



DECOLONIZATION, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, AND PERFORMANCE

IN THE CARIBBEAN AND CANADA 1968-1988

October 24-26, 2019

York University

Toronto, Ontario

Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation and the Dish with One Spoon Wampum

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PROGRAM

THURSDAY OCTOBER 24

1:00-3:00pm

Dance Annex, 527 Bloor West (Not Accessible – One Staircase)

**The Arrivals Legacy Project: Navigating Loss,
Reviving Stories of Recovery and Return**
Performance Workshop with Diane Roberts

3:30-6:00pm

Media Commons Theatre, University of Toronto
Robarts Library 3rd floor, 130 St. George St. (Accessible)

Slavery Happened Here: An Afronautic Research Lab
Performance Workshop with Camille Turner

6:30-9:30pm

A Different Booklist, 779 Bathurst St. (Accessible)

Opening Reception & Dinner

Emcee: Itah Sadu

Land Acknowledgement

Organizers' Welcome

Dean's Welcome: Alice Hovorka, Dean of Environmental Studies, York University

Charlotte Henay: *After Dorian: "in the end" what must we do?*

Readings: Carol Lawes, Oonya Kempadoo, Lillian Allen

Book Launch: *The Coup Clock Clicks* by Brian Meeks

Performance: Amai Kuda et Les Bois

PROGRAM

FRIDAY OCTOBER 25

305 Founders College, York University (Accessible)

8:30am-9:30am **Registration**

9:30am-11:15am **Memory, Oral Performance, Revolution**

Anthony Bogues (Brown University) *Political Language, Oratory and Performance: The 'Not For Sale' Speech of 1976*

Alissa Trotz (University of Toronto) *'To Speak with the Voice of the People': Notes on Rodney's Groundings as Pedagogy in 1970s Guyana*

Faith Smith (Brandeis University) *After the Dance: Performing Sovereignty*

Chair: Ramabai Espinet (Poet, Novelist, Critic and Academic)

Discussant: Chevy Eugene (York University)

11:15am-11:30am **Break**

11:30am-1:00pm **Remembered Tomorrows: The Revolution in Grenada**

Patsy Lewis (Brown University) *Exploring the Grenada Revolution Through the Lens of Size*

Shalini Puri (University of Pittsburgh) *Performance, Everyday Life, and Ordinary Activism: Moving Memories of Grenada*

Tanya Shields (University of North Carolina) *Rehearsing Revolutionary Tomorrows*

Chair: Beverly Bain (University of Toronto)

Discussant: Mila Natasha Mendez (York University)

1:00pm-2:00pm **Lunch**

2:00pm-3:00pm **Decolonization and Visual Memory: A Round Table on Exhibiting Histories of Emancipation**

Suzanne Francis-Brown (University of the West Indies Museum) *Exploring Confrontations Through Exhibition*

Christiana Abraham (Concordia University) *Protests and Pedagogy: Representations, Memories and Meanings*

Chair: Richard Fung (OCAD University)

PROGRAM

FRIDAY OCTOBER 25 (CONT.)

305 Founders College, York University (Accessible)

3:00pm-4:45pm **Performance and Gendered Resistance in Jamaica**

Taitu Heron (University of the West Indies, Open Campus, Barbados) *Not a Bloodklaat: Performance, Ritual and Disruption in Jamaica's Social Justice Movements*

Kanika Batra (Texas Tech University) *Rights a di Plan: (In)Directing Sexuality in Jamaica*

Nicosia Shakes (College of Wooster) *Male (Dis)Embodiment as De-Colonial Practice in the Work of Sistren Theatre Collective*

Donette Francis (University of Miami) and Linnette Vassell (Women's Resource and Outreach Centre) *Interim Time?: Big Politics versus the Politics of People to the Bone*

Chair: Kelly Baker Josephs (York College/CUNY)

4:45pm-6:30am **Break and Transportation Downtown**

6:30pm-8:00pm **Keynote by Erna Brodber *After the Looking Glass: Blackspace and Emancipation***

George Ignatieff Theatre, Trinity College in the University of Toronto, 6 Hoskin Avenue

Opening Remarks: Lisa Myers (York University)

Introduction: Ronald Cummings (Brock University)

Keynote: Erna Brodber (Writer in Residence at the University of the West Indies) *After the Looking Glass: Blackspace and Emancipation*

Q&A Discussant: Andrea Davis (York University)

PROGRAM

SATURDAY OCTOBER 26

305 Founders College, York University (Accessible)

10:00am-11:30am Roundtable: Cuban Connections

Brian Meeks (Brown University) *Cuba and the Caribbean, or Cuba in the Caribbean? Looking forward and looking back*

Bernardo Garcia Dominguez (University of Toronto) *Caribbean Independence and the Cuban Connection*

