

COLONIAL PLANTATION THEATRICALS: “STAGING” THE CREOLE BODY

In the Caribbean we are all performers [...] we all try to act the roles that our skin reads out to us. This is a regularity. (Benítez-Rojo 236)

As Antonio Benítez-Rojo notes in *The Repeating Island* (1992), Caribbean identity has to a large extent been affirmed by the historical roles accorded by race, which is most prominently identified by the colour of one's skin. In this essay, I propose a reading of the eighteenth-century sugar plantation in the English-speaking Caribbean as a metaphorical amphitheater in which colonial racial identities were formally articulated and *staged* according to European dictates. At the top of the hierarchy (in this context), the white male Creole body, as instrument of power in the master class, was costumed in the garments of the European gentleman and assumed a leading role performing as the preeminent *colonizing* agent on the plantation stage. His white Creole wife, daughters, and sisters, similarly outfitted in European finery, performed supporting domestic roles according to the patriarchally established expectations of (white) “true womanhood.”ⁱ Coloured slaves (products of the sexual exploitation of slave women by the white masters) also acted as subordinate supporting characters in the domestic sphere. Owned as chattel, they nevertheless enjoyed privileges denied to the general slave population because of the lighter colour of their skin. The half-clothed multitude of black slaves formed the majority of players in this tyrannical system. Forced into hard labour against their will, they were cast in the lowest roles in this highly stratified oppressive power structure.ⁱⁱ The master's governance decreed subservient roles for both the white Creole women and the coloured and / or black *colonized* Creole subjects (the slave class) under his control, and survival on the plantation depended upon strict adherence to the specificities of these roles.

The visual dynamics of this “Plantation Theater”, produced and directed by European colonial and patriarchal decree in the interest of the economics of sugar production, was accordingly predicated upon *stereotypical* roles based largely on the *appearance* of the actors. The “performance” of power on the plantation stage relied on visual spectacle and binary constructions of racial identity. Bodies were classified based on visual signifiers and compelled to perform roles and adopt behaviours appropriate to the identities predetermined for them at birth by race, class, and gender. Imitation / mimicry became important accomplishments of all of the players.ⁱⁱⁱ

In the following critical examination of eighteenth-century Caribbean material culture, I reveal Caribbean plantation society as a visually performative site. In particular, I look at paintings representing Creole bodies (the actors), tools of torture (the stage props), and images / replicas of the plantation yard and its Great House and furnishings (the stage setting) found in the Barbados Museum and Historical Society's collection to facilitate a discussion of plantation life as a visual spectacle of power and race.

The Caribbean sugar plantation of the eighteenth century operated as a mighty machine shaping the political, economic, social, and cultural aspects of each island.^{iv} Sugar became “king”^v and by the end of the seventeenth century, the fact that the economic boom required a forced black slave labour base had necessitated a huge shift in the racial population.^{vi} Each plantation, isolated from other plantations, functioned as a microcosm of the colonial “sugar island” society.^{vii} Europeans visiting the islands likened the plantation yard and slave settlements

to complete villages or small towns, with the Great House as a “castle.”^{viii} The circularly arranged plantation yard became the stage on which regulated bodies performed the duties integral to the plantation’s economic success. Hierarchical subordination became the founding principle of success in an organizing system based on incarceration and the exploitation of forced labour.

A contemporary painting entitled *Burnt House Plantation* (1988)^{ix}, mounted in the Barbados Museum diorama to illustrate plantation life from this period, clearly lays out the typical plantation stage set (*****). The Sugar Mill where the sugarcane is crushed by wind power dominates the left foreground. The Boiling House (with smokestack), the Curing House, and the Still House, together with the storerooms, workshops for tradesmen, stables, and houses for white staff, encircle the plantation yard. The mansion house or Great House (the white master’s residence) occupies center-stage on slightly higher ground opposite the Mill. Centered within this circle, and moving between buildings, the slaves undertake the labour of producing sugar, molasses, and rum, while in the surrounding cane-fields, the field gangs harvest the sugarcane. To the west / lee of the mill yard and Great House, but in close proximity, a group of huts in orderly rows constitute the plantation slave settlement or “Negro yard.”

