic elaboration of cultural elements from Africa, Europe and the neighbouring Caribbean islands" (Liverpool p.xxi) It is the stage on which what he terms "the cultural identity of Caribbean people: violent struggle, festivity, oppressive legislation, ethnicity, religious differences, discrimination in education and employment, cultural resilience and creativity, communal work habits and ritualization" (p.xxi) has come to be realised. Inadvertently, Elena my *J'ouvert* loving friend had done the same thing - placing the social dynamics of Trinidad as intrinsic to the discourse, given the historical construct of the line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour at Carnival. A line traditionally drawn through the bodies of women and demarcated in Trinidad French creole as

the word *diametre,* (pronounced *jamette*) at once the boundary line and the woman whose behaviour locates her below it. Noel (2009) discusses the role of the *jamette* in the constantly evolving spectacle that is Carnival and traces a genealogy from women who occupied the periphery of polite society, using their bodies to provoke debate about how women should appear and behave in public; to the contemporary woman masqueraders whose unreserved wining and gyrating in the streets demonstrates the embracing of " a primitivist performativity in order to comment on the patriarchal containment of women inside and outside of the Carnival arena." (p.186-7)

 This is a significant point for this enquiry for any number of reasons. Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana are the two English-speaking Caribbean countries with significant East Indian populations. As the region moved toward independence following the Second World War, the initial Colonial Office direction was the formation of an independent West Indian Federation. This political decision was the foundation of the politics of race that continue to dominate the social landscape of Trinidad and Tobago, as political machinations across the region through the Colonial Office worked to politically isolate the East Indian population. With the failure of the Federation in 1962 and the subsequent independence of Trinidad and Tobago in the same year, the politics of race has transmogrified into a racial politics beginning with the election of the first UNC government in 1996 under Basdeo Panday. However, the public discourse on the topic grew louder with the election of Kamla Persad-Bissessar S.C. in 2010 as the first female Prime Minister and Hindu woman to lead the government of Trinidad and Tobago. Identifying Mrs Persad-Bissessar (now Leader of the Opposition) as such is significant to the context of this research indicating as it does the specificity of identifiers currently used in the public discourse in Trinidad and Tobago - a situation arrived at through the declining relations between

successive government and the media. It is in this context that for the purposes of this inquiry, I

establish a cognate relationship between the *jamette* and the associated behavior and Sarah

Ahmed's (2006) definition of *lifelines* as expressions of identity or "the lines of rebellion and

resistance that gather over time to create new impressions on the skin surface or on the skin of

the social." Liverpool sees the role of the *jamette* in Carnival as destroying the political power

and economic position of the middle and upper classes through its masquerades and calypsos –

through *picong*, the semi-formalised or ritualised ridiculing or insulting of the other that is part of

the fabric of Trinidad society.

I mobilise the construct of the *jamette* to account for and contextualise this *picong* in both

the media and public discourse as the country moved to its constitutionally due general elections

in September 2015. In an effort to deflect criticism and commentary away from its perceived

shortcomings in governance and transparency, the UNC actively engaged in a public discourse

on the subjects of race, religion, ethnicity and gender. By enjoining their respective publics to

engage on these terms, the two political parties steered the national discourse into a

manifestation of jamette culture - at once political, provocative, vulgar, mocking and grounded in

reality. According to Elena:

> Plus the political agenda is so clearly racist that it can't help but come out in the
> coverage. If you're covering racist politics it is not just difficult, I think it is irresponsible
> to not show that these people are being racist. I mean it is part of the responsibility to
> report what is being said and unfortunately a lot of that is racism and, unfortunately,
> sexism.

Jamette as Praxis

Deploying the *jamette* as praxis is a decided theoretical and methodological move geared

to account for the *presence Americain* in the frame of analysis offered by this project. Arising as

she does out of the Trinidadian Carnival tradition which, as already been mentioned, is itself a

creolised version of the European Catholic Carnival tradition on which Bakhtin predicates his observations - use of the *jamette* as both theoretical and methodological lens at once forces us to negotiate with new eyes and with new methods the common spaces in which new cultures, new ways of seeing and hearing, and new meanings were made and in which the dichotomies of our difference and sameness are located. Van Dijk (1993) makes the point that unlike other discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis should take an explicitly socio-political stance. He calls for analysts to spell out their point of view, their perspectives, principles and aims with the goal of effecting social change through a critical understanding and analysis of the relations between power and dominance. In expanding the notion of critical discourse analysis to account for what he terms "the investigation of Internet and digital phenomena, artifacts, and culture." Brock's (2016) multimodal Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis does exactly that by integrating as it does the analysis of both technological artifact and user discourse to "to unpack semiotic and material connections between form, function, belief, and meaning of information and communication technologies (ICTs)."

With CTDA requiring the incorporation of critical theory—critical race, or in this case creole theory - this study of the role of racial discourse in the media and public sphere in consensual identity formation and its effect on the voting choices of the respondents; is ideal for the this analytical framework that systematically accounts for the contexts, the production, the structures, and the affordances of technology on of media discourses such as news reports, editorials, user generated content and opinion articles. This multidisciplinarity, Van Dijk writes, must "give an account of intricate relationships between text, talk, social cognition, power, society and culture" (1993, p.253). This is the same multidisciplinarity identified by Jane Anna Gordon in her call for framing the creole as both cultural identity and method of inquiry as a

means of theorising social and power relations in the Americas. Within the context of this multidisciplinarity, this move to deploy the *jamette* seeks to answer Gordon's call for a creole method of inquiry, mobilising social constructs as lens of analysis and paying particular attention to local meanings and rhetoric as a means of making sense of the data.

The *diametre* of social respectability that the *jamette* ignores is also a significant contributor to the analytic frame under construction. The very notion of respectability speaks to power and social relations in the Americas; bridging the social commentary and lack of propriety of the Trinidad Carnival and the respectability politics that arise in the United States during Reconstruction as a way for Black Americans to attempt to assimilate into broader white society. That the *jamette* has long ignored the conventions of respectability while pushing for social change, is echoed in the rise of the Black female performer beginning with the Blues Queens of the early 20th century whose use of the burgeoning broadcast and recording industries in their fight for the right to be heard had a profound effect on culture in the United States; and culminating in this moment in Queen Bey herself. Beyoncé's deep exploration of Blackness in the United States, as manifested in projects such as *Lemonade* and her Super Bowl 50 performance speak not only to the value of such performances of what Victor Rios terms a "deviant politics" but also harks back to the place based notion of self and circumstance that the Blues Queens mined to ventriloquise the concerns that the politics of identity intrinsically speak to.

It must be noted that though the *jamette* as introduced to this point has been constructed as a Black female body existing beyond the pale of moral society, and in whom the forced indigeneity of the American colonial project is manifest; it is this forced indigeneity - read as

abundance[17] both socially and morally - which enables the construct to transcend its traditionally gendered interpretation and be employed as a lens of analysis.

Hear Every Creed And Race

Teun Van Dijk (2012) defines racism as "…as a system of ethnic or "racial" dominance, that is, of systematic power abuse of a dominant (European, "white") group against various kinds of non-European groups – such as ethnic minorities, immigrants, and refugees – in Europe, the Americas, and other European-dominated countries."(p.15) and goes on to delineate the two dimensions of racism – the social and the cognitive. He writes "…the cognitive dimension consists of the ethnic beliefs, stereotypes, prejudices, and ideologies that function as the motivation and legitimation of such discriminatory practices." (p.16) Like Van Dijk, it is how this cognitive dimension defines interpersonal everyday interactions in the public sphere that is of the greatest interest. However, unlike Van Dijk's definition of racism that reflects the binary of race relations in the metropole white heteronormativity as baseline with the 'other' held in direct comparison; for the purposes of problematizing the public discourse in Trinidad and Tobago; post colonial theory is used to ground the study. Post colonial theory is concerned with an initial awareness of the social, psychological, and cultural inferiority enforced by being in a colonized state as well as the struggle for ethnic, cultural, and political autonomy and a growing awareness of cultural overlap and hybridity. Grossberg (2002) writes that postcolonial theory serves to remind us that "…the organizations of nations, states, ethnicities and races are the product of a colonial history and in its continuing rearticulation in contemporary local and international, economic and cultural, relations." (p.369) Making the case for postcolonial theory as a lens for communication research he posits that postcoloniality moves away from the accepted binary of race in the metropole, supplanting it with an approach which speaks to the

complexity of the postcolonial social structure – "Eastern and Western and…" (p.369) while reminding us that our accepted notions of communication, culture, identity and history are a result of a Eurocentric historicity with little cultural validity when looking at postcolonial spaces such as Trinidad. Most significant in Grossberg's call to arms is his conclusion "postcolonial studies joins with the best work in communication studies in seeking to find more modest but still rigorous practices that will enable us to contribute, as intellectuals, to what is, in the end, always a political project." (p.370)

Taking up the prompts of Miller, Van Dijk, and Grossberg I ground my enquiry in the notion of creole indigeneity[18] that structures the Creole as native to the space under consideration brought into being by technology and labor.

Along with the unstructured interviews with political operatives and media practitioners that inform this chapter and constitute some of its content, I also analysed each of the Sunday newspapers published in the month leading up to the General Elections of September 7th 2015. Beginning on August 2nd and concluding on Sunday September 6th (the eve of the election), each of the eighteen publications was scrutinised with specific attention being given to the contextual variation between each publication's coverage; the topics deemed newsworthy, the local meanings derived from the media and the rhetoric used. Political and Government advertising content also forms part of the corpus. The 6 week period was chosen as this period represents the final run in to the election and the period that the rhetoric and advertising touting each party would be at their fullest volume. Sunday's newspapers were chosen not just as a representative sample of the media in the period, but because these editions are the largest of the week, carry the most columns and have the most advertising. To make sense of what was being said, I turned to Ryan & Bernard's *Techniques to Identify Themes in Qualitative Data;* as their suggested

method of cutting and sorting allows the researcher the ability to dive deep into the data and to weave discourse strands into a coherent narrative.

> Cutting and sorting involves identifying quotes or expressions that seem somehow important and then arranging the quotes/expressions into piles of things that go together […] We cut out each quote (making sure to maintain some of the context in which it occurred) and paste the material on small index cards. On the back of each card, we then write down the quote's reference—who said it and where it appeared in the text. Then we lay out the quotes randomly on a big table and sort them into piles of similar quotes. Then we name each pile. These are the themes. (Ryan & Bernard)

The constant comparison required to link these quotes together as I sat on the floor shuffling, sorting and stirring my data lead to dense, multi-layered thematic frames which, when juxtaposed with my local knowledge and sociopolitical perspective, combined to give a true picture what was happening here. By collectively invoking the milieu of the *jamette*, each of the themes - political, provocative, vulgar, mocking and grounded in reality - can be seen as the self of each of the participants, interacting with others, shaping emerging social structures, meanings, and contexts to form a collective identity that informs each individual's sense of belonging. In the analysis, five styles of messaging were identified: advertising (of which there were four types - each political party, government and activist), editorial, opinion columns, letters to the editor and online comments/memes.

Advertising

While political advertising is by nature confrontational and partisan, the 2015 election campaign in Trinidad and Tobago was among the first to be influenced by the machinations of the Cambridge Analytica Group now at the centre of investigations by the United States for interference in the 2016 Presidential elections. Alexander Nix, former CEO of Cambridge Analytica, revealed that Strategic Communications Laboratories, the British company that eventually became Cambridge Analytica under contract to the government of the day (UNC) had

"engineered a highly successful grassroots campaign to "increase apathy" so that young Afro-Caribbeans would not vote[19]." In his testimony before a British parliamentary committee looking into data misuse by Cambridge Analytica and its associated companies, whistleblower Christopher Wylie revealed that though most of the work undertaken was mundane and geared to providing software to motivate the apparatchiks of the governing party - Cambrige Analytica and its associated companies deployed a micro-targeting campaign predicated on data ostensibly collected to build a national police database. A 2017 column on the investigations into Cambridge Analytica in the Guardian, puts the motive behind the project into context. According to Tamsin Shaw[20],

> The capacity for this science to be used to manipulate emotions is very well established. This is military-funded technology that has been harnessed by a global plutocracy and is being used to sway elections in ways that people can't even see, don't even realise is happening to them, […] It's about exploiting existing phenomenon like nationalism and then using it to manipulate people at the margins.

In the words of Christopher Wylie, "this is what modern day colonialism looks like[21]." This contextualisation of Trinidad and Tobago's 2015 General Election as the first site of an information war that continues to dominate the global news cycle to this day, reinforces the tensions of racial politics and amplifies the value of what is at stake - the political power to dominate discursive ontologies of place and belonging.[22]

By continuing to mine the veins of distrust and misunderstanding between the subaltern groups that colonialism creates and reinforces - a racially driven discursive ontology best described by Michelle Wallace in *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (1979) as "…if whom you fuck, indicates your power, then obviously the greatest power would be gained by fucking a white man first, a black man second, a white woman third and a black woman not at all. The most important rule is that nobody fucks you." (p.68); the politics of this place

demonstrate both the validity of the discursive process of cultural creolization as a lens of inquiry and the *jamette* as its praxis.

According to an article in the Sunday Guardian in the week before the general election, the ruling party had out spent the opposition by a ratio of 6:1. "Of the estimated $5million in advertising expenditure, the PP was responsible for $4.3 million, the PNM a meager $700,000." (Mendes, 2015) In this six day period, according to the article: " the [government] had placed over 100 newspaper advertisements, while the PNM had placed a paltry 17." In their advertising, both parties focused on their leaders, with the governing party making Mrs Persad Bissessar the totem on which the party's and indeed, the country's future rested. KPB appeared by herself in almost every one of the 10 full page full colour layouts that rotated in the press in this period either directly or as a pointed reference. In contrast, the PNM rotated six advertisements, most of which, though centred on the Oppostion Leader, Dr. Keith Rowley, positioned him not as the totem of the party but rather as the latest leader at the helm of the strongest party in the country. Dr Rowley appears as the symbol of the party he leads while Mrs Persad-Bissessar in contrast, appears as a universal panacea for all that is perceived as wrong in the country. In the Westminster political system in which the Prime Minister is the person who can command the most support in Parliament - the difference in the messaging strategies speaks volumes about what each party sees as its core attraction to the voting public. The PNM stands on the legacy of the party, with the UNC standing on the perceived potential of Mrs Persad-Bissessar to attract the majority of voters. By eliding the majority of the candidates from the messaging, the UNC took the decision to create a cult of personality around the Prime Minister and to play to the trope of woman as mother, positioning the nation as being in need of someone who would take care of it rather than one who would lead it.

Political

The vast majority of the advertising placed by the parties was explicitly political in nature, synopsising major points of their respective platforms; introducing candidates or giving notice of public meetings. The UNC, under the overall theme of "Your choice is clear" deployed five messages, each of which positioned their political leader as the right, if not obvious choice to lead the country.

Saturating the press, these messages each privileged Mrs Persad-Bissessar as leader of the country, with a direct call to action highlighting the result of a vote for the party - essentially, make Kamla Persad - Bissessar Prime Minister by voting for whoever the local candidate is. This message was clothed in full colour advertising designed to dominate the page, prominently featuring her image and inviting readers to visit a now defunct campaign website *Kamla2015.tt*. In every image she is smiling, whether appealing to family values; being positioned as the impetus behind a political movement; hailing her constituency with a pointed index finger or a wave we are presented with an iconography that meshes the individual and the party so seamlessly that they cannot be separated. The two exceptions to this are full page, full colour advertisements that appear a week apart. One marked the 2015 Independence Day celebrations in San Fernando (Trinidad's second city) and featured the local candidate for the constituency in which the celebrations were held. That the identity of the candidate is that of a hijab wearing Muslim woman of Indian descent, an identity in direct contrast to Mrs Persad- Bissessar's Hindu female identity is a political statement designed to illustrate a unity across religion predicated by race. The second advertisement was paid for by the UNC and featured Mrs. Persad-Bissessar addressing the nation directly in her role as Prime Minister. Bereft of party motifs and presented in a font meant to mimic handwriting, this message begins *Dear Citizen* and goes on to display

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the mocking nature of politics while simultaneously attempting to divorce her from the practice -
I am not in politics for the bacchanal or to shout slogans - the advertisement avers.

In contrast, the PNM, the oldest active political party and that with the longest history of
governance deployed advertisements that stood on its legacy. As noted previously, this legacy is
one of afro affinity often to the real or perceived detriment of Indo - identified Trinidadians. Also
prominently featuring its political leader, these advertisements positioned him as the leader of an
identified group of people positioned to take the country forward. Under the theme *Rebuild.
Restore. Represent* these double page full colour spreads located the candidates not only in their
constituencies but also in the social fabric of the nation. This notion of a nation united into what
the advertising termed a Red Army was also mobilised in the advertisements calling the party's
faithful to action, to go out and support because one was *red and ready.* While the prominence of
Dr. Rowley in these advertisements is not to be discounted he was in no way positioned as the
catalyst for change that Mrs. Persad- Bissessar was by her party. In its most explicit platform
promise of change, Dr Rowley features nowhere. Instead, the full page advertisement puts the
onus on the public by placing the responsibility firmly on their vote for the PNM. In none of the
advertisements is Dr Rowley hailing his constituents, instead in presenting the party's slate of
candidates he references his party's commitment to service and locates the candidates as the
latest contribution to its history. This is not a partisan hail, to which the faithful are expected to
respond, rather it is the public interpellation of Fanon through which one is invited to identify
one's self.

As with the UNC, the PNM also could not resist the mocking inherent in politics.
Deploying the locative of history as a discursive tool of belonging, and swathed in the national
flag; this full page, full colour advertisement is the only one that features Dr Rowley. In a

message headlined *Restore Integrity in Public Office* and with a flag pin prominent on his lapel, Dr Rowley, situates his party as historically synonymous with the ideals of meritorious service and good governance that the nation was founded on. The rhetorical question that ends the message "I say to you - why can't it be that again?" becomes not just the prompt for electoral change but also the discursive mechanism of exclusion for the non-party faithful.

Mocking

Rooted in the history of the *jamette* Carnival is the character of the Midnight Robber[23] whose scornful turn of address to his audience is full of mocking taunts designed to belittle. The person, or persons that this address is focused upon is known as the *mockman* – a scornful term of address. In the immediate pre-election period this *robber talk* was the currency deployed by both paying advertisers and columnists to score their political points. One political action group *Citizens for TT* set the then ruling UNC as the target of their *mauvais langue[24],* with the Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar as their specific target. This series of paid, full colour, full page advertisements appeared sporadically in the build up to the election and then in totality in all of the newspapers on the day immediately prior to the polls; mockingly presenting "Kamla's Plan" for the future. Using the failure of the government to deliver on the election promises that brought them to power, and deliberately mocking the style of the party's campaign advertisements, each of these advertisements compared an election promise with the perceived misbehaviour or failure of the Prime Minister and ended with the punch line "To present the same failed plan is a …Skam". The true mocking nature of the *jamette* is captured in the deployment of the fake hashtags *#MakeThemOut* and *#SendThemOutSept7* as a both a call to action at the polls and as a provocation to take the conversation and the *mauvais langue* into the online spaces that Trinidadians frequent and use to engage with each other.

Clayton

> I like the fact that I could be so different and still belong. For a small country we have so
> many different sub-cultures - the North is different from the South which is different to
> Central. I think the thing that makes you Trinidadian is that you can be so unique and still
> belong.[25]

Swirling the ice in his glass, Clayton sat back, pulled a cigarette from the pack on the

table, lit it and waited for me to continue. A former political candidate, an entrepreneur,

community activist, and active social media commentator - Clayton is the second generation of

his family so engaged. The son of a Member of Parliament in the moment that the politics of race

seemed on the wane in Trinidad; he has never aligned himself with the PNM, preferring instead

to present himself as an alternative or example of a non- race based political identity. "I want to

talk specifically about the media," I began "In your experience do you think that race or racial

composition is a significant topic of the media in Trinidad?"