Chair: Akua Benjamin (Ryerson University)

Discussant: Warren Harding (Brown University)

11:30am-11:45am Break

11:45am-1:30pm Yard Performance, Decolonizing Institutions and the Body

Elaine Savory (The New School) *Theater and Social Justice in Post-Independence Barbados*

Tony Hall (Lordstreet Theatre) *The Masquerade in Trinidad*

Carolyn Allen (University of the West Indies at Mona) *Ratoon Revisited: Decolonization, Identity and the Stage*

Rawle Gibbons (Caribbean Yard Campus) *Back a yard: Decolonizing Caribbean Theatre*

Chair: Ahdri Zhina Mandiela (Poet and Theatre Director)

Discussant: Morgan Johnson (York University)

1:30pm-2:30pm Lunch

2:30pm- 4:00pm Decolonizing Race, Gender and Social Movements

Andil Gosine (York University) *What We Wear: Wardrobes (as) Performance*

Matthew Chin (Fordham University) *Revisiting the Politics of Performance in Jamaica's National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC)*

Jason Allen-Paisant (University of Leeds) *Aimé Césaire and Vodou: Un/thinking Western Epistemology*

Kimberly Palmer (York University) *Caribbean Decoloniality, Indigenous Resurgence: Lessons from Garifuna Struggles in Honduras*

Chair: Chair: Tzarina Prater (Bentley University)

Discussant: Rachel Lobo (York University)

PROGRAM

SATURDAY OCTOBER 26 (CONT.)

305 Founders College, York University (Accessible)

4:00pm-4:15pm **Break**

4:15pm-5:45pm **Pedagogies of Decolonization and Performance**

Randi Kristensen (George Washington University) *JAMAL: Adult literacy decolonizing knowledge and activism in 1970s Jamaica*

Marvin George and Camille Quamina (Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts) *Making Mas with Theatre; Making Theatre with Mas*

Bedour Alagraa (University of Texas at Austin) *Revolutionary Thought on Shifting Ground: Rodney, Fanon, and Mondlane on Struggles for Decolonization*

Chair: Carl James (York University)

Discussant: Tka Pinnock (York University)

5:45pm-6:00pm **Break**

6:00pm-7:00pm **Intergenerational Groundings: Thinking and Performing Decolonization Across Time and Space**

Vanier College 001 (Accessible)

Closing Ceremony: Led by Students in York University's Cultural Production Workshop: Performance-Based Practice

Dinner Reception

Poetry Reading: Canisia Lubrin

ABSTRACTS

PERFORMANCE WORKSHOPS

Diane Roberts (Concordia University)

The Arrivals Legacy Project: Navigating Loss, Reviving Stories of Recovery and Return

There is no bypassing loss. Loss of language, culture, dance, songs, history, memory, home. For those who remain, there is a continual longing for a forgotten past. For those who leave, there exists a sometimes-unspoken longing to return (Césaire 1956). In the context of African Diasporas Studies (Gilroy 1995), as well as in Performance Studies (Roach 1996), there is a debate about what practices may enable individuals, families and communities to either re-construct or acknowledge the continuing existence of distinct, inherited cultural values and traditions. Terms such as “embodied memory” (Roach 1996) and “ancestral” memory have been used to refer to those processes by which one may inhabit or embody memories of dead ancestors (Vrettos 1886). In this workshop, I introduce The Arrivals Personal Legacy Process, an embodied performance-based approach which I have developed to facilitate the emergence of re-remembered connections with ancestors. Working through particular centres of gravity rooted in the body and infused by the spirit, the process aims to bring to the fore the complexities of association and the politics of resistance (internal and external) that members of African Diasporas and Indigenous peoples living in the Caribbean and Canada go through when faced with the challenge of engaging their ancestral memory. As a result, the process itself demands a level of engagement that contradicts the traditional role of the researcher as knowledge producer by asking the researcher to step into a state of unknowing and to grapple with what is potentially unknowable.

Camille Turner (York University)

Slavery Happened Here: An Afronautic Research Lab

Despite the fact that Black people have been present in territories that are now known as Canada for over four centuries, they are often presented as newcomers within Canada’s historiography. This failure of memory is enabled because the history of transatlantic slavery on Canadian soil, and its connection to the rest of the colonial world, is hidden in the gaps and silences of the archive. The erasure of the roots of the Black presence also erases the roots of ongoing anti-Black violence that stem from slavery and continue to affect Black life in the present. Without vital knowledge of the past, anti-Blackness in the Canadian context cannot be understood, reckoned with and expunged. Drawing on Afrofuturist principles of centering Blackness, imagining time as nonlinear, and combining media, performance and archival research, Camille Turner created the Afronautic Research Lab. Since its inception in 2016, the lab has traveled across the country gathering local evidence and mobilizing knowledge beyond the academy. The lab’s most recent stop was in Bonavista, Newfoundland in August 2019 where it incorporated evidence of 19 slave ships made in the area.

