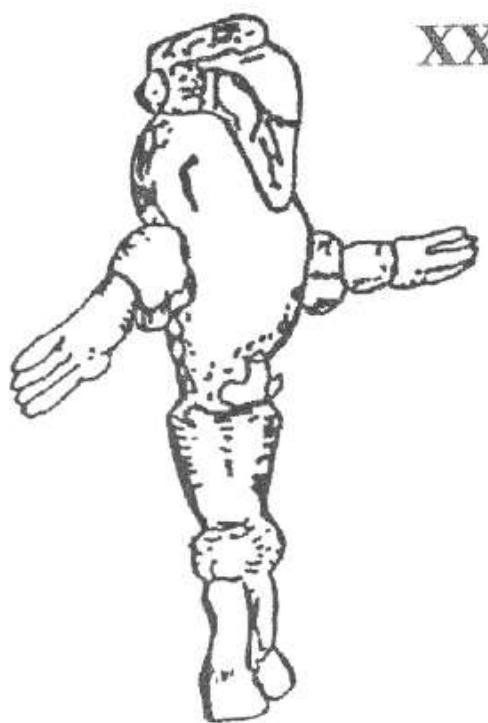


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**XXIX^e CONFERENCE ANNUELLE DE
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**The visual grammars of gender, class and race
in the Caribbean
in the work of Agostino Brunias (1730-1796)
and Jean Cazabon (1813-1888)**

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The Visual Grammars of gender, race and class in the Caribbean in
the paintings of Brunias, Bellisario, Landaluze and Cazabon, four
18th and 19th Century painters.

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The West Indian Washer woman, (c.1779, (Brunias)

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*Mr. Geoffrey MacClean, author of *An Illustrated Biography of Trinidad's Nineteenth Century Painter Michel Jean Cazabon*, and gallery owner in Port of Spain, Trinidad. Mr. MacClean generously shared with me both information as well as photocopies of the life and works of Brunias and Cazabon.*

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A number of copies of paintings and sketches of Brunias and Bellisario were also obtained from the National Library of Jamaica. In the event of the publication of this work, the credits will accompany the individual piece of work where appropriate.

NOTE:

The

textual illustrations are not integrated into the text but are presented on separate pages, close to their reference.

The Visual Grammars of gender, race and class in the Caribbean in the paintings of Brunias, Bellisario, Landaluze and Cazabon, four 18th and 19th Century painters.

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It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words... (but) The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled... The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe.

(John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, BBC and Penguin Books, 1972).

The visual image is the first thought image that we recognise outside of ourselves¹. When we acquire the necessary skills and the vocabulary, we convey through words and verbal communication the understanding of ourselves in relation to things around us. Identity is constructed in relative terms² and unfortunately, in general, in hierarchical ones; for instance we determine masculinity in opposition to femininity, ethnic/racial identity both in relation to and in opposition to other groups, class identities are configured as specific behaviours of upper against lower, bourgeois against proletariat, and the sum of these, national or regional identities are in relation and in opposition to other societies and other cultures.

Visual imagery also possesses a grammar which we come to learn. A child learns the difference between masculine and feminine based on outwards signs such as dress, length of hair, what tasks each sex performs and so on. Visual grammars are the constituent parts of a visual language, a set of symbols which add up or leads to the thing it represents, or in other words an iconography. This paper is primarily concerned with the creation of a Caribbean iconography, and consequently Caribbean identity through the medium of painting: it attempts to trace the emergence of symbolic and representative grammars of gender, race and class as they are configured in works of painting. I argue that in the determination of a Caribbean identity, these visual images which have emerged from the pens and paintbrushes of eighteenth and nineteenth century European trained artists are the early collective images which have been formulated the internal expression and notions of a Caribbean identity, as against the external visionary ones which were imagined by painters who painted out of the Region.

In an historical examination of the evolution of art in Britain, Andrew Graham Dixon writes that "Nothing tells us more about British culture than the gaping holes punched into the fabric of the past by those radical, muscular acts of censorship and abolition which lie at the heart of the history of British art" (Graham-Dixon, 1996 :14) His particular reference was to the violence of iconoclastic acts of destruction brought on by the radical leaders of the new

Protestant church from 1534³ who were "determined opponents of all Roman Catholic rituals and imagery" (Graham-Dixon, 1996: 16). A similar act of vandalism from various quarters was wrought in the emergent Caribbean culture. Colonization did not facilitate or encourage the indigenous art forms which were largely eradicated, making way for the European lens through which the societies were looked at, and consequently the way in which the immigrant groups who comprised the society, began to look at themselves⁴.

The challenge to historians is to employ these images which do exist more pertinently as we continue to write history, and in doing so to examine how they also inform our mental images of ourselves as we write and reinvent the history of Caribbean society. James Walvin has pointed out for instance that a host of graphic images of slave sufferings drawn by William Blake and later by William Turner and others, recur in modern scholarship "as support for a textual argument. Yet such images," he notes, "were themselves politically shaped and directed" (Walvin, 1996: 5) Walvin observes that it is not the incorrectness of the image which is being called into question, rather that they "form a corpus of historical data which is itself disputed ground". The paintings and sketches which have described the Caribbean in the eighteenth and nineteenth century have in general been used unproblematically. The second intent of this essay is to begin to investigate the disputed terrain of artistic production in terms of style, purpose for painting, the artist's own sentiments as well as the political concerns which led to the emergence of the artistic text in the period, and the story which all of this tells about an unfolding Caribbean history.

Writing something into history gives a name to the subject and acknowledges its existence. The history of the West Indies or the Caribbean has unfolded through orthodox historiography as a history of discovery, colonization and settlement, a record of legendary abuses and forms of oppression, comprising constitutional and political reforms, all circumscribed by the economic demands of warring imperial nations, and declining agricultural and industrial ventures. Social history added names and personalities to the characters who made this history also one of resistance, revolution and change. Women's history has been added to this recovery of invisible players in historical passages. More recently, the task of engendering history has been tallied to the ongoing list of challenges to historiography.

Engendering history can and has obviously taken many forms. In the Caribbean and elsewhere, there is at present a tremendous and valuable body of historical writing on gender⁵. My own concern with engendering history has tended to be slightly different, more so towards the theoretical and methodological challenge it poses to the discipline of history, and consequently to the way in which knowledge is persistently being constructed for the benefit of future generations of men and women. My search has been to understand through historical writings how and why the practices and ideology of patriarchy persist, or when and where it is challenged, in the context of the Caribbean. In *The Creation of Patriarchy* Gerda Lerner asks the question "What is the relationship of ideas, and specifically of ideas about gender⁶, to the social and

economic forces that shape history? The matrix of any idea is reality - people cannot conceive of something they have not themselves experienced or at least that others have before them experienced. Thus, images, metaphors, myths, all find expressions in forms which are "prefigured" through past experience". (Lerner, 1986: 10) Historical writing along with other representations of reality in the past, have been without the gender consciousness with which we now revisit them, and therefore, the inquiry into gender has to be "demythified" rather than demystified.

To separate the experience of men and women from the total experience of their reality, is again to reinterpret these symbols in new ways, unrepresentative of reality. "Woman's place is not a separate sphere or domain of existence, but a position within social existence generally" writes Joan Kelly. (Kelly, 1983) The third subtext of this project of analysing history through painting is in fact to situate the question of gender in history theoretically as shifting balances of power between men and women. In other words I am trying through the visual art form to contemplate the undercurrents of historical change which have their causality in gender relations, or are informed by questions of sexual difference. It is unrealistic as well as unfair to expect the records of the distant past to render up material which is gender sensitive as the present consciousness of gender inequality which we has come into being now, did not inform the past recorders of events. The search for the invisible, that which is not recorded because it was not important to be recorded, requires that you look with other lenses and use non-traditional sources for data. The idea of painting for instance occurred to me many years ago when I looked at the exhibition of Agostino Brunias's paintings on loan to the Barbados Museum. As Graham-Dixon eloquently phrases it, "These pictures of ...faces are small miracles, like stills snipped from a lost film of the past. Although they seem to speak in a whisper they are revolutionary. They teach a new and radical way of seeing" (Graham-Dixon: 1996: 63).

The idea of a visual grammar brings to mind of course that words and the messages they convey have also been part of the reconstruction and invention of the Caribbean, and that words provide the medium through which the visual is being interpreted. There is an ongoing sense in which this project of language recovery is constantly being carried out, whether it is in productions such as Richard Allsopp's recently published *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*, or the history of place names such as that done by Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen in Trinidad on the first layer of history inscribed through indigenous peoples on the island - Arima, Naparima, Tunapuna and Chacachacare⁷. This linguistic project was also undertaken in Gatzambide-Geigel's very interesting paper entitled "The Invention of the Caribbean in the 20th Century"⁸.

Peter Hulme's book *Colonial Encounters*, however, provides the best preface and introduction to this visual definition and interpretation of a Caribbean iconography. Hulme draws on visual representations where these are available, but he concentrates on a textual analysis of myths which have emerged and fed the discourse of the colonial encounter between the old world and the new

prior to 1796. Several of these myths grafted on to reality have contributed immensely to and determined the perception of the Caribbean as it is interpreted to this day. The encounter between Columbus and the Caribs, and the association of Caribs as cannibals or eaters of human flesh, lead to the logical depiction of the early Caribbean as savage territory to be civilized by a more highly developed culture. The construction of the temperament and customs of the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean as tribal opposites leads naturally to the notion that one is a more deadly and intrusive species - the Caribs, who are being challenged by the civilized Old World colonizers, having themselves appropriated the lands forcibly from the "peaceful" Arawaks. The fictional characters of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Prospero, Caliban and Miranda are never fully located in the Caribbean but the association of the incident appears to have been based on reports of a shipwreck in the uninhabited island of Bermuda⁹. In *The Tempest* itself the "Bermoothes" describes the fierce winds which rage and cause the tempest. The result of this encounter is that the seafaring European comes into contact with the native, but there is no recognition of Caliban's claim to original sovereignty "This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother which thou tak'st from me". Instead he is linguistically located near enough to the "Cannibal", and depicted as a grotesque, untrustworthy and savage character who can be enslaved rapidly. The island for Prospero becomes "merely an interlude, a neutral ground between extirpation and resumption of power" (Hulme, 1986: 124) while both Caliban and Ariel, the original inhabitants are servants to the will of the newcomers.

Robinson Crusoe and Man Friday reinforce the original myth of human-eating savages, Friday being the character saved and taught by the shipwrecked Crusoe. Another reading of this text is important here. Robinson Crusoe is a product of the Enlightenment and the novel itself, written from the point of view of first person narrator, embodies the values and ideas which evolved in European civilization during the period. The process of "enlightenment" also required that knowledge be recorded and categorized, so there was great curiosity in the customs and habits of other lands, and the need to record the "peculiar" customs of others. Crusoe establishes his character in relation to the speechlessness of Friday, (Descartes "*cogito ergo sum*"), thereby privileging immediately one culture over the other. Crusoe is a temporary interloper, economic necessity forces him to remain and consolidate, economic individualism drives his purpose "I came, I saw, I conquered", and he moves on having civilized his Man Friday, the original butler and manservant of the islands.

The final and less well known myth is that of Inkle and Yarico, the archetypal lovestory of the Caribbean, the native girl who "succours" the shipwrecked Englishman Inkle. A period of mutual love obtains, when he is dependent on her for survival on the island. He is rescued by an English ship and she travels with him from her island for he promises a continued love story in his country. Returning to English territory, Inkle realises that he has lost both time and money in his stay with Yarico, and sells her into slavery to recover his losses, despite the fact that she carries his child.

