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## Minting the Face of Empire: Coinage and the Shadow King in George Lamming's *In The Castle of My Skin*

Jessica I. Damián  
anthuriumcaribjournal@gmail.com

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not an inch of this world devoid of my fingerprint  
—Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*

Within his expansive first novel, *In the Castle of My Skin*, George Lamming explores the waning powers of the British Empire in Barbados. No longer the site of a burgeoning imperial machine, the island finds itself in a state of uncertainty, poised between the memory of a violent past and its delicate future in an international market economy. At its core, the structure of the autobiographical novel functions as a compelling and highly suggestive means of exposing the complex and often bewildering reality that defines Creighton's Village, *Castle's* amalgamation of colonial dynamics. Lamming splits his narrative into first and third person omniscient narrators. Despite the reader's incessant need to pin down a unified discourse, the novel resists all attempts to sustain a singular voice, rendering in its place an overlap of voices (Paquet xi). As Michael Harris notes, Lamming's novel represents an insider's view of the West Indies (160). *Castle's* most prominent character, G., not only gestures toward a Barbadian sensibility, but also the coming of age of a greater Pan-Caribbean experience. Through the characters of G. and the schoolboys, Lamming chronicles the artifice behind the spectacle of empire and a last bastion of its hegemony, the pennies of Empire Day. As colonial subjects and heirs to England's pomp-and-circumstance colonial educational system, G. and the boys share a precarious relationship to *Castle's* shadow king and the emergent capitalist economy predicated on invisible kingship.

### The Great Design

Framed within the opening chapters of *Castle*, Lamming introduces the geographic space demarcating the colony's two principle systems of education—the church and the school. They are carefully laid out to stand inside the same enclosure:

In one corner where the walls met there was a palm-tree laden with nuts, and in front on all sides an area of pebbles, marl and stone. That area wide and pebbled in every part was called the school yard. The school was in another corner, a wooden building of two storeys with windows all around that opened like a yawning mouth. Except when it rained, the windows supported from the sills by broomsticks were kept open. In another corner was the church, a stone building which extended across the yard to within a few yards of the school. The church seemed three times the size of the school, with dark stained hooded windows that never opened. (*Castle* 35)

The natural abundance and rich landscape of Barbados are contextualized in the image of the palm tree laden with nuts, marking a sharp and distinct contrast to the decaying and neglected man-made school. An aging empire is refashioned and personified as an elderly man whose weight, metaphorically embodied through the windows, needs buttressing from broomsticks as

stand-ins for crutches. The gaping, yawning mouth shapes the reader's growing impression of the school as inherently bored with its own innate sense of purpose; the height of its youth and glory has passed.

Seeing this curious architectural layout prompts the schoolboys to question the efficacy of such a plan: "The church was not the church school as some churches were called, and the boys never really understood why these two buildings were erected within the same enclosure" (*Castle* 35). Questioning the blueprint of empire unveils a greater mystery the boys cannot comprehend, namely, their appointed roles within a plan far superior to themselves: "We're all subjects and partakers in the great design, the British Empire" (*Castle* 38). Despite being surrounded by three shrines of enlightenment—the church, the school, and the head teacher's house—knowledge eludes the boys. In *The Novels of George Lamming*, Sandra Paquet argues that "the school functions to perpetuate ignorance, confusion, and a destructive cultural dependence on the mother country among its pupils" (19). Rote learning and empty instruction characterize the curriculum taught in the classroom, a system based on the British ideal of loyalty and discipline.

