In Teaching C.L.R. James’ “Minty Alley”: Tricksters, Intellectuals and the Folk

Overview

In examining C.L.R. James’ early novel “Minty Alley,” we chose to focus on several issues germane to the study of literature of the African Diaspora: the female trickster figure, the genre of the yard novel, and the interplay between West Indian intellectualism and the folk.

The following materials offer sources and suggestions for teaching “Minty Alley”: a slide show of images of Trinidadian culture at the turn of the twentieth century, a map of C.L.R. James’ life which illustrates the Pan-African nature of his life and work, a lesson plan with discussion questions and activities for teaching the novel, an annotated bibliography of sources (including primary resources) which may prove helpful in teaching James, as well as entertaining information relating to the influence of carnival and calypso on the novel.

Lesson Plan:

Teaching Minty Alley in an undergraduate classroom:

- An introduction to C. L. R. James and to Trinidadian culture contemporary to Minty Alley
- Emphasis on the trickster and Maisie as the female trickster
- Tying it all together: a comparison to African American culture
1. An Introduction to C. L. R. James

We begin our unit on C.L.R. James by examining a map of his life which illustrates the various migrations he took and the evolution that his travels affected in his politics and work. This map only provides a very brief gloss over James’ career, but it is hopefully useful to visualize the various migrations he undertook, as his geographic movement goes hand in hand with his evolution as a scholar.

*Minty Alley* is a unique and significant work that comes at the beginning of his long career as a scholar, author, and political activist. Written in 1928 while James was still a young man in Trinidad, before he came politicized and before he began taking on the perspective of the proletariat in his writings, *Minty Alley* can be understood as the starting point of James’ Pan-African journey. Viewing images of the people and places that shaped James into a Marxist and eventually Trotskyite who worked for the liberation of the underclass across the African diaspora can help illuminate our understanding of James’ only novel.

**Mapped Introduction**

*{Online Map as a Visual Introduction}*

**Guide to Map:**

1. Trinidad
   - James as young man
   - Queen’s College
   - Audio of Darcus Howe reading from “Beyond a Boundary” re childhood
     - Howe is James’ great-nephew
     - 3:44-4:25
   - James was a member of the Beacon Group and wrote a collection of short stories and his only novel, *Minty Alley*, during his early years in Trinidad.

2. Britain A
   - Learie Constantine: impetus for journey
   - He wrote for the Manchester Guardian about cricket
   - In England, James became a Marxist and eventually a Trotskyite. During this time, he wrote his classic work, the Black Jacobins, which was a history of the Haitian revolution.
   - He also wrote a play about Toussaint Louverture, staged in 1936.
   - Also, *Minty Alley* was published in London in 1936 and was the first novel to be published by a black Caribbean author in England.

3. U.S.
   - James went to North America to meet with Trotsky in Mexico in 1938.
   - He met his second wife, Constance Webb, in California, and their relationship was based on a voluminous correspondence, and their relationship is credited with opening James’ eyes to issues of feminism.
   - He engaged in a speaking tour across the U.S. and worked with the Socialist’s Workers Party to help with African-American labor movements.
   - Due to issues with his visa, James was deported from Ellis Island in ’53 and went briefly to England and then back to Trinidad.

4. Back to Trinidad, Later Years
During the late 50s and early 60s, James edited *The Nation*, a newspaper for the pro-independence People's National Movement party. He became immersed again in the Pan-African movement, with particular interest in Ghana's devolution.

In 1963, James wrote his autobiographical book about cricket entitled “Beyond a Boundary.” Critics describe it as the best book about cricket ever written.


5. Britain B
- James returned to Britain in the 1970s.
- James and his third wife Selma in later years
- James in ‘83
- picture of movie about cricket
- he died in 1989 in Brixton, England

Discussion questions:
A.) C. L. R. James and Marxism
The novel centers on the relationship between the middle class Haynes and the working class members of the yard. James' Marxist and later Trotskyite politics blossomed after he wrote *Minty Alley* and left Trinidad – does one see any roots of his Marxism in Minty Alley? How does James navigate the conflicts between the bourgeois and the popular, the individual versus the collective?
2. The Culture of Trinidad

- Slide show of photos of early twentieth century Trinidad
  Link to slide show.
  "Mommy, where did the yard novel come from?"

