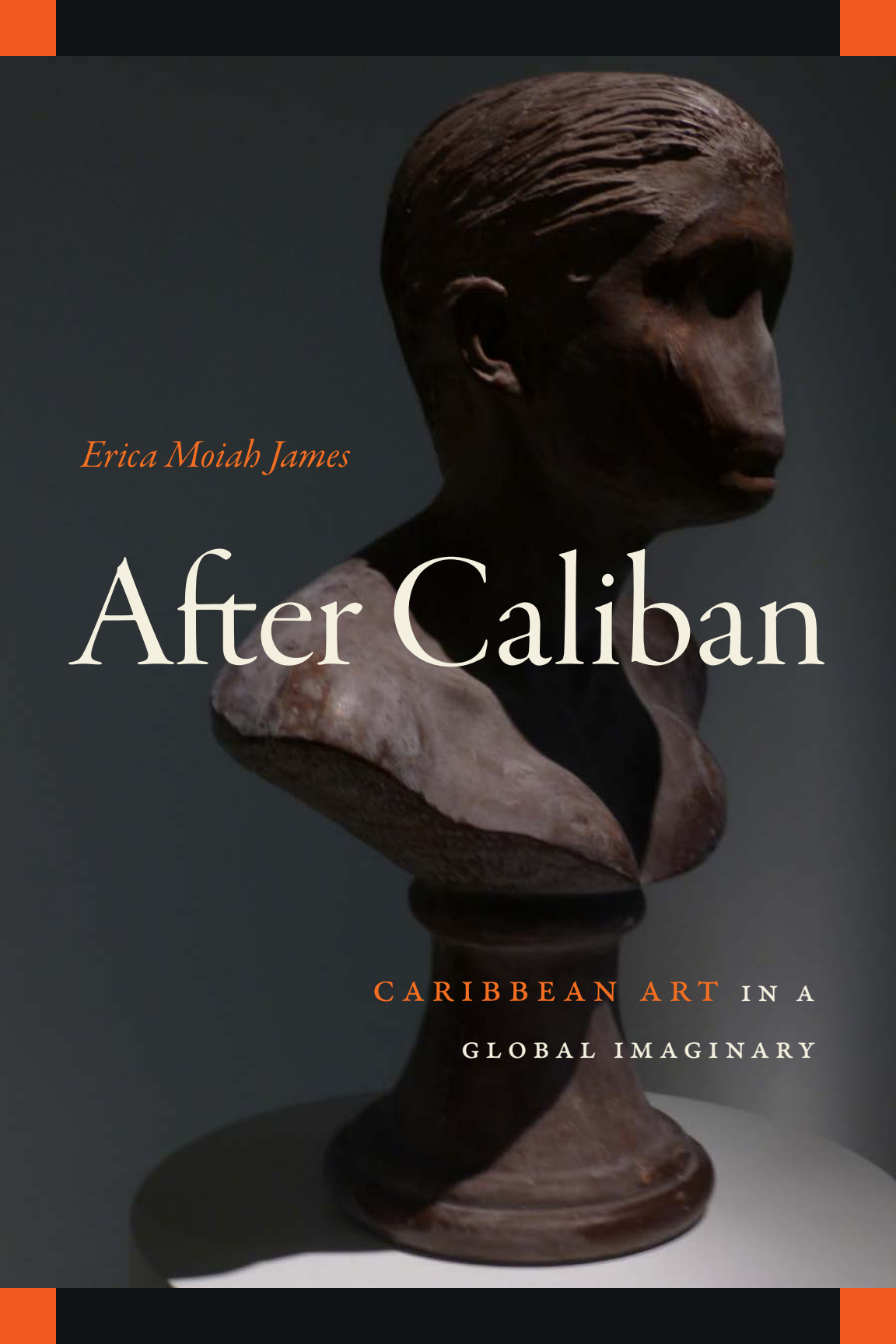




Erica Moiah James

After Caliban

CARIBBEAN ART IN A
GLOBAL IMAGINARY

After Caliban

BUY

THE VISUAL ARTS OF AFRICA AND ITS DIASPORAS

A SERIES EDITED BY KELLIE JONES & STEVEN NELSON

DUKE

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ERICA MOIAH JAMES

After Caliban

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Caribbean Art in a Global Imaginary

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Durham and London

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞

Project Editor: Liz Smith

Designed by Matthew Tauch

Typeset in Garamond Premier Pro and Real Head Pro

by Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: James, Erica Moiah, author.

Title: After Caliban : Caribbean art in a global imaginary / Erica Moiah James.

Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2025. | Series: The visual arts of Africa and its diasporas | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2025004838 (print)

LCCN 2025004839 (ebook)

ISBN 9781478032137 (paperback)

ISBN 9781478028871 (hardcover)

ISBN 9781478061069 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Arts, Caribbean—20th century. | Arts, Caribbean—21st century. | Postcolonialism and the arts—Caribbean Area. |

Arts and globalization—Caribbean Area.

Classification: LCC NX523 .j36 2025 (print) | LCC NX523 (ebook) | DDC

709.729—dc23/eng/20250220

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2025004838>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2025004839>

Cover art: Janine Antoni, *Lick and Lather*, 1993 (detail). One licked-chocolate self-portrait bust on pedestal. © Janine Antoni. Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York. Photo by the author.

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For my grandfather

EDDINGTON BURROWS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I GIVE THANKS,

To the artists, academics, writers, curators, and collectors whose work, conversations, and critiques were important in the formation and development of this project over the many years it took shape: Christopher Cozier, Edouard Duval Carrié, Marc Latamie, Janine Antoni, Joy Gregory, Joscelyn Gardner, Nari Ward, Tavares Strachan, Tomas Esson, Blue Curry, Ricardo Brey, Ebony G. Patterson, Graham Fagen, Mira Schor, the late John Beadle, Antonius Roberts, Tyrone Ferguson, Maxwell Taylor, the late Brent Malone, Dave Smith, Kendal Hanna, Allan Wallace, Ian Gregory Strachan, Eric Williams, Didier William, Jolyon Smith, Clive Stuart, Dawn Davies, the late Jackson Burnside, and the late Belkis Ayón.

I GIVE THANKS,

To the many institutions, private and public archives, and individual researchers and collectors who provided access and worked with me to realize this text: The National Archives of The Bahamas, National Gallery Jamaica, National Library of Jamaica, Institute of Jamaica, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Racine Art Museum, Bass Art Museum, Archives of the *Jamaica Gleaner*, Institute of Contemporary Art Miami, Beinecke Library–Yale University, Humanities Center at the University of Miami, Cuban Heritage Collection at the University of Miami, the Oakley Center for the Humanities and Social Sciences at Williams College, the Clark Art Institute, Visual Identities Art and Design at the University of Johannesburg, the late Alex and Carole Rosenberg, the estate of Belkis Ayón, the estate of Ronald Moody, Colin McGeehan, Adam King and Signe Prois, Lilianne Lugo Herrera, Yolanda Martinez San Miguel and Lisa Rivero, and Penelope Nottage.

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To my editor Rachel Rosekind, who loves words as much as I do but is far better at marshaling that love.

I GIVE THANKS,

To my doctoral mentor, Richard J. Powell, and C. T. Woods-Powell—honorable, brilliant, and kind people. I work every day to earn the faith they have in me.

To the founding board and staff of the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas, especially the late Dr. Gail Saunders and the late Dr. Petrine Archer-Straw, for trusting me with the establishment of that institution and supporting my vision for it and the work. And to Ms. Louanne Morris, who was there from the beginning and protected me from more things than I will ever know or need to know.

I GIVE THANKS,

To my mentors, teachers, colleagues, graduate students, and friends at Vassar College, the University of Chicago, Duke University, the John Hope Franklin Center at Duke, Washington University in St. Louis, Yale University, University of The Bahamas, ICA (Institute of Contemporary Art) Miami, Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, Dean Leonidas Bachas and my colleagues in the School of Arts and Sciences and Department of Art and Art History at the University of Miami.

To the Small Axe Project Team: David Scott, Wayne Modest, Jerry Philogene, Juliet Ali, and Vanessa Perez.

I GIVE THANKS.

I often say that I have the very best friends in the world. Some I have known my entire life, and others are more recent. But in their own way, each has given me so much. I took so long to finish this book that a few of my older friends are no longer here, but I feel their joy in this moment. Thank you to Suzette Knowles Parker, Dionne Benjamin-Smith, Bernadette Butler, Dionne Joseph-Scott, Don Ashford Stubbs, Virginia Hopson, Mora Beauchamp-Byrd, Patricia J. Saunders, Paul Rodgers, Christian Campbell, Anthony Jervis, Thomas Mtumwa Cleare, Richard Gray, Lawrence Bascom, and the late Gloria Wilson and Robert Eliot Johnson.

I GIVE THANKS.

To my small but mighty “Hanna, Heastie, Tynes” clan and James and King families, my aunts, uncles, and cousins and my precious sisters Evadnie and Keshia, and their children, my nephews Rohan, Myles, Noah, and August.

To my late father, Carmi Beriah “C.B.” James, who helped me to understand the value of laughter, forgiveness, and joy in others.

To my beautiful mother—Elverna Burrows-James. Mummy is a woman who values life more than anyone I know and is a fierce mama bear with her love. As an octogenarian, she would still enter a fistfight to defend me, and no one trusts me more. Who can ever fully articulate the hope of a mother for her children? My joy, my achievements, all belong to my mother.

I GIVE THANKS.

Through the years I have lived with an amazing group of dachshunds and one cocker spaniel, the indomitable Winnie. Where would I be without the late Wallace “Wally” Thurman, Winnie and Laila, Biggie Smalls, and Georgia? They greeted me each day with such gusto that it always felt I must have done something good to deserve their joy. Many evenings they kept me company and protected me as I wrote or gardened away my stress deep into the night. On those beautiful evenings they never left my side.

I GIVE THANKS.

To my neighborhood. A thousand lives. A million stories. An Epic. Seventh Street. The “Black” Grove.

To Ken Wissoker, Kate Mullen, Liz Smith, Steven Baker, the awesome series editors Kellie Jones and Steven Nelson, and the entire Duke University Press team for their patience, precision, and care.

And finally, to the good Lord, I give thanks.

This book is dedicated to my grandfather, Eddington “Eddie” Burrows, the best person I have ever known.

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INTRODUCTION

“Wat Wrong wit Dis Place?”

JOHN LAHR: Most people of color who come to America [from the Caribbean] and encounter it, especially in the '50s, didn't have an opportunity to tell their stories to too many people, necessarily, or to many people that were listening. And the thing that is so extraordinary to me is that somehow you made that transition almost *effortlessly*.

GEOFFREY HOLDER: I walk through doors.

JOHN LAHR: Now, why, what do you attribute that to?

GEOFFREY HOLDER: I walk through doors.

If I am not wanted in a place. There is somethin' wrong with de place, not me.

GEOFFREY L. HOLDER IN CONVERSATION WITH JOHN LAHR

Several years ago, I was invited to speak on a panel accompanying an exhibition of new work by the Martinican-born artist Marc Latamie. In the months leading up to the event, I had several discussions with the organizers about my contribution. Familiar with Latamie's oeuvre and fascinated, yet deeply troubled, by the ways the trope of Shakespeare's Caliban had been historically applied to the Caribbean, I insisted that the conversation neither begin with nor be framed by this discursive boundary and relational construct.¹

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These aspirations may well have been logistically and conceptually unachievable in the setting.² Martinican poet, writer, and politician Aimé Césaire's final play, *A Tempest* (1969), attempts to decolonize Shakespeare's Caliban and, through a retelling of his story as allegory, the Caribbean itself. Both the exhibition and my contribution centered on a Martinican artist whose oeuvre portrays and promotes similar decolonizing aspirations. The connection seemed intuitive and obvious.