> Well, as yuh put it there, race is a natural part of our conversation, it is part of who we are
> and not only from a negative perspective yuh know? We does say 'dais mih white boy
> padnah, red woman nice and so on'. I do think that at election time which is when politics
> uses race as a form of division the media is very quiet to numb the stupidity of that racial
> talk, so you will never hear the media dispel those types of rumours. I find the media has
> dropped the ball significantly when it comes to raising those conversations. Our
> mainstream media tend to just repeat and fan the flame of whatever the *idle talk* is in
> society.

> I'm glad you brought the last election up…I thought race was much more in your face
> than ever before both on the hustings and in the media…

> Yes. I managed a campaign for an incumbent MP who was a sitting member of the
> Government. There was a narrative that the Leader of the Opposition (now Prime
> Minister) was too black to be Prime Minister, so it seemed that all these Indians were
> going against this Black guy. But we know that in Trinidad and Tobago when all other
> major political strategies fail, all we have to do is drop a racist frame and off we go. The
> funny thing in Trinidad though that people don't seem to understand is that an Afro-
> descended person can drop a pseudo-racist or semi-racist comment and would be
> excused. An Indo or non-Afro politician dare not make anything even as one-tenth bad
> because its going to be seen as ten times worse. In 2015, race raised its head because it
> was the default platform and the attack on the head of the PNM by this group of Indians
> made him the victim and lost them the election.

So do you think that society in general is buying into these portrayals of race to its detriment?

YES! And I'll tell you why - we both went to the same secondary school so we understand social relations in Trinidad to be less about race and more about class. Race plays a factor you can't deny that. Race will always be a factor because we are fooled by many things. When you hear race in Trinidad the person on the outside would swear that there are only African and East Indian people in the country. They forget the Syrian population, small in numbers, big in power. The Chinese population big in money – then you have a bunch of people who identify themselves with none of these. This is the reality of what Trinidad is but people still want to make race a problem.

Trinidad is a real place

In 2018, a hashtag *#trinidadisarealplace* began circulating across the social media platforms frequented by Trinidadians. Intended as an online instrument of *picong* most often deployed to highlight some perceived shortcoming of the State; it also found life as a discursive locator through which a socially constructed virtual *Trinidad* is constructed in epiphenomenal time; and against which the performance of any current government is measured. This practice of discursive placemaking predicated on the repercussion-free broadcast of personal opinion was once the sole purview of the opinion columnists that fill the Sunday newspapers.

These opinion columnists are for the most part freelancers - either professional writers or professionals paid to offer their opinions in writing and they do so knowing that were they to step afoul of an editorial policy there is always another space for them. This positionality does the same work as the *#trinidadisarealplace* hashtag - the discursive creation of place. A process especially significant in a place such as Trinidad where the politics of place are mobilised as those of race - as the 2015 election demonstrated.

Sticks and Stones

Borrowed from one of the newspaper columns, this header speaks to the mocking nature of the columnists across newspaper outlets in the immediate build up to the election. Some ran

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series critiquing society and the voting process, utilising *picong* as the tool while holding a mirror to society. In the six weeks preceding the election, one columnist; a self identified professional writer, published novelist and textbook co-author; used their column to mockingly draw attention to the demographic landscape and the race based politics that dominate Trinidad. Unlike the advertising messages that sought to make a mockery of the campaign promises of the Prime Minister, the mocking nature of the opinion columnists is in the tone of the columns. Positioning themself as *provocateur* "[…] for me I badtalk both the UNC and the PNM, and which I badtalk more depends entirely on who is in office." Bringing race into the discourse, the placemaking work in this series of columns is done through statististics presented to mock current ontologies of place and identity - presenting the paradox of belonging that marks Creole spaces. In a column that appeared on the day immediately prior to the election the columnist wrote " […] in fact, the data show that Indo-Trinidadians are less likely to vote along racial lines than Afro-Trinidadians. In seeming paradox, however, the data also show that Indos are more likely than Afros to have racist attitudes."

Race was a consistent theme of the columnists that used their space to mock the state of society. Confronting the issue head on, another columnist, employed personal experience and rhetorical devices to make their point explicit. Evoking the experiential emotions of shame, frustration, and helplessness this work shines light on the systems of patronage and the lack of accountability that the politics of race foster.

In their mocking of this epiphenomenally constructed Trinidad, both columnists present a discursive race-driven political dystopia as the social engine that drives place-making.

Calculating Marginality

Rather than mock, other columnists set out to provoke and stimulate conversation by taking the social situation as a given and to concentrate on the business of governance. Place making in this context took the form of commentary on the steelband and its place in the national fabric; the opportunities awaiting future governments and the mathematics required to rule the political space. In all of these columns, the overarching thread is Trinidad as place - a place in which the stakes are high, but also a place that defines its value in the discursive relationship that its citizens have with it and each other. Positioning the right to vote as central to the notion of place, these columnists used their space to provoke their readers to think about this relationship and to take action to protect it through the work of self-identification and the duty of care that comes with such identification.

> Every election provides threats and opportunities. We should not surrender to
> defeatist memes that all governments are corrupt, so it doesn't matter who we put.
> That belief reflects the electorate's fatigue with crookedness, but it is also tantamount
> to an abandonment of our children's future to lawlessness

ran one column two weeks before the election. Fully and unconsciously embracing the nature of epiphenomenal time another columnist, writing one month before the election, tracks the history of the political parties in Trinidad and jumps back and forth across the continuum to make his point. The one constant in this account is the role that Trinidad the place plays in the shaping of this political narrative. In making an argument for the rise of a third political force to challenge the racially dominated two-party system that has long dominated national politics, the columnist minimises the significance of linear time in the evolving social fabric of Trinidad, instead focusing on the discursive power of identity as the impetus for change. He writes

> The reality is that something is happening in our politics that is challenging the
> traditional force that is based on single-party hegemony and dominance. […] What
> has happened is that a force has emerged in our electoral politics that is not based

on the single-party model, but rather on a coalition model under which the leaders engage in accomodative political behaviour.

The Eternal Pantomime

Technology, economics and politics have always played a role in the development of media systems. Digitization has led to a convergence of communications tools and a subsequent undermining of the source power of the traditional news sources through the rise of citizen journalism. Empowered by technological advancements in personal communication devices and channels that in turn lead to new interpretations of societies, news values and markets, these citizen journalists in Trinidad have taken to social media, Facebook in particular, to shape the national conversation through ethnic blame discourse. Josey & Dixon (2009) define ethnic blame discourse as the mechanism through which "… ethnocentric communication becomes so pervasive that it is routinized and becomes an invisible and legitimate means of framing and expressing ones opinions or race related matters. These frames shape the way we think about and express our attitudes on a wide variety of matters." Whereas ethnic blame discourse is usually framed in the context of the 'dark other' given the location of such research in the metropole; it is my contention that the result of such discourse is more inimical in a society such as that of Trinidad & Tobago given what is at stake – access to power and control. Governed as they are by legal codes and codes of professional ethics, the media in Trinidad and Tobago is seldom the primary site for ethnic or racial discourse, in their traditional form. The situation online is different. Comments sections of the media are filled with invective of all forms – race, gender, body image and so on. This damaging rhetoric is most present on Facebook, with constructed identities being one of the forms used to mask the origin of this rhetoric.

The relationship that Trinidadians have with the Internet is unique and primarily grounded in their relationship with Facebook. Though the majority of the population has no direct personal account with an ISP, the access facilitated by mobile technology means that approximately 75% of the population have Facebook accounts. In *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach* (2000) Miller and Slater provide an ethnographic insight into "how a specific culture attempts to make itself a(t) home in a transforming communicative environment, how they can find themselves in this environment and at the same time try to mould it in their own image." The particular culture they study is Trinidad and their findings indicate that Trinidadians have molded their Internet spaces into a place to perform identities that are explicitly culturally Trinidadian.

They are being 'Trini'.

In the frame of this analysis, being Trini here is understood as invoking "a basic shared nationalism that means they can together praise but perhaps more often disparage Trinidadians (including politicians and institutions) but with an underlying affinity for Trinidad that would make the same negative comment by an outsider seem highly offensive." The cultural practices that are brought into this discursive space as a result include the renaming of Facebook as either *Fas'Book* or *Macobook. Fas* may defined as paying undue attention to another's business and *Maco* is a verb that speaks to the close surveillance of another to learn about their private life. Miller (2011) argues that the ontological disposition of Trinidadians informs the construction of a true self through the cumulative performances of various presentations of identity. Performances afforded by a lack of import duties on computers and peripherals; the highest standard of living (and the resultant surfeit of disposable income) in the Caribbean; a government programme that gifted each child entering secondary education a laptop computer; ready access via mobile

technology and mobile hotspots along with a middle class population who believe that

"…Internet access has become a basic entitlement of citizenship in the digital age" (Murdock,

2002, p.386). The Internet continues for Trinidadians " a longer history of material cultures that

mediated the island's relationship to global modernity, acting both to extend and refine its

identities in relation to its global position." (Miller et al, 2005). Trinidadian use of Facebook to

supplement personal and emotional face to face encounters means that the site becomes a place

to comment and record everyday life, an ongoing stream of consciousness and conversation in

which everyone with access is invited to participate and does.

By using the site as the primary location for ethnic blame discourse, Trinidadians change

the national conversation, with the resultant shift in focus of the media now better appreciated as

what Bourdieu (1986) defined as a 'cultural intermediary' at the 'interface of society and

technology' (Winston, 1995, p.69) contributing to the creation of new symbolic and

representational forms.

Online Comments/Memes

Drink Wine Bar sits at the apex of the intersection of two major streets in the Port of

Spain district of Woodbrook that diverge at its front door painted patriotically as the Trinidad and

Tobago flag. It is the preferred space for the media, academic and creative types that populate the

neighbourhood's design studios and ateliers to grab a bite, some food or to sit in conspiratorial

company laughing and plotting their next fabulous adventure. It is also where I arraged to meet

the delightfully named Indian Rose - university lecturer, inveterate Facebooker, social critic,

radio talk show host, and general pain in the ass to misbehaving public officials. I sought Rose

out because of her public profile and advocacy for accountability in public office and more

particularly because her corporeal being belies her nom de plume - she is as African descended

as she is of Indian descent and as Trinidadian as she is Tobagonian with a parent from each island. She is blond, dark, vivacious and wired into the zeitgeist of the country.

> Instagram seems to be a very light hearted space, frivolous in that sense; Twitter is more to consume information, aaand maybe sometimes to kinda follow things, to do things like #caribbeanhogwarts, but Facebook is where we get all up in our feels. But da is how we are. We very good at dat. I know when anything serious has happened here, one very good way to know that we will be able to cope with it is to gauge how quickly the memes come out. If it takes 20 minutes for the memes to come out, this too shall pass - if it takes a day or two for people to start to meme it, yuh know that it hit dem hard.[26]

"Do you think that these nasty race based conversations that we are having on Facebook, is it people asserting their right to belong or is it people pushing back at the feeling that they don't belong?" She stared directly at me, silent. "Ok! Let me put it another way," I began, "No, no, no, it's not that I don't have an answer for it, is just the options you have given me as answers I don't think quite exhaust my response…"

> Some of it may be people pushing back because they don't feel that they belong, some of it may be people asserting their right to belong and I also think that some of it is a scary degree of myopia that is essentially saying 'I don't want YOU to belong'. I think that is one of the things that played off in the 63 months of the People's Partnership and has spilled over into this Government's tenure where there are lots of people that are very concerned about this right to belong and this ability to belong. And I am afraid given the way our politics has continued from 2015 to now the way in which there has been a lot of obstructionism against the Government, that come 2020 the campaign is going to boil down to something just like that. You may not like the sitting Government, but the way the UNC has behaved, I don't see how it could promote itself as a viable option for non Indian people.

> Look, I'm trying through this project to rehabilitate the frame of reference for Creole from a race based identity to a place based identity. You used the term hybrid to describe the region and the people who come from it. How does the nomenclature of Creole feel to you?

> I'm happy to hear you say that. I have no problem describing myself as Creole, in that I come from and was influenced by multiple cultures that came here; but I'm indigenous to this space and I am the sum of these many parts but the wholeness that I am is a wholeness from here.

> So do you think our concentration on race is taking away from our appreciation of this uniqueness?

Of course it does, because we spend so much time delineating and distinguishing difference but we have yet to take the time to distinguish what in fact is US. I think once we have figured out what in fact is us, the things that distinguish us will really and truly be the things that define us. Thinking about these other spaces as ethnic spaces and identities, when you think about what constitutes an ethnicity, Trinidadian is an ethnicity in much the same way that Tobagonian is an ethnicity.

We'd met after work, so as our conversation continued, the music came on and we were soon speaking over some anonymous Caribbean pop and reggaeton until *Despacito* came on and led us into a conversation about the Caribbean's place in global culture, given that song's global prominence in the summer of 2017 and the touting of it as a crossover hit. Both Rose and I agreed on the track being successful particularly in the Americas because that is what the Americas looks and sounds like - in *Despacito* we hear the ghosts of the *Presence Americain, Presence Europeene, Presence Africain and Presence Indienne*

"Weeee are global culture! Weeee are global culture!" Rose was adamant.

I travel too much and fit into too many places where everybody else want to be like me for me to not know that WEEEE are global culture. The thing is, we've been fed the myth that global culture is North America, but no. North America has absorbed so much of us.

Let's take the #metoo movement. Because we are still fighting against systems and hierarchies that may not be palpable for us, transgression and transgressiveness is still very important to us, so you can't just come and take the #metoo movement and transpose it into the Carnival.

It doh fit. It doh fit.

Is only people who don't understand Carnival and its transgressiveness and that feminist movement and where it coming from will think the two things could fit together. When #metoo jumped off, someone asked me on my wall if we had forgotten about #lifeinleggings[27], I replied 'NO!' I mean #lifeinleggings originated in the Caribbean, is we thing.

I don't have time for #metoo.

Now it has taken on a particular life that is punitive. You have to prove yourself not guilty. Whereas #lifeinleggings nobody set out to name nobody, they just talked about

their experiences - it was much more poignant because it didn't have the malice factor. I had so many friends that told their #lifeinleggings stories and

They. Did. Not. Name. A. Single. Person.

As unexpected as this reference to the #metoo movement was, I let Rose continue as I reflected in real time on my reaction to the #lifeinleggings movement, and how these stories on social media that painted a stark image of the personal effect that the sexual subjugation of the male gaze has on women related directly to the subject of my enquiry. The place-making work done by women across the English-speaking Caribbean in this moment, ventriloquising the male response to their corporeal beings as a sign of protest at once brings to mind the agency of the *jamette* and the empathy of the citizen to work towards community in spite of transgression.

CHAPTER III

The Corridor of Uncertainty

Media, Cricket and Trinidadian Identity

> The West Indies is a microcosm of world civilization. The great problems are posed in such a way that everything can be seen… Everything depended formally upon European literature, European institutions. And yet we are a distinctly Caribbean, Third World people; we are not dominated by the past civilizations. We are in a most unique situation.
> (CLR James, in Buhle 1983, p. 93)

Prologue

It's dark outside and I can't sleep anymore. Lying under the sheets, I anticipate the creak of the floorboards as my father comes into the room to wake me - "Son, time to get up, we leaving in 15 minutes". School was out for the long vacation and I was back in the house that I knew as home, bursting at the seams with various members of my extended immediate family. That morning however the house sighed, thankful that it was just Daddy and I moving around in the low, almost sepia gleam of the swinging light bulb, collecting the various accoutrements necessary for our day at cricket at the Queen's Park Oval. Cortina packed with excited, sleepy 10 year old, basket of food and cooler of drinks, we stopped for Uncles Blackie and Brownie and off to cricket we were.

Standing in the queues outside the ground in the *fo' day* morning, that blush of day that heralds the rising of the sun; I held Daddy's hand tightly, not to certain what was going on or what was going to go on but certain that where my Dad was, was where I wanted to be. The

gates opened and the turnstiles began their metronomic cadence; each of the fans making the stile click twice as they entered the ground. "…*Click click, click click, click click*, Uncle Brownie in; *click click*, here goes Uncle Blackie; *click click* and now me and Daddy are in the ground. We make ourselves comfortable among our fellow denizens of the uncovered bleachers and the wait for the start of play. Curling up with my head on my Dad's lap, I fall back into a restive sleep to the accompaniment of drinks being poured, the laughter of men laughing at the things men find funny and the comfort of knowing exactly who I am - Blanco's son.

There's a buzz in the air as I come awake. The ground now full, the air humming with laughter and shouting and vibrancy and camaraderie and I am a part of this, Blanco's son "yes" but suddenly something else; immersed in the spectacle of the Queen's Park Oval full to the rafters, the forecourt between the stands and the boundary crammed with humanity lounging in the sun, the rum flowing as freely as the opinions; I felt for the first time that I belonged to something that was bigger than my family. In the mind's eye of a ten year old boy exposed for the first time to spectacle of West Indies cricket in the 1970's and the destruction of the other, the Pakistani team in this instance, the Queen's Park Oval gave birth to another West Indian, another person to share the common destiny of the victors on the field. The Oval became my West Indian home, the cradle of an identity I felt stronger than my constituent Trinidadianness.

Given both that "…cricket does not deal with or satisfy the need for certitude; it excels in uncertainties and ambiguities" (Nandy, 2007, p.4) and its role as definer of postcolonial identity through the nativisation of an imperial pastime into a form of cultural resistance and expression, it has long been used as a means of interrogating post colonial societies. No more significant account of the relation between cricket, politics and society has yet been written than CLR James' *Beyond a Boundary* which marked its 50th anniversary of publication in 2013. When James published *Beyond a Boundary* - forever attaching the sport of cricket; its rituals, its rhythms and its customs; to the construction of a West Indian identity – the cricket-playing Caribbean (the West Indies) was a different place; and cricket was a different game. It was a time of great hope in the region. Even the failure of the West Indian Federation the preceding year (1962) had brought with it the independence of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago and the promise of vibrant post-colonial societies in the first, the original and the purest diaspora.[28]

The formal study of cricket's significance to the development of West Indian societies begins with James' autoethnographic account of life, cricket and society in colonial Trinidad and, as noted above coincides with the Independence movement in the region. In fact, Grimshaw (2006), notes - in the introduction to *A Majestic Innings* - that the independence movements in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago and the publication of *Beyond a Boundary* were intimately connected, part of the same historical moment. James' work continues to influence most scholarship on the relationship between cricket and West Indian identities with Tim Hector's archived online project *Fan the Flame,* Hilary Beckles' two volume political history of West Indian cricket; and Michael Manley's *History of West Indies Cricket,* engaging and expanding on the themes of resistance and political activism expressed by James. However, very little

scholarship has been done to recontextualise cricket and its continued role in the post-colonial globalised West Indian space.

James and other scholars writing on the relationship between cricket and the emergent independent societies of the former British Empire have sought to couch their hypotheses and theories within the dominant discourse of power relations in their source societies. In *Cricket and National Identity in the Postcolonial Age Following On* (2005) compiled by Stephen Wagg; cricket's role in the development of national identities in the post colonial former British territories is discussed in depth. The various authors (Crabbe, Gemmell, Hammond, Hector, Hutchins, Marqusee, Miller, Roberts, Ryan, Searle, Sen, Ugra, Valiotis and Wagg himself) analyse the construct of identity through cricket in the former 'white' dominions of Australia and New Zealand; the former minority ruled subaltern societies of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the West Indies and reimagine the British identity in a newly multicultural society. In all instances, the politics of identity is paramount as the game is seen as a means of transcending the dominant power discourse and in the case of the West Indies at least

> … sports offered the avenue, perhaps the only clear avenue, to assert a new style different from the established style in the first place. And in the second stage, arising out of the first, not only a new style, a black style, but to win in black style, as opposed to the oppressor's style, which was and is hegemonic, is to be human. (Hector, 1998, p.1)

In this chapter I argue that cricket in the West Indies did the work of creating what Henri Lefebvre (1991) defined as social space - one constituted through *spatial practice* (how the space is perceived), *representations of space* (how the space is conceptualised), and *representational spaces* ("space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols") (p.291). This space is at once both tangible, as defined by membership of the West Indies Cricket Board; and so deeply intangible that it exists primarily in the hopes of West Indian cricket fans. In presenting this triad, Lefebvre presents the motive for my position, leaving open to postulation the success

of the triad in constituting a coherent whole - " they probably do so only in favorable circumstances, when a common language, a consensus and a code can be established." (p. 292).