In his essay on plantation settlements, Jerome Handler points out that slave settlements were placed near the plantation yard, and “almost universally within ready sight of the mansion house itself” for purposes of the planter’s personal comfort, security, and ease of surveillance (Handler 125). He states,

The advantage of having the slave houses close at hand was sarcastically noted in 1796 by the manager of Newton and Seawell. In Barbados ‘generally’, he wrote [. . .] ‘the manager’s dwelling house is [. . .] situated where they enjoy the sight of all the doors of the [yard] buildings at one view; if nothing is wrong in the day time, all must be secure – they suppose – and from [. . .] their front door, they give their directions with a stentorian voice without the trouble of motion.’^x (Handler 127).

In the painting of Burnt House plantation, the division of labour between controlling white male bodies (on horseback) and enslaved male and female black bodies (toiling as forced labour) is readily apparent. Each actor has an assigned role within the plantation machine that is visually confirmed by strict racial codes of dress and behaviour. The two white male Overseers (in the left foreground and middle of the painting) are finely attired in tail jackets, bright red jodhpurs, shoes, stockings, and black top hats. Meanwhile, among the numerous black slave bodies they regulate, the women wear loose untailored clothing and head-wraps and the men are generally barebacked and walk barefoot. The slaves are all shown industriously performing their duties while the Overseers sit on their horses, high above their subjects, “overseeing” the work. Here, slave labour is normalized and glorified as a natural part of the sugar production process.

Missing in the painting of this plantation are the privileged players within the Great House and the scenes of the torture that was daily inflicted on the slaves. The exhibition of this painting within the Museum display indexes the racial stratification that placed white and coloured bodies inside the House and black bodies outside in the fields. However, the objects in the display cases on either side of the painting only hint at the realities of plantation life. On one side, there is elaborate silverware, crystal, and miniature portraits from within the House. On the other side, there are the humble personal belongings of the faceless slaves (clay pipes, necklaces of beads, canine teeth, and fish vertebrae, and iron bangles and earrings) as well as the shackles, branding iron, and iron ball that are symbolic of slavery.^{xi} The viewer of the display is made aware of the class divisions of plantation life but the visual performance of the extremes of this life is left to the imagination. As Marcus Wood notes in his book *Blind Memory* (2000), these objects become floating signifiers devoid of the bodies that would give them meaning.^{xii} The painting “naturalizes” black slave labour and visually denies white privilege (the Great House is rendered as much smaller and less ornate than usual) while the display cabinets conflate inanimate objects with imagined performative experience.

The oppressive structure of disciplinary power that proposed the functioning of the plantation as a well-honed machine is only tentatively suggested by this display. Predicated on a network of surveillance systems associated with a hierarchical sliding scale of race and caste, this apparatus of power punished non-conformity to assigned roles through physical torture. Slave society was subdivided into rigid castes and classes corresponding to “racial divisions in which membership was hereditary and defined by laws: the white population first, and then, in descending order of social rank, the free persons of colour and the slaves.”^{xiii} On the lowest rungs, domestic slaves were in one caste and field slaves in another. The field slaves (working directly with sugar production) were divided into work gangs. A black driver (of a slightly higher social class), equipped with a whip, led each gang and supervised their labour. Lashes were meted out frequently to increase production. Membership in these gangs was dictated by age and physical strength. The first or “great” gang included mature men and women who did the most difficult work – holing and harvesting. The second gang was composed of youths (from twelve to eighteen) and elderly men and women who did lighter fieldwork. Children, aged six to twelve, formed the third gang and worked weeding or gathering grass. Slave registers further regulated black bodies by classifying them according to age, sex, country of birth, occupation, and value (in sterling) and kept account of all births, deaths, and serious illnesses.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the strict racial classification of plantation labour had been permanently instituted to simplify the visual regulation of plantation bodies. This is particularly evident when it is noted that white women who had earlier laboured in the fields and in menial jobs as indentured servants were removed from the fields and given privileged status over the black slaves.^{xiv} Power and privilege became visually equated with the minority white body. By contrast, the status of the majority black body as legal “property” destined it for a lifetime of subjugation, torture, and psychological trauma.