- Influences on the yard novel:
  1. Carnival
     Carnival is a seasonal celebration that takes place before Lent. It typically involves parades and performances of all sorts. After Emancipation in the 1834, Carnival became a source of pride for the popular masses, and the rituals began to reflect popular culture. One part of Carnival was the calypso tents, which originated as places where calypso bands would practice before Carnival. Over time these tents became main attractions in Carnival. Now, calypso tents are the places to go to see what's new in calypso music.

  2. Calypso
     Calypso music covers a variety of topics, from politics to love. They can be serious or comical, and often have a satirical element, commenting on recent events. Some calypso songs are about domestic troubles, focusing on a few specific characters and one main conflict. This elevation of working class dramas into creative pieces of art is similar to the yard novel.

     Audio:

  3. The Calypso Drama
     Originally staged in calypso tents during Carnival. These were vaudeville-like sketches performed by several calypso singers. They focused on domestic dramatic situations, as the yard novel did, and were done in musical form. Comical and bawdy in nature, they often involved costumes.

     Audio:
     - Alan Lomax - "Introduction to a Calypso Drama, 'The GI and the Lady,'" samples and full version available from Amazon, CD Universe, and many other venues on the CD Calypso After Midnight!: The Live Midnight Special Concert (live), (1999).
     - Lord Invader, Macbeth the Great, and the Duke of Iron - "The GI and the Lady (Calypso Drama)," samples and full version available from Amazon, CD Universe, and many other venues on the CD Calypso After Midnight!: The Live Midnight Special Concert (live), (1999).

- Group Assignment: Have the students create lyrics to a calypso song based on their newfound knowledge of calypso music. Another option is to have them turn Minty Alley into a calypso song.
3. The Yard Novel meets the Bildungsroman

- Reading of “Triumph” as an introduction to the yard novel (either in its entirety out-of-class or just excerpts in-class)

- A comparison to popular culture: Consider the viewer as voyeur -- how is this like reality television? Why do we like reality television? Why do we like Minty Alley? Haynes is a voyeur. He enjoys watching his neighbors through a hole in the wall as they do things that he does not do (have sex, argue, lie, cheat). They are not necessarily things that he wants to do, but they are fun to watch. We enjoy watching girls compete for the affections of Flavor Flav on The Flavor of Love and such shows, not because it is what we want, but because it is grotesquely entertaining to watch full grown women hot tub with a rapper, argue amongst themselves, and physically fight one another. These are activities that do not occur in our normal lives, so they seem exotic and exciting.

- The reception of the yard novel in Trinidad: Discussion of “vulgarity” in literature; examination of Belmont article

  Discussion questions:
  A.) What are the effects of James’ choice to utilize a limited narrator? (Haynes peeks through a hole in the wall.)
  B.) The connection between Calypso, the yard novel and the bildungsroman – what does James achieve by drawing on these disparate genres or traditions?
  C.) Where do we see the influence of the folk in Minty Alley?
  D.) What, if anything, can we make of the fact that Minty Alley was James’ only novel?
4. **Comparison to situation faced by the writers of the Harlem Renaissance**

- In-class reading of responses to Du Bois’ questionnaire “The Negro in Art”
  - The Beacon writers faced criticisms similar to those faced by Harlem Renaissance writers who depicted the folk.

- What should be depicted in art? What are the advantages of depicting the lower class? The upper class?
- More popular culture: How does this compare to the contemporary criticism rappers face concerning subject matter and the vernacular?
  - [Link to “censored rap” article](#), “Chamillionaire ditches profanity and N word on new album ‘Ultimate Victory’.”