Heidegger poses a provocative question at the start of his opus *Being and Time* (1927): "What is the being that will give access to the question of the meaning of Being?" The concept of the dasein or selfhood of existence is Heidegger's answer to the question. For Heidegger, the dasein engenders three components of the human situation: being there in the world, being there as someone and being there for a while. The dasein then is Heidegger's construct of the being for whom the question of being is important, the being for whom Being matters. Heidegger argues that for the dasein to exist fully so that it might actually understand Being - what he refers to as the 'authenticity' of the dasein – it must first understand its relationship to time. The temporal nature of human existence is one measure, but this scale MUST be contextualised against the broader temporality of human existence.

Cricket in the West Indies easily meshes with two of components of the human situation that *Dasein* seeks to engender: *being there in the world* and *being there for a while.* The third component *being there as someone* is the site of my intervention. Walter Benjamin reminds us that there is simultaneity across both time and space; that events can connect across both dimensions in spite of either physical or temporal distance. Merrifield (1993) argues that the Lefebvrian conception of space is constructed on "flows of capital, money, commodities and information [...] place comprises the locus and a sort of stopping of these flows." (p. 325). The dialectical tension inherent in these definitions is manifest in any construction of creole identity, no more so than in the societies that make up the West Indian space. Taking this to be true and seeing in the present neo-colonial the circumstances present in the region as it worked towards a post colonial identity, *being there as someone* takes an appreciation of worth, a cognisance of

self as defined by self. Cricket gives us that lens. If place is where the social construction of space is experienced on an everyday basis, the cricket ground, or the broadcast into a West Indian household becomes what Merrifield calls "the 'moment' when the conceived, the perceived and the lived attain a 'structured coherence'." (p. 325). It is where West Indians are made. We must also be cognisant of the fact that this West Indian place, in the absence of an actual manifested West Indian space exists in a localised space itself defined by the politics of that place. This dual consciousness of place and space is not unique to West Indian cricket fans or citizens of the diaspora whose identity is informed by the team - it is a lived reality for most people who live in heterogenous societies where place-origin becomes a coded descriptor for the right to belong.

While the creole is not primarily a racial construct, the negation of place apparent in the move to make the term analogous with hybrid, mestisage and other biologically derived terms has done just that. Rather, the creole is a technological affordance. At once both a construct and a moment of interpretation, the creole is constantly negotiating time, place, and interpellations. Specifically, I read the creole as the manifestation of Heidegger's (1977) assertion that the essence of technology is nothing technological. This phenomenological perspective allows for the appreciation of the genesis of creole culture, people and languages. Though there is nothing technological about the creole and its milieu, the essence of this construct is inherently so. Captured in this construct is the history of the region, from 'discovery', through genocide, slavery and deprivation, to colonialism and the present post colonial conditions the region finds itself in. As a product of the *Terra Incognita* of the New World, the original space of diaspora, of diversity, and of difference - the importance of Being is paramount in the construct of the creole, as is the locating of self in place.

This heterogeneity is key to understanding the Creole. Acknowledging the roles of place and space and the negotiations of identity intrinsic in unmapped or unknown spaces; the Creole is constructed not as the analogue, progenitor or product of hybridity; what Kraidy (2005) sees as "the spirit of the times with its obligatory celebration of cultural difference and fusion […] resonat[ing] with the globalisation mantra of unfettered economic exchanges and the supposedly inevitable transformation of all cultures" (p.1) but rather as the named, constructed technological product in whose being can be found the resultant affordances of the various colonial projects that shaped the New World.

Cricket as politics, cricket as resistance, cricket as identity

> When it comes to cricket and West Indies, it has been a long-lasting romantic saga between the two. They fell in love with one another, scripted the greatest love story for over two decades, decimated their foes with startling authority and ruled the world like no other emperor.[29]

No one moment captures the inherent hope for the soon to be independent West Indies more than the appointment of Frank Worrell, a black Barbadian, as captain of the West Indies team in 1960, with James as his champion. Worrell's demonstration of the West Indian mastery of what Western civilization had to teach, his wide experience, reputation, his audacity of perspective and the years which seemed to stretch before him fitted him to be one of those destined to help the West Indies to make their own West Indian way; it was cricket as politics, cricket as resistance, cricket as identity.[30] The intervening half-century has seen none of the promise of the postcolonial moment come to fruition in the region. The West Indian scholar and historian Hilary Beckles writes, in direct counterpoint to the hope of James, that historical interpretation now shows clearly that the invention of multiple, sub-nation-states in the West Indies during the anti colonial struggles was regressive and driven by conceptually backward, sociopolitical thinking.[31]

In *Camera Lucida* (1984), Barthes offers the *studium* and the *punctum* as ways of understanding the affect of photographs on the viewer. The *studium* speaks to the cultural, linguistic, and political interpretation of a photograph, while the *punctum* speaks to the wounding, personally touching detail that establishes a direct relationship with the object or person within it. A seminal photograph taken at the end of the West Indies tour of Australia in 1960/61 is a very telling illustration of the different perspectives brought by James and Beckles. This tour is significant as it featured the first tied Test match,[32] in turn inspiring James to exclaim in *Beyond a Boundary* that the West Indies had 'entered the comity of nations.' (p.261). The picture shows Gerry Gomez, a white Trinidadian, former captain and the manager of the West Indies team, riding in a convertible with Frank Worrell in the ticker tape parade given by the people of Melbourne to honour the efforts of the team. Writing through the lens of Memory Studies, Keightley and Pickering (2006) rationalize that "photographs and musical records are perhaps more likely to have a *punctum*, where the remembering constituted by the act of viewing or listening relates inwardly to a past experience or some aspect of our own identity." James would have us see the *punctum* of this photograph as a manifestation that indeed, through our sporting endeavours and the social change that had brought Worrell the captaincy, the region had shown itself as equal to the rest of the world. Beckles' perspective is somewhat different. Cognisant of the fact that the team, in spite of being fêted in Australia, in fact lost the series 2-1; Beckles would have us understand the punctum as a representation of a moment lost to time – a moment that could have built a nation around a team rather than a team built from nations. Cricket in the region has always been the levelling ground for class, race and social standing, within the confines of the boundary, what was important was skill and the desire to win. When superimposed on the Independence movements of the late 1950s/early 1960s, the level ground

that cricket provided became the staging area for a statement of identity not just globally –

signalling the arrival of new countries, hopes and aspirations – but also, regionally. We had

arrived. Shifting from the immediate postcolonial moment of Worrell's appointment as captain,

West Indies cricket began to move through the gears in the 1960s under the leadership of

arguably the world's greatest all-rounder - Sir Garry Sobers. Beckles reminds us that the

momentum for this shift was, with the appointment of Worrell, the knowledge of the players that

at last, merit and ability in the sphere of cricket had superseded the ascriptive criteria for

selection, such as race and colour. As a result the players shrugged off their feeling of insecurity

and played as they never had before - as a team.[33] Under the disciplined leadership of Worrell,

the West Indies became world champions. Guided by the brilliance of play of Sobers, holder of

the world record for runs made in an individual innings,[34] the West Indies brought the game to

life with their new brand of *calypso cricket,* a freewheeling approach to the game - always

entertaining, not always successful. These West Indian teams played a significant role in the

broader societies of the constituent countries, changing their social dynamics and giving the vast

majority of the population a reflexive image in which to see themselves as people who could take

on the world and win. The rise of black consciousness movements around the world that closed

the decade of the 1960s and the D'Oliviera affair[35] of 1968 that effectively isolated apartheid

South Africa from world cricket until 1992; put the West Indies team in the crosshairs of the

sporting world as the only black world class team in any sport. It would take the appointment of

Clive Lloyd in 1974 to combine the discipline of Worrell's team with the flamboyance of Sobers'

team into the flagship of West Indian identity and a global talismanic representation of blackness.

In this context, *Beyond a Boundary* is best read not as a book on cricket but as a political

statement; not of Trinidadian identity as an analogue for Caribbean identities broadly

constructed, but of *Black* Trinidadian identity - a construct that easily extended to the societies of the other islands in the region whose populations are more homogenous than that of Trinidad and fit the hegemonic imaginary of the region as Black - an Africa displaced and subsumed in the colonial Afro/Anglo power struggle of minority rule. The political act by James of situating this Black identity in the forefront of the apotheosis of the independence movement in the region had the effect of marginalising the *other* in Trinidadian society. But this is not just about cricket. Given Smith's (1991) dominant ethnie model, where "…the culture of the […] state's core ethnic community becomes the main pillar of the […] national political identity and community" (p.110); the conversations about race and identity that dominate the media in Trinidad are a reflection of the desire of each ethnic group to lay claim to what all consider to be their patrimony and their right to belong.

This chapter uses cricket, a colonial artefact reimagined in the West Indies as an expression of resistance, and a game in which time and its use are at the essence of performance in the eternal present that the game seems to embody in the region, as the ideal instrument for interrogating this *Corridor of Uncertainty* in postcolonial identity in the cricket-playing Caribbean. By illustrating the totality of the lived Trinidadian experience through the lens of cricket, and offering it as a subject of analysis, this work draws inspiration from the ethnographic fiction of the *Beacon Group, (*James, Gomes, De Boissiere) and the literature of social identity typified by Rhys, Mais, Selvon, Naipaul and Lovelace - all of whom sought to record the experiences of the *Other,* giving voice to previously marginalised members of society. The political statements of identity offered by JJ Thomas, Philip, Fanon, Cesaire and Williams among others also inform and inspire this work, reaffirming as they do the validity of the construction of *creole* identities in response to the hegemony of colonisation.

In recording, reporting and analysing these voices, this research is a critical analysis of the Trinidadian public sphere, ideally "…a site governed neither by the intimacy of the family, the authority of the state, nor the exchange of the market, but by the 'public reason of private citizens'." (Peters, 1993, p.542) By responding to the individual constructs of Trinidadian identity, this project stands as "…a selective collaboration with and appropriation of idioms of the metropolis or conqueror. […] merged or infiltrated to varying degrees with indigenous idioms to create self-representations intended to intervene in metropolitan modes of understanding." (Pratt, 1991).

In the cricket world, the monetisation of the sport, represented most tellingly in paradigmatic shifts in its presentation as well as the globalization of the media have occurred in step with a continued decline in the fortunes of the West Indies cricket team. As early as 1994, the cricket writer Peter Roebuck, writing in the Barbados *Sunday Sun* delineated the corridor of uncertainty facing West Indian cricket

> Cricket in the West Indies faces a challenge that goes far beyond its immediate task of trouncing all comers in an entertaining way whilst uniting a group of nations inclined to sniff each other with the suspicion a crafty cat shows when it spots a lump of cheese. Cricket, and the way of life that surrounds it, is under threat […] it can be heard for instance in the stinging, bitter lyrics of rap music now everywhere to be heard. […] It is part of an invasion. So too is cable television. […] If care is not taken, cricket will be part of a dying culture and faith…" (Beckles,1998 p.92)

More than twenty years on, Roebuck's caution seems to have been realised. The West Indies, geographical outliers in the cricket playing world, have become further isolated. Sustained sub-par performances have lessened the team's value in this age of monetisation, thus leading to less marketable series; cricket is now available in the region (if at all) only on premium cable channels or occasionally on the radio; whereas NBA basketball and European football are almost universally accessible. In the same span of time, the monetisation of sport has

seen the value of live sports and their associated broadcast rights rise astronomically, the impact being felt globally across sports with rising ticket prices and in the case of SuperBowl XLIX, the ability to charge US$3.5 million for a 30-second broadcast commercial. In cricketing terms, the monetisation of sport has seen the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) – the body that controls Indian cricket – assume a virtual stranglehold by dint of audience share on the International Cricket Council's Future Tours Programme that schedules series five years in advance.

Ritual death – money talks

It is almost ironic that the West Indies teams that have nostalgic fans rushing to YouTube to relive these glory days of cricket, owe the very media - under analysis in this chapter as instruments of a shift to irrelevancy for the game in the region - a debt of gratitude as the foundation of their hero myth The constituent territories of the cricket-playing Caribbean: Anguilla; Antigua and Barbuda; Barbados; the British Virgin Islands; Dominica; Grenada; Guyana; Jamaica; Montserrat; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Maarten; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Trinidad and Tobago; and the US Virgin Islands are spread throughout the span of the archipelago, constitute separate media markets and together contain a population of less than 7 million people. During the period of West Indian dominance of the game, the colonial legacy of strong government presence in the broadcast and telecommunications sectors[36] afforded these very small markets the opportunity to follow every ball bowled and every boundary struck by their talismanic representatives wherever in the world the team happened to be playing, first through wireless radio broadcasts then eventually through the broadcast of live images via satellite television. This strong government presence also did the work of inadvertently lifting cricket from the mundane to the extraordinary.[37] By facilitating access to the

team and its seemingly inevitable victory, the collective attention of the people of the region was focused on the symbology and significance of victory. If as Scannell writes, "the time of the event, the time of television and the my-times of countless viewers all converge in the experiential, living enunciatory now of the event as it unfolds in a shared, common public time"[38] what these broadcasts did was bookend the lived experience of going to the game with the lived experience of being at the games through the power of the media. The context collapse of the being in time afforded by broadcast media coverage of the team allowed for cricket to become the focal point of the being in time listening or watching the broadcast – time and place became immaterial to the experience. This context collapse transformed the seemingly mundane task of witnessing into the extraordinary task of nation building with cricket becoming the common cultural foundation. At this point, James' analogue had become obvious – cricket was the West Indies and the West Indies was cricket. Cricket situated the West Indian within a homeland, itself is situated within the world of (cricket-playing) nations. The conundrum being the non-tangible emotional nature of this belonging – how does one belong to an imagined community? While Anderson (1983, 1991, 2006) provides the foundational approach to thinking about belonging in 'imagined communities', the situation in the cricket-playing Caribbean is not one of fandom or citizenship as this chapter goes on to illustrate; but rather, one complicated by the desire to belong to an imagined, if not explicitly promised political space called the West Indies. In an interview with members of the *Trini Posse*, they spoke specifically to this point:

> The only things that are West Indian are the University and the cricket team and the University is becoming more and more insular - every campus offers everything so we not even travelling between the islands anymore. So while being a West Indian is accepted and certainly not rejected, we are Trinidadian first and foremost. That has been the root of our success, our Trinidadianness…and the pride we have in waving our flags has helped all other West Indian people wave their flags too - what you see at cricket is what we are - a regional amalgamation of national talent.

The West Indies is not a place, but a region, and while cricket is our common ground, the weight of history means we all bring something different to the theatre of life beyond the boundary and it is this we celebrate the 'who' that we are. [39]

The Australian media magnate Kerry Packer's dispute with the Australian Cricket Board over broadcast rights to the game which resulted in World Series Cricket (WSC) can be seen as the genesis of the West Indian cricket legend that transformed the game. A made for television event that lasted for two years (1977-1979), WSC was the result of a confluence of two factors - the virtually amateur nature of (one-day) cricket at the time and the realisation by Packer that at the same time there was money to be made in the broadcast of the sport. Commercial colour television was in its nascent phase in Australia at this point and, realising the potential of the medium to combine the spectacle of live sport and sponsorship into revenue through media exposure; Packer focused on sport to build his media empire.

Under the captaincy of Clive Lloyd, the West Indies had won the inaugural Cricket World Cup in 1975 and had mixed success in the Test arena, a humiliating series loss (1-5) away to Australia in 1975/6 being the nadir. Two series wins on the rebound from this shellacking (2-1 at home to India and 3-2 away to England),[40] the style in which they were achieved and the dissonance between performance excellence and financial remuneration made the West Indian players prime attractions for Packer's largesse. When WSC began, it was a competition between three teams - West Indies, Australia and a Rest of the World XI and a crucible for forging the future face of international cricket. Along with all the innovations it brought to the structure of the game as a whole, WSC had direct effects on West Indian cricket specifically. Culturally isolated on the other side of the world and literally playing against the Rest of the World, the team united under the leadership of Lloyd and professionalised under the demands of Packer for

return on his investment; becoming individually, and as a unit; the prototypical modern cricketers.

Unlike other cricket boards, the West Indian Cricket Board of Control (WICBC) did not ban their WSC players from international cricket immediately (that move coming after the 3rd Test of the 1977 home series against the already depleted Australians). Faced by declining gate receipts, the then West Indian Cricket Board of Control (WICBC) lifted the ban in time for the team to defend the World Cup in 1979 - as a result inheriting a team that dominated the international game like none before or since and consequently becoming the benchmark against which excellence is measured. This team and this style of cricket was a statement of arrival, a talismanic representation of identity that spoke not just for people in the region, but regional people in the diaspora. So strong was this statement of identity for West Indian people, that West Indian born English cricketers were able to win libel suits against[41] British magazines that called their allegiances into question. On the field of play, this West Indian identity became personified in the seemingly endless stream of fast bowlers intent in letting nothing stand in the way of their pursuit of wickets and batsmen who defied the opposition's attack with flair, confidence and an artistic brutality. Off of the field, in a celebration of themselves and in a celebration of this postcolonial triumph, West Indians brought the theatre of life to the boundary rope, mirroring what they saw on the field on the stage that the media afforded them. No longer was cricket a colonial artefact cleaving to the social mores of a time past; cricket became the living breathing expression of a people. Horns and drums entered the previously hallowed greens on which the game was played and in the West Indies; DJ sound systems, party stands and swimming pools soon followed. In the same interview referenced earlier conducted in January 2013, at the Queen's Park Oval in Port of Spain - one of the founding members of the *Trini Posse,* the best

known of the West Indian fan groups, encapsulated the West Indian relationship to cricket and the role it has played in the sport's renaissance

> We showed the world what cricket meant to us. It is a participatory sport, there is a theatre beyond the boundary and the *Trini Posse* took this human drama, this expression of self and gave it to the world. Now you see the *Barmy Army* and the others, even the IPL, cashing in on this theatre beyond the boundary. Cricket gave us meaning. We gave meaning to cricket.

Michael Manley, the former Jamaican Prime Minister; in *The History of West Indies Cricket*, makes the point that cricket and baseball are the only two sports that do not waste time but use time. If you look at Test cricket you see life. Your best efforts over five days can be to no avail, that's life. The two thoughts share a common root - the human drama of life in the present played out on the cricket field and reflected in the cultural practices of its audience. If the success of the West Indian cricket team in the period 1974 - 1994 spanning Clive Lloyd's captaincy; those of Vivian Richards and Richie Richardson and including Brian Lara's claiming of Sobers' record*[42] can arguably seen as an epoch of cricket as politics, cricket as resistance and cricket as identity; the cultural practices surrounding the game in the West Indies mirrored it. Of all the leisure pursuits in the Caribbean, cricket provides by far the longest period of recreation. The fans have a ready opportunity to drink, to socialise and to engage in animated discussions on a wide range of topics. Cricket provides its audience in the West Indies with the opportunity for emotional release as well as participation in a common pursuit. If culture is defined as a body of shared sentiments, beliefs, methods of communication, practices, myths and the like,[43] it is not difficult to discern the influence of West Indian culture on the modern game or in the converse; the influence of the game on West Indian culture and identity.