These myths and original tales are founded on part truth and part fiction, no doubt, but more crucial for my purposes here is that these encounters between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, and the evolution of these myths, create a much more deep-rooted and convenient fiction and ideology. So far, in my estimation at least, there is a certain taken for grantedness about these discourses of power, as if they have existed in a vacuum, are ordained through mysterious ideological statements, or as if there is a shared assumption by all of us - east and west, north and south - that the greater show of strength and technology of weaponry ensures superiority over the vanquished. I began the essay with the suggestion that identities are created in relation to and generally in opposition from another. We could also interpret the colonial encounters, and the specific way in which these have been recorded, as necessary to erecting as well as sustaining the discourses of racial and social superiority and inferiority, not only against the colonized, but in relation to other identities which are being established within a region. For instance, between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, the European concepts of nationalism and national identities were also internally within Europe being sharpened, as for instance the distinctions between England, France, Spain and Italy. Colonial encounters and conquests over native resistance were equally necessary for the affirmation of empire on home soil¹⁰. Of crucial importance is the way in which these encounters shaped notions which entered nineteenth and twentieth century philosophical discourses and treatises in the western world, the "noble savage" of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau.

Peter Hulme's discussion brings iconography up to the period 1796, and in a sense, I attempt to begin where he leaves off. I draw not on myth and fictive records, but on the artistic production which continues this discourse, and at the same time challenges it. To piece together the construction of Caribbean identity, I think we need first to consider the semiotics of an early Caribbean iconography which tallies with the early mythology. James Walvin observed, many of the sketches, paintings or drawings associated with slavery, are images which have become familiar "peppering the text, or emblazoned on a dust jacket - that we take them for granted." The following figures are reminders of these images as depicted by painters abroad.



Figure 1 'America' (c. 1600): an engraving by Jan van der Straet (Stradanus). In line with existing graphic convention the 'new' continent was often allegorized as a woman. The sexual dimension of the encounter with Vespucci is both visually and linguistically explicit (Hulme, 1986)



Europe supported by Africa and America

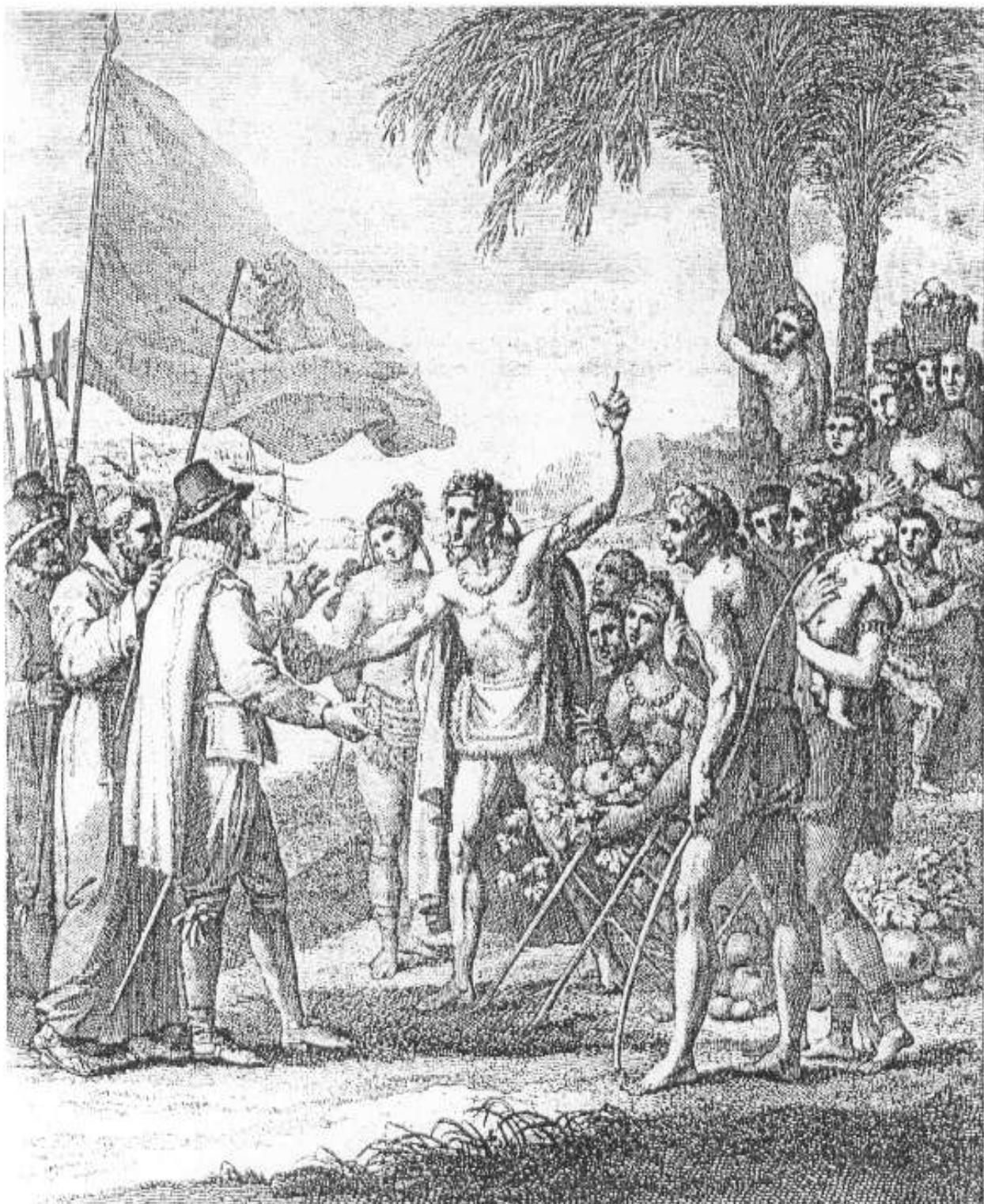
1.1 'Europe supported by Africa and America'. The exact sense the artist wished to convey is not clear, but the female form is used symbolically to depict the interdependence between the three continents through colonization and the slave trade. As in the abolitionist roundel (p. ii) the European woman is placed in a central and implicitly superior position.

Figure 3: Europe Supported by Africa and America



The Voyage of the Sable Venus from ANGOLA to the WEST INDIES

Figure 2: The voyage of the Sable Venus from Angola to the West Indies



An INDIAN CACIQUE of the ISLAND of CUBA, addressing COLUMBUS
concerning a future state.

Figure 4 : (Source: Bryan Edwards)

***Painting en plein air* in the Caribbean**

Why have I started with paintings of the 18th and 19th century. Three of the artists whom I look at in this essay worked primarily in oils. John Berger observes that oil painting refers to more than a technique, it defines an art form. "The art of any period tends to serve the ideological interests of the ruling class. If we were simply saying that European art between 1500 and 1900 served the interests of the successive ruling classes, all of whom depended in different ways on the new power of capital, we should not be saying anything new. What is being proposed is ...that a way of seeing the world which was ultimately determined by new attitudes to property and exchange, found its visual expression in the oil painting and could not have found any other visual form. Oil painting did to appearances what capital did to social relations. It reduced everything to the equality of objects. Everything became exchangeable because everything became a commodity. All reality was measured by its materiality" (Berger, 1974: 86-87).

While oil paintings are still being painted today, the basis of its traditional way of seeing was undermined by Impressionism and overthrown by Cubism. The shift of oil painting to the Caribbean was also essentially, as Berger has argued, so that the patron could then have a visual record of his wealth and property, (much in the way that photographs and videos of travels are brought back to record these travels or show evidence of the experience to others). The capturing of these images also, as Berger has observed, reduced everything to the equality of objects. The rules of representative perspective did not differentiate in European style, the vast differences between caste, race, gender or class¹¹. This was recorded only through outward appearances, dress, occupation and so on. For instance Agostino Brunias's painting of "*A Negro's Dance in the island of Dominica, Fort Young beyond*" (Figure 5) and a sketch from one his paintings "*A Negro Festival drawn from Nature in the Island of St. Vincent*" (Figure 6) suggests a level of equality here - equality of enjoyment, of leisure time, of class and race, of gender even. My argument is that while partially fulfilling the original intent of the medium and classical styles of this period, these painters, shifted into the "new world" also incorporated some of the other modes for which oil paintings were used, as visual recorders of the society, and as representations of nature and reality as they were viewed through the artists' eye and from his observations of life around him. As with analyses of the literary text, however, the subtext has to be peeled out, layer by layer. The Caribbean landscape and peoples as recorded by these painters must be viewed as a *palimpsest*. The under layer has been partially or completely erased to make room for another text¹².

These eighteenth and nineteenth century artists were primarily European trained and worked in a European style. Their work has survived and they are being perceived in the societies which they painted, as the forefathers of Caribbean painting¹³. Their work is important to understand for other reasons. Sketches from original paintings were being used in the eighteenth and nineteenth



Figure 5: A Negro's Dance in the Island of Dominica, Fort Young Beyond, (Brunias)



A NEGRO PRACTICAL drawn from Nature in the ISLAND OF S^t. VINCENT.

Note an original Drawing by William Young, Esq. R.A.

Figure 6: Brunias (Source: Buxton Edwards)

century in publications abroad and these visual grammars were invoked to support the ideas of both abolitionists as well as apologists for slavery and colonialism. I draw again on James Walvin's useful paper to support this point. He comments that the cult of the British print was firmly established in the 18th century by William Hogarth's social satires which captured the imagination of the increasingly leisured middle class. They were well on their way for becoming a favorite and accessible form of domestic decoration by the 18th century therefore, and blossomed into a lucrative commercial market predating the rise of British abolition. "But that movement", writes Walvin, "and its related commercial interests, - soon appreciated that here was a perfect combination of political and commercial interests; pictures of anti-slavery could make profits and advance the anti-slavery cause" (Walvin, 1996: 9).

For the first time therefore, the sketches illustrating the Caribbean began to be drawn from paintings which were carried out by artists working in the region. For example the engravings of Agostino Brunias's paintings were used as illustrations in Bryan Edward's *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, first published in London in 1796. Michel Jean Cazabon became a contributor to the *Illustrated London News*, depicting The Water Riots of October 1, 1849, *The Trial of the Rioters in the Courthouse of Port of Spain* of November 10, 1849 and *The Great Fire at Port of Spain*, March 7, 1850¹⁴. It is useful to point out as well that painting and sculpture preceded photography and "motion pictures" which today have revolutionised our global perceptions and interpretations of different societies and different cultures¹⁵. It was not until the development of a dry-plate process in 1871, that the method we are more familiar with today, was made possible by William Henry Fox Talbot in England. The painters whose work will be examined, for the most part, predated the age of mass produced photography. I select, and focus for this essay, on some of the work of Agostino Brunias (1730-1796), Isaac Mendes Belisario (1795-1849), Michael Jean Cazabon (1813-1888) and Victor Patricio Landaluze (1825-1889).

There has been widespread use of many of the works of these painters within the Caribbean itself with the increase in publishing activity in history over the last few decades. A point made by David Dabydeen in his analysis of **Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art** is apposite for us here. Dabydeen observes that while numerous critics have commented on the elaborate narrative structure of Hogarth's work, "at the fact that each detail within a particular work is purposefully placed to yield specific meaning or to create a specific effect, no detail being gratuitous or accidental. ...no attempt has been made to place Hogarth's blacks in the narrative contexts in which they occur" (Dabydeen, 1987:9). He notes that the black man (and woman) are invisible in English social history as it is in English art history. My analysis of these paintings therefore attempts to not only depict a Caribbean iconography as it is emerging, but to make visible some of the other discourses which they raise.