- In-class activity: Tag Team Debate
  - The students are each assigned a questionnaire response from the Crisis. They should answer the following question from the perspective of the respondent: What is appropriate subject matter to depict? The class should reproduce the different positions within the debate and represent them in a reproduction of the debate. *Divide the class into two groups: propaganda and art.* Keep a running tally of “good points” on the dry erase board.
    - *Propaganda: These students argue that art should have an ulterior motive. Artists are representatives of their race, social class, etc. They are morally obligated to represent the “best” of their races as well as the worst.*
    - *Art: These students should argue that as artists, the writers should feel free to create whatever characters that they see fit, no matter how base or immoral.*
5. The Trickster

- An introduction to the traditional trickster: Reading of some of Dr. Louise Bennett’s *Anancy Stories*; Description of the trickster in African literature
- And the female trickster (see useful quotations pages)

Discussion Questions:
- How is Anancy like Maisie? How are they different? What tricks does Maisie play? If she were a hero, what would her super powers be?
- How does Maisie’s gender complicate her role as a trickster? In what ways is she more powerful than if she was masculine?
- How do the female characters of the novel – Maisie, Mrs. Rouse, Miss Atwell, Nurse Jackson, Philomen, Ella -- fit into Dr. Horton-Stallings theory of the trope of the “Queen Bee?”
- What do we make of the presence of Obeah in the novel, and its use by Nurse Jackson, Benoit and Maisie?
6. Conclusion

Discussion Questions:
- Where does Minty Alley fit into the African diasporic literary tradition?
- Where does the folk fit in? Where does Louise Bennett fit into the literary tradition?
Annotated Bibliography

Primary Resources List


Resources with Annotations


This newspaper article is a scathing review of the collection *Trinidad*, published by C. L. R. James and Alfred Mendes, which is a collection of poems, articles and short stories written by Trinidadians. The criticism stems from the opinion of the author (echoed in letters by several readers of the newspaper), who purport that the subject matter is obscene.

This primary document will be helpful in that it is easily compared to W.E.B. Du Bois' condemnation in his magazine, *The Crisis*, in which it is stated that the subject matter of the Harlem Renaissance misrepresents the African American population. It easily sets up a parallel between the two burgeoning literary cultures and contributes to the "art vs. propaganda" debate. This debate argues whether art should embody the best of the culture (which might have been under-represented but considered boring) or the base percentage (which was intriguing but seemed to perpetuate the myth that the cultures—African American and lower class Trinidadian—in question were immoral).


Bennett’s collection of folk tales features an example of a typical trickster figure, Anancy the spider. Also, the dialect verse was featured in the Jamaican newspaper, *The Gleaner* and therefore was often written as commentary on current events in Jamaican culture.

It can be used to compare Maisie to Anancy in a comparison of tricksters. Also, it will provide undergraduates with an idea of what Jamaican society was like.


These two CDs are useful as examples of traditional calypso music. They feature a variety of song types, including domestic songs that are similar to the yard novel. The music and the lyrics, or just one of the two, can be used to show undergraduates how the yard novel is part of a larger cultural picture in Trinidad.

This collection of essays, letters, and interviews about James's life and work is split into sections: "Portraits and Self-Portraits," "Early Trinidadian Years," "Textual Explorations," and "Praxis." It also includes a chronology and glossary of relevant works and terms (like "dub poetry"). The most useful essays are those giving details about James's life, which illustrate how his background intersected and influenced his work. One letter excerpt shows how he was inspired by his landlady to create the character of Mrs. Rouse in *Minty Alley*. One particularly useful essay, "The Audacity of It All: C.L.R. James's Trinidadian Background," by Selwyn Cudjoe, describes the cultural context of James's Trinidad, including the importance of Carnival.


A collection of writings pertaining to James, this book includes personal memoirs on James by colleagues such as Anna Grimshaw, literary essays on *Minty Alley*, essays on James' political work and writings, and an account of the scholarship on James. Particularly useful will be the essays by Helen Pyne-Timothy, H. Adlai Murdoch and Barbara Paul-Emile on James' early short stories and the dimensions of colonialism and gender in *Minty Alley*. The collection also offers letters written to and by James.