The house beyond the boundary

In *A Writer's People* (2007), Naipaul defines the Trinidad of his youth:

Other races were close, but for my first five or six years, in the 1930s, I lived in a

transplanted peasant India. […] this gave me a base of feeling and cultural knowledge

[…] this base of feeling has lasted all my life. I think it is true to say that, in the

beginning, living in this unusual India, I saw people of other groups but at the same time

did not see them. (p.42)

This is a Trinidad ignored completely in James' *Beyond A Boundary*, and a Trinidad that

continues to be misunderstood to the present day.

> Lemme ask you a question, you ever watch the scoreboard when India playing and see a
> name like Singh, Maharaj or any other of them 'Indian' names that common here?…NO!
> You know why? Because we are not Indians - we are Trinidadians.[44]

Prem, the leader of the group seemed offended at my question of race playing a role in

Trinidad identity. Sitting in their regular rumshop obliquely opposite the community recreation

ground, Prem and his friends were eager to talk about identity, cricket and the West Indies and

settled into the conversation as if I was a longstanding member of their *lime*. "Listen young fella,

I born here and nobody can deny that or take that away from me. I sure that is how everybody

round this table feels." Sitting on my right, Ganesh was emphasizing Prem's point and receiving

the assent of the others. "So being born here is what makes you a Trinidadian? There's nothing

more to it than that?" "I don't know about anyone else, and it is a hard thing to put into words,

but you know what makes me know I'm a Trinidadian?" Franklin put down his beer and joined

in the conversation, "…there's an emptiness inside of me when I travel. From the time I see the

hills and we turn left on the final approach to touch back down in Trinidad, I feel complete.

That's how I know I'm a Trinidadian." The table grew quiet, everyone seemingly contemplating

what Trinidad meant to them, until Prem broke the reverie, "Right! Time for some more beers.

Ganesh, tell the girl behind the bar to fix up." Ganesh got up and walked to the counter, returning

with the round, "And you know what else? For me, when I look in the mirror, I see a Trinidadian, not an Indian, Ganesh…and I am a Trinidadian." "But race is a big part of our national conversation, all we seem to do is talk about race in Trinidad, do you gentlemen feel that race plays a big role in Trinidadianess?"

"That's now " said Hollick, his first contribution. "We, me and the rest of these fellas, are all over sixty, right? And I could tell you that race became a problem in Trinidad in the 1956 election. Check that. Before that election, we was all just Trinidadians…" " …well not really" qualified Prem, "we just didn't talk about race. When you saw people, they either looked like you or didn't - there was no real talk about who was what or anything. After that election, it became coolie dis, nigger dat; a real ugly conversation with no profit." "…What you saying, if I have this right, is that none of you has had problems in Trinidad because of your race. I find that hard to believe, seriously." "Look. I worked in the electricity company for my whole life, Prem worked at the telephone company, Ganesh was in the public service and well Hollick; Hollick had it worst of all - is how long you spend on the Port *bhaiya*?" Franklin asked. Taking a draw on his cigarette and exhaling as he spoke, Hollick replied "Thirty-five years. Thirty-five years with some of the most contrary people in this land and NEVER did I hear one racial word to me. Maybe they was saying it behind my back but never to my face…none of us here EVER had to deal with that shit. And furthermore, if I hear that shit in my house or around me I guaranteed to get vex." "What them fellas not telling you, young fella, is that there is no colour on the sport field. All of us have played cricket and football since we small. Maybe that's where we were lucky. "Cricket then, in your minds, still plays an important role in Trinidad society?"

"Cricket defines us. Where you feel we learned discipline, morals, the difference between right and wrong? On the pitch." Hollick was adamant. "People who play cricket are better for it

and we as a people are better for it. Too bad more people don't play these days." I agreed with this perception of cricket as a moral compass and added my own opinion "Gents, I feel that Trinidad cricket shows us what our society can be. We have a team that reflects us as a people and makes us proud as a nation, you think we should compete on our own?" "You have to be joking young fella. Who Trinidad could beat? We can't last through two innings in a four-day game, we can't even bat out fifty overs and win. We have good cricketers in Trinidad but West Indies cricket is what it is all about." Ganesh intoned. "Why? And I am asking this question because as Indians, you must be aware that…" "…only twenty eight Indians have played for the West Indies."[45] Franklin completed my point and continued "…I'll go one better. Remember when the WICB realised that Chris Gayle was a waste of time and they were looking for a captain? Daren Ganga was the best captain in the region. FACT! He was the obvious choice, making runs and captaining a winning team year in, year out - you know why they didn't pick him? Because he is an Indian."

The dish ran away with the spoon – deregulation, hegemony and media

During the same period under discussion in the bar, in an effort to beat the West Indies at what had figuratively become their own game, the rest of the cricket-playing world modeled their approach to the game on the West Indian on the field culture. India's unexpected victory over the West Indies in the 1983 World Cup final on the back of Kapil Dev's fast-bowling heroics was the first clear signal that the lessons were being learnt. Australia's series win in 1994/5 made it clear that the West Indian time had passed.

It had.

The immediate postcolonial optimism of the region, actualised by the dominance of the regional team, had given way to the economic realities of the effects of globalisation.[46] Beckles

argues that the presence of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the region as a result of these economic realities had a devastating effect on the performances of the West Indies team, the support and relevance fading away as the public, consumed as they were with the material devastation of currency devaluations, steep increases in mortgage interest rates, rapidly increasing working class unemployment, the shattering 'downsizing' of the so-called middle class and the spreading immediacy of an organised criminal subculture, (Beckles 1998, p.80) stayed away from the game. There is more to it than that. The same economic climate that gave the World Bank and IMF the *nous* to impose the financial interests of the North Atlantic hegemony (Beckles 1998, p.80) on the region also changed the media landscape forever. Media and telecommunication industries were typically single-country operations providing local audiences or users with basic services. These service providers were state-owned entities, that later, under the influence of International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and more recently, World Trade Organisation pressures, divested their operations to local business interests linked to transnational corporations, supported by governments of the global north. (Dunn, 2004 p.73) This enforced deregulation of the broadcast spectrum has seen the regional broadcast media - specifically television - shift from a strong public broadcasting model like that of the BBC, to a combination of local private and regional ownership facilitated by the advent of cable in the region. Just as the economic realities of a region with limited and diminishing natural resources, a sunset agricultural sector and a weak manufacturing sector put paid to the illusion of a unified West Indies as each of the constituent nations wrestled with their own specific challenges; the advent of cable television in the region put paid to cricket's centrality to West Indian identity.

Geographic outliers in the world of cricket as the only test playing 'nation' in the western hemisphere, the West Indies, situated as they are as a closed parenthesis on the Americas, have

always been susceptible to the hegemonic influence of US cultural production. Before

deregulation of the broadcast spectrum in the early 1990s, state control of the television medium

made for a mix of programming that was educational, informative, local, and entertaining.

Programming was drawn from across the world - Australia, Canada, India, the Federal Republic

of Germany and of course, the United States. In Trinidad and Tobago, local programming

featured cultural shows, game shows, talent competitions and live sport broadcasts - cricket, in

particular. The broadcast of these games doing the work of binding people across the archipelago

in the cultural practice of identity building through the shared celebration of the region. Even

with the diversity in programming sources at this time, most of the imported content came from

the United States. Brown (1987), in his report to UNESCO on *TV Programming Trends in the*

Anglophone Caribbean: The 1980s, noted a 1% annual rise in the imported portion of

programming in the state-run television stations of Jamaica, Antigua, Barbados and Trinidad and

Tobago for the period 1976-1986.[47] The economic competition engendered by the deregulation

of the broadcast spectrum has seen the low cost of American produced television continue to

dominate the programming choices of local free-to -air (FTA) broadcasters[48] as they seek to

build market share in these dwindling consumer markets seduced by the almost pervasive

presence of American cable programming in the region. What did this mean for cricket in the

West Indies and cricket and the West Indies?

Cricket features among a list of sports including baseball, basketball, ice hockey and

rugby union which may appear to be globalised in terms of intensity and impact but in reality

only have a grip on certain geographical areas rather than having a universal popular presence.[49]

In contrast to the geographic position of the West Indies as outliers to the global game, South

Asia is its nexus, with the greatest concentration of cricket playing nations - India, Pakistan, Sri

Lanka and Bangladesh and the largest populations of potential viewers. Economically then, the monetisation of the sport took place with these markets in mind. In 2005, the Indian cricket administrator Inderjit Singh Bindra made the observation that 60% of income in world cricket was generated from India, noting that even in the 1999 World Cup in England, not only sponsorship revenue but 60% of ticket sales came from Indians and people of Indian origin.[50] The West Indies' geographic proximity to the United States[51] meant that the monetisation of American sports, the effects of neo-colonialism and[52] the development of communication technology in the region brought these sports into living rooms around the region. The added allure of the globalisation of football, the region's second most popular sport also eroded cricket's prominence. The other postcolonial countries had learned the West Indian lesson well and had the economic power to weather the neo-colonial storm. Conflating cricket success with national pride, they were able to situate the game as the ideal vehicle for multinational corporations seeking to penetrate emerging markets.[53] The small size of the cricket-playing West Indies, including diasporic West Indian-identified people, had precluded that possibility for their team in both their ascendant and dominant periods. The team's fall from the top at just this moment, coinciding as it did with the social and cultural dominance of the US through cable and FTA television, music and cinema gave West Indian fans the emotional detachment and the means to find succour elsewhere.

In a media landscape such as exists in the West Indies, economies of scale are important. Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica are the largest media markets in the West Indies and any possibility of FTA cricket broadcast in the region is predicated on the buy-in of media houses in those territories. As previously argued, the consistent sub-par performances of the West Indies team has made it less relevant to West Indian people, thereby making cricket broadcast a risky

commercial venture, one best suited for a subscription broadcast model such as that of cable. Now, in the West Indies, basic cable will afford access to multiple global sporting events ranging from horse-racing to America's Cup yachting; US college sports to professional wrestling; as well as the plethora of US professional basketball, baseball, and American football. Cricket viewing, in contrast, comes with the price of a premium subscription.

Oval of Influence

My mother's second marriage situated my childhood and teenage years in the shadow of the Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad and either with my neighbourhood friends, my stepfather or more often than not, by myself, I would take my place overlooking the point boundary on the second tier of the Dos Santos Stand and continue to immerse myself in the battles being engaged on the green before me; family connections affording me the luxury of free access to all the home series, comfortably ensconced in the company of other season ticket holders. With each series my sense of belonging to the West Indies and being located firmly in the social fabric of Trinidad grew as between overs, I learnt about Barbados, Antigua, Jamaica and the other islands through conversation and commentary amid the cacophony of cricket at the Oval. Before the World Cup in 2007, the Oval told of the social history of Trinidad and the history of cricket in Trinidad with the stands named after Test cricketers, Oval members, leaders of society. On the western perimeter, the Ladies' Members, Dos Santos and Lindsay Grant Stands held the afternoon sun at bay, replacing light with creeping shadows to signal the end of another's day play; the old scoreboard snuggled next to the *samaan* tree on the eastern side; the province of Queen's Royal College schoolboys seconded to man its wheels and tin numbers; obscuring the beauty of the gingerbread house just behind it and providing an emphasis to the festivities going on in the bleachers immediately next to it.

Sitting in the *Trini Posse* sky-box at the summit of the eponymous stand, we are cooled in the midday heat by the soft hum of the air conditioner and the well iced soft drinks. Beyond the glass, on the field, a zonal schoolboys' semi final is underway and through the gaping hole left by the demolition of the Ladies' Members' and Dos Santos stands, the luxury high rise developments of western Port of Spain stand testament to Trinidad's perception of itself as the metropolis of the cricket playing Caribbean. "My main challenge in whether people believe I'm a Trinidadian or not - and I AM a Trinidadian 150% - is my skin colour, because until I open my mouth I'm just another Caucasian" - the doctor looks at me imploringly, wanting me to take his word. There's no denying it, he speaks with the monotone of the born *french creole*, but I have to admit his point is valid; and ironic, given the fact that in the last two decades, he and his group of friends have transformed an informal *lime* of cricket *peongs* into a cultural expression known internationally and emulated around the cricket world - the *Barmy Army,* the *Beige Brigade,* the IPL, Big Bash et al owe a debt to this unassuming doctor and his *Trini Posse.* "Look, the *Trini Posse* began in 1992 when we went to see the Windies play South Africa in Barbados. The boycotted Test Match, remember?" I nod, "…it was about thirty of us in Kensington by ourselves…next day in *The Nation* there was a picture of us and the caption: 'Boycott a success, other than the *Trini Posse.*' the name has stuck since - but because of the way that most of the founding members look and the fact that we went to see South Africa play, the media here tried to bring race into the conversation, branding us white and elitist…I went one on one in a radio interview with the journalist who had been attempting to make us look bad. Because there was nothing but our Trinidadianness on display in our support of cricket and sport in general, the callers blew her and her argument out of the water."

"So, you've never felt uncomfortable here?" I ask. The blond, blue-eyed female co-founder of the *Posse* who, up to this point, has been listening quietly, decides to join the conversation "My family has been here since Trinidad has been here. I'm born here, I live here and I will die here. People may have tried to make me feel uncomfortable or unwelcome here, but no one will ever succeed. This is my Trinidad!" Given that we are sitting in the Queen's Park Oval, the home of cricket in Trinidad, I ask the obvious "Cricket must play a huge part in your Trinidad identity then?" the doctor opens his mouth to speak but she is faster "You have to remember that Trinidadians and West Indians aren't defined by cricket alone. Trinidad and Tobago, smallest country to go to the World Cup; Jamaica went too, before us. But my point is best proved at the Olympics - Jamaica wins more but they do one thing - athletics. Trinidad and Tobago, cycling, sailing, boxing and imagine a little boy from Toco win a gold medal for throwing a stick. Yes, cricket is what brought us as a *Posse* and a region together, but we are so much more." "That being said," adds the doctor, "…we had a little boy from Santa Cruz who matured to be the best batsman the region, perhaps the world has ever seen - Brian Lara. The *Trini Posse* began parallel with the launch of his career and in my mind, he is the greatest Trinidadian that ever lived…bar none." "…and he from Santa Cruz", her blond eyes alight with the Trinidadian parochialism I have begun to note "…like the Stollmeyers and the Bravos. We full of cricketing heroes."

Now on a roll, she continues "…you know there's no Trinidadian identity right? I mean that when we think of our Trinidad, we think about what we know. If you've never been to the deep south or the real country, country areas they don't figure in what you think about when you think about Trinidad. Think about it, if you are a Hindu in Trinidad your experience of the place

and space is completely different to ours." Rapt with attention, I motion to the doctor to cede the

floor to her

> …remember when just black people used to go to *Panorama* in the *North Stand* and when the white people came, women were being molested and such? It took about fifteen years before we found a balance. Now the Indians reach and you find that it is now black and white versus Indian…why? Because, as I explain to people, north of the *Caroni* river from *Westmoorings* to *Toco*, all of us have been socialised the same. Once you cross the *Caroni*, that's a different Trinidad that we know nothing about, don't want to know nothing about and even if we did, would not be allowed to know anything about. Culture is different, moral values are different; so when they came into the *North Stand, townpeople* were stunned. We had found our synergies but in this small country, we still haven't found a synergy with Central. That is why this government is making the mistakes it is…it doesn't understand Trinidad and Tobago past Central.

"Is cricket still relevant to us then?" "Of course!" averred the doctor. "But cricket in the north is

not the same as cricket in the south. I will agree though, that it is the one thing that even in

Trinidad, brings us together. Cricket has mirrored our changes as a nation and a region. Cricket

has made us who we are and is so tied in with our culture, we can't get away from its relevance,

even today. Yes, it's just a sport, a game, but to us it is so much more."

A new spin on things – the social cost of monetisation

> A game, which encapsulated a way of life, is withering on the vine. Even in the age of Television financial windfalls for cricket, we see less and less cricket, on television, and more and more U.S. basketball and even U.S. Football, and by the time we get to the Superbowl I suspect more interest will be generated in that, than even Test Cricket. (Hector 1995, p. 6-7)

Cricket has had to change to meet the demands pressed on to it by the monetisation of

sport. Holden (2006) argues that the best way to perceive cricket is as being locked into a set of

global power networks driven largely by commercial interests. For cricket, the nexus of the

game's globalisation and monetisation is the relationship between the International Cricket

Council (ICC) and News Corp - Rupert Murdoch's global media entertainment conglomerate

which, since the late 1990s has been, in various incarnations, the ICC's broadcast partner with

exclusive global rights to broadcast all ICC tournaments.[54] In 2014, Star India and Star Middle East, both owned by News Corp, signed a deal worth approximately US$2 billion for the broadcast rights from 2015-2023, a period that covers no less than 18 ICC tournaments.[55] As the cricket writer Mike Marqusee writes "Cricket was a creation of the world's first market society-eighteenth century England - and the cash nexus has always played a role in shaping the game […] for more than a century, cricket was shielded from the market by aristocratic and imperial privileges. No longer."[56]

The Cricket World Cup of 2007 best demonstrates the effects of globalisation and monetisation on West Indies cricket. Marqusee (2005) makes the point that the largest single sporting or cultural event ever undertaken by the region, what Holden (2006) sees as "the most significant event in Caribbean history in terms of establishing international reputation with a longstanding impact" and an event expected to create new possibilities for re-examining the structure of Caricom and help in the integration of the Caribbean on the same model as the European Union[57] was in fact a means of extending cricket's reach into the United States; mooting as it did the possibility of games being held in Florida, New York, Bermuda and the Cayman Islands. The competition between Caribbean nations to host games and develop infrastructure to support the influx of tourists hungry to enjoy the theatre of life that is cricket beyond the boundary in the region led to the IMF's skepticism that the US$500 million spent by the host islands, would be unlikely to result in positive economic benefits. It didn't.

The tournament had the highest ticket sales of a Cricket World Cup, with 100,000 cricket fans forecasted to visit the region. There was a potential television audience of more than two billion, mainly drawn from South Asia and its diasporas. However, the combination of commodification of the sport reflected in the high ticket and concession prices and the

sanitisation of local cultural elements out of the celebration of the fans made the World Cup the forge in which cricket and West Indian culture separated. As has been argued throughout this paper, the West Indies may be seen as the cultural home of the shorter forms of the game, promoting as it has the energy beyond the boundary as equal in spectacle to the drama taking place on the field. The rhythm sections, the horns, conch shells and other devices of celebration were banned from the grounds as was food and drink not bought from vendors within the precincts of the games. This translated into an aseptic spectacle with no local flavour that, upon reflection, could have been hosted anywhere so generic was the experience. In the words of one Trinidadian volunteer at the tournament

> It dawned to me that the ICC does not care about our little countries and our economies. They are alien to the socio-economic status and the way of life of the spectators of cricket, and the culture of the peoples of the Caribbean, and even Asia ... for that matter, the world. They care only about image, ambush marketing, television and money.[58]

The central figure in cricket's commodification in the last quarter century has been Lalit Modi, an Indian tycoon who, like Kerry Packer before him, recognised the commercial value of audiences and worked assiduously to cash in on this value. First leveraging the huge value of the television audience for cricket in India and the game's unrivalled dominance as a spectator sport, Modi, as Vice President of the BCCI, was able to increase the income from the sale of broadcast rights to Indian cricket sevenfold between 2005-2008 with reported annual revenue of over $1 billion in that period. According to Modi, speaking in 2005, "…since India is driving the business of cricket, why should we not be in the driver's seat of world cricket?"[59] A point he re-emphasised in 2008 in an interview with *The Age,*

> In the past 20 to 30 years India made very little money in world cricket — Australia and England made all the money […] their television markets were more developed so they were earning more money — so be it. But now the market has turned around. The Indian market is driving cricket revenues and there is no reason the Indian board should not make money out of it."[60]

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But Modi's signal success in the transformation of cricket from a ritual expression of national identity to an entertainment commodity with significant economic value has been the Indian Premier League (IPL) - a BCCI sanctioned, made for television Twenty20 tournament which combines the best cricketers in the world with Bollywood glamour in the form of ownership, West Indian style festivities in the stands (DJ music and dancing girls) and corporate sponsorship into a $4.13bn commercial phenomenon that Forbes called the world's fastest growing sporting event.[61] Through the IPL's hyper commodification,[62] Modi has demonstrated that the value of cricket is no longer in the postcolonial expression of national pride or sense of belonging in the world, but rather in the postmodern quest for entertainment and distraction.