In this workshop, Turner will lead an exploration of the Afronautic Research Lab. We will examine the form of the lab, its adaptability and the knowledge it enables.

ABSTRACTS (KEYNOTE)

AFTER THE LOOKING GLASS: BLACKSPACE AND EMANCIPATION

Erna Brodber (Writer in Residence at the University of the West Indies)

“After the Looking Glass” shares the path which this presenter took to her realization of herself as an ‘intellectual worker’. The journey begins with parental influences, elementary and high school influences and the happenings at the local university of the West Indies where I met Lloyd Best’s term, ‘intellectual worker’ and found that it resonated with my sense of what I hoped to be. After post-graduate shifting from university to university and from discipline to discipline, I stopped for a while at the medical school of the University of Washington in Seattle where I learned from a patient that there is something called a “social mirror” in which every mentally healthy human being should be able to see herself. From my interaction with him, I came to the understanding that I and my kind, who cannot see ourselves in our society’s looking glasses—the books we read, the courses we do—are psychiatrically disturbed. There are a variety of mirrors. Since 1968, it has been my task to construct a looking glass in which we with our particular status can see ourselves. I share this process.

ABSTRACTS (PANEL 1)

MEMORY, ORAL PERFORMANCE, REVOLUTION

Political Language Oratory and Performance: The 'Not For Sale' Speech of 1976

Anthony Bogues, Director of the Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice, Asa Messer Professor of Humanities and Critical Theory, Brown University

In 1976/77, Jamaican party politics was at a juncture. A few years before the PNP had declared itself a democratic socialist party. But perhaps more importantly the party began to take on the political tasks of decolonization of the Jamaican society. These acts of decolonization not only irritated the elite but generated active political and social opposition to what they perceived as their loss of power and the foregrounding of the aspirations of the black majority. In this 1976 party conference public speech, Micheal Manley performed political action which chanted down the Jamaican elite while defiantly staking out a different ground for progressive politics. The speech is a seminal one in Caribbean politics. This paper engages in a close reading of the speech, its context and the decision to speak in this way to the massive audience which turned out that day. It addresses the ways in which the speech was performed. It also argues that the speech was a watermark of the 1970s and how three years later "we are not for sale" became an internal party slogan to create an anti-IMF program and a struggle for further democratization within the party.

'To Speak with the Voice of the People': Notes on Rodney's Groundings as Pedagogy in 1970s Guyana

Alissa Trotz, Professor of Caribbean Studies at New College, Director of Women and Gender Studies and affiliate faculty at the Dame Nita Barrow Institute of Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados

Between 1968 and 1980, Guyanese historian and political leader Walter Rodney gave numerous speeches in the Caribbean, Canada, the UK and Africa. In each context, he drew on the language of Rastafari, the Guyanese working people and formal received English. Little scholarly attention has so far been paid to the ways in which Rodney's oral and written language both called into being and was itself the product of a community of resistance based upon the principle of self-emancipation. Drawing on some of his speeches in Guyana during the anti-dictatorial struggle, this paper explores how Rodney's "groundings" unfolded in and through relation, and reflects on his developing pedagogy of liberation as these resonated with audiences across differences of race, nation and class.

After the Dance: Performing Sovereignty

Faith Smith, Associate Professor, African and African American Studies and English, Brandeis University

This paper takes up the promise of After (often, in our moment, a signal of defeat, despair, cynicism or disaffection) to think about the span of time of our deliberations as a moment from which to remember the past, or to which some future projects its retrospective gaze. What pasts and futures are animated by "1968-1988"? What genealogies and geographies? And with what consequences for the body, as a physical and affective receptacle or placeholder? This paper takes up these questions with reference to (mainly) fiction of the cusp of the 21st century, set in the 1970s and 1980s.

ABSTRACTS (PANEL 2)

REMEMBERED TOMORROWS: THE REVOLUTION IN GRENADA

Exploring the Grenada Revolution Through the Lens of Size

Patsy Lewis, Interim Director of Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Visiting Professor of International and Public Affairs, Brown University

It would be difficult to understand the Grenada Revolution, its efforts to address what it viewed as Grenada's development concerns, and its ultimate demise without considering the role of size. Debates on size have focused largely on the economy, which is at the heart of the traditional development literature. Important aspects of how size operates at smaller levels of analysis, such as the community, is left largely to the social policy/social cohesion literature. I argue that it is not possible to understand small states if these fields of exploration are treated as separate. I explore the myriad ways in which size was manifested in Grenada, in how it limited and expanded economic and political opportunities and how it interacted with internal and external dynamics to make the Revolution possible but also to undermine it. I look at the opportunities and challenges size presents and the possibilities it holds for a different kind of political engagement more suited to the realities of small states.