The Painters

Agostino Brunias was born in Italy. He was a student at the Academia de San Luca. An oil painting by him was exhibited in Rome as early as 1752. In 1756 he met the Scottish architect Robert Adam who was on a "grand" tour of Europe, and who employed Brunias as draughtsman along with other young artists for his study of the magnificent ruins of Italy. Impressed by his work, in 1758 Adam encouraged Brunias to travel back to London with him, temporarily converting him into an architect, although he also completed paintings to ornament the interior of some of the famous buildings designed by Adams in England. By 1762 however, Brunias appeared to have quitted his mentor and is recorded as residing in Broad Street, London, Carnaby Market, and participating in prestigious exhibitions at the Free Society of Artists. Brunias did not arrive in the West Indies until 1770, when he accompanied Sir William Young, on his appointment as the first British Governor to the island of Dominica, as his personal artist until the departure of the Governor in 1773. Brunias left Dominica for England a few years after the Governor's departure, but he returned after a short stay in England and lived in Dominica until his death¹⁶. The records of the Catholic Archbishop in Roseau, Dominica has the original burial certificate of Agostino Brunias, which authenticates that he died on 2 April 1796 in Dominica and was buried in the Catholic cemetery, the site of the existing Roseau Cathedral(Pereira, 1992: 9) In total he would have spent roughly twenty five years in the West Indies.

The facts surrounding Isaac Mendes Belisario's biography and work are less clear. Valerie Facey and Jacqueline Ranston who have been working for a number of years on discovering the obscure facts of this painter's life and work and have situated Jamaica as his birthplace, in 1795 or 1796, contrary to other published information which estimated his birth in 1792 or 1793 in England. He is of Jewish stock as evidenced by Jacob A.P. M. Andrade's **Record of the Jews in Jamaica** (1941). The two entries in this book confirm the findings of these researchers as well as his family relations with the Jewish community of Jamaica, while establishing the fact that he was by occupation, a painter:

Coloured lithograph by Maurin from a drawing made by Isaac Mendes Belisario in 1846 in the Jamaica History Gallery of the Institute of Jamaica. ...Bellisario was a cousin of my maternal grandfather (Andrade, 1941: 52).

and

Isaac Mendes Belisario - Born sometime between 1790 and 1800 - Etcher and Painter. He etched Bevis Marks Synagogue, London, from a picture. Painted the portraits of Hazan Isaac Lopez and my maternal grandmother in 1835 ... An interesting account of "John Canoe" is given in Belisario's Sketches of Character' (Kingston 1837) (Andrade, 1941: 156).

Facey and Ranston have identified his mother as Esther Lindo a member of the Jewish community in Jamaica. They place his death at 1849 in London.

Michel Jean Cazabon was born to Spanish/French parents in 1813 in Trinidad. He represents by both ethnic group and economic status what was even then referred to as the "French Creole" free coloured class in the society. Geoffrey Maclean notes that it is likely that his paternal grandparents were of Spanish origin and had settled first in Santo Domingo, moving to Martinique during the 18th century political upheavals in Haiti. His father Francois later migrated from Martinique to Trinidad after the French Revolution of 1789. In Trinidad he married Rose Debonne, daughter of a fellow Martiniquian immigrant. The family lived in south Trinidad in the Naparimas where they were a land owning class. The education of Michel Jean Cazabon from age thirteen in an English boarding school (St. Edmunds College) indicates the degree of wealth and privilege of the class from which he emerged. St. Edmunds is depicted by Maclean as a minor seminary which concentrated on the classics and cricket. He returned to Trinidad at age seventeen by subsequently left for Paris. It is unclear from two sources whether he actually left to study medicine or to pursue a career as a painter¹⁷ but whatever his actual intentions initially were, it appears that he studied under one of the most famous French artists of the day, Paul de La Roche. It is also recorded that he studied in Italy for about a year from 1841 to 1843. He married a French woman Louise Rosalie Trolard in 1843 but returned to Trinidad alone in 1848, leaving his family in Paris until he could establish himself in business.

From his studio at 58 George Street in Port of Spain, he advertised himself as a landscape painter and was soon hired to do water colour commissions by wealthy land owners. In 1862, he moved with his family to Martinique, where he still had relatives and to which he had turned as he exhausted the market for his trade in Trinidad. He had intended to stay permanently, and began, as he did in Trinidad, to teach, do commissioned paintings for the wealthier merchants and planters, and produce illustrations of events in Martinique for the French newspapers. By 1870 Cazabon returned to Trinidad. Maclean suggests that the contradictions inherent in his birth of mixed parentage along with the limits of his capacity to earn a living as a painter in a small society, led him back to the society where he was born. By now the family was in much reduced circumstances and towards the end of his life, he "began to lose his social significance" exchanging his paintings for a drink or a meal. He died, reportedly at his easel of a heart attack and was buried a pauper at the Lapeyrouse cemetery in Port of Spain, Trinidad (Maclean, 1986: 26).

Victor Patricio Landaluze was born in the Basque region of Europe in 1825 and came at age 38 to Cuba, only five years before the outbreak of the armed struggle. Guillermo De Zendegui notes that although fighting has started at the eastern end of the island, far away from Havana where he lived, "echoes of combat reverberated throughout the territory, and political neutrality was out of the question". Being Spanish born, his political allegiances were to Spain and to the Creole aristocracy and he began to be patronised immediately by this group. "His natural allies opened all doors to him", writes De Zendegui. "The official press was pleased to publish his caricatures in the satirical newspapers El Moro Muza and Juan Palomo, while the tobacco industry vied for his miniatures and

lithographs to decorate their cigar bands and boxes". (De Zendegui, 1975: 18) He had fully developed his artistic technique when he arrived so there was also no shortage of fees paid by the aristocracy to have their portraits painted. Nonetheless, he is recorded as the first of the authentically Cuban painters. Despite his goals of praise of the aristocracy and his defense of Spain, he did just the opposite. Working in crayon, watercolour and oils, although water colour was his finest medium, he produced a series of Cuban personalities, capturing the essence of a transforming Cuban society.

Schools of thought in painting

From the time periods in which they lived and the fact that all of these painters were trained and/or worked in Europe we can also infer that they were influenced by the genres of painting to which they were exposed. Christie's of London(1994) describes Brunias's pictures as having "much in common with the engrossing and theatrical work of English painters steeped in academic and classical tradition who travelled to the New World and the South Seas in the second half of the eighteenth century"(p .43) Brunias worked in the tradition of painters who introduced '*verite ethnographique*' into the art of painting. Brunias was an eighteenth century painter, however, predating by at least five decades the other three artists Belisario, Cazabon and Landaluze who were all nineteenth century painters. He represents a different generation of painters while the other three are near contemporaries. Berger places the period of oil painting as between 1500 and 1900. Thus Belisario, Cazabon and Landaluze would have been painting at the period in the nineteenth century when all the revolutions in the art movement were taking place but, apart from a few examples of Cazabon's and Landaluze's work, this did not seem to affect their style considerably.

Belisario's style is described by himself in the Preface to his subscribers of the first folio of his Sketches made available in Jamaica. He describes his work as "*Nothing extenuate nor set down in malice*", "drawn after nature and in lithography", and promises that he "purposes to furnish but "*Sketches of Character*" steering clear of *Caricature*: nature in her ordinary form alone, having been the source from whence all the original drawings were derived, and however amusing her accidental deviations from that course of moulding the human shape, may prove to the admirers of the ludicrous, it behoves not an Artist in this instance, to lend himself to the portraying of deformity". While a definitive chronology of Belisario's life and work is still currently being researched by Facey and Ranston, it is perhaps accurate enough to say that he was trained in England in the classical style of portrait and landscape. The method of lithography allowed the artist to reproduce original copies from one painting and thus made them more accessible to the purchaser.

Maclean observes that Cazabon returned to Trinidad in 1848, the year in which the revolution in art shifted perceptions from Romanticism to Realism. Cazabon worked in the Barbizon tradition which, like *verite ethnographic*, place the

painter *en plein air*, in front of his subject matter. "The dreams of the Romantics were replaced with the concrete realities of the Realists, and in art, the Barbizon school, or "the school of 1830" best reflected this transition. Established in the tiny village of Barbizon in the Forest of Fontainebleau, Theodore Rousseau (1812-1867), together with Jean Francois Millet (1814-1875) and Jules Dupre (1811-1889) were the most prominent members. Their philosophy was that of the 'exact truth'. Barbizon allowed the painters to be close to nature and enabled them to paint undisturbed". Cazabon's preference for landscapes reflects his training and influence of this school, as does his use of water colour over oil, which allowed more immediate involvement with the landscape than oils (Maclean, 1986: 27-28). What this meant therefore - the exact truth - was a further democratization of the subject matter, although this was not new to painting, as two hundred years ago Peter Breughel and Bosch (two Dutch painters) also recorded the life and times of the peasantry, as was being contemporaneously done by William Hogarth in England. The peasant tilling his field was as acceptable a subject to paint as the lord of the manor. Maclean suggests that Cazabon's development under European thinking ceased and that while his style showed both the Romantic and Realist schools, there is no resemblance in it to the later impressionism.

Rex Dixon, a European trained painter, debates this point. He suggests that a close examination of the style as evidenced from published copies show a distinct resemblance to the impressionists in a few cases as for instance Figure 7, *Detail of Santa Cruz River 2*. This is also supported by Zendegui of some of Landaluze's work as seen in Figure 8. The deliberate diffusion of light and dark to evoke form, as well as the more visible expression of the brushstroke on canvas or paper, had begun to differentiate the style employed by the impressionist school. Dixon suggests that one way of accounting for this development in both artists is that of a painter's natural refinement of their approach as they mature, rather than the influence of this or that style. He points out that unlike the internationalism of the art movement today, which requires almost seasonal change like fashions, there was great regionalism in style and a longer period of gestation for each revolution in style. Having been trained in Paris in the nineteenth century, Cazabon would have been the closest of these artists, nonetheless, to be directly influenced by the Impressionists, perhaps through links with the French school and fellow painters.

Landaluze's approach is close to that of Belisario in his depiction of local life and colour. When Landaluze was coming to Cuba, the young Cuban artists painting at that time headed for Spain instead and were trained at the Academy of San Alejandro, which was "still labouring under a Franco-Italian neo-classicism marked by feeble romantic outbursts portraying conventional subject matter drawn from mythology or affected historicism" (Zendegui, 1975: 18). In Cuba itself, except for highly commercialized engravers, local scenes, including landscapes, had not yet found any new pictorial expression.



12(b)

Figure 7: Detail of Santa Cruz River 2 (Cazabon) 1849
water colour

The techniques employed by Lieddorge in this oil on canvas places him among the precursors of the impressionist movement.

Detail from print captures her as she carries her goods at the end of her daily round.



Figure 8: Tendalge

Patronage and Painters

Patronage of painters was common in Europe and most artists depended on patronage, usually of the rich, in one way or another. Few painted on their own, William Blake for instance, more of a visionary painter, did not have a patron, while John Constable did not need one, supported as he was by his father's estate. Patronage was the barometer of success, both of the painter as well as his client. In general the patron wanted a record of their wealth and status, the painting was an acknowledgement of their status to the wider society, and in the absence of photographs perhaps a record for posterity. As Graham-Dixon satirically observed of the painting by Sir Alfred Munnings "My Wife, My Horse and Myself", "Munnings was, in his patriotic and nostalgic way, pointing out some of the larger peculiarities of British cultural history, above all, the curious fact that the image of nothing more than a rather snooty man, and a woman on horseback, has become an emblem of nationhood as instantly recognizable as St. Paul's Cathedral" (Graham-Dixon, 1996: 83).

The records which the four painters have left must be analysed not only as requirements of the school in which they were trained, but the agendas of their patrons, or potential buyers of their paintings and therefore a reflection of what was considered worthy subjects to be painted. This fact might account for the way in which none of the painters painted abject poverty or distress. Unlike others who had recorded the indignities and cruelty of slavery and colonial society, these painters appear almost indifferent to some aspects of social existence in pre- and post-emancipation society. The romanticism of painting was echoed in the romantic literature of the period, as for instance the message in the poetry of John Keats' "Beauty is truth and truth beauty". This is evident in the almost facile presentations of social situations or characters of the period. See for instance the two prints of Belisario, Figure 9, *Lovey alias Liverpool* and Figure 10 *Milkwoman*, Landaluze's calesero flirting with a mulatto woman (Figure 11) and the idyllic pastoral imagery of Cazabon's landscape Figure 12, *View of Port of Spain from Laventille Hill*. In any event, no patron or planter wanted to be reminded on the walls of his drawing room, of poverty or the gaps in living conditions between himself and his employee.