Cricket was made to do a hard job that economic nationalism and neocolonialism now makes impossible. The region's economic irrelevance continues to make it susceptible to economic adventurers seeking what's left for picking in the region. The CPL T20 cricket league is a case in point. Owned by a British businessman, and modeled on the IPL, the league makes use of the WC2007 infrastructure in the region and is not structured on national teams as other efforts have been, but territory based franchises. Predicated on the antecedent like leagues, this seems to be a winning proposition, however regional cricket's burden of economic nationalism and responding to the realities of neo-colonialism remains the same. Trapped in an eternal present of hegemonic subjugation, the region's governments are made to pay just short of US$1 million to host a franchise. In other words, the governments are being made to pay to be able to have cricket played in the stadia they are still paying for. Another imminent threat to cricket in the region is the Central Broward Regional Park in South Florida. The only ICC sanctioned cricket ground in the contiguous United States, Broward has already hosted CPL T20 matches under lights as well an international T20 series between the West Indies and India in 2016. With

migrant populations from the entire cricket playing world, it is foreseeable and almost inevitable that an enterprising entrepreneur could partner with the ICC to bring international cricket that does not feature the West Indies to the United States.

Coming from Moruga[63]

Sunday afternoon and Adolf is piloting the Octavia south on our journey to Moruga, a district on the arch of the sole of the boot that is Trinidad. A quick detour into San Fernando to pick up Otto and three beers and soon we're riding east through Cocoyea, St. Clements', Princes' Town - where we paused for refreshments. "Right" Otto, in his unexpectedly rich Trinidadian accent, began to explain our plan on arrival in Moruga where his family's history and investment span centuries -

> Hotsteppa, de foreman, told me to meet him on the La Lune Recreation Ground. I'll talk what I have to talk wid him and you fellas could see who you could find to talk to you… should be no problem, after all is a cricket match we going to…

If you close your eyes and listen to him speak, you would never picture the short and stocky, blond and freckled scion of two of Trinidad's most successful families that was Otto - coming from him, his speech pattern sounds like a parody of Trinidad creole. Back on the road again and we're now heading as far south as we can on the island, through the *Meriken* settled company villages, the rolling Trinity Hills providing a metronomic quality to the drive, up, down, around, gear down, turn and again and again - the quality of the road degenerating with each corner. Turning right at the big junction, the light glints off of the sea in front of us, the clear view inhibited by the pirogues pulled up on the dry for safekeeping and suddenly we are in bush - the road snuggling between overrun cocoa estates and primeval rainforest, houses sparse and people fewer, the salt of the nearby sea mixing with the scents of the vegetation to make the air rich and heavy, a tropical island aroma unique to time and place. "Right *hoss*, pull up here…we reach"

Otto announced, startling Adolf. "How you mean we reach, there is a tree, there is another tree, there is bush…how we reach? Where we reach? I not seeing no cricket ground". "Ass, you see the track there?" pointed Otto. With no more than some flattened grass to indicate the right of way, I joined in Adolf's discomfort, having no desire to tramp through the trap-gun laden forests of Moruga to watch any cricket. "Is a short cut to de ground. We go park here, walk dere an' WHAM! We in de cricket and when is time to roll out, is jus' to go so make a u and we gone…let we go!" The path was ten strides long, through some dense underbrush and onto a quite lovely ground on which the whole village of La Lune seemed out to play. In one corner, some barebacked youths played five a side small goal football, down in cow corner two little boys were valiantly trying to get a kite airborne; the *village rams* tackling the village girls along the boundary rope, not one paying attention to the form of batsmen in the middle, preferring instead to concentrate on the forms of the females next to them.

In the middle, a game of *windball* cricket was in full swing. It didn't seem to be competitive, rather a community game of bat and ball with everyone taking a turn at bat and leaving the bowling chores to the more athletic. Spotting someone that I assumed to be Hotsteppa, Otto peeled off to conduct his business leaving me standing there with a nervous Adolf.

> Watch nah Redman, I didn't come to Moruga to tramp through bush and watch cricket. I should have kept my black ass in town and gone on the Avenue later and see what I could pull…but no! I ass deep in bush in Moruga with a mad white boy, a wannabe Stuart Hall, and the not unlikely chance that I will somehow do something to offend somebody and next thing you know is Mother Cornhusk in my ass.

"Mother Cornhusk is dead." I muttered, referring to the legendary *obeahwoman* of Moruga while engrossed with the dynamics of the game before me. If a child was batting, the bowling was underhand and gentle to encourage contact between bat and ball. According to the apparent skill

of the woman, bowling was either of a spin variety or gentle medium pace, the wrath of the fast bowlers being reserved for the big swinging bats of the village. Understanding that I was not on him, Adolf wandered off in search of something or someone to occupy his time and leaving me to my own devices.

Engrossed in the game in the middle, I lost track of my companions until I heard my name being shouted across the field "Redman, come and meet mih bredrin Hotsteppa!". His business done, Otto's natural bonhomie was shining through - "Steppa, dis mih hoss Redman, Redman meet Steppa…". A regal rastaman, Steppa gave me a fist bump, our hands automatically touching our hearts after the bump as a show of mutual respect. "Blessings bredrin, any bredrin of Otto is a bredrin of mine. Dese is my bredrin who is now your bredrin - dis is Pinman, dat is Bob and dat is Razor, bless?" Bumping fists with each in turn, I asked "So allyuh want to talk to me about what it means to be a Trinidadian?" "Dais no scene bredrin, we go tell you all 'bout what you want to know ent bredrins?" The chorus nodded their heads and we were off.

Unconsciously, I turned back to the cricket just in time to see a young man triple jump his way to a short delivery and flick it off his legs over the covers and into the bush. It was Pinman who brought me back into the circle "Daddy, Trinidad is a blessed place, we ha all de resources we need - *Pitch Lake*, oil, gas, people and ideas but instead of everybody having a little; a few have plenty and most have none. We blessed but we lost God." "What about race? Everywhere you go in Trinidad, that's what people talking about Indian this, African that" I provoked. Razor, the sharp featured *dougla* instantly joined the conversation

> I doh know nothing bout dat race ting yuh talking bout dere boss. As far as I concern, once you born here yuh is a Trini. It have good Indian, African, Chinee, Whiteman and Syrian - is men who loss touch wid dey roots, where a man is a man and everything is everything - them is the bad men. Is no race scene, is vanity. In Moruga yuh doh need money to eat - sea right dere, fish. Anybody could go in any yard and dig up a yam,

eddoes or *dasheen*, cut a bunch of *figs* and make a cook. Yuh ha to be real lazy to ketch hell in Moruga.

I use to live in town. Big lights, big city business, until I realise dat dem *rogue and vagabond* and dem watching man mix cement, wuk hard to mine he chirren, wuk wid him and laugh wid him and on a payday Friday drunken him an tief all he money.

After listening to everybody, Bob offered his opinion

I use to be real proud to be a Trini but yuh see now, wid cable and dis internet and BBM an all dis technology ting? It real mashing we up - we is not Trini no more…we just like dem Yankee dem. Yuh feel yuh getting anybody in town to come out an play cricket like this? Everybody in de village here, nobody inside on no computer or internet or nothing

Seemingly oblivious to the fact that almost everyone around was constantly referring to their

various technological halters in search of the next update. But, at last, cricket. "So Moruga is a

big cricket playing community then? You think it has a role to play in being a Trinidadian?"

Watch nah! Cricket does bring out a community vibes, is nice to come and vibes under a tree, take a likkle knock an watch everybody who does bathe and dress up nice to come out. Dais what life in Moruga like, everybody for everybody; de whole of Trinidad use to be so but allyuh did loss it. De captain of de Trinidad and West Indies Women's team does live down here; she on tour now; but when she here where yuh feel she is? Here, on dis ground, wid we. Dat is what being from Moruga is and what being from Trini use to be. I from Moruga fus', Trini second.

Steppa was on a roll.

So fadda, to answer yuh question: we does play cricket dong here as a community vibes, but we have a hardball team dat does play in de National League too. Most a we does play de game but we really is football fans, Barca, ManU dem teams. Habbing one a we girls as captain of every cricket team she playing for from de local to de international…BOOM! But is just a sport, like basketball or football or de Olympics.

The long silent Otto,

Sports is de only ting saving Trinidad right now. Is de only ting dat making we look good international. Olympic Gold, world-class swimmers, sailors, track athletes. And as for de cricket…Trinidad and Tobago unbeatable in T20, lend the Windies seven of eleven starters to win de Champions Trophy an always in de running for IPL glory. I feel dat de Windies selectors should grow some balls and pick Trinidad whole side to represent de Windies, if dey picking de best available eleven.

"So you think that Trinidad and Tobago should look to go on its own, in cricket at least?" I

asked.

Adolf was the first to reply

> Nah man. We have a West Indies team because we have a West Indian people. That's the
> truth. Is the politicians who don't want to talk about it…that is why we could never put a
> bess team on the field. We can't see eleven Trinis, or Bajans or Jamaicans as eleven West
> Indians, I agree with Otto though, is the cricketers and the other sportsmen who make me
> proud to be Trini.

"Dais why all dem Bajans, Guyanese, Vincentian, Grenadian and Jamaican does come

here" began Pinman cryptically

> In Trinidad, every creed and race finds an equal place and dey is we West Indian
> brudders, we bredrin. Is a many islands one people vibes and dis is a blessed place, but
> we cah stan alone. Dis is the end times and we, as bredrin, ha to stan togedder. I does be
> glad to see we win and do well, de Windies is we team as black people and people from
> de Caribbean.

This is where the corridor of uncertainty that confronts the region resides. As constructed

by my participants, the overarching definition of a Trinidadian is one who is born here.

Regardless of where the question was asked and to whom it was asked, the first identifier of self

for the Trinidadian is that Trinidad is birthplace. Equally resonant is the work of contextualising

place within space done both by cricket itself and my participants as fans. The notion of *being*

there as someone is at once both highly individual and validatingly mutual, a group project built

on cognisance of place and predicated on a vernacular through which its members make meaning

of their lives and those of others.

CHAPTER IV

No Scene – Music, Identity and Be/longing

King Radio

Where I stood, where I stood
I couldn't see
I, I, couldn't see now
Everybody, everybody is
Behind me

Mad boys
Mad boys
Bad boys

Where I live, where I live
I couldn't feel, I couldn't feel now
Nobody, nobody
Could touch me

Sad boys
Yuh mad boys
Yuh bad boys

I got one Kiss up on you
I need a Les Paul too
But never mind

Today I don't mind the traffic
I don't mind the rain
Curtis Mayfield is on the radio
Yeah eh eh Yeah

Well I got one hit up on you now
I need a radio too now
But never mind, never mind

Today I don't mind the traffic
I don't mind the rain

Curtis Mayfield
is on the radio
Yeah eh eh Yeah

Is on the radio
Radio radio

King Radio King Radio

King Radio
There goes King Radio

In her analysis of Trinidad and Tobago radio,[64] Balliger makes the case that as with most of the anglophone Caribbean islands, at independence in 1962, Trinidad's government maintained " the highly controlled media structure inherited from colonialism as a strategy for transforming colonial subjects into national citizens." (p.3) As mentioned in the previous chapter, these state controlled media systems did the work of not just transforming these colonial subjects into national citizens, but of creating a nation to which they could belong through the broadcast of West Indies cricket. I have also argued that in creating this nation through broadcast, what emerges as paramount is the temporal and local nature of identity predicated on shared experience across time and space. Place is the localisation of this experience and at the core of any logic of culture or identity.

For Trinidad and Tobago, its place in the West Indian space is unique. In an area constructed as Black for ease of colonial governance leading up to and including machinations by the British Colonial Office to ensure Afro- led governments at independence in both Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana; Trinidad and Tobago's lack of any single racial majority means that the state controlled media had a comparatively more difficult task in transforming subjects into citizens as the cultural needs of the dominant ethnic groups needed to be satisfied. In practice, this meant that local broadcasting had the task of defining the national culture as constructed in

the imaginary of the nation's first Prime Minister Dr. Eric Williams. An Oxford trained historian

and powerful public orator, Williams was adamant that the nation's history did not begin with the

narratives of European arrival and used his 1964 *A History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*

to make his vision for the nation clear:

> Together the various groups in Trinidad and Tobago have suffered, together they have aspired, together they have achieved. Only together can they succeed. And only together can they build a Society, can they build a nation, can they build a homeland. […] Trinidad and Tobago society is living a lie and heading for trouble if it seeks to create the impression or to allow other to act under the delusion that Trinidad and Tobago is an African society. […] A nation, like an individual, can have only one Mother. The only Mother we recognise is Mother Trinidad and Tobago, and Mother cannot discriminate between her children. All must be equal in her eyes. And no possible interference can be tolerated by any country outside in our family relations and domestic quarrels, no matter what it has contributed and when to the population that is today the people of Trinidad and Tobago. (p.279)

A Broadcast history

Broadcasting in Trinidad and Tobago began in 1947 with the introduction of Broadcast

Relay Services' *Rediffusion* service into the then Crown colony. Prior to the introduction of

Rediffusion, radio reception was primarily on the shortwave band from stations in the United

States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Shortwave reception being susceptible to

environmental conditions, listening to the radio was a task rather than a pleasure. The one

exception to international shortwave broadcasts was the US Armed Forces' radio station WVDI

that began broadcasting from the United States naval base at Chaguaramas in May 1943.

Specifically intended for the entertainment of the US servicemen on the island, the signal could

be picked up on domestic radios and the station soon became what Neptune (2007) sees as a

"vital forum for calypsonians" who had found regular work on the station as part of military

leaders' attempt to regulate the behaviour of their troops through the exposure to calypso as a

"virtuous alternative to the vicious forms of entertainment on the island" (p. 138). Along with

calypso, WVDI also broadcast American popular music and radio serials like *The Lone Ranger,*

Gunsmoke and *Superman.* Neptune goes on to contextualise the introduction of the *Rediffusion*

service and the perceived threat that WVDI posed to its business. He writes

> Such was the value singers placed on the American station that when a late-arriving rival
> began pressuring the colonial legislature to lower WVDI's signal strength in 1947,
> leading exponents such as Attila (Raymond Quevedo) and Lion (Rafael De Leon) joined
> the swell of protests against the proposal (p.138)

In contrast to WVDI, the *Rediffusion* service was specifically designed to satisfy the

appetites of local listeners. Operating as Trinidad Broadcasting Company Limited, its broadcast

franchise gave it licence to broadcast both over the air and through its wired radio distribution

service (a precursor to cable television). The franchise also committed the company to building a

transmission station and broadcast studios in which a "considerable portion of programming was

originated […] in particular, the children's hour, local news bulletins and interviews with

important visitors to the island. Local talent was also given its opportunity to perform live on the

station."[65] Along with this local content, the company stayed true to its original mission as a

diffuser of BBC programming. According to Balliger, "Radio Trinidad in 1947 […] featured

BBC news eight times a day, BBC soaps, and a small amount of local cultural programming."

(p.3)

Radio Trinidad was the sole broadcaster in the colony for a decade until the launch of

Radio Guardian in 1957 as part of the Fleet Street baron Lord Thomson's media holdings on the

island which also included the *Guardian* newspapers. Both *Radio Trinidad and Radio Guardian*

operated on the AM band and played a significant role in shaping Trinidadian society both prior

and after Independence in 1962. Though the state had had full control of television broadcast

through the state-owned Trinidad and Tobago Television since Independence, it was not until

1969 that got involved in radio with the purchase of *Radio Guardian* and its rebranding as the

National Broadcast Service - Radio 610 AM. The state's involvement in radio heralded the

advent of the FM broadcast spectrum with *NBS Radio 100FM* going on the air in 1972, followed

by the Trinidad Broadcasting Company's *Radio 95FM* which went on air in 1976. Until the

media deregulation of the 1990s forced by the neoliberal economic policies of the International

Monetary Fund, these four radio stations and *Trinidad and Tobago Television* constituted the

electronic media spectrum of the nation. Across this spectrum, significant place-making work

was being undertaken both consciously and as a result of the paucity of technological

affordances available. One television station meant that until the availability of domestic

videotape technology, everyone watching television was consuming the same content at the same

time. This content, as has been noted earlier, consisted of local educational and entertainment

content, the live broadcast of cricket and first run programming drawn from the United States,

Canada, Germany, Australia and India among other nations. The local content did the work of

privileging the cultural contributions of the two major ethnic groups present in Trinidad and

Tobago, as a result the population was exposed to a range of creolised cultural products that

spoke to their heritage in the language of the new nation. Unfortunately, in spite of all best

efforts, and given Williams' stated concern that a Trinidad and Tobago society constructed as

African was delusional, this was exactly the result of all the place-making work done through the

media. By fetishizing the East Indian cultural expression through the broadcast of Bollywood

movies on a Sunday afternoon and promoting variety shows open only to the East Indian

population the media helped construct a nation in which almost half the population struggled to

claim some form of belonging. As a matter of fact, the national television station, Trinidad and

Tobago Television (TTT) began every day's broadcast with *This is Trinidad and Tobago, home of steelband, calypso and limbo*. This conflation of Afro derived art forms and national culture to the virtual exclusion of almost all other cultural expressions continued until the media deregulation of the mid 1990's. Balliger further argues that this liberalization made race, and the very nature of belonging, central to public debate in national culture and governance in Trinidad and Tobago - particularly when aligned with the contemporaneous election of the first Prime Minister of Indian heritage in the country's history. She goes as far as to assert that "during this "Indian Renaissance," Indo Trinidadian cultural forms like chutney music became popularized in the national public sphere, and Indian radio directly contributed to the historic victory of an "Indian" government in 1995" (p.4). As such, rather than deregulation affording greater opportunity for more local musicians and producers to get airplay, nowhere is it more apparent that the brodcast media in particular, exists as the discursive fiefdom of the two major ethnic groups, through which the politics of belonging are debated and contested.

In the two decades since deregulation, the broadcast media landscape has grown to include 7 free to air channels (two of which are owned by the state), 24[66] satellite and cable providers and over 37[67] radio stations[68]. All of the radio stations bar one have an online presence. Of these stations, the largest number (8) cater to the East Indian market, there are seven (7) variety stations, and six (6) pop/rock stations. There are as many talk radio stations as there are those that play soca (5), four (4) urban stations, and three (3) of both adult contemporary and religious broadcasters. The BBC is one of two (2) news networks and there is a single sports radio broadcaster.[69] Situating the expansion of the radio landscape in the 1990s in her lens of analysis, Balliger takes the position that in this moment "for many people of African descent the dramatic expansion of Indian programming was viewed as an assault on their cultural and

political hegemony, […] so much so that some scholars even predicted ethnic violence. Since 2000, however, racial divisiveness has subsided in the Trinidadian public sphere, suggesting transformed meanings of ethnicity from primordial essence to consumable identity display."