Performance, Everyday Life, and Ordinary Activism: Moving Memories of Grenada

Shalini Puri, Professor, Department of English, University of Pittsburgh

The question at the heart of my inquiry is how might we strengthen the movement between Memory Studies and transformative action? Writing within and against the field of Memory Studies and in dialogue with Performance Studies, theories of embodiment, and artists, activists, and scholars like Bill T. Jones, Sistren, Fred Moten, the Zapatistas, Walter Rodney, James Scott, Andreas Huyssen, Hal Foster, and Sujatha Fernandes, I will explore the realized value, the possibilities, and the diverse functions and limits of story-telling. I will explore storytelling as a professionalized practice, a form of witnessing, and an everyday activity. Taking the Grenada Revolution as a case-study, I will explore performance as a site of everyday activism and expression in a context of a long historical silencing. However, I will also address some of the topics that remain absent even in performative memory of the Grenada Revolution. How might we approach those silences?

Rehearsing Revolutionary Tomorrows

Tanya Shields, Associate Professor, Department of Women's and Gender Studies, University of North Carolina

Using Maryse Condé's *In the Time of the Revolution* (1989), which juxtaposes the French and Haitian revolutions with revolutionary ferment in Guadeloupe, and Francis Urias Peters' *Redemption Time* (2013), a play about the Grenadian revolution, my essay engages with remembering revolutionary stories. Condé's play is a grand sweep in which Zephyr, the storyteller, unites the three locations to explore revolutionary failures. Peters' intimate structure uses familial dynamics to rehearse revolutionary fractions and the play posits that the failure of a decolonial narrative was brewing long before the invasion. To engage with the layers of the revolutionary story, there must be (1) an examination of pre-revolutionary periods (Gairy and the colonial era); (2) the revolution; and (3) the silences after its collapse. These works highlight Sylvia Wynter's interpretation of the "coloniality of power" by illustrating the ways in which the matrix of colonial power persists.

ABSTRACTS (PANEL 3)

DECOLONIZATION AND VISUAL MEMORY: A ROUND TABLE ON EXHIBITING HISTORIES OF EMANCIPATION

Exploring Confrontations Through Exhibition

Suzanne Francis-Brown, Co-Curator of the Confrontations Exhibition, University of the West Indies Museum, 2018-2019

“Confrontations” is an exhibition that focuses on student protest in Jamaica and the wider West Indies with a special focus on the moment of the 1968 protest spurred by the Jamaican government declaration that Guyanese university lecturer Walter Rodney was persona non grata. Rodney’s activism among the students, but more so in dispossessed and disaffected communities, had led to the conclusion that he was a threat to be removed. The exhibition draws on oral history as a major source complementing administrative and academic texts; in relation to the student action, to the wider perspective on the events and in seeking to gain some appreciation of the unrepresented voices who were Rodney’s major interest—in other words, to Gown and also Town. The exhibition continues to be a site for the collection of narratives from visitors, which are shared through an exhibition blog, thereby continuing the process of collection and interpretation.

Protests and Pedagogy: Representations, Memories and Meanings

Christiana Abraham, Assistant Professor, Communication Studies, Concordia University

This exhibition offers a rare glimpse into the archival records related to the 1969 student protests at Sir George Williams University. Between January 29 and February 11, 1969, Canada’s largest student occupation took place across the street in the Henry Hall building, when students took over the seventh and ninth floor computer centre to protest anti-black racism in the classroom.

By revisiting these events fifty years later, we ask: what do these archival materials say to us now? How do they enable a re-reading and re-telling of the “Sir George Williams affair,” and how can they inform the ongoing production of knowledge about this important history? Many of the existing accounts of the “George Williams affair” have focused on violence: labeling the protest a riot, emphasizing material damages, or tied to discourses of revolution. This exhibition highlights lesser-known narratives, through images, sounds, newspaper accounts, official documents, and oral testimonies that bring the archives to life. These artifacts take us on a journey to 1969, where we experience the tensions of the period playing out in black and white. Representation meets memory as the neglected complexities of the protest come into view.

Contemporary artistic renderings, meanwhile, generate meanings that disrupt normative tellings of this story. These creative pieces articulate narratives of activism and resistance, reveal un-spoken symbolic scars, and stage debates about race and racism. They force us to reflect upon the unfinished business of decolonization and its relationship to teaching and learning.

By bringing together past and present, “Protests and Pedagogy: Representations, Memories, and Meanings” offers a new vision of these events that allows us to reflect on our desires for the future!