Compounding this violent oppressive system, slave laws in the British colonies were made directly by the slave-owning ruling class.^{xv} The master had absolute power over his property, the slave. Since legally the slave was not regarded as a person, but as *private* property, the master could dispose of his body in any manner he chose. The plantation therefore became a stage for the theatrics of *racist* power in the pursuit of sugar production. Tools of torture such as cart whips, leg irons, balls and chains, stocks, bridles, branding irons, and iron collars provided the stage props for the performance of power. The visual spectacle of publicly exhibited corporal punishment was paramount in maintaining order both in its physically cruel fulfillment, and afterward, in the scars that it left on the slave victim’s body.^{xvi}

Two simultaneous operations of power were accordingly manifested on the eighteenth-century plantation stage; namely, a visually codified surveillance system (based on racial signifiers) and corporal punishment in the form of torture. These disciplinary systems align themselves curiously in the space between Michel Foucault’s two *opposing* theories of disciplinary power and punishment proposed in his book *Discipline and Punish* (1979). Here, Foucault theorizes that by the eighteenth century European society had gradually *substituted* a modern system of surveillance for the old-style theatrical spectacle of violent torture (physical pain, death, and dismemberment) as a means of enforcing power. The author states that the punishment of torture was replaced by a system of hierarchized surveillance in which “disciplinary power became an ‘integrated’ system, linked from the inside to the economy and to the aims of the mechanism in which it was practiced” (Foucault 176). He suggests that an organized network of relations from top to bottom based on mutual observation of supervised and / or supervisory bodies (with a “head” and layers of lateral supervisory positions) produces a system of supervision that is automatic, silent, ever alert, and continuously present. Such disciplinary power functioned as an offshoot of the Panopticon surveillance system where multiple bodies could be visually regulated by a single body and negated the need for physical punishment.

In *Blind Memory*, Wood contests Foucault’s model by arguing that paradoxically both these forms of disciplinary power co-existed on the Caribbean plantation from as early as the seventeenth century. He points out that the treatment of black slaves in colonial cultures did not

reflect Europe's post-Enlightenment penal reforms as outlined by Foucault and that Foucault's analysis of ritualized torture completely ignores "the relation of race to the language and semiotics of violence"(Wood 228). In Foucaultian terms, the effectiveness of torture relied on evincing pain in the victim and having the torture delivered in a measured fashion to satisfy the demands of ritualistic display and visual spectacle. Wood problematizes this by showing that the visual representation of plantation torture in European prints of the time was dismissive, depicting the black male body as "bufoonish" and impervious to pain, and the female black body as sexually erotic. He argues that Foucault completely overlooks the punishment of the slave body in plantation societies and that furthermore, torture was not used simply to expedite efficiency and profit within an economy of power, but more expressly, to inflict *terror* (Wood 229).

The slave codes, and the operations of large plantations, combined logic and efficiency with barbaric violence, and a display of power which was focused upon the public torture of the body of the slave. Both the slave trade and plantation slavery seem, at every point, to confound the central division, the division between ritualized torture and ritualized surveillance, which lies at the intellectual heart of Discipline and Punish. The public spectacle of torture, and the private discipline of the Panopticon, are fused in the private worlds of violence which characterised plantation societies. (Wood 230)

The eighteenth-century colonial sugar plantation consequently functioned as an economic, social, and political system that dictated the performance of prescribed racially coded roles on the plantation stage. Within this oppressive social structure, the occupants of the Great House became the most privileged players. The white family and its (usually mulatto) domestic slaves were symbolically divided from the outdoor plantation population according to skin colour, higher class, and the associated visual codes inscribed within behaviour and dress. Here, it was the white female body that assumed a starring role as symbol of domestic power. Responsible for organizing the affairs of the household, her position was pivotal to domestic order. She was also highly visible to outside visitors as hostess of dinners, teas, and parties, and as a symbolic representative of her husband's wealth and class status in society. As an extension of the home's system of display, she was valued for her domestic formality and respectability on the plantation stage.