Belisario provides a similarly picturesque description of Lovey and the Milkwoman. Lovey is described in his Character Sketches as:

an apprentice, a native of Congo in Africa, and about fifty-one years of age, he was there called "Kangga" but in 1803 was baptised here by a Catholic Priest, as Louis; for reasons only known to himself, he has however, for several years assumed the appellation of *Lovey (*The name of Liverpool was given him by his Master, the motive for which does not appear). He is a shrewd, intelligent, kindhearted, and industrious fellow, and although no subscriber to the regulations of a "Temperance Society" enjoys such excellent health, as scarcely to have five days' illness during the last twenty seven years. Of good living he is remarkably fond,

15 (b)



Figure 9: Lovey alias Liverpool
(Belisario)



Figure 10: Milkwoman
(Belisario)

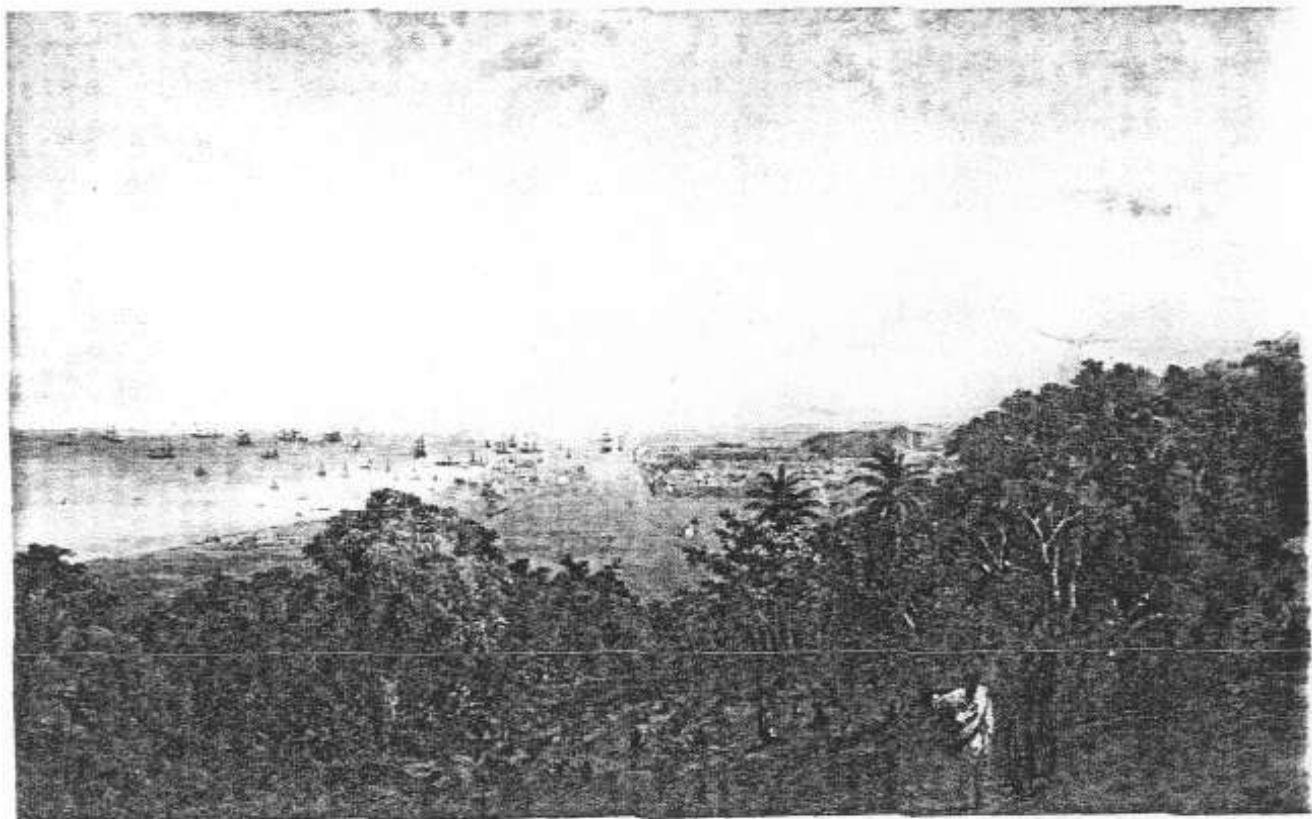


Figure 12: View of Port of Spain from Lassentille Hill (Cazabon)-1880
(Two figures barely visible on the right are East Indians)



13 (c)

Left: The calesero or carriage driver, one of the most representative popular figures in colonial Cuban society, appears frequently in Velázquez's genre paintings and drawings. Right: Watercolor shows a calesero flirting with a mulatto woman while his horse drinks from one of Havana's many colonial fountains.

Figure 11 : Havana - Cuba - Calesero (right) on horseback flirting with mulatto woman, Calesero in his finery on the left.

and seldom fails to gratify his taste in that respect...

Of the Milkwoman he writes:

The damsel depicted may be considered as on her way from the Pen to town, at an early hour of the morning to supply her customers: her head is closely enveloped in a handkerchief to protect it from the "cole" (cold) as she would be pleased to term the balmy, and refreshing air before sunrise, than which nothing can be more delightful. The Blacks are universally a chilly race, and are never so well content as under the enjoyment of the sun's rays at his meridian height, which accounts for such a seeming contradiction in their feeling on this subject. Divested of the encumbrance of shoes and stockings, and with dress of a *convenient walking length*, the Milkmaid of Jamaica travels along at a rapid rate, and beguiles the way with snatches of songs, in a style peculiarly her own; arrived in town, she announces herself with "See me da ya wid de milk" (Here I am with the milk).

The idea of the happy go lucky native, unencumbered by the demands of property or propriety, cheerfully engaged in making a day's living, is textually mythologized, providing a symbol for future art forms to build on to characterize the Caribbean personality. Nonetheless, these optimistic renditions must be embraced despite my search for the subtext. To reduce a people at any moment in history to pure victimhood produces an equally destructive discourse. Somewhere between fictional portrayal and reality, there lies a truth. This is where the historian is required to complete the picture puzzle. I begin by uncovering the first layer encrusted in the Caribbean palimpsest, the recording of the indigenous peoples and their confrontations with later migrants to the islands.

Of Caribs, red and black

Agostino Brunias's presence in the West Indies, and his depictions of West Indians scenes are linked to the ascendancy to the post of first Governor of Dominica of Sir William Young. Brunias is recorded as having exhibited two drawings 'after nature' at the Society of Arts in London submitted 'From the West Indies' in 1770, the very first year he accompanied Sir William Young to Dominica. He had previously exhibited landscapes at the Free Society of Artists in 1762 and 1763, and together with his connections to architect William Chambers, he would have developed a reputation as an artist in London. In this way his submissions from the West Indies would have been brought to the attention of the English art and publishing world, and thus engravings after his paintings would be used to illustrate Bryan Edward's *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, first published in 1798. Figure 13, *A family of the Red Charaïbes on the Island of St. Vincent* and Figure 14, *Pacification with the Maroon Negroes* were printed in Volume 1,

while Figure 15, *Chatoyer the Chief of the Black Charaibes with his five wives* was printed in Volume 111. If, as I have indicated, Brunias not only served as a private recorder of society for his employer/patron, Sir William Young, but was also painting from nature what he observed, then we can deduce that these sketches provide some of the most accurate visual records of the Charaibes and the Maroons. The three sketches, however, placed side by side with Young's account of this period of history, suggest another truth. I have deliberately cited lengthy verbatim texts of these discourses as they emerge. The uncovering of a palimpsest requires that the original text itself be re-examined for details left unseen¹⁸.

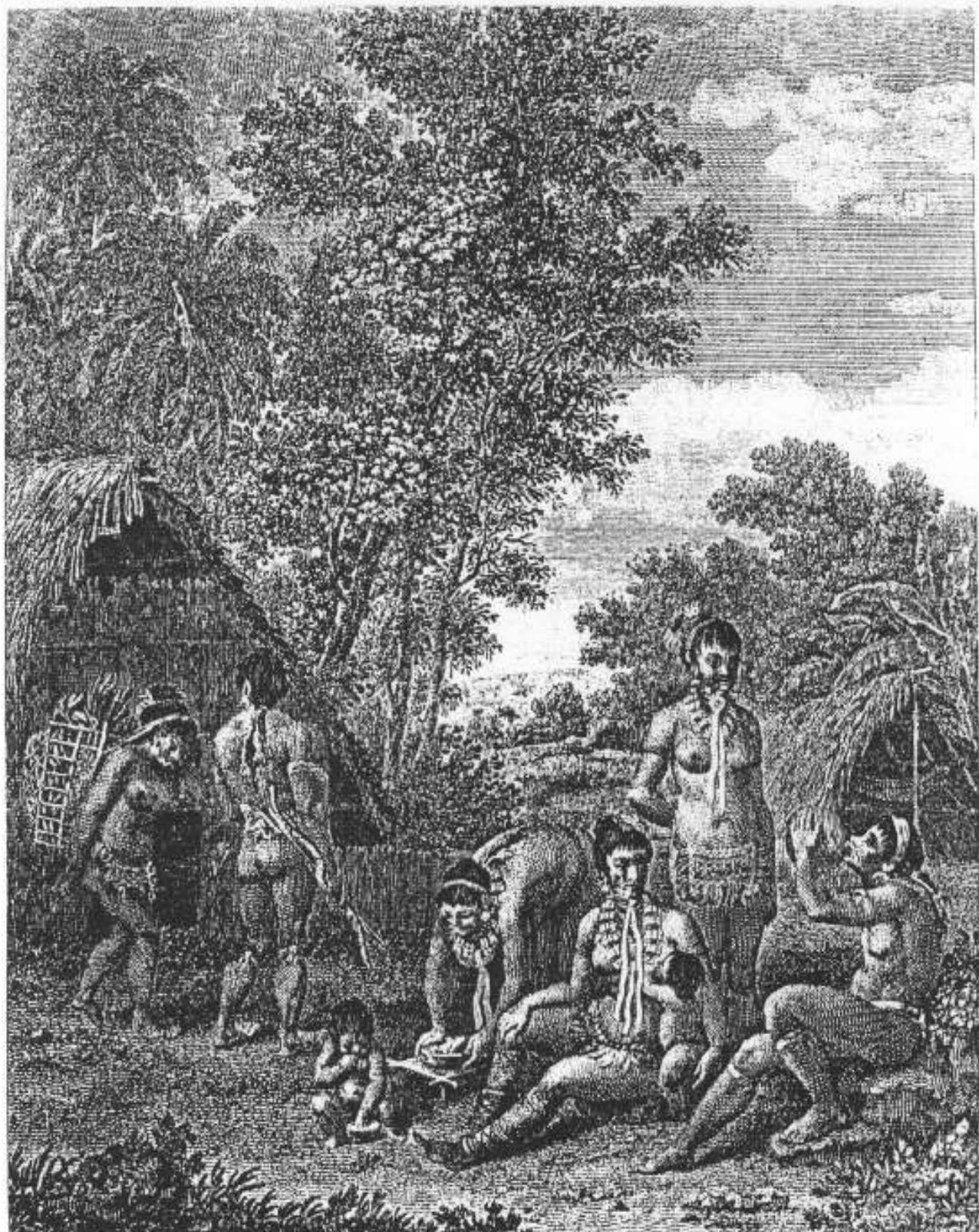
In 1763 Sir William Young was appointed to head a commission of enquiry into St. Vincent. The Treaty of Paris had given England control of the last remaining land in the Caribbean suitable for plantation, the best land being found in the island of St. Vincent, which unfortunately for the English, was occupied on the windward side by the Black Carib population who were granted this land through a treaty made with the French in 1700. The English did not take this previous treaty seriously and Young's commission sought to discredit the claims of the Caribs to this property. A history of how they came by this land was recorded by Young himself.