The lessons, which the children recite faultlessly, encompass the only two global spheres of consequence in their visionary universe, Barbados and England. The alphabet, for example, arguably the most basic component of language, is formed through associations with island life:

a    b    ab    catch a crab  
g    o    go    let it go. (*Castle* 36)

As we will see, Lamming cautiously posits this playful, child-like synthesis of words against a greater, more disturbing view of the boys performing for the head teacher. Meanwhile, by expanding the narrative eye outwards in this scene, Lamming evokes the symbol of the crab; it is *Castle*'s most enduring icon. As an inhabitant of the sea, this creature embodies Benítez-Rojo's assertion that the Caribbean is not a terrestrial culture but rather an aquatic one "where time unfolds irregularly and resists being captured by the cycles of clock and calendar" (11). The marine currents and waves enact a repeating motion as they approach the meta-archipelago that bifurcates endlessly until it reaches all the seas and the lands of the earth (Benítez-Rojo 3). The children, through the rhythmic motions of their speech, "a b ab catch a crab / g o g o let it go," also enact the fluid, give-and-take of the island. Lamming's description of these animals, moreover, captures this notion beautifully:

The waves heaved forward and rushed up the shore. When they sank into the sand and slid back to the sea, we saw three red-back crabs. They were forcing a passage through the sand. The sand made a heap like an ant's nest, then fell away and the backs emerged. The backs were deep red and the claws were pink. The claws raised almost above the backs as they propelled themselves. And they were covered with wiry bits of hair like a man's hand. They crawled along, brushing

the sand with their aprons, and when the claws came up from the sand and the whole body groped forward, they left a varied scrawl along the sand. It made the pattern we might have drawn with a finger. (*Castle* 128)

Invoking these creatures grants not only an expansive view of Barbados but also of the Caribbean. Their eyes bestow upon the reader the ocular privilege of a 360-degree perspective; nothing goes unseen:

And the movement of the crabs' eyes was as wonderful. They were lifted so that they seemed to see all around and in all directions at the same time. In that position they looked like sitting figures, and when they returned to the oblong cavity where they rested, the movement was effortless. It seemed the crabs had nothing to do with it . . . Crabs' eyes seemed so much like a man's hand. A man's hand that moved about like a machine that was left to work following its own instructions. Sometimes when you turn your fingers over and around, letting them go in and out in all possible shapes, you look down at your hand in its movement, and are aware of something outside of you. (*Castle* 129)

The third person omniscient narrator at the school intersects with this all-encompassing view. The free-flowing movement of the narrative "eye" mimics the vision that navigates across the landscape spanning the four points of a metaphorical compass.

Through the vested mediation of the third person narrative, Lamming slowly unearths the island's collective slave history. It is one of the mysteries that the boys cannot solve or even fathom for that matter: "There were nine squads comprising about a thousand boys. The squads were packed close, and seen from the school porch the spectacle was that of an enormous ship whose cargo had been packed in boxes and set on the deck" (*Castle* 36). By juxtaposing this mature and knowledgeable consciousness alongside the children, Lamming delineates an unfolding transition from a colonial framework to a market economy. Rich in symbolic meaning, the squads conjure up visual renderings of the commodified bodies of slaves aboard British vessels. One thousand boys and one thousand slaves are packed tightly, guaranteeing a higher return and profit on imperial investments. The decks, moreover, depict modern trade along the West Indies and abroad. Prefiguring the destabilizing labor strike of the dockworkers, this image speaks to the transfer of agricultural goods, most prominently, sugar:

"What'll happen if we don't unload the boats?" Bob's father asked.

"They'll stay where they is, that's all," said the shoemaker. "When the ship people ready they'll either take them back where they bring them from, or if they rotten they'll dump 'em in the sea."

"An' what's worse, said the overseer's brother, we got to load the boats with sugar. That's worse. What he'll lose on that ship load of sugar that won't go away will repair these roads seven times over." (*Castle* 97)

The perishable nature of foreign, exported commodities renders their preservation absolutely necessary. However, once they spoil, there is no turning back; they must be disposed of. Encased within the same system of exchange, the metaphor of sugar stands in for the bodies and the blood of slaves thrown overboard in the Atlantic.