However, at the time, Césaire's *A Tempest* was not widely known or discussed beyond the academy. Although, as I will argue, it is a seminal intervention in the decolonial process, I did not think it would provide the most generative framing for Latamie's work in a public setting, without substantial buttressing. More than four hundred years after Caliban's first appearance in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), it was his relationship to Prospero in the 1611 text that still dominated popular characterizations of the enduring colonizer-colonized connection in the Caribbean—now borne by Caliban's so-called children. This anachronistic and infantilizing graft endures as allegory despite its patent failure to account for the complexities of the contemporary landscape. As conceptual and discursive architecture, it seals the Caribbean within a neocolonial cul-de-sac, rendering a public conversation focused on Latamie's decolonizing artwork nearly impossible.³

Despite my request, when the panel convened that early summer evening, the moderator opened by declaring Latamie a “child of Caliban.” A quick read of the room suggested that the reference, regardless of its source, did not resonate with those gathered. As the night wore on, I became more certain of the need to reorient the Caribbean contemporary art conversation away from this trope. When my turn came, I set aside Caliban and instead asked the audience to consider Latamie's installation in relation to the practices of other contemporary global Caribbean artists. I cited Ebony G. Patterson, whose art, rooted in the Jamaican experience, confidently affirms her subject's humanity amid postcolonial challenges. I discussed Magdalena Campos Pons, who, like Latamie, centers local and personal memories as history through performance, sculpture, and installation. Finally, I positioned Latamie's work in conversation with Blue Curry's playful yet trenchant interventions in Caribbean consumerism, tourism, and iconography. I hoped that my approach would open new horizons to explore Latamie's art and its relational webs and influence. Instead it became clear that once Caliban entered the room, the dimensions

of Latamie's production, its engagement with contemporary practices, the signifying possibilities of absinthe and the story of Lumina Sophie—fundamental elements of the exhibition that initiated the gathering and contextualized its decolonizing work—would be largely subsumed by the weight of this fictional-historical trope. It remains one of the most frustrating public panels I have ever participated in.

Long before the exhibition opened, Marc Latamie's work had departed from and exceeded the metaphorical limits of Shakespeare's Caliban. The panel affirmed that the critical discourse around it had not kept pace. The event encouraged me to rethink Latamie's position as a *global Caribbean artist* and his oeuvre's relationship with Césaire's reimagination of this figure. By "global Caribbean artist," I refer to artists that may or may not have been born in the Caribbean or be of Caribbean descent, and who engage the Caribbean as a conceptual point of departure or constitutive idea in their work. These artists practice around the world, including the Caribbean. Their work is not wholly directed to the Caribbean but is prismatic in character, meaning that its critical capacity permits participation in multiple conversations simultaneously. Latamie's work embodies this dynamic. Yet, if a conceptual connection between him and Césaire, channeled through a revision of Shakespeare's Caliban, existed, why had no one teased out the linkages beyond their common place of birth? If both were engaged in ongoing intergenerational decolonial action in the aesthetic realm, what was the shared character of their intervention? Might it be possible to see Césaire's *A Tempest* as precedent for the work of global Caribbean artists like Latamie in the 1990s? And, if so, how might one render the contours of an emergent global Caribbean art history through this work?

This book considers these questions and offers a response. It positions Césaire's *A Tempest* as a decolonizing work of art in concept, form, and content; a work that heralds the decolonial labor of global Caribbean art in the 1990s. Like many artists of his generation, Latamie reimagines history to enact a Derridean *différance* in relation to the theoretical arrangements of Césaire's Caliban and the colonial theater in which he is cast. My employment of *différance* in this context aligns with that of Stuart Hall, who describes it as "a marker which sets up a disturbance in our settled understanding or translation of the word/concept [or work of art, setting it] in motion to new meanings without erasing the *trace* of its other meanings."⁴ While Latamie's art accounts for Caliban's discursive trace in ways

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aligned with Césaire's Caliban, I argue that it also breaks free of its confines through the language of contemporary art to become what Césaire's decolonial imagination conjured.

Akin to Geoffrey Holder's declaration in this introduction's epigraph, this book posits that these global artists rejected the geographical and conceptual marginalization of their work, but doing so was by no means an effortless enterprise. The 1990s marked an abyss for critical approaches to Caribbean art. The work of artists tied to places outside metropolises was ensnared in temporally delimited and delimiting colonial models intended to elide and obfuscate its critical heft. Approaches to art from these so-called margins presented a cognitive and discursive feedback loop that reinforced and reinscribed paradigms of power tied to notions of authenticity and nation that were predicated by the colonialist project, even as the authority of art history's disciplinary narrative was increasingly called into question.

This book reimagines this work's critical valence in relation to the transformative landscape of global art histories and curatorial practices in the 1990s. It uncovers its decolonizing work and uplifts global Caribbean artists' assertion of their right to occupy, exist, and move freely within the art world during this period. Their work points toward a critical rethinking, a political and aesthetic *dechoukaj*,⁵ of this atrophied order; a reworlding of the art worlds they chose to occupy.

To repurpose a metaphor exceptionally deployed by Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker toward decidedly different ends, colonialism does not have a single face.⁶ As the consort of early capitalism, it too is a "many-headed hydra" set loose on the world with a unified goal of extraction, power, and control. In prioritizing the work of artists emerging in this decade, this book pointedly examines the colonialist underpinnings of the discipline of art history and explores how Caribbean artists, intimate with its apparatus, unmoored its multivalent foundations. All artists discussed in this book confront history and historicization in their work differently. They employ multiple mediums and approaches and draw on and in various sociopolitical conditions, both inside and outside the geographic Caribbean as subject. Following Césaire, they practice what I describe as *autohistoriography*, the process by which formerly colonized people reengage and reauthor official history rendered from a colonial perspective. In rewriting and reimagining these narratives, they become "historical actors," agents of decolonization within postcoloniality, or what David

Scott terms the “political-theoretical” project centrally concerned with the “decolonization of representation; the decolonization of the West’s theory of the non-West.”⁷ In this critical arena, there are no masters or margins. Like Césaire, like Holder, global Caribbean artists who emerged in the 1990s recognized thresholds, then pushed past and stepped beyond them toward new horizons.

After Caliban: Caribbean Art in the Global Imaginary thus argues that in *A Tempest* Aimé Césaire breaks apart the certainty of colonial relationships entombed in Shakespeare’s play through the practice of autohistoriography and the reimagination of form. In the process he models the work of Caribbean artists wherever they are in the world in taking similar control over narratives, histories, and conditions that seek to delimit their creative imagination and work. The book posits that this generation of artists, whether consciously aware of it or not, did just that, in ways specific to their practices. Through the work of Marc Latamie, Janine Antoni, Belkis Ayón, Edouard Duval-Carrié, Christopher Cozier, and the Italian-born Maurizio Cattelan, it offers an expansive reading of what *Caribbean* and specifically what being an artist in the “global Caribbean” came to mean, revealing ways these and countless artists like them navigated various problem spaces to avoid and/or overcome the marginalization of their work as “Caribbean” at the time.

In 1999 Cattelan declared that the Caribbean did not exist in the art world. This book pushes against that claim to write a new art history of this period; one that narrates beyond the limits of the discourse on this work during the time it was created. It offers a dense critical reengagement with this art and maps how, through their oeuvres, and where possible by exercising control over the discourse around their work, these artists and many others like them created art that engaged multiple histories simultaneously to craft decolonial autohistoriographies through aesthetics. In process the art that grounds this book refuses the lens of marginalization; it navigates difficult critical terrains, crafts new forms in order to make transformative demands of local and global art histories, to rise to the upper echelons of regard in contemporary art in ways Césaire would recognize and applaud.

This introduction maps this archive and argument first by carefully assessing Aimé Césaire’s work and positioning it within the social and political terrain in which *A Tempest* emerged, to illuminate the critical strategies his reimagination of Caliban in *A Tempest* performs. It then

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returns to the work of Latamie, using Césaire's approach as a model. This methodology repeats in each chapter of the book, architecting a text, which like *A Tempest*, becomes decolonial in process and form.

DECOLONIZING CALIBAN

What do I mean when I propose that as a work of art Césaire's *A Tempest* performs the decolonization of the West's theory of the non-West, and then claim that contemporary artists reenact this process through their work again and again?

Peter Hulme has described Shakespeare's Caliban as "a compromised formation," a character that "can exist only within discourse."⁸ Conceptually confined and "resistant to visualization," Caliban has served as a perennially versatile metaphor for extending the language of Caribbean abjection.⁹ He is human-like but not human—the colonizers' foil—and is a summation of their "dishonest equation" whereby self-proclaimed altruism defined their artillery and ideology in the battle of civilization against savagery.¹⁰

Exactly thirty years after his long-form poem *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal: Return to My Native Land* (1939), Césaire published his revision of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the drama *A Tempest*. His shift in genre was intentional. In a series of conversations with Françoise Vergès toward the end of his life, Césaire expressed his persistent desire to reach people through his work.¹¹ He initially turned to poetry, believing it most amenable to public discourse. But, beginning in the 1940s, he redirected his public voice first to historical biography (*Toussaint Louverture*, 1960) then to the theater. In his dramatic works, Césaire grappled with the possibilities of postcolonial nationhood and the prospect of freedom. In the process, he publicly exhibited an increasingly rare intellectual vulnerability and transparency. This important trajectory adds both dimension and clarity to his decolonization of Caliban, contextualizing *A Tempest* as decolonial act and artwork within the movements of its time and intertwining with the ways Caribbean art and art history move beyond political boundaries toward a philosophy of ideas grounded in history.

By the time *A Tempest* was published in 1969, Césaire's position on sovereignty in the postcolonial world was far more nuanced than when he began serving as mayor of Fort-de-France and a member of the French Assembly, drafting legislation favoring department status for all French colonies (1946). Although some view his opposition to independence

as a misfire by an otherwise brilliant mind, to me, it represents a courageous *détournement*. When theory converged with reality, Césaire met the moment by changing course, in contravention to the global Pan-African momentum for independence. As Vergès noted, Césaire's decision has often been framed around the binary of assimilation (department status) versus autonomy (independence). But I posit that this reductive scaffolding effaces the complexities of Césaire's cognition and the contemporary political landscape. In conversation with Vergès, Césaire reflected on his decision to decouple political independence and autonomy and challenge the equation of independence with freedom: "On one end you have assimilation; on the other, independence. If you bring them together, you go beyond both to reach another position, which is broader, more humane, and more in line with our goals. I am against assimilation. . . . I'm for independence. . . . My own position is neither pro-independence nor pro-assimilation, but pro-autonomy, which means preserving our uniqueness, our own institutional practices, our own ideals, all while belonging to a greater whole."¹² Sixty years on, the ongoing opposition to his stance still baffled him.¹³ He firmly believed that given the full context, he had made the right, albeit imperfect, decision. Further, while Césaire led the action and shaped its rationale, it's worth remembering that a majority in the French Caribbean Islands agreed to proceed alongside him.

In retrospect, Césaire's support of department status amid the global Pan-African independence movement reflected core beliefs and observations that inform *A Tempest* and, through it, this book. He was largely unmoved by rhetoric, ideology, or romantic notions of liberation. A pragmatic Marxist with an ongoing disdain for *békés* and the Black petit bourgeois, whom he saw as *békés'* foot soldiers,¹⁴ Césaire sought a path forward toward freedom. He did not associate that path with independence. His research and experiences had revealed the limits of that connection in ways that deeply impacted his thinking.

Césaire studied the period's liberation movements and carefully tracked the social, cultural, economic, and political trajectories of former colonial nations. He was particularly interested in Black postindependence leadership and its dynamics in Haiti and the Congo, as exemplified in the historical biography *Toussaint Louverture*; the plays *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe* (The Tragedy of King Christophe, 1963) and *Une Saison au Congo* (A Season in the Congo, 1966); and later *A Tempest*. His position toward Haiti and Haitian leadership after the revolution gained nuance during an extended stay there in the 1940s.