The television landscape is more complicated. There are 7 FTA stations of which 3 are owned by the State. Of these, two are commercial and the other broadcasts the proceedings of Parliament. The other four commercial FTA broadcasters comprise two privately owned national broadcasters and two community broadcasters, one of which is a religious broadcast. According to the most recent statistics available,[70] the PayTV market accounted for 65.9% of all broadcast revenue generated in Trinidad and Tobago in 2015. With 233,000 subscriptions (2015) and 11 subscription providers, Trinidad and Tobago also has 10 cable only local broadcasters. Of these, two broadcast Islamic content and there are two Hindu and one Roman Catholic broadcasters. There are also two music channels broadcasting original local and Caribbean content including music videos and one sports broadcaster. The other two cable only broadcasters carry a variety of local content. Writing in 1990, on the cusp of this expansion in the media landscape, Skinner warned

> The climate of anticipation, participation and the real changes that these endeavours foster will test more than ever the structural strength of the mass media as a national industry. […] The process of change will reveal the system's most basic contradictions: government control and paternalism versus a press unconstrained by government prescribed national goals; local indigenous needs against foreign cultural hegemony; and split personalities of the media, its endogenous, informal make up in contrast to its exogenous, technical, formal structure.[…] These two forces, the ideological and the material are at present antagonistic ones: contemporary needs versus historic drive, pragmatic necessity versus ideological requirements. As such, they aggravate the prospects for future media development. (p.31)[71]

Skinner's prescient warning is manifest in Balliger's work. Fifteen years after Skinner, in 2005 the State divested itself of its radio holdings by mothballing the National Broadcasting

Service, which in Balliger's words had been an "important symbol of national sovereignty and essential for preserving a distinctly Trinidadian aesthetic" for a generation. This moment coincided with the explosion of FTA FM radio stations[72] which brought the tensions between the endogenous nature of local media and its exogenous structure into the spotlight. In this moment, according to Balliger, " the media environment featured more 'Trinidad' than any previous historical moment." She leads us through an analysis of what she terms "the cultural and spatial politics of 'all-local radio'" using three case studies to illustrate her point that identity is personal, particular and consumable. Two of the stations in her analysis cleave to the state constructed notion of Trinidadian culture as being the product of what David Rudder refers to as "where the Ganges meets the Nile"; in that the nation as constructed through these broadcasts is no more than calypso, soca, chutney, and she attributes this to the demands of the local neoliberal marketplace. In a country that structures the majority of its creative output around its pre-Lenten Carnival, it is Balliger's assertion and the unfortunate reality that liberalising the media market, rather than expanding opportunities for local creativity, has in fact reduced and discouraged opportunities for local producers and performers.

No Scene

A colloquial expression in Trinidad & Tobago that means *There's nothing going on, No Scene* is at once both an interrogator of belonging and an analysis of the work being done to re/construct the music scene in Trinidad and Tobago. Outside of what have come to be identified as dominant musical forms – soca, calypso, and chutney – used to provide the cultural exports on which the nation builds its brand; there is practically no viable market for locally produced music or local music forms. However, there are acts that continue to play live, often to miniscule audiences, and to record full albums on a regular basis. These bands face the double

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consciousness of identity – the paradox that comes with making meaning of being Trinidadian musicians who do not play 'Trinidadian' music. Rommen (2007), in his analysis of "the extent to which cosmopolitanism can open some alternative spaces in the face of nationalist discourses of place and authenticity and draw some preliminary conclusions about rock music's localized place(s) in Trinidad" (p. 372) argues that rock music in Trinidad and Tobago offers relief from the cultural politics of the nation given its perceived foreignness, and in so doing, provides a sense of community and belonging that

> offers the greatest freedom from local claims upon style by ethnic groups, opening the scene to broad participation and fostering a sense of unity not easily achieved within more ethnically entrenched musical styles. By looking beyond the nation, artists and fans are able to draw into the nation a range of musical practices that occupy a position of such Otherness within Trinidad that they are consequently freed to explore new ground on home turf, as it were. (p.380)

Given Rommen's analysis, the third of Balliger's case studies is most cogent to my own work. In this study she pays close attention to the brief life of the now defunct *Sidewalk Radio* which, rather than highlight the products of the cultural tapestry of the nation, chose to focus on the music that informed the nation's cultural expression. Owned by Solomon Gabriel, a local musician who had gained some local notoriety with his version of Hendrix's *All Along the Watchtower, Sidewalk Radio* "offered a free form mix of Trinidadians performing a variety of music genres, including jazz, rock, reggae, world music, and electronica, thus occluding the audible branding of national culture." (Balliger, 7) Though *Sidewalk Radio* was but one of the three stations which initially focused on bringing Trinidad to its audience, it is the only one that had as its raison d'etre the alternative sounds of the nation, the bands and artistes who had long despaired of gaining mainstream traction - it was the endogenous, informal nature of radio in Trinidad writ large and at complete odds with the more commercial stations which had adapted to the perceived demands of the new marketplace. Balliger goes on to define its impact as

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"Sidewalk Radio's radical intervention into Trinidadian cultural identity occurred through the claim that "Trinidadian" music is defined by the people that make it, not by genre." (p.8) The brief existence of Sidewalk Radio graphically illustrates the state of broadcast media in the country. Given the industry's response to the demands of the neoliberal marketplace, local artistes and performers have long lobbied for content quotas on local radio and television "that would guarantee a fair percentage of airtime for local music relative to non-local materials (this is an initiative involving all musicians, without regard to whether they are soca artists, chutney singers, or calypsonians)." (Rommen, 381) From the data discussed above and the lack of legislation to support such an initiative, we know that this remains a pipe dream for the local music industry, particularly given that as recently as May 2019, the topic of what constitutes local music was still under discussion at a panel held under the umbrella of the *Bocas Lit Fest,* Trinidad's annual literary festival. Titled *Our Music Too,* the panel - which consisted of local musicians and music writers - considered the impact of the now age old question of "We claim calypso and steelpan as T&T's "national" musical forms, but what about other genres in which we excel?" on local performers in genres such as jazz, rock, classical and even traditional Indian music. Writing of her participation in the panel, sitarist Sharda Patasar had this to say

> Who is this "our" when we speak of "our music?" […] It is an ongoing debate to say the least. The conversation, however, segued from an attempt to define "our music" or a national music to how we ourselves as working musicians composed and thought of ourselves within the national space. Coming from varying backgrounds – rock to classical Indian music – the conversation hit on areas like stratification in music, processes and personal stories.[73]

As such, this work begins my attempt to make sense of a scene that reflects the everyday lived reality of the majority of the country's musical performers and producers. Through both critical cultural analysis and ethnographic practice, this project explores these realities, seeking to construct a frame for an appreciation of what it means to belong when existing on the periphery and to locate that belonging in a temporality and spatiality of its own.

Port of Spain Style

I feel like I walking a long long time
I feel like I walking for days
I feel like I walking on my two hands
I feel like I walking away

An' like ah walking a while
I look fuh a smile
An' like I walk six miles
An' still no smile
Fuh six long miles

Is only faces
Different places
No one to see
Nowhere to go
No no no

Feel like I driving fuh hours and hours
I feel like I driving for days
I feel like I driving
But I still see nothing
I feel like I driving away

An like I driving a while
I I I I look fuh a smile
Oh lord like I drive six hundred miles
But yuh know is still no smile
Fuh six hundred miles

Is only places
Different faces
No one to see
Nowhere to go
I know

When I tell yuh
Faces
Different places
Not a soul to see
Not a place to go
This I know

Is trouble now (x6)
Is bacchanal (x6)

In their overview of the music industry in Trinidad and Tobago, Henry and Daniell[74] make the astute observation that in societies such as Trinidad and Tobago, when it comes to cultural production "irrespective of demand or a willingness of others to consume the product, the originator may be inspired to produce […] there is a social process at work, in that essential to the individual's sense of self worth is the approval of peers and of others who are exposed to the work of art, even if this is not directly related to income." (p.9) Writing in *Aesthetic Theory* that "art becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as autonomous art…it criticizes society by merely existing."[75] Theodor Adorno emphasizes that by virtue of the very nature of art's autonomy, it expresses opposition to the society from which it cannot be separated. It is this notion of art's autonomy that establishes a Marxist defense of art for art's sake, suggesting, as it does, the dialectical nature of such a defense; for art at once both opposes society and exists as a product of society.

After Half Past Nine

This observation gave me the perfect entry for my inquiry. In 1996, at approximately the same time as the national media landscape was changing in Trinidad and Tobago, giving increasing airtime to the promulgation of what Cudjoe (2011) refers to as " the maintenance of our immigrant society with each different group making separate demands upon the body politic and the body social and a continuous demand for proportional representation." – I appeared in the music video for the first single off the debut album of a Trinidadian rock band. The band is *Jointpop*, the video is *After half past nine* and the album was called *Port of Spain Style* – of its sound, one contemporaneous reviewer wrote "its sound, which melded together rock riffs with a

kaiso swing and sensibility […] presented a reflection many young people could relate to, the American/British pop-rock influence with which they had grown up and our own soca sweetness."[76]

Arguably, it is the video that brought the band to the notice of most of Trinidad and Tobago; the lack of local diversity in the crowded radio marketplace and a corresponding lack of local content for use as time fillers on the newly launched private television channels made the video more likely to be played on television than any song from the album would likely be played on the radio. The band looked like it sounded, the history of the country and the amalgam of arrival narratives apparent in their appearance, the importance of space and place obvious in the choice of imagery and location in the video; and both combining with a sound that sounded like Port of Spain – rhythmic, mysterious, slightly dangerous but comfortingly familiar, a promising panacea for the racially charged conversations that were beginning to consume the local public sphere. In the case of *Jointpop*, Adorno is particularly correct. The band's longevity and discography stand in glaring counterpoint to the reality of Trinidad and Tobago's music scene and stands as a criticism of the political economy of music in the country. The use of local imagery and totems in its videos speak to the band's sense of place and belonging, in spite of the country's less than warm embrace as does its use of local expressions and language.

The song *After Half Past Nine* continues the long tradition in creole thought about the meaning of time. In *CLR James and George Lamming: The Measure of Historical Time* (2003) Bill Schwarz uses these two Caribbean thinkers to define what he terms a "phenomenology of historical time" that

> brings together what conventionally are kept disconnected: on the one hand, the internal, subjective experience of temporality; and on the other, the socially organized, objectively structured operation of time, deemed to be historical. In the connecting of these two domains of time lies the term's value. If the term seems a paradox, it is because the term

has less to do with the realities it describes than the manner in which these realities have customarily been thought.

Schwarz roots his definition throughout the paper in the argument that this phenomenology predicated on the everday lived realities of life in the Americas "has forced into being a new epistemology grounded in popular life and in the practices of everyday existence" (p.68) In *After half past nine,* this hybrid conception of time is combined with an abstract and seemingly arbitrary construction of time in a social commentary about the state of Trinidadian society.

Putting the present in conversation with the past, the singer asks the same rhetorical question across temporalities to build a frame in which the unspoken is loudly declared:

How come in my time, I can't smile in the morning
An' how come in my time I find it hard to sleep at night now
How come in my mother's time she could smile and dance all day now
How come in my father's time he could sleep anywhere, but this time
Ain't no nice time, the only nice time, the only nice time
Is after half past nine, is after half past nine

Time is also interrogated in the visuals. The opening frames capture the passage of time through pans and shots of scenery and flora taken from a moving vehicle. Temporalities are shifted through the use of cuts between frames of the same scene featuring different permutations of the band - lead singer alone, lead singer close up, medium shot of lead singer and lead guitarist for example. Constant throughout the video is Trinidad as place, captured in the varied locations or spaces we shot in. The east coast of the island is the Atlantic coast, the first shore visible at the end of any transatlantic journey and the most rural and deprived of all of the island's geographic districts. It is the historic location of huge coconut plantations and remains the home of the descendants of the workers of those plantations. Most of the video is shot along

this coast and features the practices of everyday existence in this part of the country. Historical

time and historical memory are put into conversation in the second stanza

> How come in your time yuh never seem to understand now
> An' how come in your time is only fuss and fight, is only fuss and fight
> An' how come in Pa and dem time, Pa he never tell me about it
> An' how come in Ma and dem time, well Ma could live in any time
> But this time, ain't no nice time, the only nice time
> The only nice time is after half past nine
> I tell you half past nine

And in the use of visual motifs to signal a temporality that is constructed out of both the past and

the present. The flute and flautist are used to anchor Trinidad as place, appearing either with the

band or in culturally significant places across the north and east coasts by himself. Trinidad as

place is also anchored in the band itself. The juxtaposition of the band members' spectrum of

ethnicities with the specifically local manifests the creole nation that Dr. Eric Williams referred

to as *Mother Trinidad and Tobago.*

Shot in guerilla fashion in two days on Betacam and Super8, the video features the

members of the band in various locations across the east and north coasts of Trinidad. It

epitomizes the reality of the state of the industry in the country. Without an inherent broad

market for the music, almost no hope for local airplay, and no major financial support; artists are

forced to be creative in capturing their creativity - calling in favours, trading services and

sometimes, just asking nicely. In this instance the video locations were either public access or

properties owned by friends of the band. There was a crew of two - camera and grip/flautist. I

initially got involved as the grip as a favour to my camera/director friend and found myself in

front of the camera mimicking the playing of a bamboo flute and providing a counterpoint to the

band throughout the video because the lead singer thought it was a good idea.

The members of *Jointpop* are veterans of the local rock music scene. In his analysis of

the Trinidadian rock scene, Rommen identifies three developmental phases - the 70s until 1983,

1983-1991 and 1991 to present. Each of these periods is bounded by the technological

affordances which facilitasted the local growth of the genre. The most instrumental and cogent of

these periods being the latter two which cover the last 35 years and intersect with the

development of the country's demonstrated technological literacy. The major shift in the local

scene according to Rommen, was the introduction of cable television into the country in 1991. In

this moment occured,

> The single most significant media influence on the rock scene in Trinidad: the entrance of
> cable into the market. It would take several more years for cable to reach a large
> percentage of households but by roughly 1994, cable was pumping MTV and VH1 into
> Trinidad's homes. Perhaps most importantly, Internet access also became available to a
> great many customers during the mid to late 1990s, and it should come as no surprise that
> young musicians increasingly seized these opportunities to educate themselves. Cable
> and the Internet drastically changed the terms upon which rock music was learned,
> played, and consumed in Trinidad.

Following on this point, Rommen argues that this technological interjection, rather than

simply building capacity for the genre and the local music scene in which it exists, also played a

role in further exacerbating the tensions inherent among local rock musicians who, faced with a

burgeoning neo-liberal driven live music scene created in response to the media influences

brought to living rooms via cable; struggled with internecine debates around authenticity that

separated the acts generationally with the veterans finding "the new approach to rock somewhat

lacking in depth and the young bands too confident of what rock was supposed to be." (p. 376)

Gary Hector, the frontman, lead singer and general dogsbody of the group is one of those

leading the continued existence of an underground scene in Trinidad and Tobago. It was a long

time coming, being able to sit and chat with Gary; I had been trying to pin him down for almost

two years and when we finally sat down to speak about the band, its use of technology and its

position in the musical landscape not just of Trinidad and Tobago but the world, it was not face

to face as I had imagined, but through the affordances of technology – WhatsApp specifically. As

there often is, there was a technological glitch at the start of the interview. after the greetings and

platitudes, the call dropped and we had to start again. On reconnection, we agreed as

Trinidadians do to "go through hard" and sat down to talk. Our conversation began with Gary

reinforcing the notion of authenticity as it relates to the rock scene on the island and putting the

band into context in the history of the genre. After having not spoken to him for over a year, I

was instantly struck by the stream of consciousness that his initial utterances took, the thoughts

flowing quickly and the message taking on an interesting textuality as a result:

> I will start by saying that this started just after *Oddfellows Local* which ran for five years
> sorta thing. The reason for sticking around so long…boy I would say because we had, the
> first lineup lasted for 9 years, then we had a little break and then we changed a couple of
> members and that lineup has been together for 12 years now. I would think it has to be
> down to the music, the vision and the ideas that we fuse together. I know a big part of it is
> just the closeness of everybody and we're very good friends also which was also the key
> for me when you choosing a member, not only that you know them but this person, that
> you have a good vibe about them, not necessarily if he is a hot bass player or a drummer,
> is more about the chemistry than the fitting in and I think that, that that plays a big part in
> the stick together factor…outside of yes ok the music. Is not that everyone have the exact
> same influences and yes, we do butt heads every now and then when we writing some
> songs and so on; but I think its about the close knit unit.

In the two decades of their existence, *Jointpop* has managed to record and release six full-length

albums, a number of EPs and singles, produce a number of striking music videos and tour in both

North America and the UK, all while working through the reality of having no scene to nurture

their development or hone their craft. As such, I read the band as a holistic art project designed to

demonstrate the band's ability to be a band in the face of adversity and to perform being a band

through performances, recordings and video art. The purpose as I read it has been fulfilled,

through the simple fact of its existence *Jointpop* is the perfect example of the phenomenon that

Henry and Daniell observed in Trinidad and Tobago and societies like it – the making of art for

art's sake. This is an unintentional circumstance brought about by the lack of viability of a local

music industry and the fetishization of particular forms as sole representatives of the country's

culture and history removing the use-value of other musical forms. It is also the basis of the line

of conversation that we embark upon once the initial warmup questions and framing have been

taken care of

> One of the things that has been amazing to me, two things really – one has been your longevity and the fact that *Jointpop* continue to produce not just tracks but either EPs or full length albums. Has social media played any part in sustaining that type of effort?

> The funny thing, when you first opened it up by saying you wanted to talk about the internet and social media and so on, the thing is I'm being very honest and I'm not very good at it at all I took, I was the last one to get involved in it, like yuh know I, I only switch phones in the last couple years to do WhatsApp and so on. It took me a while to get on Facebook but I keep asking "How, how, what is this Facebook thing and how the bands using it?

> Somebody else in the band might have been running our Facebook page and then I say (sucks teeth) I can't stay out of things so I had to get involved and I learn a bit, I mean I'm still not very good at it in the way that people really maximize it but I use it religiously and I'm now learning a lot more things yuh know so, Twitter for instance and so on. I'm now running our Twitter page, I'm not running the Instagram page, the bass player does that, but I know that I'll take it over soon, because yuh just have to keep…I, I watch my pages and is always like "This man and his music again" but dais what I do, I run my band so I have no shame about doing it yuh know.

> Some people don't like talking about their band, but I have to do it, this is what I do so yuh know? But I mean, when *Jointpop* first started the social media thing wasn't that big yet at all so we were just going along as normal, but I will go as far as to say that without social media we probably would struggle to even survive yuh know?

> There is no way around it. We have to use it and we have to learn to use it better and better and it's not to trick people into anything, is just to build awareness. I wouldn't use it for tricks and for buying likes and buying this and…(trails off) we have never done that

As his voice trails off, the familiar sounds of a lighter striking and a draw being taken

come down the ether and I follow suit, taking the smoke into my lungs and exhaling through my

nose while I compose my thoughts. I'm imagining being at home, sitting outside and having this

conversation over a beer. Intuitively, almost automatically, I know how the question I'm about to

ask will be answered given the perpetual nature of the situation it gets at, but I'm interested in

hearing about the specific experience of the band. Keeping on the topic of social media and its

importance to the band's viability as musical performers, and given the state of the local

broadcast landscape, I kept urging him to expand on their use of technology and virtual

communities to further their purpose:

> This brings me to my question. As I've said, I follow you across pretty much all of the
> platforms that the band is on, I'm a follower; so one of the things that has struck me
> recently is that you've started to get airplay…I see it on Twitter more often than not
> …you've started to get airplay in places like Australia, and New Zealand and so on on
> internet radio and those types of spaces. How are these people finding your music?
>
> Again, again social media wise; and as I say, I mean my regular day is 5:30 up in the
> morning and then I just spend the next few hours online, I would target radio stations, I
> would send things out, some discover us out of the blue and you would get messages
> saying if they could play this track and so on. I built my own network per se and of
> course a lot of it is hit and miss. Yuh would send things out some won't and some would
> play it and so on.
>
> We have done PR campaigns with promo companies before where you pay for a
> campaign and they send the new single out to various radio stations and so on. So some is
> via that but…a lot of it is directly from me just checking people and at that point, the
> music has to stand up for itself – is fuh them to listen and to say I like this track and we
> going to play it and so on yuh know?
>
> So yeah, we on web radio and some radio stations all over the world – Russia, Belgium,
> Hungary, whatever, Poland, is ongoing…yuh just keep building yuh platforms via that
> way yuh know?