The Negroes, or Black Charaibs (as they have been termed of late years) are descendants from the cargo of an African slave ship, bound from the Bite of Benin to Barbadoes, and wrecked, about the year 1675, on the coast of Bequia, a small island about two leagues to the south of St. Vincent's.

The Charaibs, accustomed to fish in the narrow channel, soon discovered these Negroes, and finding them in great distress for provisions, and particularly for water, with which Bequia was ill supplied, they had little difficulty in inveigling them into their canoes, and transporting them across the narrow channel to St. Vincent's where they made slaves of them and set them to work. These Negroes were of a warlike Moco tribe from Africa and soon proved restive and indocile servants to the less robust natives of the western ocean.

According to Young's account, the blacks attempted a massacre of the Caribs, and in the ensuing insurrection, escaped to the mountains of the North east where they joined forces with other runaways and shipwrecked African refugees and formed a nation "now known by the name of Black Charaibs; a title themselves arrogated, when entering into contest with their ancient masters".

The savage with the name and title thinks he inherits the qualities, the right, and the property of those whom he may pretend to supersede: hence he assimilates himself by name and manners, as it were to make out his identity, and confirm the succession. Thus these negroes not only assumed the national appellation of Charaibes, but individually their

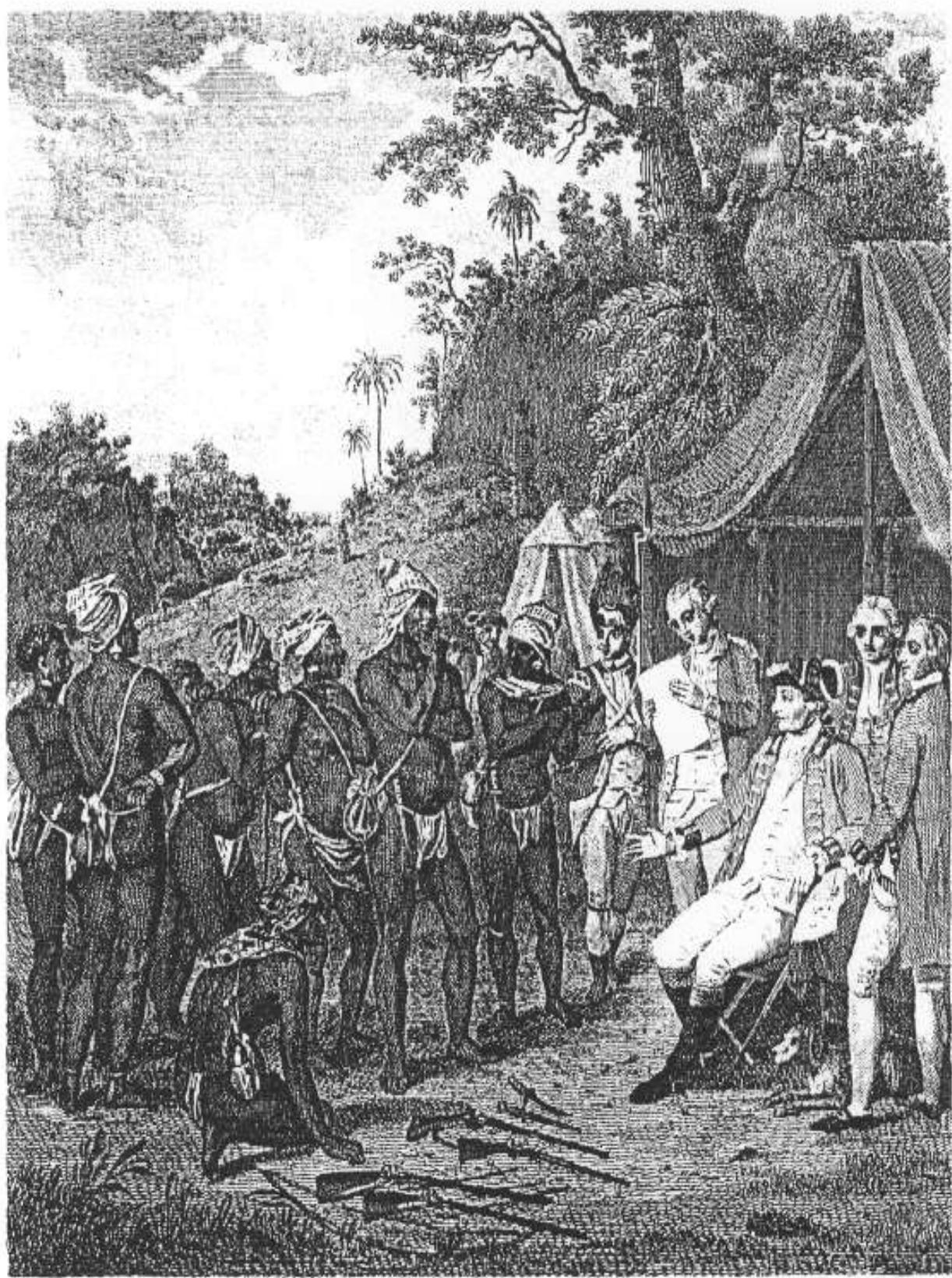


"T. Meller sculp."

A FAMILY of CARIBEES, drawn from the Life in the ISLAND of ST VINCENT.

From an Original Drawing by A. P. Duncanson in the possession of Dr. William Young, F.R.S., &c.

Figure 13: Source Bonyan Edwards (1801)



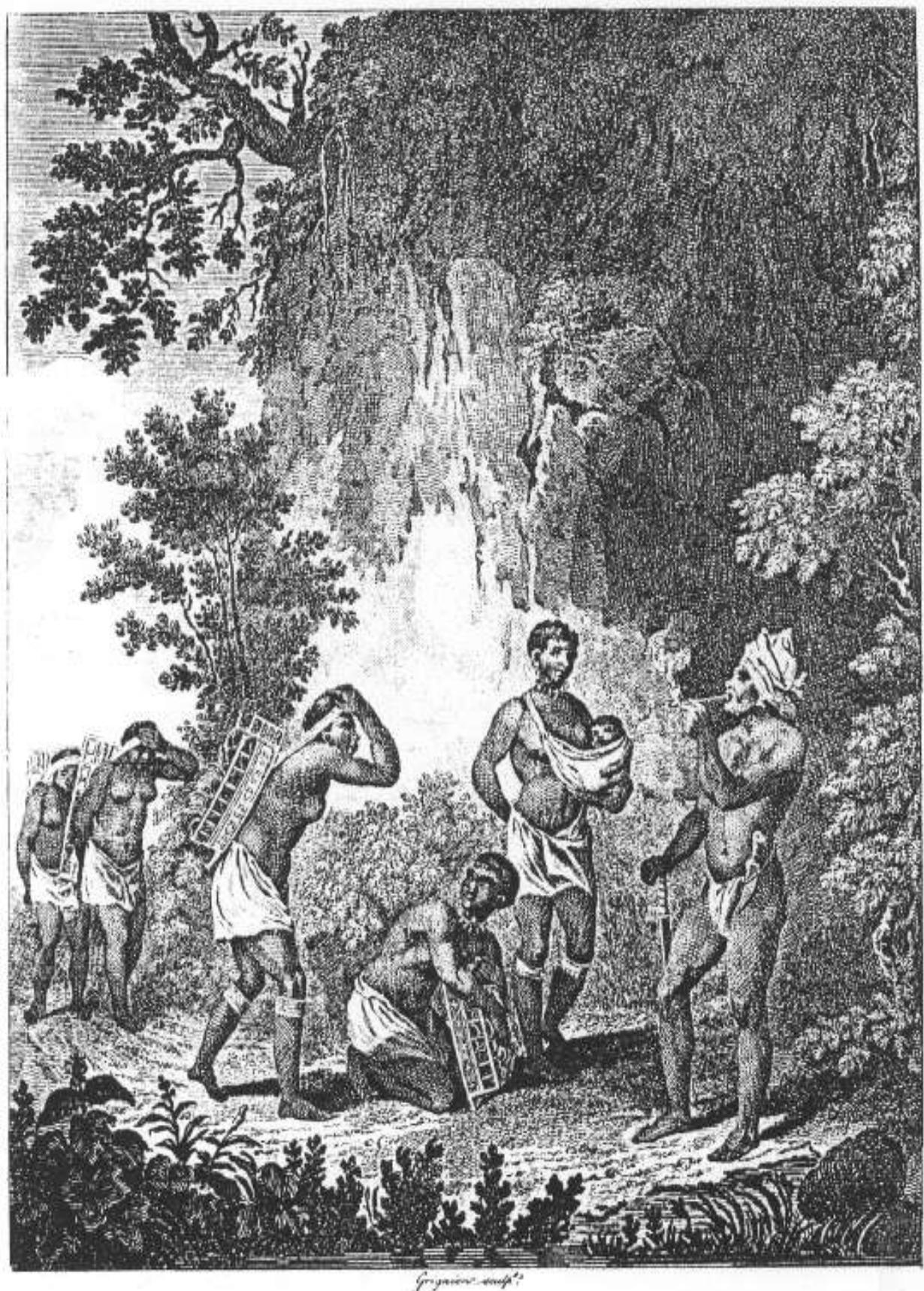
Painted after

PACIFICATION with the MAROON NEGROIS

Drawn from the original painting in the possession of Sir B. Wong Fane, P.B.E.

Figure 14: Source - Bryan Edwards (1801)

(15(d))



G. Granger sculp.

CHATOTYER the CHIEF of the BLACK CHARAIBES in ST. VINCENT with his five WIVES.

Drawn from the life by N. G. Bouvier - 1773. From an original painting in the possession of Sir W^m Young Bart. F.R.S.

Figure 15: Source - Bryan Edwards (1801)

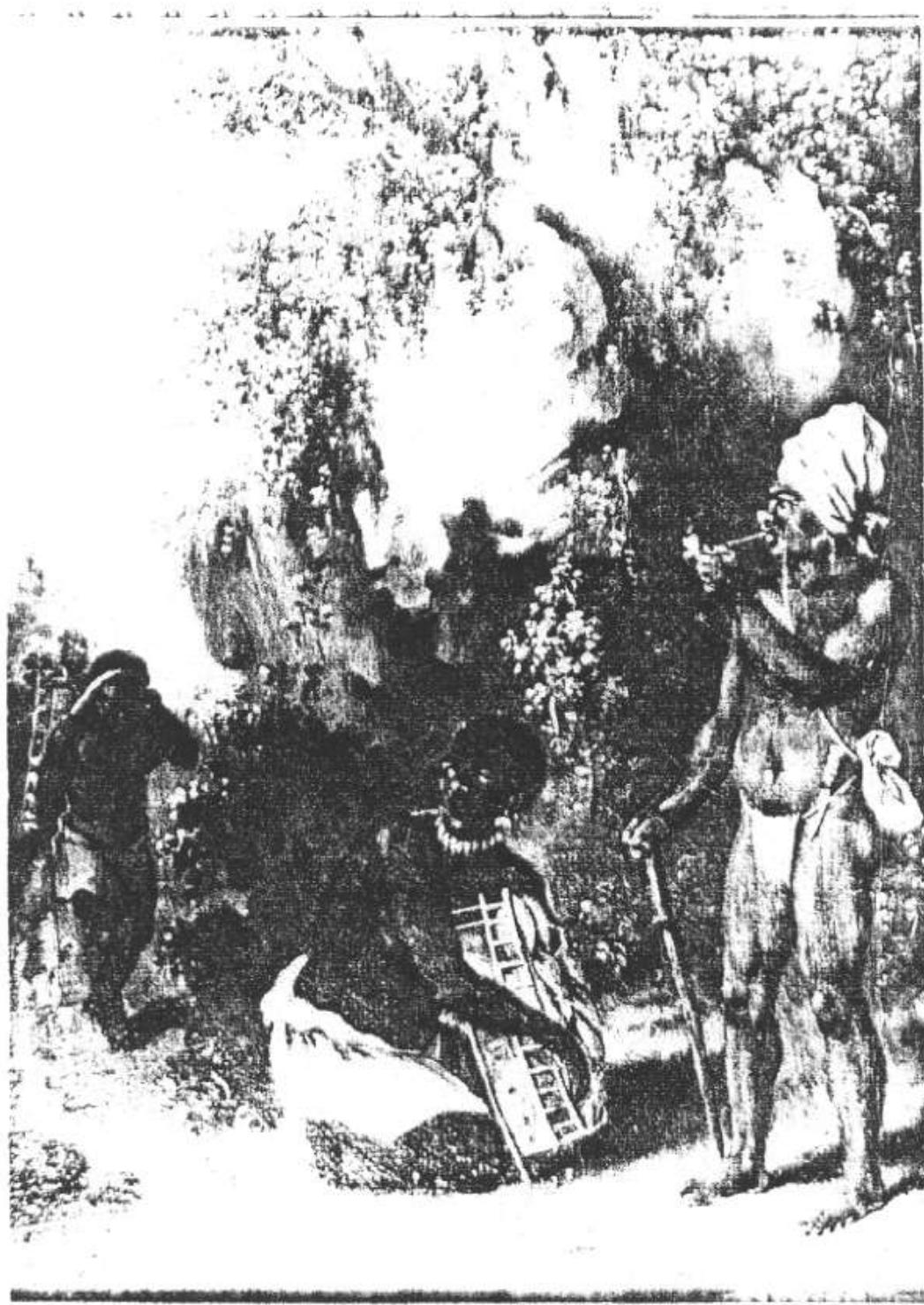


Figure 16: Chatoyer, Chief of the Black
Negro (Agostino Brunias)
(oil on canvas)