Suzanne and Aimé Césaire arrived in Haiti in May 1944.¹⁵ Although Suzanne returned to Martinique in October to care for their children, Aimé stayed through December of that year. It was a troubling visit for someone who had long admired, studied, and sought to understand the Haitian Revolution. In a letter to the French anthropologist Henry Seyrig while there, Césaire expressed profound disappointment, lamenting that he “suffered from his interactions with ‘la petite bourgeoisie de couleur (the lower-middle class mulattoes),’” whom he found “mediocre and subject to prejudice.” Césaire had long grappled with how to bridge the divide between the intelligentsia and everyday citizens and viewed ordinary Haitians as a “good and unfortunate people.”¹⁶ He observed that the Haitian Revolution’s success had hinged on the mulatto class’s unification with enslaved Africans under Louverture’s leadership, representing a quintessential illustration of what is possible when oppressed people, regardless of color and class, coalesce under the banner of a shared vision. Césaire refused to criticize Louverture for walking into his betrayal or to dismiss Henri Christophe as a mimic of French royalty, as was and still is common. Rather, he leapfrogged over superficial and expedient misreadings to recognize Louverture’s tactical genius and Christophe as “a deep thinker who suffered real anguish.”¹⁷

Césaire’s time in Haiti made clear to him that Toussaint, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and Christophe had confronted overwhelming obstacles; and that the revolutionary alliance that delivered success did not and could not last, since the problems of Haiti before revolution—divisions based on race and class—did not magically disappear after it ended. The mulatto class eventually took power and “never ceded” it. While he greatly admired the achievements of its revolution, Haiti exemplified for Césaire the difficulties of building nations in formerly colonized spaces. Years later, he reflected: “In Haiti I saw above all else what shouldn’t be done! A country that had supposedly won freedom, won independence, and which I saw more miserable than Martinique, a French colony!” In Haiti, intellectuals cut themselves off from the people. “It was tragic, and Martinique could have gone in the same direction.”¹⁸

Césaire’s disappointment was palpable. The cautionary tale of Haiti, coupled with the power of Martinique’s *békés*, whom he regarded in the same vein as Haiti’s wealthy white and mulatto class, clearly influenced his support for departmental status. His decision was likewise informed by a lifelong allegiance to Marxism, if not communism. To choose independence from France in 1946 meant that nothing would stand in the

way of the economically dominant béké class gaining even more power on the island, leaving the Black majority defenseless against their exploitation. For Césaire, such a predicament was untenable.

Césaire's research and creative focus on formerly colonized, predominantly Black and mixed-race societies in the wake of revolution or independence are notable. I am not convinced he believed a true postcolonial condition had been realized by the late 1960s. Rather, his execution of *A Tempest* frames up a door for a new generation to open on the path to such an achievement. Césaire understood colonialism and the need to decolonize, but in his purview, independence initiated neocolonial forces rather than a postcolonial condition; neocolonialism was, he declared, not "the abolition of the colonial world, . . . only its reorganization."¹⁹ Independence was neither a utopia nor an entrée to a postcolonial future; at best it was measured freedom, if such a thing existed. For Césaire, freedom encompassed the totality of what it means to be human—the political, economic, social, historical, and cultural. It could not be apportioned. This fullness of vision registers in his reimagination of Caliban as both human and historical actor within neocolonial contexts.

Césaire's position toward sovereignty and postcolonial nationhood was also influenced by pragmatic and moral factors. He did not regard existing local institutions in colonized places like Martinique as robust enough to hold békés and those bound to them accountable. Békés controlled the plantation economy and would continue to do so. Only France had legal structures in place to delimit the békés and protect the working class. Raising six children with his wife on an island with no major resources or industry, Césaire was also no doubt sensitive to the practical needs of Martinicans. Department status meant that they would be French, and to be French meant that they were entitled to the same benefits as French citizens—equal pay for work, equal benefits.²⁰ Though entitlement was no guarantee, theoretically, the position conferred value.

Césaire's decision also stemmed from his position on slavery and the prospect of reparations, which has been viewed with increasing scrutiny given the current reparations movement in the Caribbean, led in part by Sir Hilary Beckles. Césaire deemed slavery "irreparable." In response, Vergès asked him whether it was possible in a capitalist society to pay one's way out of genocide and dehumanizing violence and whether one can quantify the "innumerable consequences [of slavery] into a tidy sum." Césaire did not waver in his response:

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For me no act can put an end to it. It's irreparable. It's done. It's history. I can't do anything about it. . . . I know the Western world too well: "All right dear friend, how much? I'll give you half of that to pay off the slave trade. Okay? It's a deal!" Then it's over: they repaired the matter. But for me it's utterly irreparable. I don't really like the term "reparation." It implies that repairing the matter is possible. The West has to do something, it has to provide aid to countries as they develop, help them thrive. It owes us this aid, but I don't believe a simple check can pay for reparations. It's a question of aid, not a contract. It's purely moral.²¹

These important considerations informed Césaire's political and creative articulations. And as Jacqueline Frost and Jorge E. Lefevre Tavárez propose, Césaire's dramatic work explores answers to these questions of "revolutionary social transformation" in postindependent Black societies not as "tales of tragically flawed leaders and destined defeats" but as "elaborations of a notion of the tragic [in] . . . the long struggle for sovereignty [in the Caribbean]."²² He wanted political independence but not without genuine autonomy. Within the system of colonialism and neocolonialism he observed, independence was doomed to severe compromise, if not failure; it could not sufficiently address the decolonization of economies, class, culture, and histories.

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the colonizers eventually leave the island. Caliban's future is rendered uncertain, though presumably he and his people regain control. But in Césaire's *redux* the possibility of sovereignty and freedom through a postcolonial nation-state is foreclosed. Drawing on Yarimar Bonilla's work on sovereignty in the context of the French Caribbean and Gary Wilder's exploration of the relationship between Négritude and decolonization, or what Wilder describes as the possibility of a "transcontinental political association" over state sovereignty,²³ I argue that the concluding scenes of *A Tempest* reflect Césaire's belief that postcolonial sovereignty within the container of the nation-state was possible but improbable in the Caribbean. Like Wilder, I posit that through his careful study of Black liberation struggles in the wake of the Pan-Africanist independence movement—made evident in the first two of his three plays—Césaire "recognized that colonial emancipation posed a genuine problem whose institutional solution was not self-evident."²⁴ Following Frost and Tavárez, I do not see this as a tragic position in the literal sense but instead recognize its "potential instead of implausibility."²⁵ In my view—and pace Wilder—for Césaire "a national state was only one

of *many possible* frameworks within which self-determination could be exercised. He saw no necessary relationship between colonial emancipation and national liberation.”²⁶ In other words, statehood, a perceived portal into postcoloniality within the Pan-African movement, was not a precondition of freedom. *A Tempest* suggests that Césaire disaggregated nationhood and freedom, choosing to fight for the latter on the individual and collective level of psychology and in the realm of art and culture.

Césaire’s use of the theatrical arts as a decolonizing tool was not his alone; it is vital that we understand the ways it is tethered to the work and ethos of his wife, Suzanne. Kara M. Rabbitt’s work has been illuminating in this regard. I propose that Suzanne’s “almost revolutionary” decision to rewrite and produce Lafcadio Hearn’s novel *Youma: The Story of a West Indian Slave* as the play *Aurore de la Liberté* (*The Dawn of Liberty*) in a “popular” rather than “professional” production in 1952 more than likely influenced her husband’s transition from poetry and prose to plays, providing a template for his Shakespearean recasting seventeen years later.²⁷ The public discursive intention of Suzanne and Aimé Césaire’s work is notable. Art had to reach people. This intentionality surfaces in the work of global Caribbean artists in significant ways.

Although a full transcript of the play is now lost, it is known that *The Dawn of Liberty* focused on the May 22 and 23, 1848, slave uprising in Martinique and was written and produced a few years after the event’s centennial. In Hearn’s novel, *Youma*, a slave raised in a white household, sacrifices her life as an act of preternatural loyalty to her enslavers on the very night Martinicans rise to claim their freedom, unaware that slavery has already been abolished in France. Although the work’s details cannot be assessed, the title Suzanne Césaire chose for her reinterpretation suggests that she shifted narrative positions from *Youma*’s personal story to a community narrative that subsumed the individual within collectively articulated Black liberation efforts. As Rabbit observes, at the time of her rewrite, the events of May 1848 were not officially recognized: “What was present until [1998 as official history] was French legacy rather than Martinican agency.” Suzanne Césaire’s decision to rewrite Hearn’s novel as a play and perform it in the wake of the French government’s decision to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the April 1848 emancipation proclamation, instead of the May 1848 uprising, despite the fact that emancipation was not formally announced on the island until June of that year, evidenced her navigation of “contemporary questions of self-determina[tion]” through the “historic events the play referenced” and revised.²⁸

Furthermore, and this is extremely important in the context of this book, Suzanne Césaire's usurpation of a seminal event in Black Martinican history that had been narratively colonized spoke "to the individual acts and collective refusals of men and women overturning the official story to create their own histories."²⁹ By appropriating and transforming Hearn's text, Suzanne Césaire engaged in autohistoriography, decolonizing "the West's theory of the non-West" by setting aside French perspectives of 1848 and centering Black Martinican accounts of their liberation. In the process, the play models how art can mobilize new political visions and activate political agency. Her recharacterization of Youma prefigures Aimé's approach to Caliban. It is art doing decolonial work.

RECASTING *A TEMPEST*

A Tempest is the most conceptual of Césaire's three plays. Written ten years after his oft-cited speech turned essay "L'homme de culture et ses responsabilités" (The Man of Culture and His Responsibilities), it represents a cognitive plateau—a pragmatic acceptance of what is and what must come. While writing it, Césaire returned to ideas introduced in the earlier essay for a speech delivered at the Havana Cultural Congress of 1968. By then he had come to believe that the work of Louverture, Dessalines, Christophe, Patrice Lumumba, and other Black revolutionaries belonged to the future, a world that did not yet exist.³⁰ The futurist aspect of Black liberation he cites is a key element in Césaire's thinking in the 1960s and presages the work of the generational visual artists featured in this text. It also suggests an appreciation for the uniquely nonlinear character of Caribbean modernism.

Adlai Murdoch's illumination of the potential impact of France's 1931 Colonial Exposition on Césaire's 1946 decision yields insight as to what I see as his historically based liberatory futurism. Murdoch proposes that, when Césaire, Léopold Senghor, and Léon Damas developed Négritude in the 1930s, it was seen as "an agent of challenge and change. . . . [It] articulated a black consciousness aimed at rehabilitating, constructing and valorizing identity on the individual and communal levels."³¹ As an emancipatory discourse, Négritude struck at the heart of colonial othering. By centering and valuing Blackness, Murdoch posits, the movement exposed the "hypocrisy that had long undergirded western claims to a superiority of hu-

manism and reason even as the most egregious colonial depredations and exploitations took place” and, in this way, “inscribe[d] a new modernity for blackness.”³²

Caribbean modernism and the practices that constitute it manifest as ways of being that are atemporal, spatially boundless, and ongoing. What Murdoch describes is a process of dissembling, reimagining, and remaking—a reworlding that sows fertile ground for Black things and Black life. This humanist modernism necessarily takes shape as refusal of Black and colonial abjection, stasis, and marginalization in service to a world yet to come. It is an ethos that centers art’s decolonizing work, as encapsulated in *The Dawn of Liberty*, *A Tempest*, and Marc Latamie’s oeuvre.

A Tempest arrived in the wake of World War II, ongoing revolutions, and independence movements and at the point of the formation and continued growth of regional and transcontinental cultural events and organizations. In 1950 the West Indian Cricket Team defeated Britain in a powerful display of the colony David defeating the colonizer Goliath that reverberated across the empire. Two years later, in 1952, the first Caribbean Festival of the Arts took place in San Juan, Puerto Rico; Aimé Césaire’s former student Frantz Fanon published his first major text, *Black Skin, White Masks*; and Suzanne Césaire’s *The Dawn of Liberty* was staged. That same year, riots erupted during a sugar workers’ strike in Guadeloupe against French rule and economic stagnation. Several people were killed when French police fired on the crowd of striking workers.