Speaking about the band's work to harness technology to their benefit there is a pride and

sense of satisfaction in his voice. This is a man who seems to acknowledge every single one of

his airplay notifications on social media, sharing the notices with his network not as a means of

self-aggrandisement and validation but rather as a means of making real connections between

people. However, the tone changes palpably when the prying question about airplay in Trinidad

arises:

This is a real contentious question. We've talked radio, Russia, New Zealand otherwise. What's it like being a rock band or a band in Trinidad that does not play soca or chutney music? Has that changed in any way?

Well, as yuh say we've been bringing out records since the '90s and so on and I'll compare it to the *Odd Fellows* days when we first put out our first single in 91, there were only about two or three radio stations at the time and somehow I thought that at that point they were more open to playing local music. I mean I myself grew up hearing a lot of local music on the TWO radio stations we had then so obviously it was, it was not a problem THEN. But after a while it just got absolutely out of hand and we would pretty much not get any airplay at all. Yet, I would still service all the stations when we have a new record out

(Hmmm) mumbling in encouragement, I pushed back in my chair, lit another cigarette and

continued to listen

Not expecting anything and that just went on for years and years and years. I never gave up, I just never bothered but I would service them. I would do the right thing.

"Here we are. This is our new record!" - This declaration took me by surprise in its

resigned tone - you could hear the frustration implicit in describing a pointless effort, the offhand

nature of his following comment, a tacit indictment of the local radio landscape.

They won't play it so that's alright. In some of our songs and so on we mention a lot of radio things. Of late, over the last album and some of this one, some songs started popping up on local radio. I would get messages, I mean I don't listen to radio but I would get messages from people like "Ay, I just heard this song and dada, dada, dada" so its been playing so again – "Is it being played much?" probably not, but in my case I'll say "Thank you very much, blah, blah, blah."

It's still not healthy for us or for the local industry as far as the no airplay thing is concerned cuz that is the media where songs get heard yuh know?

We can't rely on people coming to our gigs on average every three months to know a song and to like a song. Songs are liked by repetition yuh know? And it still remains the modern media even if people listen to internet radio and so on – people do still listen to the radio.

Likewise, funny enough, local television yuh think its not being seen but they were recently running a concert we did two years ago, one of those MovieTowne concerts. They run every now and then and you meet normal people in the street and they're "Hey, I saw you on tv – nice songs man and bleh, bleh blah."

Repetition and repetition dais all it is about yuh know? So leaving all of us meaning our band and others just naked without any sort of support (trails off) We would just go nowhere really.

I understand the layout but I just find that they should just have a little more Trinidad morality about them; about jus' saying " There are things out there that we could use" but I think that they don't care, that they don't bother.

oul Going Cheap

$ouls going cheap (x3)
Yeah
$ouls going cheap

These streets are growing cold
My rock and roll band, Lord, are getting old
There's still half the story to be told
You know what
FUCK THAT
It's time to sell our souls

Yeah these nights are getting warm
It's getting harder to write these songs
And everybody's telling me to be strong
You know what
FUCK THAT
The soul sale is on

Send another drink my way
I feel to get carried away
Because all this work and still no pay
You know what
FUCK THAT
Souls giving away

On the back of their initial success and critical acceptance, *Jointpop* participated in

Midem 1997, the leading annual forum for global distribution and music deals with the hope of

taking *Port of Spain Style* global.

Nothing came of this experience.

Almost 20 years and four albums later, the band was again selected to appear at a global music showcase, this time the 2016 edition of SXSW, the largest event of its kind in the world held annually in Austin, Texas. Previously, the government of Trinidad and Tobago has largely underwritten the cost of participation for local acts at SXSW and worked in partnership with private promoters to host a Trinidad and Tobago showcase. Given the explicit intent of successive governments to entrench a national culture predicated on afro and indo derived cultural forms, these showcases have been used to highlight soca and chutney performers and in 2015, the insular stylings of *parang*, Trinidad and Tobago's Christmas music. However, without Government support, the cost of flying Trinidad's flag at such an event (approximately US$20,000 which included underwriting the cost of the headliners, soca queen Destra Garcia and Haddaway of *What is Love* fame.) precluded the band's participation. In my conversation with Gary, these and other stories about tours and lost opportunities became a topic. At the root of the conversation is the political economy of artistic endeavour in Trinidad and Tobago. Those performers and artistes that cleave to national cultural forms have the implicit promise that, at some point in their career, the opportunity to fly the national flag on a global stage with the support of the government. Despite any personal traction gained on the local or global stage, other acts create and perform with the explicit knowledge of the converse - any state support received is random and subject to the personal patronage of the decision makers.

> I have one more question that is about *Jointpop* touring. In 1997, there was Midem then there was the failed attempt to attend SXSW in 2016. Both of those were supposed to have been done with government support…

> Midem facilitated it and we had to find ourselves there, we had to fund ourselves there. They facilitated, here's a contingent from Trinidad that going up, who could pay their money come. Same as with the SXSW, we were selected to go and we submitted proposals to try and get there. I mean, any time yuh trying to get there, yuh talking five band members flights and so and so and so on. Is always a bit costly, likewise all the UK tours and so on, same thing.

I mean our present situation, this new album has been picked up by an Italian label right? An independent label in Italy. So, they just released it, and now they have booking agents under their umbrella and they are noew working to book gigs throughout Italy and Germany, Belgium and Austria blah blah blah. But it is the same situation, they not in the position to bring us there – "CAN YOU GET THERE?" is the question.

So let's say "Ok, right is proposals time again" Send it out, and we just been rejected via all the Ministries who deal with this aspect – "No we can't help you at this time". I mean you could tell deep within that they not going to help cuz of the nature of the type of band yunno? And that is the common fight we deal with dem all the time. They've helped in the past yes, but is more a help of "Dis man bodderin' us again" kinda ting "Give dem a lil something". The tour supposed to be in July and as I say, we been rejected so we gonna try some other angle and try and get the flights going and do the tour somewhere in November but dais what we face all the time.

Now, I'm not saying that they are obligated to keep sending us anywhere BUT ah doh think they see the big picture of where we are poised and what we can do, what doors we can open for others. They doh look at it like that yuh know? That is the battle.

However, it must be made clear that *Jointpop* exists because they can afford to do it. While the cost of flying the national flag at SXSW prohibited their participation, a history of the band demonstrates that they have borne the cost of their patriotism and self-belief every step of the way.

There is no doubt of either the band's origin or inspiration, their lyrics reference the space, the videos show us the place for what it is - a thirdspace created by creole indigeneity and shaped by cultural creolisation. By emphasising origin *Jointpop* is constantly constructing and locating themselves in a Trinidad that is itself constructed at the nexus of temporality, spatiality and location of its audiences. To this point, our conversation segued toward representation and the work

Your videos and music, talking about music show a very, very strong link to Trinidad and Tobago. You have a Trinidad flag on your guitar, and a lot of the music reflects Trinidad. This is a two-part question – How does coming from Trinidad influence *Jointpop* and then, what do your audiences see when you perform outside of the island because you are from Trinidad?

First up, me personally real real real proud Trini. This is home and this is us and then we have our story here so writing the songs from a Trinidad perspective in general yuh know, I wouldn't say that every single song is, but a lot of it when yuh start going back to the ones that not even sounding like our situation it is something to deal with it yuh know?

So that part of it for me is quite easy because this is our environment and this is where we live, yuh know wha' I mean? Yes, we might have a song about travelling to London or Berlin or Vienna or something but that is just more or less fantasy stories yuh know? But generally we touch a lot of Trinidad situations and topics from life living and the situation in society and just the people and the love for the country and we touch a lot of those things even though we are a rock and roll band but we more or less have to find a perspective to get our points across yuh know?

That they accept the status quo and continue to exist in spite of the difficulties they face

in Trinidad and Tobago is evident in Hector's confession in an interview in support of *Quicksand*

The fact is, we can't get any bigger in Trinidad and Tobago. That's just the way it is, and it won't change. We respect that. Our music at home is mostly Calypso, Soca, Steelpan, Reggae and Top 40 hits, and that's just fine, the rhythm of the islands. So we will be forever underground, we can't change that. So touring UK, Europe and USA is our lifeline. The internet is a big plus for us being so far away from the main music capitals and it helped us gain an international following via press, radio and tours. Its safe to say if the internet goes away now, so too would *JointPop* on the international level.[77]

Shifting back to my own line of questioning and picking up on the direction I was taking

our conversation, Gary continued

I mean yuh could see it too when we manage to tour like the UK and so on and obviously that is always a part of it, the appeal and is like "here's a rock band from Trinidad with this view of not only their situation but a world situation which all applies to the same thing" yuh know?

Is one thing with the foreigners thinking we just on the beach all day and smiling and having fun so I, we show the other side of the postcard let's say. The press, the interviews that we do they always want to know about the country and they always want to know about our sense of living and so its interesting from all those angles and we like to keep it so.

Is not a conscious thing, this thing, it comes out of us that "Ay, we here" and we have to talk about here and our situation.

Can we talk about that European tour. I have all of the vlogs, that England and Scotland tour. How did, did you book that tour yourself?

Yeah, I have booked all the tours on my own. As I say, from home on the laptop targeting promoters, cities contacts too. I might know somebody in some city and it works that way and then you link with this one, yuh set up some radio interviews and just try and put it together yuh know?

To be honest, once you spend time doing it – is not that difficult. Getting there is the difficult part, the actual funding part is the difficult part. Booking the tour is not really that difficult once you have patience, time and a vibe to deal with people you know?

I mean a band was here a couple weeks ago. They going and do their first UK, and they came to me to sit and discuss with them how to go about it, what to do, what contacts you have. I sat down and gave them all my information, all my advice – spend some time doing it and you can get it done on your own.

I mean with the Italian situation where we now have an actual booking agent we STILL can't get there you know?

Desperate Houseflies is a long form film by the band's most consistent creative

collaborator, the videographer and filmmaker Walt Lovelace, who incidentally, was instrumental

in putting me in the video for *After Half Past Nine.* The film is a behind the scenes look at the

recording of the band's second album *The January Transfer Window.* The album was the first

that the band recorded outside of a traditional recording studio and actually brings the band back

to one of the locations featured in that first seminal video. It is shot to demonstrate the duty of

care that the band has to its music and audience and captures five days in the recording of this

full-length album. It features interviews with the members and some footage of the tracks being

recorded. In our interview, I asked Gary about this album and the significance of football to the

band

Your second album is called the *January Transfer Window*, my question is how big a part has football played in *Jointpop?*

That's a good question. The thing is I've actually been a football fan since before I even started playing music, since I was young, young – 10/11 years old I playing football and I watching Trinidad football for all that time just religiously following the national team […] I've seen it all and I'm qualified as a licensed CONCACAF coach also so I see a lot of relations in running a band and running a football team – it's quite similar. It's

management, keep people happy, to make sure men in their right positions and da da da. To keep motivating, so a lot of it is quite similar I would even compare our situation where, "Ok, we not in the Premiership, we might be a second division team because we eh playing at the world level and all that kinda thing so you know is just I mean, even our nickname is *Jointpop FC.*

The *Jointpop FC* flag is prominent throughout in *Desperate Houseflies,* as are other

Trinidadian motifs - the language, the scenery, the everyday rituals of the community in which

they are recording the album, this in spite of this album signalling a shift for the band from that

of a Trinidadian rock band to that of a rock band from Trinidad. The film documents that

transition and the growth of the band's sound to reflect its new dispensation. According to

Damon Homer, the band's guitarist and other founding member

> We're just more rock and roll now, we've shifted from that calypso/fusion rock to more straight up rock and roll type music […] its the music we listen to now, we're heavily influenced by a lot of English bands so I think that's the direction the band took naturally

My final question: I wanna talk specifically about the video aspect of it, particularly the long form *Desperate Houseflies*? Do you think video is obligatory for your presence online or are you doing the videos because you think the songs need visuals?

> I think a video always helps if you targeting a song as a single because, because the visual and the eye still work that way people want to see some imagery to a song. I mean you could go audio only on YouTube also, but I think a video will give you a kickstart. Then there's a lot of video channels across the world that you can use it on. It is always better to have one, it definitely still works, it's still a plus.

> It all depends on the band's situation, what budget they have, what level or what sort of things they want to do – we always try to get something done especially with our main collaborator Walt, but as you know we have a sort of artistic brotherhood in that Walt will hear the album and will be "Let's do something" which he did recently and we probably going to be doing again soon.

> In an interview excerpt taken from the film, Gary is adamant on the band's shift and the

reasons behind it

> Yuh know we kinda sing and write a bunch of Trinidad songs for the past ten years. Serious topics, the works, ah mean - crack, pitbulls, guns - just stuff dealing with Trinidad topics and the whole nature here and nobody listening.

Nobody listening to not 'the message in the music' but I guess is that - nobody paying attention, nobody cares an' we saying all these things and they keep coming and happening over and over.

If yuh lissen to the old *JointPop* music yuh could form headlines with it. Is full Trinidad things and part of me end up saying 'Yuh know what ? This record I eh talkin' to nobody under dat. Right? Nobody eh hearing we anyhow, they just eh listening to we - I going and just write some stories yuh know?'

Having almost disappeared from the consciousness of all but their diehard local fans, but

finding global purchase through networks of like minded, technologically savvy fans and taste

publics, the band's reinvention as a rock band from Trinidad as opposed to a Trinidadian rock

band facilitated and sustained by the use of technology and labour tells its own story - identity is

both temporal and local predicated on shared experiences across time and space.

CHAPTER V

A Dasein for Digital Culture

This project began with the perspective that identity is political.

It is.

It is also local, in that both its consensual nature and its subjectivity bound it within the

confines of temporality and spatiality, constructs at once epiphenomenal and subject to

technology. This is the lived experience of creole peoples. The title of this work *The Creole Web,*

speaks to an ontology of being appropriate for negotiating the *thirdspaces* created out of

technology and labour *in real life.* Looking at the case studies presented, we see a consistent

deployment of technology by Trinidadians in an effort to cement a contextual identity

appropriate for the place that they are occupying in the moment of interpretation. From the

cricket fan as constructed in the moment of the broadcast of the game or the search for a

YouTube video in which the West Indies is constructed as both a moment in time (the time of the

broadcast or the duration of the game) and a *thirdspace* that takes into account the physical space

that is the region, the broadcast and location of the game **and** the hope of each of the fans. This

moment affords each of the fans the discursive ontology to construct a place of belonging. This

thirdspace is also apparent in the political construction of the state of Trinidad and Tobago.

Constituent of the physical space of the nation, the nation as constructed through rhetoric and

ideology, and the political allegiances of its citizens; all subject to an epiphenomenal temporality.

This Trinidad becomes a *thirdspace* through the creolisation of colonial political practice to meet

the needs of the modern nation as well as through the hopes of the electorate in the period leading up to each General Election. The work being done in both online and offline spaces by the two major ethnic groups (Afro and Indo identified) in continuing to mine veins of distrust and misunderstanding as a means of controlling access to power, and for political gain give us a valuable insight into how the hegemony of difference can be manipulated, as became visibly apparent in the 2016 United States Presidential election. Guess (2006) cites Kincheloe (1999) to make the point that even though there is no universal definition of Whiteness, there is universal agreement that it is a construction of power that is at once both monolithic and ephemeral – a social construction designed to control access to power even in creole societies where Whiteness is not centred as a demographic majority.

In modern society, issues of power and control are delicate topics. Recent and seemingly ongoing revelations about the amount of data being collected on individuals has made these issues even more pertinent, as the information economy predicated on algorithmic processing of data 'shape(s) how we understand the world and they do work in and make the world through their execution as software, with profound consequences.' (Kitchin, 2016 p.5)

Kitchin cites Miyazaki's (2012) definition of an algorithm as a 'set of defined steps that if followed in the correct order will computationally process input […] to produce a desired outcome' (p.3). The qualifying words 'correct' and 'desired' used in Miyazaki's definition are where the cause for concern about algorithms and their use is rooted. Kitchin mobilises this definition, illustrating algorithms as being contingent on logic and control 'where logic is the problem domain-specific component and specifies […] (what is to be done) and the control component is the problem-solving strategy and the instructions for […] (how it should be done).'

(p.4) At the core of Kitchin's argument is that algorithms are not neutral, their work is not a process of machine logic but is in fact an active political process, contextual in nature and firmly grounded in their 'socio-technical assemblage' (p.5). The malleability of autocomplete results across geographic space, physical place and chronological time[78] is reason enough to pay attention to the work that algorithms are being made to do; we need to understand for whose power and control and to what end are algorithmic processes being utilized. In *Whose F in Fault is it?* the notion of algorithmic manipulation of public opinion for political gain by exploiting the fears and racial stereotypes promulgated by marked difference was both exploited and defeated by a construction of Trinidad that did not create an equal place for everyone, but rather gave everyone an equal opportunity to space in the place they had constructed. This is a telling identifier of the results of cultural creolisation and the creole identity. Woven throughout the case studies was the centering of place in the construction of identity. For some, place was hyper-local, for others place defied epiphenomenal time – being constructed out of imagination, memory and longing – while for others still place becomes the site of struggle where labour and technology are the currency of belonging. Common to all was the focus on Trinidad as place.

Identity, at some level infers belonging. It is constructed at the nexus of temporality, spatiality, and location - each of which contributes to its veracity. In the United States, the Creole is primarily bounded as a construct both historically and culturally within the borders of southern Louisiana, and speaks to the uniquely heterogeneous cultural landscape of the region. Of the space, Spitzer (2003) writes:

> South Louisiana society offers a powerful counterexample to the atomized "hyphenated-American" image of diverse, bounded ethnic groups […] It also offers contrast to the idea that still lingers of a uniformly biracial Southern (and U.S.) society […] This is a culturally Creolized region in a broader sense than the multivalent ethnicity of people actually called Creoles. (p.62)

Though the specificity of this place and its milieu is at the root of the construction of this identity – it is also at the foundation of its present near irrelevancy as a lens through which to interrogate identity in the United States. Dubois and Melançon (2000) make the point that in the period between the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and the Civil War; the influx of Anglo-Americans into the region prompted a devaluation of the Creole cultural identity in the face of Anglicization and the growing distrust between whites and Blacks.

That the Creole identity has become an addendum to the cultural history of the United States, it is important to note that the growth of popular culture and political awareness in the country owes a debt to the process of cultural Creolization began in Louisiana. Building on the root of the word Creole, *crear* – to create, cultural Crealization describes the development of "new traditions, aesthetics, and group identities out of combinations of formerly separate peoples and cultures" (Spitzer 2003, p.58). When put into this frame, the United States was, and remains a prototypical Creole space and its cultural products - jazz, rock and roll, Motown and rap, among other forms, are creolized artefacts.

As is Barack Obama.

Demonstrably a product of new traditions, aesthetics and identities, the *thirdspace,* Obama has been termed "'l'homme de la créolisation' [the man of Creolization] (Chamoiseau and Glissant, 2009) because he embodies the process of Creolization through his complex cultural, familial and racial diversity impossible to fix in one static definition" (Loichot 2012, p.88). In a speech in March 2008, just after his assumption to the presidency, and available on YouTube - he draws parallels between his family's story and his hope for the United States: "it is a story that has seared into my genetic makeup the idea that this nation is more than the sum of its parts – that out of many, we are truly one." (Obama, 2008)

It is this notion of polyculturalism that heralded Obama's rise to the White House – the hope inherent in his keynote address at the 2004 DNC in support of John Kerry. "Alongside our famous individualism, there's another ingredient in the American saga – a belief that we are all connected as one people […] it is what allows us to pursue our individual dreams yet still come together as one American family – *E pluribus unum.*" (Obama, 2004) In this speech and throughout his presidency, Obama folded his family's narrative into that of the United States, virtually using himself as the example of what can be achieved with hope, dreams and hard work. Specifically, standing on that stage in 2004, Barack Hussein Obama became the United States of America – in him was the culmination of the social, cultural and racial history of the nation – it is the epiphenomenonal moment that allowed the United States to see what it had created and to celebrate, in that moment and for 12 years to come.