The plantation Great House itself functioned as a monument to power. Grand in scale, and hurricane proof,^{xvii} it represented permanence and stability. The elaborate décor, polished hardwood floors, fine mahogany furnishings, elegant porcelain china sets, sterling silverware, fine crystal, and valuable artwork, were calculated to convey the high societal status of the owners and to symbolize morality and cultural superiority. The resident plantocracy aimed to replicate the living standards of the mother country, England, and as such, the House functioned as a visual spectacle. Ironically, it was to become the main site of creolisation because of the plantation's isolation from the seats of European power and the close interaction of colonizing and colonized subjects within its shared confined space.

The period rooms in the Barbados Museum's Warmington Gallery^{xviii} recreate a traditional plantation Great House interior on a moderate scale (a nursery, a bedroom, and a living and dining room combined). Antique objects and furniture have been chosen from local collections to closely match those found in a mid-eighteenth to nineteenth-century plantation home. The contents of the living and dining rooms (the home's public display rooms) are of particular interest to this discussion of a discourse of power. Based on the layout of similar rooms in the homes of the British aristocracy that they sought to duplicate, the furnishings speak to the owner's status through careful positioning of treasured objects. Above the cane-backed mahogany settee in the living room is a pair of marriage portraits, *Mr. Samuel Brown* and *Mrs. Samuel Brown*, dating from the late seventeenth century. On the ornate mahogany sideboard several sterling silver pieces are laid out while in the china cabinet and on open display areas in the room there are fine china and crystal pieces collected from around the world. The exhibition of affluence and grandeur was an important signifier of assumed colonial authority and domination.

Such plantocratic importance was further reproduced in portraits that hung within the public rooms of the Great House. An interesting example of this portraiture is an oil painting in the Barbados Museum collection entitled *Seale Yearwood Esq. (1732-1823)*^{xix} (*****). This full-length portrait depicts an elderly white Barbadian planter centrally seated in an upright mahogany dining chair with legs casually spread apart as he smokes a long pipe and grasps a wooden cane firmly in his right hand. Emerging from the shadows behind him on his left is a standing coloured man carrying a tray with a large filled Sangaree glass. Beside him, and immediately in front of his slave butler, is a low round mahogany pedestal table covered with a tablecloth bearing a silver platter of limes, a small knife and the sitter's spectacles and top hat. The elegant setting of the portrait appears to be under a tree outdoors, allowing a view of a colourful sunset through a wide opening between the trees on the sitter's right.

This portrait clearly speaks to the status of the sitter and functions as an icon of wealth and privilege.^{xx} Dressed formally in blue jodhpurs with knee buckles, white stockings with buckled black shoes, a high-collared white shirt with buttoned vest and black jacket, the sitter is presented as a fine upper-middle-class eighteenth-century gentleman. His relaxed pose with his vest partly unbuttoned and his legs wide open in a display of gendered power suggests a comfortable no-nonsense attitude. His manservant stands tall and is likewise attired in a fine dark livery with a white collared shirt and gloves. In the tradition of eighteenth-century European portraiture, the presence of the black slave in the portrait imparts grandeur to the subject of the portrait through the slave's position of inferiority. As Pointon notes in *Hanging the Head* (1993), "pictorially, the black body serves as the ideal complement to the white subject" since his situation in the shadows behind the subject and his dark skin provide a visual trope for the white subject and his empowerment in colonial terms (Pointon 143).