Four years later Césaire resigned from the French Communist party in a scathing letter addressed to Maurice Thorez, party chair, denouncing its racism. Later that year he delivered the speech “Culture et colonisation” at the First International Conference of Black Writers and Artists in Paris. The talk was included in the inaugural issue of Alioune Diop’s groundbreaking publication *Présence Africaine* the following year. The year 1957 marked Haiti’s election of François Duvalier and the inauguration of the Caribbean Festival of Arts, CARIFESTA (1957–67). In 1958 the Parti Progressiste Martiniquais formed, triggering protests on the streets of Fort-de-France demanding independence. That same year, the first Institute of Caribbean Studies was established at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, just as the West Indian Federation coalesced. The following year saw the irruption of the Cuban Revolution, and Césaire attended the International Congress of Black Artists and Writers in Rome, where he delivered the speech “The Man of Culture and His Responsibilities.”

Meanwhile, in Paris, a young Martinican poet named Édouard Glissant was forming the Front Antillo-Guyanais, a group calling for Martinique's independence and its integration into the Caribbean.

For Césaire and the wider Caribbean, the 1960s were filled with tragedy and triumph. The decade opened with the publication of George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile*, which includes a reading of *The Tempest* and a critical engagement with Caliban, guided by a luminous invocation of Césaire's poetry. Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* was also published at this time. The book's opening chapter, "On National Culture," vocalizes many of Césaire's concerns about neocolonial sovereignty and the role of the *békés* and *petit bourgeois* in fostering Black oppression in postindependent colonial states. Fanon died soon after the book was released.

In 1962 the West Indian Federation, a grand experiment in regional collective governance, dissolved, as Trinidad and Jamaica claimed independence from Britain and the Cuban Missile Crisis unfolded. The following year Césaire published *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe*, and he and Suzanne divorced after twenty-five years of marriage. Notably, C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (originally published in 1939) was reissued that year with a new appendix, and the March on Washington took place in the United States. The year ended with John F. Kennedy's shocking assassination, the first in a series of successive high-profile murders that included Malcolm X (1965), Martin Luther King Jr. (1968), and Robert F. Kennedy (1968).

In April 1966 the First World Festival of the Arts was held in Senegal, where *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe* was performed by a France-based troupe led by Guadeloupean-French filmmaker Sarah Maldoror and Haitian actor and singer Toto Bissainthe. The Caribbean Artist Movement formed in London, and Césaire published the play *Une Saison au Congo*, based on the rise and fall of Patrice Lumumba. Barbados also gained independence from Britain. Tragically, Suzanne Césaire died on May 16 in Yvelines, France, of a brain tumor.

More labor riots erupted in Guadeloupe in 1967, and in December of that year, Césaire arrived in Havana to participate in the 1968 Havana Cultural Congress.

I cite this history to make clear that Aimé Césaire played a central role in most, if not all, major Pan-Caribbean and Pan-African gatherings across the Black Atlantic in the 1950s and '60s. His presence and voice were highly regarded, and he was granted honored roles in key assemblies that positioned arts and letters as a critical component in the struggle for

political liberation. In this expansive context, *A Tempest* resides as a future-driven text, a theoretical form in which Césaire staked out generative visions and pathways in a landscape he may have known best.

If the Prospero-Caliban relationship in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* prefigures that between colonizer and colonized, Césaire's recasting warns that postcoloniality's deliverance of political sovereignty and personal freedom, whether secured through independence or through revolution, was theoretically plausible but limited in its ability to clear a path to freedom.³³ In Césaire's *A Tempest*, Prospero, the colonizer, never changes and never leaves the island. It is Caliban who is recast as the transformed and transformative figure.

For Césaire, colonialism established differences between colonizers and colonized based on a willful misrecognition of the colonized as approximations of human beings (Caliban figures). This was affirmed by who possessed economic, political, and territorial control and power, and who didn't. In this way, postcolonialism was configured as a psychic state; art had the capacity to unveil and unmask the colonizer's imposed binary and usher in freedom.³⁴ This position is transmuted through Caliban. At the end of the play, Prospero expresses a desire to live peaceably with Caliban. Rejecting his desires, Caliban replies that he isn't interested in peace but in freedom. Unable to accept his wishes being ignored, Prospero continues to press Caliban to affirm them. Tired of Prospero's refusal to listen, Caliban delivers a response that serves as the apex of the play:

For years I bowed my head
for years I took it, all of it—
your insults, your ingratitude . . .
and worst of all, more degrading than all the rest,
your condescension.
But now it's over! . . .
Prospero you're a great magician:
you're an old hand at deception.
And you lied to me so much,
about the world, about myself,
that you ended up by imposing on me
an image of myself:
underdeveloped, in your words, undercompetent
that's how you made me see myself!
And I hate that image . . . and it's false!

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But now I know you, you old cancer,
And I also know myself!
And I know that one day
my bare fist, just that
will be enough to crush your world!
The old world is crumbling down!³⁵

In this remarkably sure-footed declaration, Caliban speaks himself into an emancipatory existence. In so doing, he calls on the Yoruba god Shango and thereby reorients to the foundations of his African past. Shango is the god of lightning and thunder, the god of protection, justice, male virility, and vengeance.³⁶ What is most important, he is the son of the creator god Obatala. No longer Hulme's "compromised formation," Caliban has (re)created himself as fully human. While Prospero continues to seek absolution and grows infuriated by Caliban's disregard, Caliban ends the conversation. And his evocation of Shango marks his last word on the matter. In Césaire's retelling, Caliban does not produce offspring. There are no children. As an emancipatory figure, he represents the close of one chapter and the start of another.

CARIBBEAN STYLE

In his letters to Henri Seyrig in the 1940s, Césaire affirmed the presence of a "Caribbean genius, a Caribbean style" in arts and culture. This book follows in his footsteps to explore a unifying ethos in 1990s Caribbean art that not only deeply aligns with Césaire's view on the decolonizing impact of autohistoriography and the arts but also models it. As Wilder observes, "Decolonization, for Césaire, was as much about reworking time as it was about reworking space. It meant, on the one hand, interrupting the apparent historical destiny of colonized peoples by transforming Antilleans into history-making actors."³⁷ If, as Césaire observed, colonialism "ruptured" when "imperialism divided history" and "'balkanized' time," hope lay in decolonizing history and in creating "new forms of temporal, as well as spatial, solidarity" in the arts.³⁸

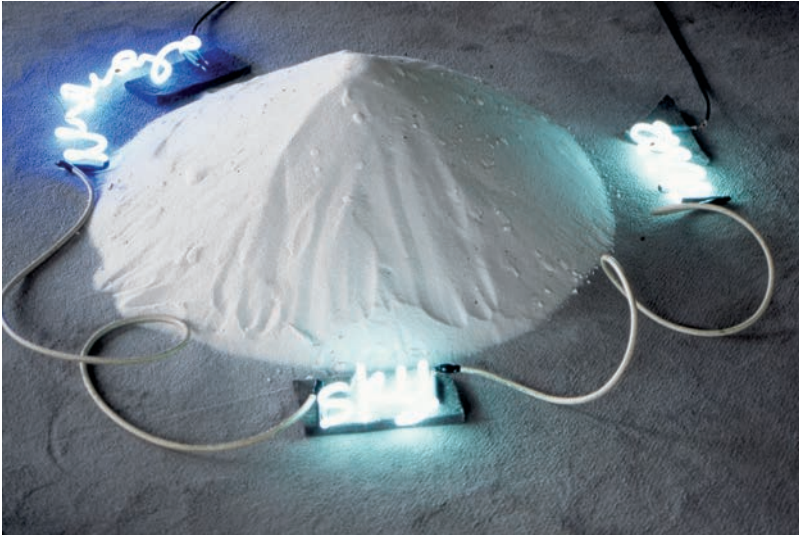
This book occupies that space of hope and possibility. It explores the ways Caribbean artists in global spaces became "history-making actors" by challenging old forms, creating new ones, and affirming their artistic vision outside and beyond institutional spaces. If these artists were not wanted in

a museum, gallery, exhibition, discipline—if their work was not considered worthy of regard or valued—then, as Caliban and Holder declared, something was wrong with *that* place, space, or discourse, because there was absolutely nothing wrong with them.

Considering the foregoing now, when thinking back to the Latamie panel, I think this is what I should have said: Like many Caribbean artists entering major global exhibition spaces in the 1990s, Marc Latamie produces speculative, often multisensory aesthetic arrangements in quiet, powerful sculptures and installations that reconfigure dominant notions of history across space and time. In this way, he performs the decolonial work his countryman the late writer and politician Aimé Césaire had hoped to see uplifted by future generations of artists and writers. Latamie's work is typical of the art that emerged in the global Caribbean imaginary during this era, which sought to transform our way of seeing in real time. This is plainly evident in the installation *Caldera* (1994) (figure I.1), where a volcano-shaped mound of refined white sugar evocative of Martinique's Mount Pelée, its land/*terre*, is encircled at three points by the words *sky*, *mer*, and *indigo* written in blue-white neon tubing. *Caldera* demands a discourse that can account for how its aesthetics converse with extended space-time relationships, economies, and global histories. *Terre*/land that produced sugar, "sky," "mer," and "indigo" were integral and interconnected components of the regional slave economy, components that have since been rebranded for mass tourism's neocolonial marketing apparatus. Today's tourism industry is overseen by the same *békés* who controlled the island's production during slavery. Césaire would have recognized this continuum instantly.

For his 2012 Americas Society exhibition, Latamie arranged a three-part installation in the galleries, using another signifying commodity, absinthe, as conceptual anchor. Absinthe is a 100 proof, anise-flavored alcoholic beverage known for its mind-altering capabilities. Referred to colloquially as the green fairy, it is closely associated with late nineteenth-century French modernism and memorialized in depictions of French café society such as Edouard Manet's *The Absinthe Drinker* (1859) and Edgar Degas's *In a Café (The Absinthe Drinker)* (1875–76). Latamie's exhibition extended this association beyond France to the Caribbean. Although the liquor was banned in France in 1914, absinthe's manufacture and consumption in Martinique never ceased after its introduction in the 1840s. Its production was primarily a domestic and personal enterprise, mostly undertaken in local kitchens rather than formal factories.

In the central gallery space of the Americas Society exhibition, Latamie installed an absinthe distillery comprising a small wooden shack in



1.1 Marc Latamie, *Caldera*, 1994. Sugar, neon light tubing. Courtesy of the artist.
© Marc Latamie.

a simple post-and-beam, pitched-roof style found in Martinican homes (figure I.2). The structure, pierced with copper rays reminiscent of Gian Bernini's *The Ecstasy of St. Theresa* (1647–52), marked this as an alchemic space. The shack's interior, visible through a small oculus embedded in its wall, held a miniaturized version of the wormwood tree whose leaves are used to produce absinthe, spinning magically like a ballerina on point (figure I.3). Centrally positioned in the main gallery, the shack was surrounded by a series of metal sculptures ranging in height from four to nine feet. Fabricated of sheet metal, their large, abstracted forms were drawn from discrete mechanical elements found in Martinican absinthe home distilleries.

Latamie has described his approach to art-making as “the minimum of demonstration and the maximum of thinking.”³⁹ The installation's arrangement encapsulates this mantra. He traces the work's conceptual beginnings to his encounter with Robert Rauschenberg's *Oracle* (1962–65) many years prior at the Pompidou Centre in Paris. For him, *Oracle*, already in conversation with the centralization of process as art epitomized by Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* (1915–23), became a conceptual wormhole, a point of catalysis that expanded Latamie's thinking and, subsequently, his process. As he spent time with *Oracle*, he became particularly attentive to Rauschenberg's use of deconstructed aesthetic forms and theatricality to commu-



1.2 Marc Latamie, Central Gallery Space, Americas Society, New York, 2012.
Courtesy of the artist. © Marc Latamie.



1.3 Marc Latamie, Oculus, Central Gallery Space, Americas Society, New York, 2012. Film Still. Courtesy of the artist. © Marc Latamie.