Indian names; and they adopted many of their customs: they flattened the forehead of their infant children in the Indian manner: they buried their dead in the attitude of sitting, and according to Indian rites: and killing the men they took in war, they carried off and cohabited with the women.¹⁹

Young's account is presented to justify the British retrieval of the lands which were wrested from the Caribs, the true owners who have been wrongfully dispossessed. Interestingly, this is not with a view to returning the land to its rightful owners, merely to provide a rational for the present usurpation by the British. The Caribs, or Charaibes, in this mythologized or real narrative of Young, have been cast as the "less robust natives of the western ocean, innocent and pacific victims of black usurpation, an uncanny repetition, down to the linguistic borrowing of the supposed relationship, three centuries earlier, of Carib to Arawak" (Hulme, 1986: 246).

William Young's account of the Black Charaibes savage difference is for the first time recorded not only in the text, but by his accompanying painter Agostino Brunias. Joseph Chatoyer, was the elected warchief of the Black Caribs, who began a successful campaign of harassment against the British surveyors and roadbuilders who were carrying out a survey of the land occupied by the Black Charaibes. Chatoyer is presented by Brunias with his five wives in the engraving after the painting from the original collection of Sir William Young dated 1773. The original painting is shown in Figure 16 titled *Chatoyer, Chief of the Black Negro*. In the original painting, one woman kneels near his feet, the posture more so resembling the unburdening of a load, and another in the far left background, enters the frame similarly burdened. Both Chatoyer and the woman in this painting are looking into the middle distance. Chatoyer's skin colour appears slightly paler than the two female figures in the painting. In Figure 15, the engraving after the painting, Chatoyer is now outnumbered by five women, one traditionally carrying a child in a sling, one kneels in a more cowed position in front of him, and the three others bring up the rear, again laden with burdens, eyes cast towards the ground. In the meantime, a slightly paler, turbanned Chatoyer, leisurely supports himself by the right hand by a silver topped sword or cane, a knife is held fast to the side of his waist by his loincloth, and he smokes a pipe and oversees their activities.

What do these two representations reveal especially in relation to the sketch of the family of Charaibes (Figure 13). There are several distinct differences in the portrayal of the Charaibes as compared to the Black Charaibes²⁰. There are two males present, one seated at the right and the other carrying a bow and arrow and communicating with a woman who is similarly laden as the women around Chatoyer. Three other women and two children complete the picture, together with two thatched huts in the background. One woman is seated with an arm around a child, the other appears to be serving food and another stands to the right of one of the males who is drinking something which looks like a coconut. There is a suggestion of coconut or palm trees and a banana tree at the back. The women are decoratively adorned with necklaces, earrings and

beaded skirts. The male torso is not encased in a loin cloth as in the case of the Black Caribs. The atmosphere of this engraving is not only "family like" but also village like, settled. The dark gaping hole at the back of Chatoyer in Figure 15 evokes the coldness of a cave rather than the warmer texture of a thatched hut settlement. In Brunias's colour scheme, the Caribs are a paler shade than the Black Charaibs. As illustrations for a text, these engravings support the arguments of William Young. The Black Caribs are the usurpers of the original peaceful inhabitants, and Chatoyer has taken on the aspect of authoritative patriarchy, without the mantle of benevolence as evoked by the male figures in the family of Charaibes. These two scenes are, according to Brunias's chronology of painting in the West Indies, simultaneously existing ones.

There is another contradiction which does not immediately emerge. The literature available on Brunias's life suggest that his travels in the West Indies were in the islands of Dominica, St. Vincent, St. Christopher and Barbados. Figure 14, *Pacification with the Maroon Negroes* is used by Bryan Edwards to illustrate an event which takes place in Jamaica in 1738. "Governor Trelawny, by the advice of the principal gentlemen of the island, proposed overtures of peace with the Maroon chiefs. Both parties were now grown heartily wearied out with this tedious conflict" (Edwards, 1801: 311) The illustration is another engraving after an original painting owned by Sir William Young and drawn from the life by Brunias and depicts an apparently peaceful, almost happy settlement of differences between the British and the Maroons. Through the trick of composition, the light from the north western sky leads the eye straight to the seated figure, the central English 'chief' whose vision is connected to one of the group of black men, another of whom is kneeling in a postulant position. Guns and weapons are laid to rest in full sight of each other. Interestingly enough while one group is clothed formally, and the other is more exposed, there is no imbalance in presenting this different group of men - as if they share a common language, the faces do not portray antagonism, but rather deep thought if not wonderment. Even the title, "Pacification with the Maroon Negroes" suggests an equal negotiation. The problem with the use of this illustration of Brunias's to depict a pacification in Jamaica is that if "drawn from life", it was drawn from life in St. Vincent after 1771. Brunias never visited Jamaica, according to my information to date, and the incident his sketch illustrates in fact occurred before he was born.

What the evidence suggests is that the drawings of the maroons in Figure 14 were actually taken from life of the maroons from St. Vincent. A close examination of all four figures, 13-16 reveal another narrative than the one presented by Sir William Young and which, in my view probably represents a pattern of events it was not convenient to record, or even envisaged as a process of historical change. There is a similarity of dress of both the Maroons and the Black Charaibes, but this has already been accounted for by William Young in his account that the Maroons overpowered the Red Charaibes and stole their wives, and adopted some of their customs. No explanations are given as to why customs such as flattening their children's heads were adopted, or why they took the wives of their enemies. What is clear is that the

two groups are posited in history as enemies.

A close rereading of Bryan Edward's *History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, reveals that there were similarities in the conditions and customs of both the Caribs and the Maroons, at this time. The origin of the Caribs is cited as South America rather than northern Algonquin Indians, through the language similarities found among the southern groups. The Caribs by this time had had three centuries of disruption by Europeans of one sort or another. Bryan Edwards has this to say on the subject:

...They lost, together with their freedom, many of their original characteristics; and at last, even the desire of acting from the impulse of their own minds. ...in some respects we have enlightened; in others (and to our shame be it spoken) we have corrupted them. An old Charaibe thus addressed one of our planters on this subject: "Our people" he complained, "are become almost as bad as yours. We are so much altered since you came among us that we hardly know ourselves, and we think it is owing to so melancholy a change that hurricanes are more frequent than they were formerly. It is the evil spirit who has done all this - who has taken our last lands from us, and given us up to the dominion of the Christians" (Edwards, 1801: 38)

Edwards continues:

There is not a nation on earth ... more jealous of their independence than the Charaibes. They are impatient under the least infringement of it, and when, at any time, they are witnesses to the respect and deference which the natives of Europe observe towards their superiors, they despise us as abject slaves, wondering how any man can be so base as to crouch before his equal. ...The Charaibes admitted of no supremacy but that of nature" (Edwards, 1801: 42-47)

Among themselves, the Carib were described as peaceable, faithful, friendly and affectionate. Bryan observes that "They considered all strangers indeed, as enemies, and of the people of Europe, they formed a right estimation". (Edwards, 1801: 41) This philosophy of equality among Charaib men did not, however, incorporate women similarly.

Though frequently bestowed as the prize of successful courage, the wife thus honourably obtained, was soon considered of as little value as the captive. Deficient in those qualities which alone were estimable among the Charaibes, the females were treated rather as slaves than as companions. They sustained every species of drudgery; they ground the maize, prepared the cassavi, gathered in the cotton and wove the hamack, nor were they even allowed the privilege of eating in the presence of their husbands. Under these

circumstances, it is not wonderful that they were less prolific than the women of Europe (Edwards, 1801: 50).

Polygamy was a norm among the Charaibes. Both men and women were ornamented, and at birth the natural configuration of the head was reshaped by confining it between two pieces of wood back and front, firmly bound together until it changed the proportions of the skull "to resemble two sides of a square, an uncouth and frightful custom, still observed by the miserable remnant of red Charaibes in the island of St. Vincent" (Edwards, 1801: 54).

Women were important to the tribe in two ways. They were crucial to the reproduction of the tribe, but because they were heavily overworked, they were not efficient childbearers. This would no doubt have undervalued their worth> At this time there would have been limited understanding of the biological processes of reproduction. Women were also responsible for providing the necessary labour for domestic survival: preparing food and clothing, domestic gardening around the settlement, and for reproducing the tribe. The supreme importance of the male, was premised on the skill and courage of the battle, to defend and preserve the existence of the group. The rituals of manhood were geared to building each male child into a warrior. Boys were sprinkled with the blood of their fathers at birth. Later they were anointed with the fat of the slaughtered male enemies and they were meticulously trained to use the weapons of war and hunting. There were no rituals recorded about the construction of femininity.

There is a classic if unstated opposition here in gender relations which has been taken up by contemporary feminist scholarship: the undervaluing of female labour and domestic activities to the survival of the tribe as opposed to those activities carried out by the male. In revisiting the bias in anthropology, Sally Slocum advances the perspective that the "sharing of food must have preceded organized hunting, and been central to human continuity and social organization". (Slocum, 1990: 198) Maria Mies's argument in *The Social Origins of the Sexual Division of Labour* supports this point that the hierarchical importance of hunting over gathering activities emerged as a result of the different ways in which nature was in fact harnessed by men and women: for men this involved conquest over the opponent, and in general the use of destructive weaponry. For women this required harmony with the elements and with their bodies. While there have been the obvious and necessary critiques against the essentialism of this argument, in my search for answers as to the different and hierarchical values placed on the activities of one sex over the other, this explanation comes closest to delineating the logic of the process.

There were far more similarities than differences between the Caribs and Maroons in the 1770's. Both groups had been hunted and enslaved for centuries, and lived fairly nomadic lives as they were continuously routed out of their countries and settlements for their land or labour. The Maroons who came to St. Vincent and Dominica had perhaps as Neville Hall suggests, been part of

towards their wives, extended in some degree to their children. The paternal authority was at all times most harshly exerted; but more especially towards the females ... nothing can more strikingly demonstrate the forlorn and abject conditions of the young women among the maroons, than the circumstances which every gentleman, who has visited them on festive occasions, or for gratification of curiosity, knows to be true; the offering of their own daughters by the first man among them to their visitors; and bringing the poor girls forward, with or without their consent, for the purpose of prostitution (pp 321-322).