The connection between the sea and the commodified black body is heightened in the sinister rendering of the boys fishing for coins. As the white men toss pennies into the sea, the children, with their “sprawling black limbs” (*Castle* 116), kick and wound each other in their mad scramble. The scene serves as an indictment against reprehensible tourism in the Caribbean. Fostering a damaging dependence on money that is given under the guise of generosity, this cycle perpetuates the mental and physical enslavement of the islanders. While the rhetoric may change, the effect remains the same: “The white men laughed, and later . . . looked curiously as if they were inspecting animals” (*Castle* 116). Ordering them to settle their disputes with a “fight in the sea” corrupts the unique relationship the boys have with the island for the “water never carried anyone away . . . and the waves when they came seemed like gifts of sea horses on which the children rode” (*Castle* 116). Because their life experiences thus far are isolated from any semblance of violence, despite the proximity geography brings, the children unequivocally dismiss slavery.

For the boys, a looming shadow seems cast about as they hear rumors that the good queen freed them. These strange echoes hark back to something unknown and to a history not taught in or out of the school. After inquiring whether slaves existed, their teacher remains loyal in his duty to empire; he checks their skepticism by answering, “No one was ever a slave. It was in another part of the world that those things happened. Not in Little England” (*Castle* 57). Appeased with this answer, one of the boys instead worries about the old woman who spreads this tale: “Who put it into her head that she was a slave, she or her mother or father before her? He was sure the old woman couldn’t read. She couldn’t have read it in a book” (*Castle* 57). The vagueness around the issue of slavery leaves a space for myth-making:

And slavery . . . was too far back for anyone to worry about teaching it as history. That’s really why it wasn’t taught. It was too far back. History had to begin somewhere, but not so far back. And nobody knew where this slavery business took place. The teacher had simply said, not here, somewhere else. Probably it never happened at all. (*Castle* 58)

Heavily vested in Biblical spirituality, the community has a disposition for myth as the allegorical real of Old and New Testament stories (versus the marvelous real of Pa’s dream) that shapes its understanding of what belongs within linear history.

In “Caribbean Labor, Culture, and Identity,” Lamming discusses the limited scope of his own pedagogical awareness, most notably his narrow geographic reality:

In the case of my boyhood/schoolhood recollections, what I am describing is an acute form of insularity which was cultivated in Barbados as a virtue: it was a virtue to be insular. We believed all these things to be true because we were taught that we occupied a place of special favor in the judgment of the ruling Empire. It was the careful work of systematic cultural indoctrination. But if this insularity assumed an extreme form in Barbados, the experience of travel would later warn me that it was, in varying degrees, a fairly general condition throughout the Caribbean region. (“Caribbean Labour” 19)

The boy, similarly, both exalts and negates his sense of insularity. He does not understand his specific place in the Empire, but he nonetheless embraces it; nothing exists outside of Little England and Big England. This is what the schoolbooks teach him. He feels himself within a privileged position as an erudite islander vis-à-vis the old woman. However, he also displaces his own ignorance about the island’s painful history onto her, referring to the old woman as a “poor fool.” Age, in his eyes, has not brought her wisdom. Her insistence on this uncanny subject undermines the stability he feels under the colonial framework.

*Castle*’s nuanced yet sustained focus on literacy and education leads to a dubious omission; there are no British novels hailed within the text. Lamming’s narrative marks a point of departure from his counterparts in the Caribbean. Whereas McKay (*Banana Bottom*), James (*Beyond a Boundary*), and Naipaul (*A Way in the World*), for example, exalt the British literary canon, oftentimes in profound praise, *Castle* remains outside of this tradition. Quoting Gauri Viswanathan, Belinda Edmondson notes that the English literary text “...functioned as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state. The English literary text, then, arguably functions as the most refined form of colonialism” (72). However, the discourses of Wordsworth, Blake, Burke, Brontë, Shakespeare, Thackeray, and Dickens hold no aesthetic or practical value in Creighton’s Village. The only books of true consequence the boys ever see are the record books that maintain a guarded register of their offenses and violations. With an absence of fictional and biological fathers, the boys look to the mother country as their figure of authority and control.