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nicate the effects of mechanization. In his much larger sculptures, or what he calls malic molds, Latamie echoed this stylistic approach by drawing on mechanized elements as form and deploying the defamiliarizing effects of monumental, three-dimensional abstraction. His technique achieved two conjoined ends: He was able to center absinthe without physically articulating it and enable spectators to literally enter the work. And, through the latter, he insisted on the audience's complete attention, time, mobility, and cognition to fully experience the work and its signifying implications.

Just beyond the sculptures, a short film by Myrtha Richards Marie Joseph, entitled *L'Absinthe de Monsieur Gentil* (Mr. Gentil's Absinthe), was screened on a loop (figure I.4). It documents a Black Martinican man in the process of making the liquor. His name, Mr. Gentil, simultaneously evokes tenderness, refinement, and, in its similarity to the word *gentile*, a kind of otherness. The film's intimacy and intentional view into Mr. Gentil's home distillery transformed the aesthetic experience and Latamie's practice into an important rhizomatic affair that was, in every sense of the word, Caribbean. Here, absinthe, Mr. Gentil, a home distillery, and Rauschenberg come together in the exhibition form, interweaving subjects and traces.

In the adjoining gallery, the work shifted. Painted in a deep-green jewel tone, the space displayed a collection of prints, photographs, drawings, and paintings by canonical French modern artists, including Paul Gauguin, André Masson, Raoul Dufy, Henri Matisse, and Man Ray. All exhibited works were portrait reproductions of Martinican or Guadeloupean women, except one. A small wall plaque noted that the artist had dedicated the room to the life of a Black Martinican woman named Marie-Philomena Roptus, also known as Lumina Sophie or Surprise, whom Latamie had learned about through tales passed down by generations of Black Martinicans, including his family.

Lumina Sophie's story was a source of immense pride: She was lionized for her leadership in the fight against the continuing oppression of the island's Black plantation workers in the late nineteenth century. Yet despite her centrality to (Black) Martinican history, her story is not referenced in the island's historical curriculum, nor is her life nationally celebrated. On one hand, her absence from official state narratives may call into question the legitimacy of Black islanders' oral lore. On the other, the narrative's persistence over time suggests the existence of a vibrant discourse *outside* the realm of state-sanctioned authorship. Latamie learned that despite her omission from the official historical narrative, Sophie's life *is* recorded in Martinican state archives, which document her arrest, trial, and sentencing



1.4 Marc Latamie and Myrtha Richards Marie Joseph, *Mr. Gentil making absinthe* in his kitchen, 2012. Film still. Courtesy of the artist. © Marc Latamie.

following her command of the 1870 rebellions that pitted Blacks against local whites. Charged with committing “blasphemy,” “subversion,” and “male domination” by inciting men to riot and burn plantations to the ground, Sophie was convicted and sent to the prison of Saint Laurent du Maroni in French Guiana, where she died in December 1879 at the age of thirty-one.⁴⁰ A criminal in one story, subject to historical erasure; a hero in another, celebrated and kept alive through oral tradition despite limited access to material evidence of her existence.

Many of the names of women in the portraits displayed in the gallery remain unknown. But among them, Latamie includes a fabricated portrait of Lumina Sophie (figure 1.5).⁴¹ In this gallery, the spatial curation enacts an art-making process designed to reconfigure official narratives that perpetrate historical erasure. Drawing on situational aesthetics, Lumina’s inclusion in the gallery finds meaning in its relational *différance* to the other women.⁴² Her presence affirms an organic Martinican autohistoriography, an active decolonizing element Césaire believed could be found and activated in the creative arts. In this exhibition, Latamie, like Suzanne Césaire before him, revealed the dimensions of historical erasure by recentering and rendering what and who has been devalued, disregarded, and dismissed in official Martinican historical narratives and representations.



1.5 Marc Latamie, installation, Americas Society, New York, 2012. On the left is Raoul Dufy's etching *Deux Antillaises*. Latamie's drawing of Lumina Sophie is on the right. Courtesy of the artist. © Marc Latamie.

Latamie repeated this act of authorship through aesthetics in every gallery. The Lumina Sophie room mirrored the final gallery, whose green walls transferred to the containers of absinthe being offered to guests in what appeared to be a nineteenth-century-era French salon where visitors might sit and enjoy a glass of absinthe. The presumed intent was that imbibement would literalize the mind-altering experience the artist operationalized through the exhibition. His work to render Martinique's place in the history and production of absinthe, as well as the story of Lumina Sophie in contemporary space and time, echoes the output of global Caribbean art and artists in the 1990s vis-à-vis the Western art world—not as children of Caliban awaiting regard but as Césaire envisioned, artists capable of reshaping the very world that occludes them.

CRITICAL METHODS FOR PROBLEM SPACES

As an art historian who teaches courses on the discipline's critical methodologies and history, I understand the pedagogical import of tracing a line from Shakespeare's Caliban to Césaire to Latamie. But to leave it there

positions art-making as conceptual evidence rather than generative, often disruptive theoretical form. My scholarly intervention departs from this premise to enact methodology that recenters artistic production and attends to the theoretical and historical (re)positions embedded in works of art. It examines the ways Latamie and his cohort align with Suzanne and Aimé Césaire's decolonial intentions in enacting through their work what Walter Dignolo calls "epistemic reconstitution,"⁴³ producing art that demanded new methodologies and a decolonized art history for sites mapped outside what has historically been understood as "the West."

This book seeks to render Césaire's vision of the arts as a decolonial force capable of creating postcolonial futures. As *A Tempest's* conclusion suggests, and the work of Édouard Glissant subsequently makes clear, the possibility of return to a precolonial state or future situated prior to Prospero's arrival presented a theoretical and pragmatic lacuna. In *Discourse on Colonialism*, Césaire articulated this predicament: "For us, the problem is not to make a utopian and sterile attempt to repeat the past, but to go beyond. It is not a dead society that we want to revive. . . . It is a new society that we must create."⁴⁴ For the formerly colonized (Caliban), an emancipated, sovereign state or a culturally distinct island operating within a transcontinental economy where the *békés* no longer held sway were impossibilities. Both Prospero and Caliban had been transformed through contact with each other, a nexus that precluded return and *occluded* certain future visions. The silence, or dead calm, shared between the two figures during their final scenes ossifies a hermeneutic of disappointment *and* acceptance, evidencing Césaire's recognition of the need for new models, new approaches, new art, and new imaginaries that emergent generations would be tasked with creating.⁴⁵

A Tempest underscores the internal crossroads that people of the diaspora, colonized people, navigate repeatedly. Glissant marked the initiating moment of this encounter as the Middle Passage, the space between the known and the unknown.⁴⁶ In conversations with Manthia Diawara on board the *Queen Mary* in 2009, he opined about confronting and navigating this crisis state. To him, the collective memory and survival of slavery and colonialism offered Caribbean peoples the revelation of a quiet truth—that their humanity exceeded any attempt to physically or ideologically contain it. He believed that creolization, a process fundamental to the multifarious character of Caribbeanness, moved its people beyond the role of "historical avatars."⁴⁷ Drawing on this conceptual lens, I see Caliban as a historical avatar who clears a path to lead his people to the promised

land but, like Moses, is unable to cross into it with them. Therefore, to continue to designate Caliban as an embodiment of the “Caribbean” reinforces an internal estrangement between history and the present, trapping the region in a perpetually reduced state of Other in a colonial-defined hierarchical system of values. *A Tempest* thus renders a critical silence in the “postcolonial record,” intimating what few dare say—that in 1969, and arguably today, postcoloniality as a lived reality has yet to arrive.

This book hopes for, illuminates, and anticipates the aesthetic visions of contemporary artists in the global Caribbean. The cohort featured in this text understood the generative power of creolization and forged practices that reconfigured local and global Caribbean histories and imaginaries with speculative tools and languages that transcended the critical capacity of Caliban’s literal and metaphorical island. Their work thus demands different methodologies and critical approaches—in museums and galleries and on the page. Guided by the expansiveness and diversity of their visions, my examination is modeled differently in each chapter, while the work of the work, echoing Césaire, remains the same: decolonization.

In recent years the contemporary art world has expressed significant interest in Glissantian thinking, particularly his concept of the rhizome and deployment of the term *creolization*. I, too, have turned to his work many times in order to think through a philosophical or ethical quandary and locate the conceptual architecture needed to break the mirror of colonialism systemically embedded in dueling neo- and postcolonial visions of the Caribbean. Glissant certainly merits this level of engagement. But when his theory is detached from a robust consideration of the artwork in question, it misses the point, veering into ahistorical waters. For both Glissant and Césaire, art was critical to the reformations and recastings they envisioned. In this text, I retrieve Glissant from the romance of apolitical universalism by reconsidering Caribbean art in the global imaginary.

According to Glissant, *creolization* is a generative process that makes space for individualized artistry forged in the catalysis of ongoing contact. Caribbean people live “in” creolization, wherein one “can change, you can be with the Other, you can change with the Other while being yourself, you are not one, you are multiple, and you are yourself. You are not lost because you are multiple. You are not broken apart because you are multiple.”⁴⁸ This poetic, political, and anticolonial statement echoes Césaire’s notion of freedom and verifies the extreme heterogeneity historically used to dismiss the region and its claims to modernity.⁴⁹ Here I must pause and repeat: Unmoored from the specificities of the Caribbean, the poetics of

Glissantian relation may appear romantic, forgetful of histories and the realities of violence embedded in and inflicted on the region. To be clear, this is not the rhizome of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who, in *A Thousand and Plateaus*, describe the concept in ways familiar to those of us who grew up growing or eating cassava and yams, as a “subterranean stem . . . absolutely different from roots and radicles.”⁵⁰ For them, this fundamental food system was the perfect metaphor for mechanisms of human activity and social machines, because “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything. . . . A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive.”⁵¹ These relational principles were instantly recognizable in my world. And though I found Deleuze and Guattari’s framing beautiful, provocative, and affirming, it was at the same time troublingly ahistorical and spatially and culturally unmoored. It perpetuated a feedback loop—shorthand for a feature of Caribbean life that I had always known but without reference to the brutal conditions and violent forces that underpinned it.

Glissant’s central concept of the rhizome must be situated in relation to the historical, cultural, and political dross of colonialism, indigeneity, transatlantic slavery, and East and South Asian influences within the space and character of Caribbean-ness. Without context, the notion of rhizomatic, creolizing systems of relation can easily devolve into dehistoricized universality, divorced from the particularities of world-shattering forces like slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and neoliberalism. In this process, the ethics of creolization are severed from its aesthetics, and the concept is transformed into a romance for global art cosmopolitans’ appropriation and consumption. In the spirit of Sylvia Wynter, the work produced by this book’s featured generation of artists signals a *praxis of humanness* that seeks to embrace and lift the entire expanse of Caribbean peoples—past, present, and future.⁵²

As I engaged Glissant more intentionally to render the post-Caliban world Césaire had envisioned, I looked to Antonio Benítez-Rojo, who helped explain my ambivalence and ultimate discomfort with the contemporary adoption of the Glissantian paradigm. He argued that “the specifications of their [Deleuze and Guattari’s] model are clear and final: [But] here [the Caribbean] is a flow machine” of multiple dimensions. He continued: “The Caribbean machine . . . is something more; it is a

technological-poetic machine, or, if you like, a metamachine of differences whose poetic mechanism cannot be diagrammed in conventional dimensions, and whose user's manual is found dispersed in a state of plasma within the chaos of its own network of codes and subcodes . . . polyrhythm (rhythms cut through by other rhythms, which are cut by still other rhythms)."⁵³ Like Glissant, Benítez-Rojo believed that Deleuze and Guattari's approach flattened relations by rendering them in linear, mechanized, one-dimensional space and time and, in so doing, foreclosed imagination and the spectrum of potentialities embedded in the creolization process. Both Benítez-Rojo and Glissant retained the yam's polymorphic nature in their retheorization of the rhizome concept. A machine suggests relative certainty and uniformity; action in opposition to the machine induces panic. Even the shape of a yam is inconsistent; where it chooses to bulb cannot be predetermined, and if left wild, its root system cannot be mapped. And yet no matter the root's positionality and contours, it will always become a yam. In Glissantian terms, a yam represents a plateau catalyzed by the creolization process, in which to be "in creolization" admits no known or final destination and plans are at best speculative. In anticipation of Benítez-Rojo, Glissant moored rhizome theory as a Caribbean reality or, more specifically, conscience.