Since 2004, culture has responded to that notion with increasing resonance being afforded to minority voices across the media. The top box office stars are hyphenated Americans, as are the most talked about characters on television and the vast majority of major recording artists. The media is also celebrating this notion of diversity outside of the entertainment spaces. National news broadcasts and magazine shows are increasingly being anchored by people of color – place has been found for mixed marriages in advertising, and some brands have gone so far as to use hyphenated, non celebrity Americans as their major spokespersons. For Obama though, the epiphenomenal moment of the realisation of the American promise came at a great personal cost. In attempting to negotiate his presidency through this conferred Creole identity in the binary construct of race in the United States, he ran foul of both constituent groups who claimed him as their own. For some he was not Black enough, for others; that was all he was and that was not enough. Dyson (2016) noted that this 'burden of representation' meant that Obama's

presidency was the only one subject to epiphenomenal analysis because of what his body represented and the obsession with race in the national psyche. (p. X.)

It is difficult to fathom the consistent framing by the media of difference as measured against what have become labelled "American values" – religion, skin color, national origin - as weapon or problem until one understands the social dynamic at play. This portrayal serves to keep people of color on the outside of society looking in and by so doing, maintains a status quo to which everyone; on either side of the hyphen; subscribes. For example, the dichotomy between the successive presidencies of Obama and Trump is best encapsulated in Donald Trump's vocal and visible role in the Birther conspiracy theory that sought to cloud Obama's ascendancy to the presidency of the United States and has lingered to this day in some dark parts of the interwebs. Masking racism through the neo-racist rhetoric of speculation surrounding Obama's birthplace the Birther movement stood on Article 2 of the Constitution of the United States, which prohibits foreign-born citizens from the presidency. The attacks began in 2008 during the election campaign, persisted through his first term, and gained positive valence with the entrance of Trump into the public debate in 2011. The sustained traction of this movement speaks to a construction of identity in the arguably Creole space that is the United States; that does not account for the role technology, its repercussions and its manifestations have had on the development of the nation. By discounting and attempting to deny Obama's right to belong, the Birther cohort weaponized the hyphen as it relates to people of color in the United States, making the observations of Teddy Roosevelt and Toni Morrison synchronous through the span of the more than eighty years that separate them.

> *There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism. When I refer to hyphenated Americans, I do not refer to naturalized Americans. Some of the very best Americans I have ever known were naturalized Americans, Americans born abroad. But a hyphenated American is not an American at all.* (Roosevelt, 1915)

In this country American means white. Everybody else has to hyphenate.
(Morrison, 2013)

During the Obama presidency the epiphenomenal realisation that anyone born in the United States could ascend to the Oval Office became apparent *for the first time*. It shifted the clock of history, recalibrating it to the hard reset brought on by this moment in time. Regardless of the adjectives used to describe the presidency, Barack Obama and his person transformed the office by representation, seizing the epiphenomenal moment to assert the right of belonging of those whose access to the claim of belonging to these United States is qualified by a hyphen. Transforming identity through the lived construction of representation is also the lived experience of people who negotiate online spaces, as they build identities through discursive ontologies of place predicated on the technological affordances available to the space. In doing so they are creolizing these places through their use of technology and the labor they put into creating these discursive ontologies of place and belonging. Created through the epiphenomenal consideration of time in which the political power of identity is not necessarily predicated on past constructs but almost always dependent on immediate interpretation and interpellation – these places carved out of the online spaces of apps and platforms become creole societies in which everyone's lived experience is brought to bear in the construction of a culture for that place through which one can situate one's self. A major concern however is that many companies and law enforcement agencies charged with designing surveillance tools are unfamiliar with the lived experience, cultural background, and linguistic preferences of those whom they are monitoring. Implicit bias often fills in these knowledge gaps, leading to a disproportionate number of youth and communities of color being surveilled and suspected of wrongdoing.

As xenophobia, muscular nationalism and religious intolerance become features on the global

landscape, I join with boyd et al (2014) in the call that

> We must rethink our models of discrimination and our mechanisms of accountability. No longer can we just concern ourselves with immutable characteristics of individuals; we must also attend to the algorithmically produced position of an individual, which, if not acknowledged, will be used to reify contemporary inequities. New technologies have a tendency to obscure the ways in which societal biases are baked into algorithmic decision-making. Not only must such practices be made legible, but we must also develop legal, social, and ethical models that intentionally account for networks, not just groups and individuals.

We live in a digital world. Technology has irretrievably altered the ways in which we

receive and process information, it has also drastically increased the opportunity for punitive

surveillance of difference and the fanning of flames of hatred through electronic dog whistling. A

recent body of literature from scholars addressing the intersection of race and technology

demonstrates not just the implicit racist attitudes hard wired into the creation of everyday

technologies but also their deployment in explicitly racist practices to marginalize vulnerable

communities. This body of work, *Race Critical Code Studies*[79] and other literature that is

interrogating the relationship of race and technology has begun to highlight the systemic

iniquities in society that are reinforced by this interaction.

Consider Patton and colleagues (2013, 2015, 2016) who have found significant

sociolinguistic variation in the Twitter content of self-identified gang affiliated Twitter users that

may impact how their social media content is interpreted. In one study, gang-involved Black and

Latino young men suggest that determining the extent to which a post is threatening is often

complicated even when one lives in the neighborhood and has a nuanced and contextual

understanding of the Twitter communication. This example raises questions around the ability of

individuals outside the community to reliably interpret social media communications from a population of young people they know little about (Patton et al., 2015).

However, as necessary and timely as all of this work is, it is predicated in the largest part on critical race theory which does not translate smoothly outside of a US context. For example, the structural shift in rhetoric that has changed the national conversation around immigration and belonging is a reflection of the hegemonic constructs of identity that have traditionally dominated discourse in the United States. Race baiting has been transformed into neo-racism dressed as immigration policy and inevitably temporality, location, and labour have become rallying cries and the tools of civil society standing in protest at the move to MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN by bounding the United States with literal and figurative walls.

These networks of activists, technologists and influencers often work to create local communities that provide critical mass to a global cause should the need arise. This notion of staying local while thinking global is key to negotiating the world that we live in. Transforming identity through the lived construction of representation is also the lived experience of people who negotiate online spaces, as they build identities through discursive ontologies of place predicated on the technological affordances available to the space. In doing so they are creolizing these places through their use of technology and the labour they put into creating these discursive ontologies of place and belonging. Created through the epiphenomenal consideration of time in which the political power of identity is not necessarily predicated on past constructs but almost always dependent on immediate interpretation and interpellation – these places carved out of the online spaces of apps and platforms become creole societies in which everyone's lived experience is brought to bear in the construction of a culture for that place through which one can situate one's self.

Appendix
Glossary

This glossary is drawn from the seminal *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad and Tobago* edited by Lise Winer.

Afro-Saxon *n* Someone who is of African descent, but who identifies psychologically with the ruling white colonial class. Not intended to be a pejorative term, but a descriptive analysis of the ruling class.

babash *n* Illegal homemade rum.

baje *n* A Barbadian, usually a person born in Barbados.

bhaiya *n* A male friend who is like a brother; a friendly term of address usually between men.

bredrin (brethren) *n* A term, usu. Friendly and respectful, for a fellow man or close friend.

breadfruit *n* A large cultivated tree with large edible, starchy fruit.

calypso *n* A Trinidadian music with a 2/2, 4/4 or combination rhythm, usually with the second beat emphasised, with syncopation or off-beat phrasing.

creole (10) *n arc* A person or practice characteristic of locally developed European- based or oriented culture.

creole (11) *n* A person of primarily African descent and cultural-ethnic identification.

coconut milk *n* Liquid obtained by squeezing grated coconut meat. It is white, not clear, and very flavourful.

dasheen *n* A cultivated plant with edible tubers.

douen *n* A folklore character, the spirit of a child who died before baptism. Douens wear large hats and have backward facing feet. They haunt lonely country places in the night, uttering plaintive cries like those of a lost child. Should some compassionate traveller seek to ascertain the source of the cries, the douen leads him further and further into the woods, until he stumbles into some stagnant pool, and just before he disappears under its waves for the last time, he hears the mocking laugh of the douen, as it flies to seek another victim.

dougla (doogla) *n* A person of mixed Indian and African descent. From the Hindi *dogala* 'hybrid; mixture; mongrel animal; person of mixed descent; bastard.' Intermarriage between Negroes and Indians is strictly frowned upon by Indians.

eddoes *n* Edible tubers widely eaten, smaller and more elongated than the *dasheen,* covered with small brown scales. Dry leaves and roots used to make hot poultice for splinters, bruises.

ent *part* A sentence-final question word indicating an expectation of a postive answer or agreement.

fete match *n* A sports match between amateur groups or friends, the occasion for drink, food and festivities.

French creole (2) *n* Any light-skinned person, of mostly European background, usually seen as a member of the economic or social elite.

fig (banana) *n* Any of many varieties of this fruit; though not usually applied to the export varieties.

fo' day morning *n* The period just before sunrise.

follow fashion (3) *adj* Imitating others without considering suitability for oneself.

hoss (horse 3) *n* Friend; someone you can rely upon, usu. Used between men.

knucks in (3) *phr* Be going well.

Lime (3) *n* A group formed and loosely maintained for a specific purpose, frequenting a usual location, or associated with a specific activity.

Lime (4) *v* Participate in an informal gathering of two or more people, characterised by semi-ritualised talking and socialising, drinking and eating.

mauvais langue *n* Critical, slanderous talk

Meriken *n arc* A group of black settlers and their descendants; demobilised black soldiers of the West India Regiment, and escaped slaves who had fought with the British against the United States in the War of 1812, established in the "Company" villages in eastern and south-central Trinidad after the American Revolution.

Midnight Robber *n* Dressed elaborately in fringed trousers, sweeping cape, shoes like coffins or animal heads and very large wide-brimmed hats with architectural constructions; the robber is known for long, eloquent and complex speeches of a threatening or boasting nature.

obeah (1) *n* A folk system of magic and using supernatural forces to bring about effects from success in love or business to harming an enemy; based primarily on West African rituals but incorporating Christian, Indian and other practices.

obeahwoman *n* A woman who practices *obeah*, usually for hire.

oil-down *n* A dish made with *breadfruit, salt meat,* seasonings and *coconut milk*

peong *n* Someone who is constantly looking for something, running behind it, an enthusiast.

picong *n* Teasing, ridicule, or insult.

Pitch (1) *n* Asphalt

Pitch Lake *n* A large natural asphalt deposit, located in La Brea in southwestern Trinidad.

Pitch Walk *n* A *pitch*-covered walkway on the perimeter of the Queen's Park Savannah in Port of Spain, approximately three miles in length.

rogue and vagabond (2) *phr* A negative term for someone considered a thief, lawless, worthless, law-breaking.

rumshop *n* A shop which sells liquor by glass and bottle, and small snacks such as nuts; mostly frequented by men.

saltmeat *n* Meat, usually chunks of beef or pork, preserved in brine.

samaan tree *n* A very large naturalised tree with an umbrella shaped crown and enormous spread of branches.

soca *n* A type of *calypso* based music with a fast dance beat and party lyrics.

vex *adj* Irritated; angry; annoyed.

village ram *n* A sexually dominant and promiscuous male.

windball (1) *n* A tennis ball, thus any game played with this ball instead of the regulation type.

wine *v* Make a rhythmic, gyrating pelvic movement, sometimes overtly sexual, as in dancing.

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Notes

[1] Juliette Hua http://www.aaihs.org/on-michelle-wrights-physics-of-blackness/

[2] https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/walter-benjamin-messianism-revolution-theses-history/

[3] http://www.pariapublishing.com/SaintLaurent.htm

[4] http://caribbeanhistoryarchives.blogspot.com/2007/12/royal-cedula-of-1783.html

[5] http://www.hawaii.edu/satocenter/langnet/definitions/trinidad.html

[6] For further reading on the history of Trinidad's position as an experimental slave colony: Matthews, 2007.

[7] http://www.mamalisa.com/blog/would-you-know-a-lullaby-from-trinidad-with-the-line-dodo-petit-popo/

[8] http://www.hawaii.edu/satocenter/langnet/definitions/trinidad.html

[9] In *The fact of blackness,* Fanon lays out the process of racial objectification

[10] The United Nations' (UN) working definition of an ethnic minority as a group of citizens of a State, constituting a numerical minority and in a non-dominant position in that State, endowed with ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics which differ from those of the majority of the population, having a sense of solidarity with one another, motivated, if only implicitly, by a collective will to survive and whose aim it is to achieve equality with the majority in fact and in law. (Deschenes,1985, p.31)

[11] Buhle (1988, 2017) reads Trinidad as " more than any other Caribbean society the victim or beholder of multiple identities." (p.7)

[12] According to Cottle (2006) "not simply a numerical designation, but refers to imbalances of economic, political and social power…often forged in relation to a colonial past, diaspora histories and contemporary patterns of disadvantage, discrimination and unfair access to the means of cultural representation."

[13] " the contents of the media always reflect the interests of those who finance them" (McQuail, 2005, p.226).

[14] (Ryan, Trinidad Express, 2011).

[15] OCM Annual Report 2017. Accessed 10/26/18

[16] Personal Interview. Conducted in person. Port of Spain. January 2018.

[17] This notion of abundance is drawn from Jackson Lears

[18] Jackson (2012) sees as "capturing the rerouting of indigeneity in the Caribbean" (p.65) tying "the destabilisation of native to the reinvention of Creole as native through a relationship to labor that has a regionwide, ontoepistemic function to support modern belonging." (p.67)

[19] https://www.opendemocracy.net/brexitinc/paul-hilder/they-were-planning-on-stealing-election-explosive-new-tapes-reveal-cambridg?fbclid=IwAR318VHjQVBvrCAiDJNAsWLhRGTPfxz-d9SelXeiMKK68M6wOhMZMGOSt4o

[20] https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/07/the-great-british-brexit-robbery-hijacked-democracy

[21] https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-consulting-firms-in-data-scandal-first-partnered-on-project-in/

[22] For more on this topic, read: Barry Brummett & Margaret Carlisle Duncan Toward a discursive ontology of media, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication,* 9:3, 229-249, 1992. DOI: 10.1080/15295039209366829

[23] See Glossary.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Personal Interview. Conducted in person. Port of Spain. January 2018.

[26] Ibid.

[27] #lifeinleggings is a movement/organisation that originated in Barbados. It specifically tackles gender-based violence in the Caribbean. Founded in 2016. https://twitter.com/hashtag/lifeinleggings?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Ehashtag

https://twitter.com/TheOfficialLIL

[28] Hall 1993

[29] http://www.sportskeeda.com/cricket/west-indies-cricket-nonchalantly-delightful. Retrieved 5/1/2015.

[30] James 1967

[31] Beckles 1998

[32] http://www.espncricinfo.com/ci/engine/current/match/62888.html

[33] (Beckles, 1995 p.116)

[34] 365 not out vs Pakistan at Sabina Park, Jamaica in 1958. A record that stood until 1994 with Brian Lara's 375 run innings at The Antigua Recreation Ground vs England.

[35] The reaction of the South African authorities to the selection of Basil D'Oliveira, a "Cape Coloured" South African, by the England Test and County Cricket Board

[36] Dunn (2004) p.74

[37] Dayan & Katz 1992

[38] Scannell 2014

[39] Group interview. Conducted in person. Queen's Park Oval. January 2013.

[40] Made infamous by England's South-African born captain Tony Grieg's promise to make the West Indians 'grovel'

[41] In 1995, *Wisden Cricket Monthly* published an article *Is it in the Blood* that called into question the allegiances of foreign born nationals. England cricketers Phillip De Freitas and Devon Malcolm, both West Indian born sued for libel and were awarded substantial damages.

[42] * see note 34

[43] *An Aspect of Creolisation,* Maurice St. Pierre p.131

[44] Group Interview. Conducted in person. Barataria. February 2013.

[45] As at February 2019, only 28 players of East Indian ancestry have represented the West Indies cricket team.

[46] The late Caribbean economist Norman Girvan (2002) succinctly stating the issue 'Their scale of production is a fraction of what obtains in the larger countries, so their unit costs of production are higher. Their infrastructure costs are higher because of the diseconomies of small scale. Productivity is low because of limited human and physical capital.' (p.10)

[47] Barbados 92%

Antigua 91%

Trinidad and Tobago 89%

Jamaica 76%

[48] Once the production has been made, the only cost involved is distribution. A TV station can buy the latest American soap or drama for a series run of 13 shows for US$4,000 to US$12,000. It is estimated that American programmes cost one-tenth to one-third what it costs to produce local programmes. (Farrell, 2010)

[49] Holden (2006)

[50] Quoted by *Asia Times*, April 23, 2005 http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/GD23Df05.html Retrieved May 2015

[51] The major market for three of the sports which, along with cricket, have specific global audiences (baseball, basketball, ice hockey)

[52] The globalisation of multinational media entities and their economic ties with US transnational corporations already in the region. Lent (1991) cited in Dunn (2004) noted that in the mid-1980s, 77 of the top 100 US corporations had commercial interests in the region.

[53] Holden (2006)

[54] These tournaments, from which the ICC draws all of its revenue, concentrate on the shorter forms of the game (One-day internationals, T20).

[55] including two ICC Cricket World Cups (2019 and 2023), two ICC Champions Trophy tournaments (2017 and 2021) and two ICC World Twenty20 tournaments (2016 and 2020).

[56] Mike Marqusee (1994)

[57] The Reverend Wes Hall, West Indies cricket legend and former administrator. Cited by Holden, 2006.

Caricom is the Caribbean Community

[58] http://www.espncricinfo.com/wc2007/content/story/288885.html

[59] Quoted by *Asia Times*, April 23, 2005 http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/GD23Df05.html.

Retrieved May 2015

[60] *The Age,* March 8, 2008. http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2008/03/07/1204780070687.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap2.

Retrieved May 2015

[61] BBC News. Monday, 26 April 2010. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8643753.stm. May 2015

[62] In *This Sporting Mammon: A Normative Critique of the Commodification of Sport,* which uses 'the world's game' - Association Football - as its central point of engagement, Walsh and Guilianotti define hyper commodification as both the quantitative explosion in the value of sports and the broader, intensive commodification of secondary, non-play aspects of the game. The former process being illustrated by the multiplication in the market value of top clubs, top players, and seats at football stadiums; the latter process instanced by the enormous increases in the value of club merchandising, television contracts with clubs, and the off-field earnings of players. Further arguing that this process engenders greater professionalization and global migration of players, rule-changes to draw in new customers, and a general redefinition of the competitive structures and ethos of the sport.

[63] Group Interview. Conducted in person. Moruga. February 2013.

[64] Mediating the Local Radio and the Neoliberal Cultural Economy of Space in Trinidad

[65] http://www.rediffusion.info/Trinidad/

[66] https://tatt.org.tt/RadioandTV/ListofTelevisionBroadcasters.aspx

[67] https://tatt.org.tt/RadioandTV/ListofRadioBroadcasters.aspx

[68] https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/td.html

[69] Some of the stations were counted more than once per the broadcast description provided.

[70] https://tatt.org.tt/DesktopModules/Bring2mind/DMX/Download.aspx?Command=Core_Download&EntryId=830&PortalId=0&TabId=222

[71] Mass media and the Caribbean

[72] Thirty licenses were granted in February 2005. Balliger

[73] https://newsday.co.tt/2019/05/05/on-choosing-sufi-music-to-mark-memory/?fbclid=IwAR3XZnlowUmdCk7IgyR8u7Wv3Zkxke0d7Hf4iH_HoeYyRoVzfkdfcaKJI0k

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[76] http://legacy.guardian.co.tt/archives/2006-05-07/features1.html

[77] http://www.americanpridemagazine.com/music/jointpop-talks-about-their-album-quicksand/

[78] Mahnke and Uprichard, in *Algorithming the Algorithm* (2014)

[79] https://twitter.com/math_rachel/status/1149502410831740930