In chapter two of her book, ‘Cultural an tradition an birthrigh’: proverb as metaphor in the poetry of Louise Bennett, Cooper provides many of Bennett's folk proverbs as well as interpretations of them. She also puts the proverbs into context by pointing out their relevance to Jamaican culture.

In chapter three, Than cunny Jamma oman: representations of female sensibility in the poetry of Louise Bennett, Cooper examines the female figure in Bennett's dialect verse, again provides context, as well as a comparison to the Anansi trickster figure, which is particularly helpful (to us) in tying together Maisie as a trickster figure to Anansi, who Cooper calls “the quintessential trickster.”


The above articles highlight the series of responses to Du Bois questionnaire (the first article listed) in which he facilitates a debate on how the African American author should portray his race within creative works. The respondents are often influential members of the community or artists of the Harlem Renaissance.

These articles are useful in connecting the plights of Jamaican and Trinidadian authors (such as Bennett and James) to the authors of the Harlem Renaissance, whereby they were forced to confront the accusations that their works were vulgar and over-sexed. Ultimately, this comparison creates a parallel between African American literature and Caribbean literature in the early twentieth century.

Duran’s essay attempts to integrate James’ Marxist stance with his writings on Black African-Americans, in order to solidify James’ place in the canon. Duran posits that James attempts through his work to construct a social identity for African-Americans, an identity which lends itself to self-actualization as a revolutionary force. Duran states that James examines African-Americans as a group, without concern for what this label means, whom it applies to, and what variations in identity, among other concerns, exist within the group as a whole. According to Duran, it is in James’ interest to conceptualize African-Americans as a homogenous group in order to provide context and impetus for a Black American revolution. Duran highlights James’ recognition of the history of Black political movements, specifically the way in which he “sees previous movements, including the Haitian revolution, a number of nineteenth-century movements, that of Marcus Garvey, and so forth as intimately related to the Black Power movement of the 1960s, for example.” Reading this essay in conjunction with Minty Alley would be particularly useful, as Duran provides a nice overview of James’ Marxist theory and its connection to Black political movements.


Eudell delineates the ways in which James departs from the standard Marxist theory in envisioning the actualization of individuals, not the collective state, as the ultimate good. By examining three books written about James – Anthony Bogues’ Caliban’s Freedom: The Early Political Thought of C.L.R. James, Aldon Lynn Nielsen’s C.L.R. James: A Critical Introduction, and Kent Worcester’s C.L.R. James: A Political Biography, Eudell provides a synopsis of James’ life and political evolution. Through Bogues, Nielsen and Worcester, Eudell traces the development of James’ Marxism, from his childhood in Trinidad to his years in England, his transition to Trotskyism, his work in Black American labor movements, and an in-depth examination of his various works. This essay would be particularly useful in teaching James in a class in which time constraints prevent a reading of the books on James by Bogues, Nielsen or Worcester.


These liner notes, along with the music and liner notes for items ___-____, are good examples of calypso music contemporary to the beginning of the yard novel.


In this book, Foote discusses Carnival and Calypso in a highly academic fashion, using deconstruction and other philosophies (those of Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan are mentioned) as a basis of analysis. Though probably not as useful for teaching undergraduates, the book does give some interesting definitions of Calypso. It is more appropriate to provide additional context for the teacher.


Hamner introduces the idea of the yard novel subgenre as a true West Indian literature. He identifies the major traits of the yard novel genre, examining how they work in eight different yard novels, including Minty Alley. Hamner describes how books from different time periods are closely related through these traits, and concludes that the variety within the different texts reflects a flexibility of literary expression.
In Teaching C.L.R. James' "Minty Alley": Tricksters, Intellectuals and the Folk

This is useful for identifying the main characteristics of the yard novel, so we can see how Minty Alley fits within the genre. This gives a good background for undergraduates. Also, we can look at the list of traits to see which ones can be traced back to Calypso (such as the sweet man character).