To situate the work in this text and avoid the romance of theory, I ask, following David Scott, What are the demands of art history and art criticism in the postcolonial present? How might we render a continuum of global Caribbean artists that is not beholden to traditional art historical rubrics such as shared styles, location, social communities, formal problems, materials, and aesthetic approaches, that trajectories a common ethical approach to what Scott describes as the "problem spaces" these artists find themselves in? Scott observes that these problem spaces are "conceptual-ideological ensembles, discursive formations, or language games that are generative of objects, and therefore of questions," and are "necessarily historical inasmuch as they alter as their (epistemic-ideological) conditions of existence change."⁵⁴

The Latamie panel evidenced the need for a deeper consideration of these problem spaces. It clarified that applying ill-defined tropes to contemporary Caribbean art was a fatigued and one-sided romance. And it showed that the retention of this relational model not only reinforced an epistemic blindness that the postcolonial, postindependence Caribbean project claimed to dematerialize and delegitimize,⁵⁵ but also imprisoned the Caribbean within an atemporal Other world whose place on the art world's margins had fossilized—in theory. Despite the hopes for a postco-

lonial Caribbean art history, in the art world, perhaps Massa day was still not done.⁵⁶

GLOBAL CARIBBEAN ART HISTORY

In the Caribbean context, Glissant provides a point of departure for a rhizomatic, decolonizing, global Caribbean art history in service to transformative practices, or to Césaire's imagined future. This book envisions the Caribbean as a mutable and migratory problem space, a historically configured archipelago that is without a geographically or psychically defined boundary or center. It seeks to contribute to the field of global Caribbean art history, in which memory and re-memory are significant and history is part of a continuing present.⁵⁷ It interpolates multiple histories and creolizes to author new ones.

This book reflects that belief that works of art participate in multiple discourses and engage many processes and sites. It resists Western-centered hierarchies of value that privilege (white) men as creators, define innovation through a narrow avant-garde lens, and essentialize geopolitical spaces and relations between place, race, culture, and ethnicity. It rejects notions of value that depend on defining the Other in binary terms and prioritizes the art object as both primary material and theoretical form.⁵⁸ It is issued in the spirit of an art history that resists the foreclosure of the single frame, the single story. It claims opacity as a right even as it develops prismatic methodologies that aspire to clear-eyed vision.

In other words, global Caribbean art history demands a nonhegemonic practice beyond modern binaries. It does not cohere temporally, formally, or theoretically within the traditional frames of the art history discipline. Yet it is resolutely contemporary. As an ethical practice, it generates a discourse on the art of Others as autohistoriography rather than as a shadow of the West. Here, those formerly known as subalterns not only speak but decenter the concept of the West and its systems of value.

Global Caribbean art history does not foreclose the possibility that its discursive subject can occupy and participate in multiple conversations simultaneously. It is a field fueled by intellectually rigorous, humanistic, and ethically grounded critical methodologies. Not anchored in a fixed institutional framework tied to immutable geographic boundaries, it embodies a fluid field able to code switch in order to attend to theoretical implications and varying points of departure presented in diverse works of art.

Latamie's oeuvre and that of his contemporaries demand a rhizomatic art historical approach to render the problem spaces that their art engages and occupies. Regrettably, a disconnect exists between the work of Caribbean artists emerging in the 1990s and the critical discourse around it—if one can describe it as such. The conversation between Lahr and Holder that opens this chapter maps this project's political domain and vocalizes the imperative to challenge the critical canon's vacuousness and the frameworks that have sought to delimit the art it misapprehended. This text aims to walk with the artists it engages through the disciplinary doors of art history. And beyond them.

The critical literature on Caribbean artists in the global imaginary during the 1990s is extraordinarily ordinary, particularly given the level of exhibition and market renown some of these artists achieved. Either the literature is severely limited in quantity, or one finds the same story repeated over and over again—as if the art under discussion occupies a fixed point. In this critical discourse, the work is typically reduced to the exotic or fantastic, especially if it engages spirituality or critiques tourism and other neocolonial enterprises. At the same time, the Caribbean is often positioned as a shadow, a place where attachment was tenuous for native artists now based elsewhere.

Rather than outline the reasons and anxieties that animate these practices, this text provides a studied reengagement of the work of several Caribbean artists who emerged in the global imaginary during the 1990s, using public discourse as its archive. Echoing Holder, I show that the archival thinness and superficial engagement did not reflect the work's critical, aesthetic, or historical heft but rather the values of the discipline, the critical environment, or the art world it encountered. I advance a rhizomatic, decolonial methodology that broaches a more complex conceptual plane. Through critical methods and approaches modeled by these artists, this text illuminates how they challenged the art historical status quo to initiate an epistemic reformation that decolonizes and expands the art historical archive in vital and invigorating ways.

Like Césaire's, Holder's approach to his 1950s-era milieu presaged that of the Caribbean artists under review. In many ways, not much changed in the intervening four decades, and some may argue that, despite optics, things remain much the same today. In the 1990s, the discipline of art history was initially consumed by the concept of multiculturalism, a current it quickly cast aside in a slow push toward global art histories. But how can this field of study be defined if Western art history only sees "the global"

vis-à-vis its reflections in its Others? Global art history is discursively and practically possible only if the discipline suspends the narrative and teleological authority of Western art history to see the world horizontally and relationally, not as a mechanized vertical hierarchy.

The global art history conversation captures this project's ethical contours to imagine what becomes visible beyond the blinders of historical avatars like Caliban. This book argues that Latamie's generation of artists affected a field reformation in global (Caribbean) art during the 1990s and, moreover, that their work provided the architecture for a rhizomatic art history = Caribbean art history = global art history. This feat was aided in no small part by the remarkable convergence of an equally remarkable set of factors and events in the United States, this text's primary landscape outside the Caribbean. These artists were part of and beneficiaries of the simultaneous rise of multiculturalism, an ongoing institutional critique by Black artists, AIDS and Gay Rights activism, and art's political engagement in these movements. Much of this work was foregrounded by the efforts of feminist—specifically Black feminist—artists and became entangled with the culture wars, which stimulated pivotal social, political, artistic, and institutional fissures in a righteous battle among artists committed to deeply personal and political work, the seemingly all-powerful “Art World,” and the US federal government, with the support of the political far right. The establishment of institutions such as the Studio Museum in Harlem, the New Museum, and the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art orchestrated new arrangements by collaborating on transformative statement exhibitions such as *The Decade Show*, exemplifying how curatorial innovation reset the landscape of American and global art during the 1990s.

In the 1990s, New York was the capital of the art world. Challenges generated by smaller, innovative institutions created tentative entry points for the migrant Caribbean artist to stake their claim and engage Glissant's “state of multiplicity.” The world they engaged and would go on to shape was far different than Wifredo Lam's Paris in the 1920s and '30s; Ronald Moody's Paris or later London in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s; Frank Bowling's, Althea McNish's, and Aubrey Williams's London in the 1950s and '60s; and Mavis Pusey's and Geoffrey Holder's New York in the 1950s and '60s.

In the 1990s, the presence of Caribbean artists and their work in the so-called metropolises was felt more palpably due to the sheer number who came to the art world's fore and simultaneously rose to its greatest heights.⁵⁹ The numbers are remarkable, and, while I explore this history in greater depth elsewhere,⁶⁰ this text focuses on the art of Marc Latamie, Janine

Antoni, Belkis Ayón, Edouard Duval-Carrié, and Christopher Cozier in conversation with Maurizio Cattelan's 6th Caribbean Biennial. I could have made a similar argument with any number of artists and artworks, but I am particularly interested in the ways *these* artists tread the path cleared by Césaire's Caliban to confidently deploy the conceptual capacity of Caribbean history and culture in a global arena inclusive of the Caribbean. Their willingness to confront erasure in the then-dominant American art world *as well as* in the Caribbean is extraordinary. And wide-ranging. Their oeuvres' diversity in media, production, location, and historicity embodies the need to do decolonizing work in multiple arenas, multiple problem spaces, simultaneously.⁶¹

These artists came of age in the wake of colonialism, revolution, and independence. They are part of a transformative generation that may never have learned the words to hymns and anthems of empire such as "Rule Britannia," "God Save the Queen," or "La Marseillaise," or have long since forgotten them. They made their way to places beyond the geographically defined region to forge critically human, multilingual art practices resonant in varied sites, histories, and formal languages participating in global conversations.

In the opening chapters, I focus on Janine Antoni, Belkis Ayón, and Edouard Duval-Carrié, all of whom cultivated artistic practices that enunciated deeply personal aesthetic visions rooted in Caribbean imaginaries and global art histories, and performed the decolonial work of Césaire's imagined future in three very different problem spaces. Chapter 4, on Cattelan's 6th Caribbean Biennial, further illuminates the discursive environment these artists consciously engaged and the impact of their work in reshaping the critical landscape.

While this text walks through disciplinary doors in service to an enlarged and ongoing generative vision of art history, I am not advocating for a Western-styled school or "movement" in which artists or "communities" are consciously linked through stylistic affinity or aesthetic concerns. My project does not promote the existence of a unifying aesthetic or medium or support critical field formation organized around a singular unifying narrative, aesthetic, innovation, or medium. It does not attempt to answer an overarching formal problem held in common, nor does it reflect a single collectivity expressed by politicized aesthetic imperatives (though there are sites of convergence).

For the most part, the artists featured in this text did not live in close proximity to one another, though in multiple instances their work was

jointly exhibited. Instead, I think of this period and its artists as constitutive of a globally situated meta-archipelago whose articulation point and place of recognition required both linkages to the region and spatial and temporal distance from it. Albeit grounded in a particular Caribbean experience, the content of their art is not limited to a single national history or nation-space. In fact, the period under consideration was pointedly critical of national narratives, revealing disappointment in the independence project and reflecting the rise of global Caribbean art as a distinctly postnational phenomenon. Despite this attribute, the idea of nation remains a subject of interrogation.

This text illuminates how artists cultivated practices and created work that quietly but resolutely moved against the art world's colonial and colonizing assumptions, which regarded the Caribbean as a place where "Art" could not be philosophically imagined, institutionally supported, or epistemologically rendered.⁶² Reaching back to Césaire, their art and aesthetics emerged as transgeographic, transtemporal, and transideological, cumulatively situating the linear narrative of the West in an anachronistic relation to the present. Neither linear nor strictly nonlinear, their work shaped a prismatic field that enabled an ethical, multidimensional discourse attendant to the rich life of art objects and ideas as allegory and metaphor, from wherever and whomever they emerge.⁶³

The final decade of the twentieth century saw profound change within the art world, change that arguably shaped the global turn in ways still not fully rendered. Spatial and narrative boundaries interrogated by Césaire were now being challenged by global travel, international exhibitions, and biennials' geographic expansion beyond self-proclaimed artistic capitals. This era was also marked by pointed and at times scathing critiques of the failures of independence and the limits of national identity. Nonetheless, my project neither assumes nor subsumes cultural and historical specifications of various sites within the Caribbean. Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, Martinique, Curaçao, The Bahamas, and other Caribbean places—all are both local and relational sites. They meet at various plateaus, of which the Caribbean is but one nexus, and bear their own prismatic histories.