ABSTRACTS (PANEL 4)

PERFORMANCE AND GENDERED RESISTANCE IN JAMAICA

Not a Bloodklaat: Performance, Ritual and Disruption in Jamaica's Social Justice Movements

Taitu Heron, Head/Development Specialist, Women and Development Unit (WAND) University of the West Indies, Open Campus, Barbados

Against the background of earlier activist moments in Jamaica (abortion and sexual offences), and emphasizing a more recent one on violence against women and girls—the Survivor Empowerment March of the Tambourine Army, held on March 11, 2017 in Jamaica—this photographic essay explores the different approaches to women's activism and wider intersectional activism whose methods may be argued as “decolonial” and disruptive. By that I mean a deliberate disruption of an oppressive status quo embedded in Afro-Saxon hetero-normativity, brown middle-class respectability politics, anti-woman, anti-Black and Christian fundamentalism (Hintzen 2014; Lewis Gordon 2001; Pinkie Megwe 2008; hooks 1984; Lorde 1984; Oyewumi 1997). Activism therefore occurs within the wider discourse of what has been called a “battle for space” in a post-colonial polity (Nettleford 1996; Heron 2003).

The essay uses reflections on personal involvement by key leaders—myself included—performer participants, photographs and video clips of stands, protests and marches to discuss and demonstrate how activists relied on testimony, disruptive tactics and African-derived spiritual practices to shift the way activism takes place in Jamaica in order to challenge the Afro-Saxon sensibilities of the status quo and break free from the tendencies of conservative feminist heterosexism in Jamaica's women's movement towards something else. This “something else” means different things to the different women who participated and who experienced it with commonalities threading them altogether. This essay elaborates on these meanings as told by the women themselves.

Rights a di Plan: (In)Directing Sexuality in Jamaica

Kanika Batra, Professor of English, Texas Tech University

My focus is on how publications such as "Sistren" and "WomanSpeak" represented Caribbean sexualities in the 1980s in ways that furthered discussions of non-normative sexualities even while running the risk of governmental and social opprobrium. One of the ways in which this was accomplished was by making implicit connections between sexual and reproductive autonomy. Presenting these issues as health concerns enabled a detailed, if indirect, discussion within these publications without inviting direct resistance and censorship either from the readership or the governmental machinery in Jamaica and other Caribbean nation-states. Such implicit connections are also reflected in cultural production of the period, including plays by the Sistren Theatre Collective and Pat Cumper. It is important to take into account representations of sexuality and gender, not only to correct the monolithic and pervasive narrative of the Caribbean islands as a rampant homophobic space but also to position these as activist locations.

ABSTRACTS (PANEL 4 CONT.)

PERFORMANCE AND GENDERED RESISTANCE IN JAMAICA

Male (Dis)Embodiment as De-Colonial Practice in the Work of Sistren Theatre Collective

Nicosia Shakes, Assistant Professor, Department of Africana Studies, College of Wooster

Caribbean feminist movements have emphasized the inextricable link between patriarchy and colonialism. Accordingly, Second Wave Caribbean feminism demanded that Caribbean states finish the process of decolonization by firmly placing gender justice on their national development agendas. Sistren Theatre Collective, formed in Jamaica in 1977, was a significant part of feminist mobilizing. Sistren rooted their aesthetic in Black radical, feminist, anti-colonial and other liberatory paradigms with a focus on empowering Black working-class women. Sistren's repertoire was lauded as well as criticized for featuring women-only casts, including to depict men. In this paper, I argue that the Collective's use of women actors to portray men performed a politics of feminist decolonization in two main ways: First, it questioned the corporeal bases of male power by allowing "maleness" to reside in female bodies. Second, it challenged the masculinism characteristic of mainstream Jamaican theatre by featuring men as secondary and mostly villainous characters.

Interim Time?: Big Politics versus the Politics of People to the Bone

Donette Francis, Associate Professor and Director of American Studies, Department of English, University of Miami

Linnette Vassell (Community Development & Gender Specialist, Women's Resource and Outreach Centre)

The work of Neville Dawes stages decolonization as an unending process marked by generative failures and returns to the status quo. In his 1970 novel, *Interim*, the narrator is a journalist from the rural black lower-middle class who spends the narrative time taking notes about the struggle over land, leadership and labour to write his memoir from the other side of the revolution. This narrative framing underscores the performativity of revolutions. Situating Dawes as writer, Director of the Institute of Jamaica and advocate for the development of theatre and drama, I take up his recasting the Jamaican 1970s not as revolutionary time, but rather as interim time, a time marked by the unsustainability of the period's momentum. I explore the temporalities of the 1970s as marked by at least two competing sensibilities: engaged radicalism versus radical skepticism; and two temporalities: revolutionary time versus interim time.