This work is a collection of essays and stories written by James on subjects ranging from “The Atlantic Slave Trade” to Stalin to W. E. B. Du Bois. The essays that will be the most useful are those on Du Bois, “The Artist in the Caribbean,” “The Revolutionary Answer to the Negro Problem in the U.S.A,” and “Triumph.” These essays and short story give their readers a glimpse into the opinions of James on subjects which will allow them to understand his feelings about the plight of the African American as well as that of the Caribbean, which will encourage a comparison of the two cultures.

The collection also offers an introduction to yard fiction in “Triumph.” The genre of yard fiction is undoubtedly foreign to most students, and the first few sentences of this piece define yard fiction clearly and concisely. “Triumph” would be a good story to read in conjunction with James’ Minty Alley, as it is short and entertaining throughout.


We are examining James' Trinidadian yard novel. It has an introduction by Kenneth Ramchand.


King’s book covers the scope of James’ literary and political career, through the lens of creolization or hybridity. King’s argument is that creolization, the process by which the intersection of two cultures through colonization results in changes that cut both ways, is at play in much of James’ work. The book includes an interesting chapter on the history of The Black Jacobins and Touissant L’Overture, the history and play that eventually were merged into a second play in the 1960s, somewhat confusingly entitled The Black Jacobins. King’s chapter on Minty Alley is very helpful for a study of Minty Alley, due to her placement of the novel in its cultural and political context.


Landay’s book is an examination of various female trickster figures in American history from the nineteenth century to contemporary popular culture. Particularly useful will be chapter two on “The Female Trickster in the Jazz Age,” and chapter five on "Feminism and the Female Trickster
In Teaching C.L.R. James’ “Minty Alley”: Tricksters, Intellectuals and the Folk

in Contemporary American Culture.” The second chapter will appeal to students as they should have been recently introduced to the newly liberated women of the jazz age, and they will already be familiar with the contemporary female tricksters of the fifth chapter through such blockbusters as Sister Act with Whoopi Goldberg and Batman Returns starring Michelle Pfeiffer as the trickster.


This essay compares three heroines of West Indian literature: James’ Maisie, Bita from Claude McKay’s Banana Bottom, and ‘Tee from Merle Hodge’s Crick Crack Monkey. The essay focuses primarily on defining the characters as heroines and also on the women’s migration away from their homelands.

Lawrence’s work is useful mainly in identifying Maisie as a heroine in order, for our purposes, to define her as a heroic trickster figure. Lawrence also gives her reader insight as to the realism of the characters of Minty Alley and a brief description of how the novel was received by the upper class of Trinidad.


This book goes through the history of Carnival. It also provides descriptions and discussion of the different rites of Carnival, such as stickfighting, calypso tents, and mas. Included are color pictures from modern Carnivals. It answers the who-what-where-why-when-and-how of Carnival.

This book can be used when tracing the history of the yard novel. Though there is no academic or critical discussion, it is still useful for teachers to provide a basic understanding of Carnival. I used it mostly after reading several academic discourses on Carnival but still not understanding the basic elements of the festival.


Mendes’ short article is a direct response to Belmont’s article in the Trinidad Guardian which condemned his collection of literature entitled Trinidad. Mendes defends Trinidad, suggesting that the negative response is rooted in Victorianism and also in Christianity. He cites obscenity as existing in “almost all the world’s great literature,” and also brings up the suggestion of determining the difference between secrecy and modesty.

It will be useful to read this essay in order to examine an alternative to Belmont’s opinions when discussing what purpose the chosen subject matter served and exactly why the public was incensed. It is a defense of the “art” angle within the art vs. propaganda debate based in Du Bois’ Crisis articles of the Harlem Renaissance.


The first chapter of this book examines the works of C. L. R. James as both literature and also theory in the instance of Minty Alley. It delves into the importance of the point of view in Minty Alley especially in comparison to the short story, “Triumph,” which is a comparison of omniscient to limited narrative styles. The limited narrative style is symbolic of the limited knowledge of the middle and upper classes of Trinidad possess concerning the lower class.