While we must acknowledge that Bryan Edwards recounted the habits and customs of other cultures as "uncivilized" or savage, we must presume as well that he had little reason to invent these customs and invoke them onto a group - as for instance the custom of polygamy and the treatment of the women. The main subtext which I want to draw out from this re-examination of the period is that there can be another story of the emergence of Black Caribs from the presence of Red Charaibes and Maroons in the same island, vying for limited land space and survival away from the plantations and "urban" dwellers. While clearly we need more data to conclude this point, one suggestion, drawing on Levi-Strauss's theory of the exchange of women, is that there was a predominance of men among the Maroons and the survival of the group depended on the capturing of women, both for labour and for reproduction of the species. Women would have been particularly important for the tribe as they carried the burden of domestic work. This also supports William Young's point that Carib women were captured and made the wives of the Maroons, thus bringing forth Black Charaibes, and carrying over traditions such as the shaping of the infant's forehead which would have been largely continued by women. But I must at this point be inconclusive as this line of thinking is suggested by a theoretical insight which has yet to be verified in the Caribbean context.

The exercise I have carried out is merely to point to another way of seeing historical change through the interpretation of visual imagery and the lens of gender. It is by no means a finished inquiry, yet I have found support for this kind of approach in an essay by Verena Stolcke entitled "Sex, Race and Class in Colonial Society". Stolcke writes that "Until recently, the history of the Conquest of the Americas was presented in such a way as to omit systematically questions of gender. Even the more critical accounts ignored the manner in which indigenous women (and later black women) had been forced to live through the assaults on their personal and cultural integrity. Little attempt was made to explore the consequences this had on the formation of colonial society". (Stolcke, 1995:7) Stolcke points out that miscegenation or 'mestizaje' was one immediate consequence of the Conquest, with the mestizos or those of mixed blood discriminated against. Differences are always constructed historically through the dominant discourses. In the case of Mexico, this involved the question as to whether the indigenous population were "human beings". If they were, then both they and the mestizaje

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The exercise I have carried out is merely to point to another way of seeing historical change through the interpretation of visual imagery and the lens of gender. It is by no means a finished inquiry, yet I have found support for this kind of approach in an essay by Verena Stolcke entitled "Sex, Race and Class in Colonial Society". Stolcke writes that "Until recently, the history of the Conquest of the Americas was presented in such a way as to omit systematically questions of gender. Even the more critical accounts ignored the manner in which indigenous women (and later black women) had been forced to live through the assaults on their personal and cultural integrity. Little attempt was made to explore the consequences this had on the formation of colonial society". (Stolcke, 1995:7) Stolcke points out that miscegenation or 'mestizaje' was one immediate consequence of the Conquest, with the mestizos or those of mixed blood discriminated against. Differences are always constructed historically through the dominant discourses. In the case of Mexico, this involved the question as to whether the indigenous population were "human beings". If they were, then both they and the mestizaje

population had to be treated equally. If they were naturally defined as different, less than human beings, then the enslavement and inferiority could be justified by the Christian Church and State, indivisible at this point. The mestizo population ruptured this clear cut division, and the doctrine of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) shifted from a linguistic usage as its original usage in the thirteenth century as *raza* or race, referring to the succession of generations, to acquire a pejorative meaning - flaw or defect, as when blood now becomes mixed.

The discourse in the English speaking Caribbean on "purity of blood" has not only been similar but has taken on many aspects of the Spanish treatment. The words sambo, mulatto, quadroon, tercerones, quarteroons, quinterones and the like owe their origin to the intricately woven Spanish race and colour schema. The legal capacities, class associations and caste like divisions were all formulated as part of this emergent discourse of race and class in Caribbean society and have been dependent on the collusion or annexing of women. The purpose of a more extensive body of work which it is hoped will emerge (with greater clarity) from this approach is to examine, as Gerder Lerner has suggested "the relationship of ideas, and specifically of ideas about gender, to the social and economic forces that shape history" *op cit*. It is useful to note that in contemporary Trinidad society, the shifting balances of power due to changes in the ethnic constitution of the population is a question now been researched by sociologists in the society, as for instance Rhoda Reddock's work on the emergence of *dougla* politics, *dougla* being originally the mixed offspring of an African and Indian²². These questions have always preoccupied scholars and recorders at any time, and have been written about in different ways, as for instance, the fascination which Lady Nugent has in her diary of the period 1801 - 1805, with the conditions of the different groups of women creole, coloured, black and white in Jamaican society²³.

Constituent parts of a Visual Language

To complete the initial presentation of this paper, I include a selection of paintings of the four artists, and propose tentative areas under which extensive and indepth analyses can be carried out, thus outlining the constituent parts of the visual grammars of gender, race and class in Caribbean society.

a. Prototypes and differences in the evolution of creole society

Brunias's work clearly represents an important record of life in the Lesser Antilles as does the work of each of the painters examined in this essay. Brunias's collected works "reveal that he became primarily a figure painter in the West Indies, concentrating on the new culture of the Mulatto, born from the mixture of European, African and Carib races". If the demographic statistics between 1763 and 1787 are fairly accurate, then Brunias inhabited a region of the then West Indies which was undergoing tremendous growth and change in a relatively short time. Richard Sheridan writes that "The Ceded Islands provided a field of activity for white capitalists and coloured labour, added to

the plantation base of the Empire" (Sheridan, 1986: 457). There was variation in population growth in the islands as noted in the following records. Tobago in 1770 had 238 whites, 3164 slaves, 5,084 acres cleared and 78 plantations. By 1775 there were 391 whites, 8643 slaves and upwards of 100 plantations. In Dominica, from 1763 to 1773 the white population increased from 1718 to 3850, the black population from 5,872 to 18,753. St. Vincent was not only of importance as a sugar colony but produced coffee, cacao and cotton. The scattered population returns show an increase of whites from 695 in 1763 to 1450 in 1787, and an increase in the black population for the same period from 3430 to 11,853. Grenada, the last of the four Ceded Islands, was deemed the most productive but shows a decline in the white population. These statistical records show nothing of the mixed population which is reflected in Brunias's paintings. His oil paintings reveal a portrait of gender, class and race relations which led to the evolution of creole society, the production of a mulatto class in the West Indies.

How is this apparent? The depictions in the island of St. Vincent Figure 17, *The Fruit market at St. Vincent*, Figure 18, *St. Vincent Villagers merry making*, and Figure 6 shown previously, *A Negro Festival drawn from nature in the Island of St. Vincent* indicates a distinction of "country" and "town" as it were in the island of St. Vincent in the 1770s. The tribal interplays between Maroons and Caribs are carried out in "country" while the urban setting produces another development, that of the mulatto class, which interrupts the distinction between blacks and whites. The black men and women carry, serve and sell. In Figure 6 the black man is both the spectator as well as participant, while the central figure in Figure 17 is clearly the smartly dressed white woman whose basket is carried by the black barefoot servant boy at her side. Even the dog sits and stares at her. A curious aspect of Brunias's paintings of these mixed groups is the presence of half nude women, which we will see recurring in the other renditions of women. Nonetheless, a close look at the St. Vincent Villagers merrymaking (Figure 18) shows that two of the women have tied a wrap in such a way as to support but not cover their breasts, as if by tradition, perhaps the kind of support needed for dancing, or heavy work. The drummer and musicians are to the left almost of the painting, the mulatto woman is again central to the painting, but equally part of the dance and balanced off on the left and right as if by hand maidens with black women. The white man and very white woman to the right are observers in this painting, but not so in Figure 6, where they are equally represented with the other couple. In fact, in this painting there is a strange, (to my eyes) reversal of dance style, the formality in the stance of the mulatto couple, with an intimacy of the white couple, a movement commonly observed in popular dances in different parts of the Caribbean.

Landaluze's paintings in Cuba show the emergence of the different stereotypes which were prototypical of the evolving Cuban society. The scenario as depicted in Figure 11 shown above is thus described by Zendegui.

Among the personages typical of that large population group perhaps none appealed more to him (Landaluze) than the *calesero* or carriage driver. As far as we know there is no counterpart in the

rest of Latin American cast of characters to these very Cuban servants of the Creole aristocracy. ... Among their own class, the *caleseros* were held high status that was coveted and envied because of both the special treatment they received as slaves and the reputation as Don Juans that attended them, not unreasonably, since they were always chosen from among the most handsome and well proportioned servants. (p. 19)

In the race, class and colour stratification of Cuban society, the calesero's feminine counterpart was the mulatto woman, "Born of a forbidden dalliance by the scion of some rich house, who was usually emancipated and kept with the family servants as a maid, seamstress or the like. Landaluze's painting was key in representing the Cuban as opposed to the Spaniard. He created a caricature figure who became a symbol of the Cuban nation: *Liborio*. Figures 19 and 20 give an example of this prototype who is portrayed with his broad brimmed hat, machete at his waist and wearing the traditional shirt known as the *guayabera*, and a red kerchief tied around his neck. Figure 21 also shows the black Cuban family as opposed to the *campesino* or *liborio*.

The different depictions of the artists of the same phenomenon leads one to contemplate how the different attitudes, value systems and ideas pertaining to race, class and colour evolved in different societies within the same region. Valerie Facey for instance suggests that Belisario was an anti-abolitionist and that his paintings of various prototypical characters represented in Jamaican society. This analysis needs to be pursued in terms of his reasons for doing so, but certainly his list of subscribers are among the rich and famous in Jamaica at this time. In addition, Belisario's depiction of mulatto society in Jamaica is seen in his sketches of the Set Girls, Figure 22, *Queen Maam of the Set Girls*, Figure 23 *French Set Girls*, and Figure 24, *Red Set Girls*. In Belisario's work mulatto society is seen through the John Canoe masquerade rather than as stereotypes of colour and status in the society. Tom Cringle's log confirms that the Set Girls as well as the other characters in the John Canoe festival, follow a particular colour gradation.

But the beautiful part of the exhibition was the Set Girls. They danced along the streets, in bands of from fifteen to thirty. There were brown sets, and black sets, and sets of all the intermediate gradations of colour. ... But the colours were never blended in the same set - no blackie ever interloped with the browns, nor did the browns in any case mix with the sables - always keeping in mind - black *woman*, brown *lady*. (*Tom Cringle's Log* by Michael Scott: 202)

There is a less apparent emergence of creole and mixed society in Trinidad in Cazabon's paintings. For one thing, Cazabon's forte was more so that of a landscape artist and within the landscape he often captures different groups of people as opposed to specifically focussing on the particular typology. It must also be recalled that with regards to the settlement of Caribbean societies, Trinidad was only relatively recently being peopled by planters and slaves, with a mixture of British and French stratified on to a Spanish layer which had existed previously for three hundred years. Added to this there was the

introduction of new groups such as the Chinese and Indian. While in urban society there were differences and social upheavals, the climate of Trinidad society in the nineteenth century was relatively peaceful and prosperous compared to other societies. This is the portrait of Trinidad reflected in Cazabon's work as for instance seen in Figure 25, *Trial of the Rioters in the Courthouse of Port of Spain*, *Riders in the Queen's Park*, Figure 26, *Thatched Huts in a Cocoa Estate*, Figure 27, and Figures 28 *East Indian Group* and 12, previously shown. As a kaleidoscope of colour and forms, this gives an indication of the evolving Trinidad society at this time, with Cazabon capturing the latest newcomers, the Indians in their "traditional dress" before western garb had been acquired. His French background and training in painting as well as his sojourn in Martinique makes him also sensitive to the French aspects of Trinidad culture as depicted in his fascination with *The Blanchisseuse*, (The washer woman) Figure 29. In addition to the analysis of the emergence of creole society and the differences and variations which are occurring by society, the paintings of these four artists provide other valuable insights and areas for focussed interest which comprise constituents parts of a visual grammar. Among these are

b. Constructions of masculinity and femininity.