ABSTRACTS (PANEL 5)

ROUNDTABLE: CUBAN CONNECTIONS

Cuba and the Caribbean, or Cuba in the Caribbean? Looking forward and Looking back

Brian Meeks, Professor and Chair, Africana Studies, Brown University

In this discussion, I want to think again about the perception of Cuba in the Caribbean and the distance between the notion of Cuba as model of resistance, as opposed to Cuba as model of development. There is great admiration throughout the Caribbean for Cuba's ability to resist, withstand and persevere - what I have elsewhere called the "David State" phenomenon. There is widespread support for her heroic and historic stand against the forces of South Africa and apartheid in Angola from the nineteen seventies through to the nineteen nineties. There is almost universal expression of gratefulness and respect for Cuban assistance in health, education, construction at home and abroad. Yet none of this amounts to a resounding signal of approval for the Cuban political model, or indeed the Cuban economic model. Cuba remains mired in an interminable regime of economic crisis, underwritten, significantly if not entirely, by the US Blockade. In order to survive in the face of the US military threat and decades of attempted diplomatic isolation, not to mention sabotage, destabilization and assassination attempts against Fidel Castro and other leaders, Cuba has adopted a hermetic and centralized system of politics that has served her well as a protective shield against foreign subversion. But what is the price that is paid at the level of civil society? And what is the future of Cuban socialism in a new moment of isolation, with the Bolivarian revolution in crisis and the US once again ramping up hostilities from the North? These difficult questions are posed without definitive answers, but with a gesture towards greater regional integration as one possible avenue for a different and better future for Cuba and the Caribbean.

Caribbean Independence and the Cuban Connection

Bernardo Garcia Dominguez, Lecturer, New College, University of Toronto

The newly independent Anglophone Caribbean developed a Cuban connection that has not been assessed in all its significance as a sum of linked solidarity events that developed during the 1970s. The events were diplomatic, strategic, political and cultural in nature. As is well known, these countries, as an expression of their own unity and of solidarity with Cuba decided to jointly establish diplomatic relations with Cuba on December 8, 1972, later called the Cuba-Caricom Day. In November of 1975 Guyana, Barbados and Trinidad supported Angola's independence and facilitated Cuban planes to refuel there on their way to Africa, a critical decision that helped defeat an apartheid South African army. Cuba was invited to host Carifesta since the first was in Guyana and the second in Jamaica. The third Carifesta took place in Havana and Santiago de Cuba. Its impact resulted in the launching of Fiesta del Fuego in Santiago de Cuba, Cuba's Caribbean cultural festival, dedicated every year to a Caribbean country; an infusion of every Caribbean culture in Cuba, a consequent contribution to Cuba's Caribbean identity.

ABSTRACTS (PANEL 6)

YARD PERFORMANCE, DECOLONIZING INSTITUTIONS AND THE BODY

Theater and Social Justice in Post-Independence Barbados

Elaine Savory, Professor, Literary Studies, The New School

In the early 1970s Barbados was still effectively an apartheid society, which expected racial separatism, heteronormativity and a highly stratified class system to persist. From the late 1970s, attempts to form an integrated theatre company, to explore Black Power ideas through the arts, and to represent gender issues in the theater became important sites of possibility for Barbadian cultural life. The emergence of Earl Warner as a pan-Caribbean theatrical visionary offered the hope of much needed fresh ideas and cultural vocabularies. This presentation explores such work within the frame of Barbadian politics in the immediate post-Independence period. Drawing on oral testimony from theater practitioners and politically aware people active in this period, and the late Warner's papers, this presentation attempts to explore ways theatrical work provided a milieu for discussion of new ideas about social justice and the nature of the postcolonial for Barbados during this decade.

The Masquerade in Trinidad

Tony Hall, Director and Playwright, Lordstreet Theatre

Today, carnival, mas, the masquerade in Trinidad, remain a popular expression in an ever intensifying capitalistic marketplace. In this eruptive explosion of sometimes extremely violent, sometimes erotic and overly exploitative images, how to talk about the economies of spectatorship, recording of history and archiving, the age-old stated functions of the mas i.e. the illusion of social change, political commentary and activism? How to interrogate in these times the historical characters and approaches to their old traditions of play and performance? And how does all this affect street masquerade performances, the performers, the masqueraders themselves and the traditional theatre on the stage? By looking at two of my latest projects, which I call "mas interventions," "MISS MILES" and "Performing Marcus & Amy Garvey," I will initiate a discussion around some of these questions.

Ratoon Revisited: Decolonization, Identity and the Stage

Carolyn Allen, University of the West Indies at Mona

Erna Brodber's only play, "Ratoon" (2015), began as the writer's adaptation of her first novel "Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home" (1980). The latter was staged in 1990 with text by Pat Cumper. "Ratoon," which later evolved into an experiment with Theatre of the Oppressed, centered on the experience of a young woman inspired by men who, at different historical moments, both dreamed of a truly decolonized Jamaica, built on social(ist) principles. The play dramatizes psychological decolonization and identity, collectivity and community, as well as across hierarchies of race, class and gender. This workshop presentation will include a video review of the making of the production, which involved students of the Edna Manley College School of Drama becoming inspired to "build a better Jamaica." A dialogue between Brodber and director Carolyn Allen will follow, exploring intent, outcome and implications.