The artist appears to have caught the subjects in the late afternoon when the master is being served his afternoon liquor. The position of the figures and their body language describe positions given to formal servitude, on the part of the slave, and relaxed indulgence in the fruits of mastery on the part of the sitter. The portrait very obviously symbolizes the sitter's identity as a member of the master class and serves as a visual reproduction of power. Its representation of the sitter within the plantation setting surrounded by his material comforts (including his slave), makes the portrait a marker of privilege. The view outdoors shows the landscape over which he likely exercises control and ownership while the Sangaree punch that he is about to consume connotes the sugar industry and its byproduct of rum which provide the source of his wealth.^{xxi} The subsequent prominent display of this portrait within the plantation house would have served to reinforce its symbolic function as sign of power. Passed from one generation to the next, it would have substantiated the family's role as members of the planter class. The fact that the slave's identity remains unacknowledged in the painting's title and that he remains within the shadows further speaks to eighteenth-century portrait traditions and explicitly to his position as chattel.

The eighteenth-century colonial "Plantation Theatre" thus staged a performance of power that was based on highly determined visual codes of race and class difference. Creole bodies acted out roles that were predetermined by the plantation machine in the interest of the sugar economy's success. A hierarchical classification system allowed white bodies (the master class) to regulate black bodies (the slave class) using disciplinary surveillance and physical torture. Within this structure, the Great House functioned as a central stage for the performance of "civilized" social relations. Permanently visible to the whole plantation, the occupants of the Great House (the white Creole woman, her family, and her domestic slaves), though privileged, similarly fell under the discipline of surveillance in the interest of colonial and patriarchal power. The plantation became a microcosm of a visually coded island society in which the slave body was sentenced to a lifetime of forced labour and the white body enjoyed a privileged existence. The white Creole actors in particular dutifully imitated the colonial roles set out for them by the mother country.

A series of lithographic prints in the Barbados Museum's Cunard Gallery interestingly point to an eighteenth-century satire on these pretentious European "theatrics" that was performed by the

slave population for their entertainment and that of the planter class. In these depictions of a costumed and masked male dancer performing a mimed repertoire of dance steps in a Jamaican street festival, the paradoxical necessity of mimicry in a creolised culture is highlighted. Two of the prints, *Koo Koo, or Actor-Boy* and *Jaw-Bone, or House John-Canoe*, both produced in 1837^{xxii} (***** *****), depict actors from the Jonkonnu masquerade in full costume.^{xxiii} In the first print (*Koo Koo*), the actor-boy, dressed in an “aristocratic” European lady’s elaborate regalia complete with wig, a full skirt with petticoats, a fan, white gloves, and elegant feathered and be-jeweled headdress, lifts his white face mask to reveal his black male face.^{xxiv} In the second print (*Jaw-Bone*), Jonkonnu, dressed as a courtier, confronts the viewer in a cross-legged dance pose with a decorative three-tiered model of a Great House (complete with royal palms) on top of his white-masked, wigged head. This “European” actor-boy character entertains his audience by reciting random passages from Shakespeare’s plays to the accompaniment of street music (drums and pipe). The performance was staged to make fun of the colonial masters. As Veerle Poupeye notes in *Caribbean Art* (1999), “these so-called fancy-dress Jonkonnu characters were not just imitating, but also parodying the Jamaican plantocracy and its “European” culture” by “mockingly” adopting a “white identity” (Poupeye 18). Peter Marsden, in 1788, writes, “They dance minuets [. . .] imitating the motion and steps of the English but with a degree of affection that renders the whole truly laughable and ridiculous [. . .]”^{xxv} The ability to release hostilities through laughter was indicative of the black population’s resilience in the face of adversity. The festival combined the masquerade of Africa with that of British mumming plays^{xxvi} to undermine colonial authority through cross-gender / cross-race / cross-class performances that visually empowered the slave players through brief periods of liberty. It seems ironic that the Jonkonnu should so accurately both reflect and mock a visually coded society that prided itself on the perfect replication of British society.