Figures 30 and 31 of Brunias: *The Barbados Mulatto Girl*, and *Free Natives of the West Indies*, Figures 10, 32 and 33, Bellisario's *Milkwoman*, *Chimney Sweep* and *Creole Negroes*; Figure 8 and 11 of Landaluze, and Figures 34 and 35 of Cazabon, *Creole Woman with a Parasol* and *Seated Mulatto Beauty*, begin to reveal the lost film of masculine and feminine stereotypes and divisions of labour as these were emerging in Caribbean society. There is much scope here for further analysis.

c. Retentions and transformations in popular culture

Figure 36 Brunias's *Sticklicking in the West Indies*, Figure 37, Portrayal of John Canoe parade by Brunias together with his other characters such as *John Canoe* Figure 38, Figure 39, *Koo Koo The Actor Boy* and others, Figures 40 and 41, Landaluze's *Three Kings Day and Dance of the Nanigos*, need to undergo an enormous degree of scrutiny about the evolution of these forms of culture in the Caribbean and the way in which they depict a story, but not a fictional account how cultures merge and become indelibly mixed.

This process of becoming and continually reinventing itself persists today, in every society around us, as for instance the increasing importance of Carnival as a festival alternative to dance hall culture, for the middle class in Jamaica. Or for example in Trinidad, the musical fusion of calypso and Indian music to form *chutney*, the latter referring originally to a blending of mixed spices used to accentuate the appetite for a meal. In my view the gap between what we see and experience, and what we know needs to be diminished for the construction of identity. For the historian, the project of revealing a Caribbean iconography, provides another way of seeing, demonstrating visually the journey which Caribbean society has been taking as it continues its evolutionary path.



Figure 19: Campesino prototype (his wife plait the traditional straw hat) (Londalize)



Figure 17: The Fruit Market at St. Vincent - (Brasilas)



Figure 18: St. Vincent Villagers merry making.



Figure 20: Prototypical campesinos in country side scene. (Londeluz) creation of "Liborio" or Cuban type

Figure 21:
Black Cuban family

25 (d)



Figure 22 : Queen Maam
of the Set Girls
(Belisario)



Figure 23:
French set
girls
(Belisario)



Figure 24:
Red Set Girls
(Belisario)



Figure 25: Trial of the Receters in the Courthouse of Port of Spain (Cozabon) 1849



Figure 27: Thatched huts in a Cocoa Estate, (Cozabon) 1880
source: Mac Leon, 1986



Figure 26
Riders in the Queen's Park
(Cazabon)

1853
Watercolour
363 x 126 mm.
Signed lower right: Cazabon.
TLW.00.AnJ03.
Private Collection.

Source : (MacLean, 1986)



Figure 29: The Blanclisseuse (Cozabon)
Collection: Hugh Dempsey (Snore - MacLean, 1986)



Figure 28: East Indian Group (Cozabon) 1886
Collection: Victoria Naipaul

25(h)

(Bruises)



Figure 31: Free Natives of the West Indies

(Bruises)

Figure 30: The Barbados Mulatto Girl



Figure 32: Chimney Sweep (Belisario)



Figure 33: Creole Negress



Figure 34 : (Cozabon)
Creole woman with
a Parasol



Figure 35 : Seated
Mulatto Beauty
(Cozabon)



Figure 36 : (Brujos)
Sticklicking in the
West Indies



(Belisario)

Figure 37: John Conne Parade?

25(C)

25(k)

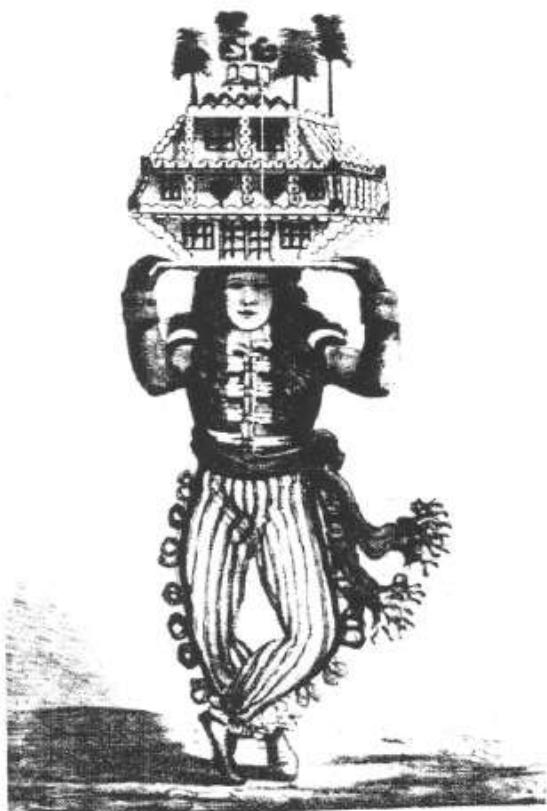


Figure 38: House John canoe
(Belisario)



Figure 39: koo koo The Actor boy (2)



Three Kings' Day, detail, above. Watercolor of the celebration in the plaza of the Cathedral of Havana. Gorantes Collection. Comparsas such as these enlivened the carnivals of Havana for many years. Figure 40 (Landaluze)

Dance of the Náñigos, watercolor, shows ritual ceremony in the meeting place of the náñigos, a secret fraternity of African origin

Figure 41: (Landaluze)

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ENDNOTES

1. In *The Inheritors* by William Golding, Faber and Faber, London, (first published in 1955), the author describes imaginatively the way in which human beings may have begun to communicate with each other. Their sense of smell is acute and thus leads them to food. The survival of the group creates more cultural demands: clothing, warmth, rituals and medicines for birth and death, illness, transportation over water, meeting with other unknown groups and so on. In the absence of an extended vocabulary or shared language which allows them to describe feelings, emotions, ideas or material properties, they communicate through "pictures in their heads. They ask each other to conjure up the mental images which have resulted from a common experience and they use this to enhance the survival skills of the group. This is the first relationship which we have to the material world of bodies and the earth, and it is in general a visual one, combining senses of smell, taste, touch rather than one we can actually put into words. An analogy which brings this point home is also that of children learning to speak and think. A child recognises its mother before it can acknowledge this. It is both the scent as well as a mental image which allows this recognition.

2. Anthony Cohen notes on the idea of community that this is formulated when a. members of a group of people have something in common with each other, which distinguishes them significantly from members of other groups. Community and therefore identity seems to imply simultaneously similarity and difference. The word therefore suggests a relational idea, the opposition of one community to others and to other social entities,

Cohen, in *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Tavistock, London, 1985.

3. Graham-Dixon points out that Henry VIII, determined to divorce Catherine of Aragon despite the pope's disapproval, repudiated papal authority and rejected the Roman Catholic faith. He dissolved the monasteries and founded the Church of England, a vastly more austere form of Christianity. The radical new leaders of the new Protestant church were vigorous and determined opponents of all Roman Catholic rituals and imagery, and under their direction, thousands and thousands of religious art were burned and smashed, emptying the cathedrals and churches of Scotland, England and Wales of sculptures, paintings and stained glass(Graham-Dixon, 1996: 16)

4 . The absence of indigenous arts forms, including a sense of colour and design and styles of painting which each group brought with them is very obvious even among the later groups of migrants. It occurred to me in my research on Indians in Trinidad and elsewhere in the Caribbean that the aesthetic had undergone a radical shift: flourescent pink and green nylons were used for dress as opposed to the hand woven natural dyed cottons which produced the rich green and pink colour tones and patterns traditionally worn. Only where a particular group of artisans came as a caste, as for instance jewellers or potters, did this art form persist

5 . In the Caribbean the pioneering work of Lucille Mair, later Hilary Beckles, Rhoda Reddock, Barbara Bush, Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton among many others and my own work on Indians in Trinidad may describe this listing.

6 . Gerder Lerner clarifies her use of gender here, a definition which I support in part. Sex is a biological given for men and women. Gender is the cultural definition of behaviour defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time. Gender is a set of cultural roles; therefore it is a cultural product which changes over time. (Lerner, 1986: 10). Joan Scott later added to this understanding with her definition that "Gender is the social organization of sexual difference". A further clarification needs to be made, nonetheless. First, in general, the social organization of sexual difference has been skewed granting more power to the male sex, thereby establishing relations of power between the sexes in the construction of cultural gender. Second, the idea that gender is primarily socially and culturally constructed suggests that gender differences will disappear over time. If the notion of sex as biological difference is maintained, then the understanding of gender construction leads one to believe that it is not difference which is the problem, but the hierarchical ordering of this difference which needs to be addressed.

7.Rawwidda Baksh-Soodeen, Ph.D Thesis, Department of Linguistics, University of The West Indies, St. Augustine

8 . Paper presented at the Association of Caribbean Historians 28th Conference, 1996, Barbados.

9. Hulme notes that there are close verbal parallels between parts of *The Tempest* and what have become known as the Bermuda Pamphlets, a series of documents pertaining to the shipwreck of the Sea-Venture and the salvation of its crew in 1610.

10. A good example of this in the last decade was the war against the Malvinas Islands of Argentina, the last stronghold of the British in that neck of the woods. This war was largely fought as a statement of British might.

11. This is perhaps more obvious in the style typical of Indian paintings of a particular period. I am still researching these differences, so can only be speculative here.

12. The use of palimpsest here is analogous to its usage by Salman Rushdie in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, 1995. In this book Rushdie invokes through the metaphor of painting and the method of palimpsest, the layers of history behind contemporary ethnic, caste and gender relations in India and the connections between this history and global political and economic concerns.

13. This point is evidenced by the research and publication as well as rebirth of interest in their work and imagery in many societies in the Caribbean now, as for instance Cazabon in Trinidad, Bellisario in Jamaica.

14. Geoffrey MacLean, *The Illustrative Biography of Trinidad's Nineteenth Century Painter Michel Jean Cazabon*, Aquarela Galleries, Port of Spain, 1986, p 22
15. Building on the work of French physicist Nicephore Niepce who began to transfer lithographic drawings by means of light onto paper, Mande Daguerre, a colleague, continued this research and in 1839 produced a workable system of photography. Daguerre's method however produced an item which was both unique and irreproducible.
16. Facts elicited from Barbados Museum publication on Brunias.
17. MacLean writes on this that "Although there is no evidence of registration at medical schools in London or in Paris, there are stories that he favoured a career in medicine, but found himself too sensitive to deal with human suffering". (MacLean, 1986: 17). The Report from the West India Committee Circular, April 12, 1928 notes that after St. Edmunds he went on to study medicine in Paris but "Unable to stand the sight of blood he gave up the idea of becoming a doctor and studied painting instead".
18. Another analogy with the uncovering of visual material for this paper comes to mind. I have had to draw on photographs of originals, photocopies of published photographs, and make slides from photographs and photocopies. Only in the case of Brunias's work have I actually seen some of the originals. Each time another process of reproduction takes place, something is lost of the original: colour, texture, detail and so on. I argue that a similar process occurs with the transliteration of a text.
19. Cited on pages 243-246 of Peter Hulme's Colonial Encounters, original source William Young, *An Account of the Black Charaibs in the Island of St. Vincent*, London, 1795, - the papers of the elder William Young put together by his son of the same name.
20. Mark Pereira notes another Brunias painting of the Red Charaibes in Tobago, but I have not come across this in any publication thus far.
21. I am grateful to Swithin Wilnot for pointing me to this article by Neville Hall entitled "Maritime Maroons: The Grand Marronage from the Danish West Indies", 16th ACH, Barbados, 1984. Hall suggests that the outward flow of trade between the islands as well as the desertion of the white crew led to the replacement of the ship's crew by runaway slaves, who in turn jumped ship when it came to port at other islands.
22. I am not sure of the title of the paper by Reddock which deals with this subject, but am aware of her writing on this subject.
23. I carried out such a rereading of Lady Nugent's diary and this is published in an article entitled "Nuancing the Feminist Discourse in the Caribbean", *Social and Economic Studies*, Vol 43, No 3, September 1994, Special Issue on New Currents in Caribbean Thought edited by Brian Meeks.