By employing this non-literary approach, *Castle*’s objective is two fold: on the one hand, the novel stands as one of the earliest attempts “to portray West Indians as having a tradition and culture of their own” (Harris 161), while on the other, it underscores that proficiency in the higher studies (mathematics above all other disciplines), is the only true reward of an emergent capitalist economy. The exhibition scholarships the school awards encourage the study of arithmetic and its derived branches: stocks, shares, and compound interest. As the scenes of Empire Day unfold, the boys become increasingly aware of the seductive mechanisms behind economic production.

## Entertaining Empire

Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* delineates the complex and charged relationship between spectacle and nation building. He argues that the origins of a national consciousness arise, in part, from public displays of pageantry. They elevate the mythical, invisible ties that bind all of its citizens, within homogeneous empty time, in rapturous grandeur:

Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance. Singing the Marseillaise, Waltzing Matilda, and Indonesia Raya provide occasions for unisonality, for the echoed physical realization of the imagined community. (145)

I want to argue that a central component of Anderson's theory is the need to maintain an overwhelming sensory experience that bombards and animates the body. In this case, national anthems emphasize assimilation through sound. The boys at the school share their own version of unisonance as they participate in the Empire Day festivities:

With incredible precision every squad saluted, and there was silence but for the sound of the wind in the trees, and the silence moving gradually from squad to squad broke forth into an earnest, pleading resonance:

God save our gracious King,  
Long live our noble King,  
God save the King. (*Castle* 37-38)

Lamming's prose reproduces the movement of the wind as it swirls among the trees and among the squads, gradually building up to a carefully orchestrated crescendo of voices. Patriotism, in its aural and oral tonality, is highly contagious. One thousand boys, through the sway of spectacle, coalesce into one. This salute to British nobility marks the second of the schoolboys' lessons. Whereas the alphabet is taught through associations with island life, refined and proper language pays homage to England as the land that bequeaths the privilege of discourse.

As if to awaken the school from its slumber, it too is dressed in the garments of empire:

The school wore a uniform of flags: doors, windows and partitions on all sides carried the colours of the school's king. There were small flags and big flags, round flags and square flags, flags with sticks and flags without sticks, and flags that wore the faces of kings and princes, ships, thrones, and empires. Everywhere the red and the white and the blue. In every corner of the school the tricolour Union Jack flew its message. The colours though three in number had by constant repetition produced something vast and terrible, a kind of pressure or presence of

which everyone was a part. The children in the lower school looked with wonder. They seemed to see a mystery that was its own revelation . . . (*Castle* 36-37)

Working through this awe-inspiring display is another quality of sensory experience; one can see the sovereignty of British dominion. All of the negotiable spaces—doors, windows and partitions—unfold themselves in an endless sea of repetition. In a myriad of shapes, colors, and sizes, the flags bifurcate infinitely, much like the meta-archipelago on whose soil they stand erected. Likewise, colonial history moves forward linking Little England and Big England through time in the faces of kings, princes, ships, thrones and empires.

As the last bastions of hegemony, the pennies the boys receive bear the physical mark of the crown, that is, the image of the king's face. Their innocent queries about the nature of his seemingly fixed presence on each one speaks to a more sophisticated awareness about the true mechanics of cultural and economic production. The pennies, a gift bequeathed to them from the good queen herself, are awarded immediately after the children hear about stocks, shares, and compound interest. However, an important caveat precedes the actual ceremony: "You must all when you go to spend your penny think before you throw it away. Queen Victoria was a wise queen, and she would have you spend it wisely" (*Castle* 42). Despite their limited possibilities on the island, the boys are, in essence, taught to act as prudent investors. The scene serves as an ominous and paradoxical foreshadowing of the betrayal enacted by Mr. Slime and his Friendly Society and Penny Savings Bank.