I am also not concerned with anxieties regarding perceived hierarchies between artists living and working in the geopolitical Caribbean and those working and living abroad, those born in the region and those born outside it. Likewise, I do not marshal signifiers of African, European, and Asian descent to mark authenticity or delineate claims to Caribbeaness. *All* Caribbean people are from somewhere else, and all are differentially

marked by the unequal violence of genocide, slavery, indentureship, colonialism, and capitalism. Thus, I am not interested in labeling authenticity or inauthenticity, generally or specifically, as it relates to rootedness, land, and race-based affiliations. Following debates in African art history around myths of authenticity, such binaries fuel a problematic essentialism, rooted in colonialism.⁶⁴ Demands for “authenticity” sustain a narrow frame of reference based on colonial determinations of purity that has rarely, if ever, been applied to those who once defined the terms of colonial Otherness. As a pervasive “truth,” authenticity has never existed beyond the ideological objectives of hegemony, colonialism, and domination.

On the other hand, I *am* deeply interested in the ways artists in the emerging global Caribbean of the 1990s dismantled such binaries. In their work, one finally sees the promise of postcolonial rupture and futurity that Césaire had envisioned, moving us beyond closed temporal, spatial, theoretical, national, and formal assumptions of the contours and possibilities of Caribbean art to see our world anew.

The seeds of this book germinated many years ago during a quest to understand the Caribbean’s absence from contemporaneous critical discourses even as these artists entered global exhibition spaces. In case after case, the region was noted as a site of birth and family history but summarily dismissed thereafter. My hope is that my archive and argument will shed light on this absence and fill this critical void.

Each chapter attends to the ways the artists’ work was translated for the public through critical texts and exhibitions. A consideration of cultural documents, artist writings, exhibition records, and public discourse, alongside artist and collector interviews and formal engagement with the work, reveals that histories, ethnographies, and aesthetic and performance practices in the Caribbean were often ignored or superficially glossed once the work entered so-called globalized spaces. More important, my inquiry unmasks the epistemological blindness affected through methodologies and frameworks that occluded nuances and multivalences and thereby reinforced the boundaries of the art world and the discipline of art history. As a response to this omission, I show how artists strategically wielded both silence and self-curation as a weapon, often permitting facile critical discussions, sometimes even assisting in reproducing them, to ward off more troubling alternatives and diffuse and dismantle the structures built to exclude them.

I do not speculate on the utility of considering multiple modernisms or cosmopolitanisms in relation to the Caribbean. I find the inclination to debate these terms in places outside Europe and the United States troubling

and myopic, serving to fix these *movements* within spatial and temporal vectors that reinscribe value to the West's project by affirming difference under the guise of criticality. This text refuses that point of departure and instead renders the Caribbean in the world from the perspective of the Caribbean.

In this book, the compression of time in the global Caribbean is a sign of anticolonial futurity rather than evidence of belatedness on the part of the formerly colonized. Rather, "belatedness" typifies the position of Western art history in relation to the rest of the world.⁶⁵ In the spirit of *Black Martinik* and drawing on Roshini Kempadoo's work on creolizing the archive, this text sets aside the authority of the Western conception of archive to see what has been occluded or disappeared in service to official colonial history and its concept of time.⁶⁶ The archives that inform this text include oral, performative, and aesthetically based, self-critical Caribbean autohistoriographies that emerge from local strategies and practices in the face of oppression.

Chapter 1 focuses on the work of Bahamian-born artist Janine Antoni and her subtle, often deliberate, and sometimes humorous evocation of and claim to American feminist art histories as decolonial work. A doyen of American feminist art and breakout star of the nineties, Antoni deployed personal Caribbean ethnographies in ways completely ignored in the surrounding critical discourse. This absence can be seen as evidence of the incapacity of national or disciplinary histories to account for the complexity of intersectional work by Caribbean women artists. It also highlights Antoni's Césairean Caliban-like awareness of the power of narrative historicization to both concretize and erase and her subsequent attempt to control the narrative on her work. I argue that Antoni's seeming cultivation of a critical distance from "Caribbeanness" and "Caribbean art" is both grounded in and situated beyond what José Muñoz eloquently theorized as "disidentification";⁶⁷ it may even be seen as an extreme deployment of Glissant's claim regarding Caribbean people's right to opacity. Antoni's resolve to define the terms of engagement for her work *and her identity* is Césairean in its assumption and execution of authority and authorship. The success of her discursive authorship remains not only unprecedented during her time but reflective of her greatest work.

Chapter 2 centers on the late artist Belkis Ayón's master print *La cena* (1991) in historical relation to filmmaker Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's film *La última cena* (1976). Unlike Antoni, Ayón spent her entire career in the Caribbean, specifically Cuba. As an artist, she was able to travel freely, and

her work was exhibited and collected globally. While Antoni's discursive plane is pointedly outside the region in ways that speak to C. L. R. James's notions of Caribbean art in *Beyond a Boundary*,⁶⁸ Ayón's work is deeply rooted in Cuban history and culture and conceptually echoed in global discourses. Born in the wake of the Cuban revolution, Ayón presents a formidable critique of its consistent alignment with hegemonic racial positions—specifically Blackness—and gendered power relations through her brilliant redeployment of the founding myths of the all-male Abakuá secret society. The intergenerational discourse between her work, Alea's, and Roberto Fernández Retamar's reconceptualization of Caliban typifies how art practices of the decade link and delink with artistic forebears. Following Césaire's decolonial vision, Ayón's art elucidates how pivotal events like revolution and independence did not magically yield the egalitarian promises they envisioned. Instead, they offered a chance to begin again and recognized the continuing need to decolonize histories and attendant values.

Chapter 3 considers the weight of history and criticality embedded in the decolonial work of Edouard Duval-Carrié's contemporary history painting. It focuses on a single painting, *Mardigras at Fort Dimanche* (1992), to explore Duval-Carrié's engagement of a postmodern baroque style to reimagine the presentation and perception of history through a contemporary lens. Rather than produce paintings that re-present events of the past, Duval-Carrié projects the entire container of history into the aesthetic arena for debate. His art critically fabulates in order to ask its audience to self-reflexively interrogate accepted historical narratives and the mechanisms of power, privilege, violence, and visibility that crafted them.

It is notable that Duval-Carrié and Ayón both drew on African Caribbean traditions that formed in the context of the transatlantic slave trade. Often dismissed as primitive and outside the contemporary frame, Abakuá and Haitian Vodoun, engaged by Ayón and Carrié, respectively, represent contemporized conceptual fulcrums that regard modernism as a generative condition, a creolization process that creates out of what Wilson Harris masterfully describes as "states of cramp," referencing the contortions of bodies in the bowels of slave ships and their reemergence from those hulls in the Americas.⁶⁹

The art of Latamie, Antoni, Ayón, and Duval-Carrié foregrounds this book's fourth chapter, which centers on the American-based Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan's 6th Caribbean Biennial. This chapter's presence, placement, and content may seem odd at first; Cattelan is not a "Caribbean"

artist per se, but his insertion in this text is purposeful. Produced in 1999, after the work discussed in the first three chapters, Cattelan's biennial represented an important signpost in global Caribbean art history that merits closer scrutiny. By highlighting Cattelan's theatrical "counterbiennial," alongside attempts to historicize the decolonizing process in the Caribbean through the public discourse that arose in the 1960s around colonial monuments, I hope to illuminate how the art world attempted to reaffirm the status quo even as its frameworks were dissolving around and within it.

Produced by Cattelan and curator Jens Hoffmann, the 6th Caribbean Biennial drew heavily on the presumptions and orchestrations of colonial power that shaped Western modernism, tourism, and the museum.⁷⁰ Devoid of substantive artistic exhibition, it was instead an "artist exhibition"; the event consisted solely of celebrated artists who had been invited to take a vacation from art. After the event, Cattelan declared that he was able to fool the art world into believing the biennial was real because the Caribbean "did not exist." Cattelan's performance concretized the perspective of the art world in relation to its perceived Others, inadvertently evidencing its critical blindness to the global outside narcissistic projections.

In *The Pleasures of Exile*, Lamming posits that "Caliban is never accorded the power *to see*. . . . Caliban is the excluded, that which is eternally below possibility. . . . He is seen as an occasion, a state of existence which can be appropriated and exploited for the purposes of another's own development."⁷¹ This is the eerie premise and conclusion of Cattelan's colonial performance. For him, the Caribbean was a place without art and a site where the production of art was impossible.

Advertised exclusively within major global art magazines as a biennial event and slated to occur at a resort on St. Kitts, the project went seemingly unnoticed in the Caribbean. Since the region's population was completely ignored as a potential audience, the "show" was not advertised locally. I argue that the Caribbean's disregard for an event not marketed to them verified neither the disengagement nor the marginal status of the Caribbean or Caribbean art. Cattelan's exhibition was not about the contemporary Caribbean at all; instead, it was a final push to validate the supremacy of Western discursive power in art history. Rather than put the Caribbean on the map, the biennial revealed how deeply rooted "Art World" anxieties pulsed around the loosening of the Western grip on the art historical narrative and its commingled markets. The performance was unmasked as a problematic bully pulpit and performative anachronism,

dependent on colonial models for articulation. Its critical failure suggests that the epistemic breaks and reconstitution that catalyzes and coheres the decolonial art produced by artists like Latamie, Antoni, Ayón, and Duval-Carrié were bearing fruit. Whether the West chose to see it or not, the borders of the world had shifted long before Cattelan and his “tourists” mounted their stage set. In art history, Massa day was done.

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NOTES

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INTRODUCTION

Epigraph: Geoffrey Holder, interview with John Lahr, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2003.

- 1 Poupeye, “Trading Across the Black Atlantic”; Poupeye, *Caribbean Art*, 1st ed.; Tawadros, *Changing States*; Zaya, “Trading Plots.”
- 2 The event occurred at the Americas Society in New York City, an institution dedicated to expansive engagement with the arts and culture of the Caribbean and the Americas from a postcolonial perspective.
- 3 I argue that by the 1990s, Caribbean artists of Latamie’s generation had far surpassed the allegorical limits and subaltern positionality embodied in the trope of Shakespeare’s Caliban, recognizing its patent incapacity to signify Caribbean (postcolonial) futures. Nonetheless, the trope has been employed widely, across disciplines, temporalities, locations, and discourses of colonialism and postcolonialism. The literature and curatorial engagement of this figure in relation to the Caribbean is extensive. Notable examples include Retamar, “Caliban” and “Caliban Revisited,” reissued collectively in *Caliban and Other Essays* (1989); Lamming, *Pleasures of Exile*; Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*; Henry, *Caliban’s Reason*; Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*; López Springfield, *Daughters of Caliban*; Meeks, *Critical Interventions in Caribbean Politics and Theory*; and Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*. Some of these texts, particularly those of Spivak and Jackson, align with Césaire and openly seek to move beyond Shakespeare’s Caliban as trope for all inescapably colonized people.
- 4 Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 24.
- 5 *Dechoukaj* is a Haitian Kreyòl term meaning “to completely root up and destroy.”
- 6 Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*.
- 7 Scott, *Refashioning Futures*, 12.
- 8 Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, 108.
- 9 Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, 108.
- 10 Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 33.
- 11 Vergès, *Resolutely Black*.