The examination of narrative styles presents the opportunity to discuss the class conflict of Trinidad as it is introduced through the novel, especially through the various skin colors and nationalities of the characters. This might transfer into a conversation about the skin color
In Teaching C.L.R. James’ “Minty Alley”: Tricksters, Intellectuals and the Folk

hierarchy of Harlem, as well as offer an opportunity to discuss why James made the decision to present Haynes as a voyeur who occasionally interacts and interferes.

Stallings, L. H.  
*Mutha is Half a Word!: Intersections of Folklore, Vernacular Myth, and Queerness in Black Female Culture.* Columbus: Ohio State Press, 2007.

The introduction to Stallings’ text acts as an introduction to the trickster. It contains detailed description of the female trickster, and also makes many references to popular culture. This may be difficult reading for an undergraduate. However, it is a useful resource, and might be picked through for quotations or broken down in a lecture on Maisie as the female trickster.


*Visiting with Miss Lou* is a short video which presents a little bit of Dr. Louise Bennett’s history. It also offers the opportunity to see and hear Bennett recite some of her poetry, tell some of her stories, and sing.

This video is entertaining, though the old school videography will inevitably be considered laughable to the students. It is useful in that it offers an opportunity hear the dialect. It also features a brief examination of why Bennett composes in dialect and why dialect is looked down upon in Jamaica. The dialect focus could be an introduction to an in-class discussion on language and culture. Bennett is described in the video as having been incorrectly categorized as a comedienne as opposed to a poet which can also contribute to the aforementioned debate. The video also provides details about Bennett’s life in Great Britain and New York City, which may prove useful in discussing migration out of the West Indies. A comparison might be made to Maisie in *Minty Alley* concerning Maisie’s flight from her island home near the end of the novel.

Whitlock, Gillian.  

Whitlock examines three different types of stories, all which can be grouped together by their colonial realism. Whitlock distinguishes colonial realism from the philosophical realism of writers like Henry James by pointing out the colonial realists’ focus on local, low-class scenes and characters. Colonial realists also use formal techniques comparable to those found in oral traditions.

This article will be useful in its analysis of James's short yard fiction. By comparing the Trinidadian yard novel to other regional genres, Whitlock emphasizes the commonalities between the genres: dialect, natural details, folk content. This then isolates what makes the yard novel different from other colonial realist texts, besides just geographical setting. All this serves to help clearly define the yard novel.
Useful Quotations
(For introducing the trickster, the female trickster, for reading Maisie as a female trickster, for tying in Dr. Louise Bennett, and for comparing the yard novel to Carnival and calypso)

Maisie as heroine
“Born in culturally and materially impoverished worlds, they are either given the opportunity to leave the stultifying confines of their society, or, as in Maisie’s case, they actively seek a means of escape. It might be of significance to note here that most West Indian writers themselves have demonstrated that in order to be literarily creative, they had to remove themselves physically from their environment.” (Lawrence 239)

“Maisie’s narrow and constricting environment offers no outlet for her high spiritedness, and her frustration turns into devilment, directed for the most part against her aunt, Mrs. Rouse.” (Lawrence 243)

“So like many West Indian women and men in her position, Maisie chooses not to surrender to the limitations and barrenness of her environment. Her only alternative is an escape, a departure to an uncertain future, but one in which she believes that she will be materially compensated for her labors.” (Lawrence 246)

Reception of Minty Alley
“For his realistic portrayal of Maisie and the other inhabitants of Minty Alley, James was soundly criticized by the ‘respectable’ sector of Trinidad society.” (Lawrence 250)

About Louise Bennett
“Louise Bennett is the quintessential Jamaican example of the sensitive and competent Caribbean artist consciously incorporating features of traditional oral art into written literature.” (Cooper 39)

“Bennett, herself, insists that she is a writer: ‘From the beginning, nobody ever recognized me as a writer. ‘Well, she is ‘doing’ dialect’; it wasn’t even writing you know. Up to now a lot of people don’t even think I write.’” (Cooper 40)

Bennett and class
“Pread out yuhself de Liza,
One Dress-oman dah look like she
She see di li space side-a we
And wan foce herself een deh.”