Set against the backdrop of the school, the boys examine their pennies closely embarking on a different type of lesson. Neil Korteana envisions a larger question on the boys' minds: "Where is the authority that mints the pennies, that guarantees the currency on which everything in a capitalist economy depends?" (48). As a truly hands-on exercise, the boys study the coins with rapt attention:

Most of the boys were busy examining the pennies. They were bright copper. The boys speculated whether it was possible to reproduce them, and made various attempts to represent them in pencil drawings. They would put the penny on the desk, place a sheet of clean paper over it, and shade thickly with pencil the part of the sheet that covered the penny. They tore away the circle which the penny had made with its imprint on one side sharply reproduced. They examined the paper with the imprint and thought long and hard on ways of making pennies.  
(*Castle* 52-53)

Their endeavor marks the final phase of the sensory experience that seeks to assimilate them within a British national consciousness. Whereas before they heard and then saw the spectacle of power, the boys now move to enact an astonishing subversion of that authority; they mint their own legal tender. Having always stood in the shadows of a great design, the boys reposition themselves at the forefront of England's great machine. By assuming immediate control over the

mechanisms and output of the market, they guarantee an uninterrupted flow of production. Moreover, *Castle* suggests the ways in which this power is exclusively mediated through a male-gendered experience.

The brightness of the copper lures the boys to action as they manufacture exact replicas of the coin's imprint. Excited by the possibility of making money, "everyone knew how important money was" (*Castle* 53), they hasten their work. Despite the staggering and endless possibilities their enterprise promises, the tools behind their improvised commercial venture are pencils, papers, and desks—the instruments of a withered empire. Their exact yet crude copies are a sign of empty production; they hold no real value. Paper, in its many forms, proves ineffectual.<sup>1</sup>

The unfolding sequence of *Castle*'s narrative describes the boys' growing fascination with the face of the king on the pennies. Perceived as a purely logistical question at first, it leads the boys into epistemological territory: "They looked at it closely and critically, and made notes of their observations" (*Castle* 53). The more they ponder the subject, the more uneasy they become about a plausible answer:

Some argued quietly about the size of the king's face, and the way the face had been stamped on the copper. It was very clever, they thought. It was a real face, and the face they had seen in other pictures. . . . This face on the penny was very fascinating. Could you have a penny without a face? . . . How did it the face get there? The question puzzled them. (*Castle* 53)

Because of the grand spectacle of empire and its signs—the flags, the parades and the speeches—the boys are well aware of the extraordinary power of the monarchy; the king and queen *are* England. Like the Ditchley portrait<sup>2</sup> of Elizabeth I standing on the globe, spatial reality is altered and redefined. Elizabeth's persona towers above England as it becomes subordinate under her feet. The coin, a representation of the world writ small, is likewise subordinate under the king's image.<sup>3</sup> By asking whether one could have a penny without a face, the boys entertain an unparalleled thought. They envision a free world; they see a country without a ruler. Contrary to Kortenaar's argument that "the boys cannot see the whole" (48), I argue that on the tiny island of Barbados, Little England dreams of stepping outside of Columbus's machine.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Shadow King**

Working against the assumption that one king could possibly tolerate "to sit till all those million pennies were done," or even more creatively, that he would press his face on the side of every coin, the boys reach a unanimous decision: "There was a shadow king who did whatever a king should do" (*Castle* 54). Moreover, the shadow king is a part of the English tradition:

The English, the boy said, were fond of shadows. They never did anything in the open. Everything was done in shadow, and even the king, the greatest of them, worked through his shadow. Somebody asked if you were ever talking to a real man or a shadow when you talked to an Englishman, and the boy said yes. Some of them were the man and the shadow at the same time, but more shadow than man. But you had to be careful when you had anything to do with English people. (*Castle* 55)

Within Lamming's pan-Caribbean framework, *Castle*'s shadow king conjures up echoes of another ruler, France's Sun King, Louis XIV. Like Apollo, the Sun King maintains an enduring image of dazzling ceremonial lavishness; he stands in clear opposition to the shadow king who operates in a world of secrecy and darkness. The shadow king's symbolic residence, the dilapidated school, is a vulgar adaptation of Versailles. The school cannot match Versailles's unsurpassed luxury and its well-structured French gardens. However, while France waged and lost colonies in the Caribbean, the boys learn that England remained unwavering in her loyalties:

Three hundred years, more than the memory could hold, Big England had met Little England and Little England like a sensible child accepted. Three hundred years, and never in that time did any other nation dare interfere with these two. Barbados or Little England was the oldest and purest of England's children, and may it always be so. The other islands had changed hands. Now they were French, now they were Spanish. But Little England remained steadfast and constant to Big England. Even to this day. (*Castle* 37)

In asserting Barbados's purity and fostering a child-like dependency on the empire, England "defends its increasingly precarious position in the world" (Harris 161). Protecting her status also means being vigilant about insurrections and insidious attempts to inhabit the castle.

In *The Pleasures of Exile*, Lamming appropriates Derek Walcott's phrase "You in the castle of your skin, I among the swineheard" (*Castle* 228). Because he believes no one in Creighton's Village could ever see themselves as swine, he seeks to "restore the castle where it belonged" (*Castle* 228). Michael Harris argues that early in the novel, the castle symbolizes British colonial presence in Barbados (161). In those opening chapters, clear boundaries are established between the public and the private spheres; the Great remains sheltered within his walls: "The world ended somewhere along the bridge, and beyond was another plane of reality; beyond was the Great, which the landlord and the large brick house on the hill represented. . . . It was a castle around which the land like a shabby back garden stretched" (*Castle* 28-29). As the novel comes to a close and the narrative beckons to a West Indian society achieving independence, G. finally seizes his triumphant position in the castle of his own skin. G.'s trajectory, however, is marked by the most disturbing and violent passage in the text, the sadistic beating of the boy Lamming names "the victim."

During his discourse on the benevolence of the queen, the head teacher feels humiliated as one of the boys, G.'s classmate, snickers during the presentation. The breach of proper decorum transpires at the exact moment the pennies are handed out: "There was a loud giggle from one corner of the school. The head teacher stiffened, and everyone felt the terror of the change that had come over him" (*Castle* 42). Symbolically important, the initial wave of anger he expresses is the direct result of the speech itself. According to him, "Some of those boys in standard 7 think they know what it is to be a king. Victoria was a real queen" (*Castle* 42). Acting as the head teacher and guardian of the colonial machine, he moves to curb any subversive insurrections. Because the boy is from standard 7 and on some levels knowledgeable about the workings of the market, he poses a heightened threat; he ventures to occupy the king's sovereign realm. The boy wishes for his image to usurp the king's countenance on the pennies. The punishment for his transgression and for assuming he could occupy the castle comes in the form of a ferocious whipping. To remind the boy of his grievous offense and to reinforce the notion that he is not white but rather black, the head teacher rends his pants with the leather. He exposes the boy's "black buttocks," then reduces him to howling "like an animal" (*Castle* 43). Much to the reader's dismay, the boy's own classmates act as dreadful accomplices to the crime.

If the boy's overt attempt raises immediate alarm, Mr. Slime's effort is far more subtle. After leaving the school under the suspicion of adultery, he forms the Friendly Society and Penny Savings Bank marking "the first apparently beneficent appearance of capitalism in this otherwise feudal world" (Kortenaar 47). As the narrative progresses, one finds nothing welcoming about his business venture. Mr. Slime forms a "new attitude to wealth" by introducing the school's arithmetic to a broader group of students; Creighton's Village is reconstructed as his own personal classroom. He teaches them that "wealth can be amassed as capital and invested. As capital, money becomes a source of power" (Kortenaar 47). Because Mr. Slime had worked as hard as any man in the village to improve their condition, no one anticipates their own money dispossessing them of the land (98). Mr. Slime's calculated rise to power leaves Pa perplexed. While he understands that Mr. Slime abandons the teaching in the school for a teaching of a bigger kind, he cannot piece together "this strange relation between Mr. Slime and the landlord" (*Castle* 254, 256). He presses the head teacher for an explanation:

He always did say way back, said the old man, way way back in the first days he says he would make us owners. He turned his head away from the head teacher. 'Tis that I don't understand how he could let the strange men come in. The strange men you hear of, the head teacher said, they put money in the Bank and the Society. They're what you know as partners. Mr. Slime is the boss all right, but they're others who put money in, and they got the first choice of buying any spot they wanted. (*Castle* 255)

Despite Mr. Slime's financial teachings, Pa and the villagers fail the lesson in investment and property banking. Fraught with political resonance, Mr. Slime morphs into the new face of Mr. Creighton. Like the molten copper in the minting process, he slowly and patiently dissolves the

spatial reality separating him from the wealthy landowner. The former school teacher turned king moves into the castle. This revelation in the closing moments of the novel points to the precarious extension of the colonial machine within the meta-archipelago. In a hypnotic, mechanical pattern the villagers repeat, “[w]e got to see Mr. Slime. See Mr. Slime. Mr. Slime. Mr. Slime. Mr. Slime” (*Castle* 247). Borrowing from Benítez-Rojo, Mr. Slime’s countenance bifurcates endlessly navigating across the landscape of the island. He is the coin and currency that stimulates the nascent capitalist economy of Creighton’s Village.

Filtered through the faded pages of his exercise book, G.’s parting narrative unites him to *Castle*’s sustained discourse on education. The sheets correspond to a past whose mystery and revelation elude him still and yet he forges on with a keen awareness of the journey that lies ahead of him. Knowing that he must separate himself from the island, he feels moved by his departure, but he does not romanticize the experience. In its place, G. articulates a penetrating acknowledgment of his shifting existence:

When I review these relationships they seem so odd. I have always been here on this side and the other person there on that side, and we have both tried to make the sides appear similar in the needs, desires, and ambitions. But it wasn’t true. It was never true. When I reach Trinidad where no one knows me I may be able to strike identity with the other person. But it was never possible here. . . . They can never know you. Sometimes I think the same thing will be true in Trinidad. The likeness will meet and make merry, but they won’t know you. They won’t know the you that’s hidden somewhere in the castle of your skin. (*Castle* 261)

G., a character who “hovers around the scenes he describes” and goes unseen like a Ghost,<sup>5</sup> possesses a spectral quality that symbolically aligns him with the shadow king. Like two sides of a coin, he seeks to reconcile the image that is here with the image that is there. This is impossible for no one can know the rightful place you claim for yourself. The Caribbean and England reside in the same castle.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Alejo Carpentier's *The Kingdom of this World* also chronicles a similar minting process whereby King Henri Christophe, a former slave, mimics the European framework in his earthly empire of Sans Souci. Meant to stand as a proud monument to Negritude at its height, Sans Souci is reduced to a parodic display of excess. Rather than embracing the benevolent traits of a sovereign ruler, Christophe embodies and perpetuates the tyranny he once endured. While his kingdom reflects his entry into the ruling class, Christophe must possess that which clearly separates him from the world of men; he must mint his own currency. His ascent necessitates a symbol greater than himself. The attraction to everything that is emblematic proves disastrous for Christophe. His rise within the same system of colonialism only precipitates his fall. When Ti Noël partakes of the spoils of Sans Souci's ruins, one sees the evanescent quality of all opulence. The treasures of the ruling class are reduced to humorous vestiges.

<sup>2</sup>The Ditchley portrait of Elizabeth I (c.1592) by Marcus Gheerraerts now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery, London. As William Leahy notes, the figure of Elizabeth resonates with a mythic presence as it pulls England to the very center where she stands as an empress on the globe of the world.

<sup>3</sup>I am grateful to Joanna Johnson, Department of English, University of Miami, for her insights on this particular representation.

<sup>4</sup>For a further discussion on Columbus's machine and its vast dispersal in the Caribbean basin, see Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 5-10.

<sup>5</sup>Neil Kortenaar makes this keen observation about G.'s ethereal presence in the text. I would further argue that G. forges an important relationship to the shadow king insofar as they both occupy the same symbolic realm. Each one functions with a dual profile, a real one and its corresponding shadow.

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