ABSTRACTS (PANEL 6 CONT.)

YARD PERFORMANCE, DECOLONIZING INSTITUTIONS AND THE BODY

Back a yard: Decolonizing Caribbean Theatre

Rawle Gibbons, Director, Caribbean Yard Campus

Black Power was the defining moment of the post-Independence era in the Caribbean. In theatre, there was a proliferation of performances around the region under various names: Yoruba House (Barbados), Tapia House (Trinidad), street theatre performances, the work of Antigua's Dobrene O'marde, Guyana's "Dem Two" and "Allah We", Suriname's Robin Dobru and Henk Tjon. Common to all these were the rejection of European theatre conventions and the affirmation of a Caribbean aesthetic. In Jamaica, Marina Maxwell's "Yard Theatre" was, for me, the embodiment of this consciousness. This presentation documents conversations with Marina and traces the realization of Yard in my own work during the period indicated.

ABSTRACTS (PANEL 7)

DECOLONIZING RACE, GENDER AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

What We Wear: Wardrobes (as) Performance

Andil Gosine, Associate Professor in Art and Politics, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University

In the Caribbean and elsewhere throughout the colonized Global South, since the moment of colonial encounter clothing has figured in various ways as a marker of humanness and civility. In this paper, I take up the wardrobe as a performance, in light of the historical colonial demarcating functions of clothing in the Caribbean. Recalling last year's decision by the Caribbean Court of Justice to strike down a gender- and sexuality- disciplining dress code law in Guyana, I briefly outline the colonial imperative to utilize clothing as a disciplining and subject-making tool. I then turn to my own education on wardrobes growing up in late 1970s and 1980s Trinidad, and indulge the opportunity afforded by our conveners today to begin to think about whether and how those strategies, mostly gleaned from the practices of women, incited (and/or don't incited) decolonial praxis, and their relevance today.

Revisiting the Politics of Performance in Jamaica's National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC)

Matthew Chin, Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Social Service, Fordham University

This paper returns to the first decade of Jamaica's National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC) to examine how the company's work shaped Jamaican cultural identity in the immediate aftermath of the island's independence from England in 1962. Given that both the Jamaican state and the NDTC itself positioned the company as representative of Jamaica from its very inception, this paper analyzes how "Jamaican-ness" was enacted through the company's early performances on the island and overseas. Though much has been made of NDTC's promotion of Afro-centric cultural development through its combination of North Atlantic and African dance forms with the movement vocabularies of the island's folk traditions, less attention has been paid to the widespread though illicit knowledge of the company's association with queerness. Drawing from oral history interviews with the first generation of NDTC company members and archival research conducted at the National Library of Jamaica and the NDTC archives, I revisit the first decade of NDTC's work to analyze the company's racial politics in relationship to how it engaged with questions of gender and sexuality. I argue that the form and content of NDTC's early work counter heteronormative expectations of the period in ways that offer a queering of Jamaican culture as the island's citizens struggled to come to terms with the process of national identity formation at the formal end of empire. In so doing, I consider how the association of NDTC with Black pride and queerness responds to Stuart Hall's call to "put in play a different sense of the past and thus a different way of thinking about cultural identity."

ABSTRACTS (PANEL 7 CONT.)

DECOLONIZING RACE, GENDER AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Aimé Césaire and Vodou: Un/thinking Western Epistemology

Jason Allen-Paisant, Lecturer in Comparative Literature, University of Leeds

Building on Aimé Césaire's early manifestos on poetry and a 1978 interview in which he revisits and assesses his poetic work, this essay particularises Césaire's poetic project through the lens of the phenomenon of possession in a ritual Afro-Caribbean context. My aim is to show how ritual possession offers a philosophical paradigm through which Césaire challenges the narrative of European humanism, anchoring Négritude in an alternative, decolonial sense of what it means to be human. I also trace Césaire's project of un/thinking humanist metaphysics by proposing a particularly Caribbean intellectual influence, via Haitian Vodou, on Césaire, whose obvious literary influences are almost entirely European, and by suggesting how Césaire's philosophy and poetics fit strongly with the generations of Caribbean thinkers that followed him, including Sylvia Wynter and M. NourbeSe Philip. In this way, I make the link, intellectually and politically, with the period under examination in this conference. Césaire's access to a profound Afro-Caribbean understanding of possession enables him to address colonial history and the nature of power and shift European understandings of philosophy, aesthetics, art, politics, self and cosmos.