“This literal spreading out of self is an evocative metaphor for the irrepressible survival instincts of Jamaica’s dispossessed who refuse to be squeezed out of existence. The amplitude of the body becomes a figure for the verbal expansiveness that is often the only weapon of the politically powerless; tracings and other forms of verbal abuse are essential armaments in class warfare. The well-dressed young woman who is not to be allowed to sit with the market-women – at her convenience – must know her place; she cannot violate the social space that the ostracized market women have come to claim as their own.” (Cooper 41)

Bennett’s Cunning Jamaican Woman/Trickster
“This multifarious heroine-victim of Bennett’s comic/satirical sketches presents us with a diversity of social class values and behaviors that attests to the verisimilitude of Bennett’s detailed portraiture.” (Cooper 47)

“The proverbial cunning of the Jamaican woman is one manifestation of the morally ambiguous craftiness of Anansi, the Akan folk hero, transmuted in Jamaican folklore into Brer Nansi, the archetypal trickster. Folktales of the mighty outwitted by the clever proliferate throughout the
African diaspora. The shared history of plantation slavery in the Americas consolidates within the psyche of African peoples in the hemisphere, cultural continuities, ancestral memories of sabotage and marronage, systemic resistance to servitude. It is within this broader tradition of noe-African folk consciousness – the Anansi syndrome – that Bennett’s elaboration of Jamaican female sensibility can be best understood.” (Cooper 47-48)

**History of the Trickster and the Female Trickster**

“The term ‘trickster’ originates in Daniel Brinton’s 1968 study of the contradictory figure of Native American tales and myth who is both fooler and fooled, heroic and base…In general, trickster figures are representations of liminality, duality, subversion, and irony..they use impersonation, disguise, theft, and deceit to expose hypocrisy and inequality, to subvert existing social systems and to widen their sphere of power.” (Landay 2)

“Tricksters often switch gender from masculine to feminine and back again, they implicitly include the criterion of masculinity and the privilege of autonomy and mobility with which masculinity is synonymous.” (Landay 2)

“She is the modern day "Lorelei," the mythic German siren who lured sailors to their deaths by combing her beautiful hair.” (Landay 53) –describing Lorelie Lee, of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*

“For Lorelei, whose only desires are material, turning on the pink light of femininity means turning Piggie on sexually with her blend of sexual allure and innocence.” (Landay 53)

**On the Yard Novel**

"Where people in England and America say slums, Trinidadians say barrack-yards. Probably the word is a relic of the days when England relied as much on garrisons of soldiers as on her fleet to protect her valuable sugar-producing colonies. Every street in Port-of-Spain proper could show you numerous examples of the type: a narrow gateway leading into a fairly big yard, on either side of which run long, low buildings, consisting of anything from four to eighteen rooms, each about twelve feet square. In these lived the porters, the prostitutes, carter-men, washerwomen and domestic servants of the city." (From "Triumph" in *The C.L.R. James Reader*.)

"The writers I am concerned with here tried to write about their colonial societies in a way which seemed to them authentic and indigenous, in a form incorporating elements of oral traditions and in content looking to be a local microcosm." (Whitlock 37)

**On Carnival**

"The second half of the nineteenth century in Trinidad was characterized by a fierce sense of nationalism manifested via cultural practices. Chief among these practices was the annual Carnival celebration which, until 1834, was confined to the upper class. After Emancipation, Carnival was taken over by the masses and for the remainder of the century became the dominant manifestation of popular culture." (C.L.R. James's *Caribbean* 41)

**On Calypso**

"Calypso is folklore of Trinidad, a style of poetry telling about current events in song." (Lord Invader, from *Calypso at Midnight!*)

16