In *Colonialism / Postcolonialism* (1998), Ania Loomba discusses mimicry and notes that Bhabha’s suggestion that “there is always a slippage, a gap, between what is said and what is heard” in any act of communication is relevant as a way of understanding the formation of colonial societies. In Bhabha’s argument, the process of trying to replicate British society in a colony could not be complete because “what it produces is not simply a perfect image of the original but something changed because of the context in which it is being reproduced. [. . .] colonial authority is rendered ‘hybrid’ and ‘ambivalent’ by this process of replication, thus opening up spaces for the colonised to subvert the master-discourse” (Loomba 89). Here, the “gap” between the appearance of the colonial presence as “original and authoritative” and “its articulation as repetition and difference [. . .] marks the failure of colonial discourse” (Bhabha in Loomba 177). The use of mimicry in the Jonkonnu festival to articulate signs of cultural difference parodies just such a construction and ironically it becomes a site of colonial resistance for both the enslaved black Creole bodies that perform it and the white Creole bodies who watch the performance. In a pure example of the process of creolisation, the Jonkonnu performers “act out” the ridiculous excesses of colonial society and make a farce of the role-playing that was integral to that society.

Though the curtains have long since closed on the colonial plantation and its theatrics of power, its history of codifying bodies by skin-colour still casts its shadow over life in contemporary Caribbean island societies. With the visual reinforcement of this history ever present in historical and cultural displays and in tourism brochures and productions which nostalgically recall the story of a romanticized colonial past to predominantly white Western visitors, the binary construction of racial stereotypes persists.^{xxvii} Because of the long-entrenched plantation dynamics of domination-subordination, it is doubtful whether the Creole imagination has managed to shape a hybrid identity out of the warring fragments of both West African and European culture in such a way as to feel comfortable performing in his own mythical Creole “skin”. As Benítez-Rojo writes,

[. . .] in the Caribbean, skin colour denotes neither a minority nor a majority; it represents much more: the colour imposed by the violence of conquest and colonization, and especially by the plantation system. Whatever the skin colour might be, it is a colour that has not been institutionalized or legitimized according to lineage; it is a colour in conflict

with itself and with others, irritated in its very instability and resented for its uprootedness; it is a colour neither of the Self or the Other, but rather a kind of no-man's land where the permanent battle for the Caribbean's Self's fragmented identity is fought. (Benítez-Rojo 201)

This “double conflict of the skin” marks Caribbean identity and leaves the Creole dreaming of,

[. . .] the possibility of arriving at a Utopian time in which conflict over skin colour does not take place, that is, where skin loses its ancient memory and erases the whiplashes and branding irons, the plantation's stock and shackles; where it washes out its guilty stains, the stains of the slave trade, of the terrible middle passage, of the buying and selling of flesh, of the master's house and the slave barrack. (Benítez-Rojo 210)

Un/fortunately, in the performance of identity, it is not as easy to take off the skin as it is the mask and since, as Bhabha notes, “neither coloniser nor colonised is independent of the other”, colonial identity today remains in a state of anxiety and flux.

ⁱ The domestic role of the white Creole female will be discussed more fully in the following essay.

ⁱⁱ For a discussion of hierarchical systems as they relate to patriarchy and colonialism, see Moane, Geraldine. *Gender and Colonialism: a Psychological Analysis of Oppression and Liberation*. Great Britain: MacMillan P, 1999, 24-54.

ⁱⁱⁱ For a further discussion of mimicry see Homi Bhabha “Of Mimicry and Man”, *The Location of Culture*. London; NY: Routledge, 1994.

^{iv} Benítez-Rojo 72. This is true of the English, Dutch, Spanish, and French-speaking islands.

^v The sugar industry in the islands grew rapidly in the eighteenth century in response to demand for this product by western Europeans. For example, in 1741-45, the British West Indies produced 41,043 tons of sugar and by 1820-24, this had increased to 147,733 tons of sugar (Rogozinski, 105).