Caribbean Decoloniality, Indigenous Resurgence: Lessons from Garifuna Struggles in Honduras

Kimberly Palmer, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University

For this workshop, I will put my dissertation research on the Garinagu's contemporary land contests in conversation with decolonial struggles over time and space. The Garinagu's fight against dispossession in Honduras, I have argued, relies on both flouting and colluding with colonial categories of race, an effort to forge cross-cutting alliances that bolster claims to place. Attention to this strategy, I propose, provides a lens through which to read the resurgence of Black and Indigenous social movements worldwide, together. Approaching these movements as a continuance of anticolonial struggles from the period 1968-1988, I ask: What similarities and differences exist between earlier manifestations of anticolonial struggle, and the Garinagu's current forms of organizing? What might we learn when we ask this question?

ABSTRACTS (PANEL 8)

PEDAGOGIES OF DECOLONIZATION AND PERFORMANCE

JAMAL: Adult literacy, decolonizing knowledge and activism in 1970s Jamaica

Randi Gray Kristensen, Assistant Professor, University Writing Program and African Studies Program, George Washington University

In the summer of 1978, at Church Teachers College in Mandeville, Jamaica, a class of advanced students participating in the Jamaica Movement for the Advancement of Literacy (JAMAL) wrote, cast, rehearsed, and performed a play that satirized several major institutions – the family, the church, and the business sector – as well as class and gender relations, and colorism. They reconstructed everyday experiences into an Anancy narrative that not only depicted how literacy empowered the normally disenfranchised to overcome structures of repression, but also challenged the expectations of the program administrators. This paper will locate this event in the context of the significance of the opportunities JAMAL offered for decolonizing knowledge and activism for poor and working-class Jamaicans. It will also analyze the reactions it provoked on the micro and macro levels, through JAMAL's subsequent decline and more recent reinvention as the Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning. JAMAL's trajectory follows the broader trajectory of the multiple contested imaginings of the purposes and audiences for adult education in the post-Independence era: from active decolonization in the 1970s; through global and local resistance, coercion, and neglect in the 1980s; to contemporary insertion into the neo-liberal global economy. Recovering this instance of popular education and performance illuminates both gaps in the historical record and possible foundations for reinvention in the 21st Century.

Making Mas with Theatre; Making Theatre with Mas

Marvin George and Camille Quamina, Senior Lecturers, Acting and Theatre Studies, Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts

This paper explores the use of the traditional cultural forms (masquerade, carnival, and festival arts such as Hosay and Ramleela) in two contemporary performances; one as theatre, the other as mas/querade. In both instances these exercises privilege the interrogation of a Caribbean performance aesthetic in which the Caribbean performer places at the centre of her process the possibilities for these cultural traditions as theatre, and as strategy in popular education. The presentation explores the implications this has for specific examples of theatre/performance praxis and pedagogy in the Caribbean. It extends the notion of “journeying towards ourselves” as proposed by Gibbons in his seminal scholarly work, “Traditional Enactments of Trinidad: Towards a Third Theatre” (1979); the suggestion that theatre/performance making in the post-colonial Caribbean is as much an ongoing (un/conscious) enterprise in identity politics and reparations (repairing), as it is aesthetic.

ABSTRACTS (PANEL 8 CONT.)

PEDAGOGIES OF DECOLONIZATION AND PERFORMANCE

Revolutionary Thought on Shifting Ground: Rodney, Fanon, and Mondlane on Struggles for Decolonization

Bedour Alagraa, Assistant Professor, Africa and African Diaspora Studies Department, University of Texas at Austin

This paper argues that the period between 1965 and 1975 constituted a moment in which the theoretical contours of the word “revolution” were being altered and re-signified conceptually. It offers a reading of three key texts in relation to one another, including Frantz Fanon's “Towards the African Revolution” (1967), Eduardo Mondlane's “The Struggle for Mozambique” (1969) and Walter Rodney's “The Russian Revolution” (1969-1974). I argue that each of these texts offer an understanding of revolution that breaks with their mid-century counterparts, due to the fatigue of waging protracted anti-colonial struggles, and the realizations of the insufficiency of scientific Marxist frameworks for crafting revolutionary ideologies and programmes. Instead, these thinkers offer an understanding of revolution, and therefore decolonization, that extended beyond questions of national liberation and instead frame revolution as a fundamental reordering of social life as the key mechanism for reconstituting the political.

ABSTRACTS

CLOSING CEREMONY

Intergenerational Groundings: Thinking and Performing Decolonization Across Time and Space

Cultural Production Workshop: Performance-Based Practice

As community, we will create a poetic distillation of the work and conversations shared during the conference that can be carried with us as we disperse again, back to our homes. How do we integrate the ideas, discussions, practices and possibilities of this conference into the rhythm of our lives? We attempt to answer this question by pulling together the major questions of the three days of the conference through a closing ceremony that is more than closing remarks from behind a podium.