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- 12 Vergès, *Resolutely Black*, 21.
- 13 Significantly, Vergès cited an introduction Césaire had penned for Daniel Guérin's *Les Antilles Decolonisées* in 1986, which suggested that he was baffled by the persistence of opposition to his advocacy for departmental status based on what had unfolded in the interim. Césaire wrote: "How hard is it to understand that the first step of a people considered for centuries as official citizens of the state, but whose citizenship is given a marginal status, wouldn't be to reject the hollow and debilitated form of their citizenship, but rather to demand that it be fully recognized and respected by the state?" Vergès, *Resolutely Black*, 60–61.
- 14 *Béké* is an Igbo-derived term used to describe a small European-descended class that has controlled the economy of French Caribbean islands like Martinique and Guadeloupe since the days of the transatlantic slave trade. See Winer, *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad and Tobago*.
- 15 Véron, "Césaire at the Crossroads in Haiti," 431.
- 16 Véron, "Césaire at the Crossroads in Haiti," 439.
- 17 Vergès, *Resolutely Black*, 32.
- 18 Vergès, *Resolutely Black*, 31, 32.
- 19 Frost and Lefevre Tavárez, "Tragedy of the Possible," 34.
- 20 Vergès, *Resolutely Black*, 15.
- 21 Vergès, *Resolutely Black*, xxi, 17–18.
- 22 Frost and Lefevre Tavárez, "Tragedy of the Possible," 30.
- 23 Bonilla, *Non-Sovereign Futures*; Wilder, *Freedom Time*, 2.
- 24 Wilder, "Here/Hear Now Aimé Césaire!," 586.
- 25 Frost and Lefevre Tavárez, "Tragedy of the Possible," 30.
- 26 Wilder, "Here/Hear Now Aimé Césaire!," 586.
- 27 Rabbitt, "History into Story," 7–8.
- 28 Rabbitt, "History into Story," 2, 14.
- 29 Rabbitt, "History into Story," 14.
- 30 In an interview with Sonia Arátan published in *Casa de Las Americas*, Césaire concluded that the "Congo did not exist except in Lumumba's head. . . . This is why what can be seen as utopian was for him essential in order to advance reality." In other words, as Frost and Tavárez conclude, as a leader, Césaire viewed Lumumba as "dialectically driven to act from the perspective of the future." Arátan, "Entrevistas con Aimé Césaire," 132; Frost and Lefevre Tavárez, "Tragedy of the Possible," 41–42.
- 31 Murdoch argues that France's attempt to use the exposition to recast itself as a plural society failed miserably in its refusal to acknowledge societal hierarchies based on theorizations of racial difference. Though he cannot affirm whether Césaire attended the exposition, Murdoch posits that the 1946 decision reflects Césaire's demand for accountability from France in the shadow of this willful blind spot. Murdoch, "Aimé Césaire," 66.
- 32 Murdoch, "Aimé Césaire," 66–67.

- 33 This view aligns with that of Yarimar Bonilla, who argues that though Césaire was against Martinican independence, he did not regard the colonizers' presence or absence as a primary factor in the achievement of liberation. In colonialism and postcolonialism, the ultimate battlefield for Césaire, though it was tied to land and plantation economies, was psychological. Bonilla, *Non-Sovereign Futures*.
- 34 The conceptual ideas and positions that undergird *A Tempest* are powerfully stated, albeit differently, in Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*.
- 35 Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*, Act III, Scene 5, 62–63. Though not as well-known as it should be, this is perhaps one of the more notable passages in modern Caribbean literature. It significantly grounds Audre Lorde's famous and, in my view, famously misread speech-essay "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House, 1984," reprinted in *Sister Outsider*, 110–14.
- 36 Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, 84; Dogbeh-David et al., "Palabre," 230–33.
- 37 Wilder, "Here/Hear Now Aimé Césaire!," 592.
- 38 Wilder, "Here/Hear Now Aimé Césaire!," 592; quoted from Césaire, "The Man of Culture and His Responsibilities," 130–31.
- 39 Marc Latamie, conversation with the author, May 29, 2012.
- 40 Pago, *L'histoire tragique de Marie-Philomène Roptus dite Lumina Sophie dite Surprise*. For a more extensive discussion of the significance of the island's oral histories, specifically in the context of the 1870 rebellions and state histories, see Chivallon, "Mémoires de l'esclavage à la Martinique," 235–61.
- 41 The image's label states, "Marc Latamie. Pencil on paper. Courtesy of the artist." He renders Lumina Sophie in the same manner and style used by the French artists and leaves her similarly unnamed, adding another dimension to the exhibition's critical labor.
- 42 Situational aesthetics describes the creative result of an artist's fabrication of social situations or encounters in an exhibition space where the audience participates, willingly or unwillingly. These encounters are performative, self-reflexive, and ethereal. The emphasis is not on the contemplation of a discrete work of art but on the process or experience initiated by the artist. The artists Rirkrit Tiravanija, Michael Asher, and Fred Wilson, in his seminal exhibition *Mining the Museum*, employ elements of situational aesthetics to create their "work."
- 43 Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience."
- 44 Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 51–52.
- 45 Martinique has had several occasions to renegotiate its relationship with France and define a path to independence or greater autonomy, in opposition to Césaire's vision of a way forward. The most recent opportunity occurred in a 2010 referendum. There are many ways to view the outcome. Perhaps one would expect that in the wake of his death, Martinicans would choose to chart a course counter to the 1946 decision. Others might argue

that it was too late, that Martinicans had assimilated and were no longer willing or able to cut ties with France. Neither view encompasses the complexities of the island's position in a neoliberal capitalist world. As Césaire might have observed, the ghosts were in the machine, but the machine had mutated.

- 46 Diawara, "Conversation with Édouard Glissant," 59.
- 47 Diawara, "Conversation with Édouard Glissant," 61. Glissant suggests that Caribbean people had, by and large, failed to recognize the generative potential of their formation and fully deploy it as strategy.
- 48 Diawara, "Conversation with Édouard Glissant," 61.
- 49 For a brilliant discussion of the ways the phenomenon of heterogeneity has functioned in Caribbean archives and museum spaces, see Modest, "We Have Always Been Modern." For an example of art history that rejects the implications of Western models and assessments of the Caribbean and Caribbean art as pure mimicry and as anachronistic and thus without value, see James, "Decolonizing Time."
- 50 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 6.
- 51 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 7.
- 52 McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter*.
- 53 Benítez-Rojo, *Repeating Island*, 18.
- 54 Scott, *Refashioning Futures*, 8.
- 55 In *Conscripts of Modernity*, David Scott argues that dreams of a postcolonial future funneled through the independence project have been dashed. His work supports Césaire's position. However, Césaire takes the argument a step further by positioning the arts as a way to move beyond the limited freedom that independence brings Caribbean countries.
- 56 This phrasing draws on Eric Williams, who explained that "Massa was more often than not an absentee European planter exploiting West Indian resources, both human and economic." Here I use Massa day as a metaphor for colonial discourse. Williams, "Massa Day Done."
- 57 As the language suggests, this definition is deeply influenced by my early encounter with Toni Morrison's work, specifically *Playing in the Dark*.
- 58 "Whether in the Francophone, Anglophone, Arab, Chinese, Japanese world," Glissant said, "what's specific in the definition of the Other is that this Other is not just considered different. The Other is considered as contrary. Now, in the world, there is no contrary. The dialectic of differences is something I agree with, but not the dialectic of contraries, because the dialectic of contraries assumes that there's a truth over here, and its contrary over there. . . . I don't believe there is a truth." Diawara, "Conversation with Édouard Glissant," 63.
- 59 This number includes the artists discussed in this project as well as Nicole Awai, John Beadle, José Bedia, Ricardo Brey, Ras Ishi Butcher, Magdalena Campos Pons, Tony Capellán, Annalee Davis, Jean-Ulrick Désert, Joscelyn

Gardner, Kcho, Roshini Kempadoo, Tirzo Martha, Steve Ouditt, Marcel Pinas, Jorge Pineda, Belkis Ramírez, Arnaldo Roche Rabell, Ras Akem Ramsay, and a host of others. My selection hinges on my level of engagement with their work and the range of critical discourses it commands and challenges. The art produced by this study's subjects resonates independently and interdependently in illuminating, generative ways.

60 James, "Prismatic Blackness."

61 I also appreciate how the work of these artists converses across languages—engaging English, Spanish, French, Haitian Kreyòl, and other regional languages. This is particularly notable in the context of the multilingual field of global Caribbean art history, where the tendency has been to historicize according to language, thus prioritizing colonial disjuncture while ignoring historical connections stemming from the shared experience of colonialism itself.

62 See "We Have Always Been Modern," in which anthropologist Wayne Modest compellingly assesses how Caribbean cultural production has been situated in the discipline of anthropology and in institutional spaces like natural and cultural history museums.

63 The term *prismatic* draws on the prism's effect as a beam of light passes through it. A prism takes a single beam of white light, or in the context of art, the object, then fractures it into every spectrum on the color scale and multiplies its signification or affect, or both. In this project's lexicon, *prismatic* also describes the artistic will to fracture colonial perceptions of Caribbean creativity that animated the generation under consideration.

64 The discourse around authenticity in African art is extensive. See, for example, Cornet, "African Art and Authenticity"; Shelton, "Fakes, Fakers, and Fakery"; Kasfir, "African Art and Authenticity"; and Theodossopoulos, "Laying Claim to Authenticity." The discourse illuminates the ways disciplinarity and critical foundations are (pre)determined by Western and colonial values imposed on other societies and the ways those societies account for them.

65 Leon Wainwright has unpacked the critiques of belatedness in relation to the work of Caribbean artists in Britain in *Timed Out*.

66 Kempadoo, *Creole in the Archive*. *Black Martinik* is a local creole term for the island of Martinique and its Black majority, which Aimé Césaire and Marc Latamie were/are members of.

67 Muñoz, *Disidentifications*.

68 James, *Beyond a Boundary*.

69 Wilson Harris's "History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas" is one of the most brilliant theorizations of Caribbean art, culture, creativity, and identity in the wake of the Middle Passage. Harris described the Passage as a "limbo gateway" (157) for the enslaved, to illuminate the importance of autohistoriography in the process of reconstituting the broken

African body of the enslaved in the Americas. Harris sees the “philosophy of history . . . buried in the arts of the imagination” (156) as an “inner corrective” (159) that heals the enslaved and later colonized body from systemic disassembly.

- 70 If one can read Cattelan’s 2016 Guggenheim Museum retrospective as a cumulative statement of his artistic practice, it is evident that the 6th Caribbean Biennial has quietly been excised from the artist’s oeuvre. Hoffmann, on the other hand, has boldly asserted its importance, including it in his book on the greatest contemporary art shows. See Spector, *Maurizio Cattelan*; Hoffmann, *Show Time*.
- 71 Lamming, *Pleasures of Exile*, 107.

CHAPTER ONE: FROM BEHIND GOD’S BACK

Epigraph: Lynette Antoni (Janine Antoni’s mother). The phrase *behind God’s back* is used to describe a place so insignificant that even God has forgotten about it. Transcript of Janine Antoni’s talk and conversation with David Bailey, Whitechapel Gallery, London, November 2003.

- 1 Raven, “Womanhouse,” 64.
- 2 Janine Antoni was born in Freeport, Grand Bahama Island, The Bahamas, on January 19, 1964. Through her Trinidadian parents, she can trace her family’s Caribbean heritage back more than two hundred years. The Bahamas celebrated its independence on July 10, 1973.
- 3 To *play mas* means to participate in the Lenten, Christmas, New Year’s, or harvest masquerades in the Caribbean. It is a term that bears great cultural and political significance as a strategic weapon of the weak and oppressed to contest power structures that deny them participatory rights. For an excellent introduction to Trinidad’s carnival, see Hill, *Trinidad Carnival*.
- 4 Scott, *Refashioning Futures*, 3.
- 5 Antoni quoted in Cottingham, “Janine Antoni,” 104–5.
- 6 Antoni quoted in Trippi, “Untitled Artists’ Projects by Janine Antoni,” 148. This chapter depends substantively on the artist’s voice, owing in large part to its centrality in Antoni’s critical strategy.
- 7 James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 195. This creative participatory dynamic is crucial to Antoni, so much so that she sometimes includes the audience in performance (e.g., in *Slumber 1993*) and invites collaboration in the process of making work.
- 8 James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 196.
- 9 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 112.
- 10 James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 197.
- 11 James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 142. This is an earlier phase than Jacques Lacan’s mirror stage, as discussed in “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the