^{vi} In Barbados, the population census of 1667 showed 745 white landowners and 82,023 black slaves while in 1645 there had been 18,300 whites (11,200 landowners) and only 5,680 black slaves (Benítez-Rojo 69).

^{vii} This fits into the plantation-society model outlined by Nigel Bolland in “Creolisation and Creole Societies”, 19-21.

^{viii} See Handler, Jerome. “Plantation Slave Settlements in Barbados, 1650s to 1834.” Ian Randle P, Kingston, Jamaica: 2002. Reprinted from *In the Shadow of the Plantation: Caribbean History and Legacy*, Alvin O. Thompson, ed., 124.

^{ix} Painted by Alison Chapman-Andrews on commission for the Barbados Museum. The artist, originally from England and well known in the Caribbean for her landscape painting, has resided in Barbados for over 25 years. The painting has been widely reproduced as representative of plantation life in historical and pedagogical source material. Its decorative style reflects the Museum's desire to satisfy the taste of the tourist market.

^x Wood. “Report on the Negroes [at Newton].” Barbados: Newton Estate Papers 523/288, July 1796.

^{xi} This display case also includes illustrations of plantation life (slaves dancing on the plantation, market day, and a female slave being branded) as well as texts entitled “Punishment during Slavery” and “Private Lives” and a large pottery vessel used by slaves.

xii Wood, 220.

xiii Knight, Franklin. "Slavery in a Plantation Society". *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World*, 398.

xiv The division of labour by race and gender is more fully discussed in Beckles, Hilary McD. "Field Women: Beasts of Burden." *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers U P, 1989.

xv For a full discussion of slave laws, see Goveia, Elsa. "The West Indian Slave Laws of the Eighteenth Century." *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World* (2000), 580-596.

xvi A significant manifestation of power was evidenced in the visual spectacle of scarring and branding the body of the slave both to mark it as property and to act as a deterrent.

xvii The walls of the Great House were constructed from massive white coral stone blocks in Barbados.

xviii This gallery was reopened after extensive renovations on 18 September 2002. According to a Museum publication, it "showcases the environment, mood and setting of a traditional plantation house, spanning the period of the mid 18th – 19th centuries" (*Arti-Facts*, No. 76, 2002).

xix This portrait by an unknown artist is in storage and has never, to my knowledge, been displayed publicly in the Museum. The portrait's significance will be discussed further in a later chapter.

xx Eighteenth-century portraiture was used as a medium of communication. According to Pointon, "forms of clothing [. . .] are not read as naturalistic attributes of an individual in eighteenth-century society but understood as components in a language, in a vast repertoire of signifiers" (Pointon 112).

xxi The presence of his walking stick also probably alludes to the possibility of his suffering from gout, a common affliction of planters.

xxii From the series, *Sketches of Character* (1837), drawn by Isaac Belisario, a nineteenth century Jamaican artist, and printed by A. Duperly.

xxiii The Jonkonnu masquerade festival originated in the Caribbean in the early 1700s as a Christmas holiday celebration. Masquerade characters included a king, queen, and courtiers. Masqueraders would go from house to house entertaining the occupants for food or money. The festival is thought to have celebrated an ancient African chief, John Conny, who headed a tribe on the Guinea Coast around 1720 (according to Edward Long, 1774).

xxiv For a discussion of the significance of cross-race and cross-sex costumes, see "Dress Codes, or the Theatricality of Difference" in Garber, Marjorie. *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

xxv Marsden, Peter. *An Account of the Island of Jamaica*. Newcastle, 1788.

xxvi Mumming plays, with actors in masks and costumes, were traditionally performed in Britain from the early 1700s. Using role-play, which identified a particular community, and played on the sense of that community, the actors used stylized ritualistic gestures in short mimes to celebrate their society's virtues and expose its faults.

xxvii A discussion of how the Museum's display of colonial artifacts affects contemporary perception of Self by Caribbean people is beyond the scope of this paper, however, it is worth noting that stereotypical readings of racial roles continue to be reinforced by the Museum's presentation of historical material.