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IMAGING AND THE NATIONAL IMAGINING: THEORIZING VISUAL  
SOVEREIGNTY IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO MOVING IMAGE MEDIA  
THROUGH ANALYSIS OF TELEVISION ADVERTISING

by

SUSAN L. MCFARLANE-ALVAREZ

Under the Direction of Gregory Smith

ABSTRACT

Academic and popular discourse frequently positions postcolonial countries as receivers of visual culture rather than as producers and transmitters. These countries are often deemed as being subject to hegemonic forces of global media flows, the influx of foreign programming into their media landscapes hindering any significant development of distinct national identity through visual media. Since independence from British rule in 1962, government, media practitioners and viewers in the postcolonial Caribbean nation of Trinidad and Tobago have sought ways to build a national visual culture despite the inundation of non-local visual texts into the country.

This study positions postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago as actively productive of its own identity, and through a cultural studies analysis of television advertising, examines the central role that this industry (including personnel, economic structure, equipment and texts) plays in the construction of a national visual culture. This process of collective imagining takes place within the visual imaging of the advertising industry, and ultimately charts the undoing of colonial, hegemonic discourses within the broader

mediascape. Ultimately the advertising industry facilitates the active negotiation of national identity, catalyzing the process of visual sovereignty.

INDEX WORDS: Postcolonial, Caribbean, National identity, Moving image media, Television, Advertising, Visual sovereignty,

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SUSAN L. MCFARLANE-ALVAREZ

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2006



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2006

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SUSAN L. MCFARLANE-ALVAREZ

Major Professor:	Greg Smith
Committee:	Ted Friedman
	Kathy Fuller-Seeley
	Emanuela Guano
	Angelo Restivo

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Georgia State University  
May 2006

### **Acknowledgements**

My journey toward completing this dissertation has been guided by my mentors, family members and colleagues who have inspired me, helped me stay the course and guided me to fulfill my potential as a student and as a scholar. Mentors include educators who inspired me early in my academic life: Christine Ince, Stephanie Shurland, Angela Ifill, and Pat Rudell who provided a diversity of examples of women educators whose essence was the Caribbean, but whose teaching was the world. There were also university professors who encouraged me through my undergraduate degree such as Lee Winet, Marcia Moore, and Fritz Messere, who showed me that education is not simply about teaching and learning, but about empowering. For their confidence that I would succeed, I am eternally grateful. At the graduate level, I have been inspired by the rich faculty of GSU's Communication Department, in particular my advisor Greg Smith who has encouraged me to develop the uniqueness of my academic voice, guiding me with detailed feedback when I needed direction, and setting me free to explore new directions on my own. Other faculty members at Georgia State who have been influential include those who guided me through the writing of my dissertation, Ted Friedman, Emanuela Guano, Kathy Fuller-Seeley and Angelo Restivo, each of whom sincerely shared my excitement about the process and helped this work to grow in new directions. And I cannot forget the relentless support of Carol Winkler as the Department Chair; Gayle Austin and Shirlene Holmes who helped me to hone my research skills; Michael Bruner, James Darsey and Leonard Teel who broadened my view of communication as a discipline. In my professional life in advertising, my generous mentors included Astra

Da Costa, Alfred Aguiton, David Inglefield, and Ric Hernandez, who helped me to develop an appreciation of advertising as both strategic challenge and artistic expression, and whose contributions to the industry made it such a fascinating subject of study.

Throughout these four years, my husband, Victor has been a formidable support, always affirming and calmly reassuring, helping me put together my presentations, staying up late with me, and designing graphic inclusions within this project. I am also thankful to my parents, Hylton and Muriel for their unending support, for providing an important connection with my research sources, and for imbuing me with a love for both academia and the broader teachings of life.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### *A Personal Glimpse*

The genesis of this study traces back to 2003 when a colleague invited me to present a guest lecture on film and video in Trinidad and Tobago for her undergraduate “Crossing Cultures through Film” class. Reviewing the existing research in preparation for that lecture, I noted that scholars positioned Trinidad and Tobago as lacking an active film and video production industry. The authors of these studies therefore surmised that Trinidad and Tobago was victim to the dominance of Western visual culture products. Likewise, study after study that I read indicated that television in Trinidad and Tobago was dominated by foreign content, a sign that authors of these articles and books took to mean minimal activity within the local moving image production industries. Yet my personal experience provided awareness of facets of the industry that these existing scholarly investigations had overlooked. Twelve years of involvement in the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry had given me first-hand awareness of and participation in a tremendously active film and video production industry. The discrepancies between the scholarly literature that I surveyed and my personal experience indicated a gap in the literature and an opportunity to analyze how the advertising industry functions in relation to the development of visual culture in a postcolonial nation such as Trinidad and Tobago.

The studies of Trinidad and Tobago’s film and television landscapes that I reviewed were limited by the ways in which they examined the *mediascape*<sup>1</sup>. Through a

multiperspectival analysis of television advertising, I wanted to engage an as-yet-unexplored analysis of postcolonial visual culture. All of the existing studies of this country, as with studies of other postcolonial nations, mostly limited their foci to either cinema exhibition or broadcast television programs. Similarly they seemed to be constrained by imagining postcolonial nations as cultural receivers in relation to visual culture imported from the “Global North.” Quite early in my research, I learned that by placing central focus on the television advertising industry, the visual imagining of this postcolonial nation clearly emerged as the result of a dynamic process involving active participation on the part of several sectors of the society including the state, advertising agencies, production houses, independent producers, television stations and other mass media.

The works I reviewed in early 2003 (and since that time) broadly indicated that scholarly investigations of Trinidad and Tobago (often treated within broader studies of the Caribbean region) have focused heavily on exhibition sites of visual culture. Cinemas in Trinidad and Tobago exhibit very few local productions. Likewise, television station broadcasting of local programs in Trinidad and Tobago has been historically minimal. My review of the literature indicated that many scholars have erroneously equated these findings with dormancy of film and video production industries and confirmation of Trinidad and Tobago’s position as a visual culture receptor, rather than as a visual culture producer (D. Miller, 1992). As a result of my involvement in the advertising industry, I was able to ponder the personnel and processes of production, while reflecting upon the products of the industry both as individual texts and within the context of mediation via cinema screens and by television stations.

Focusing on the personnel, the infrastructure and the texts of the advertising industry in Trinidad and Tobago made more apparent the interdependencies among the advertising industry and the film and video industry, raising the question of the advertising industry's role in placing the national within the visual culture landscape. At the outset of this study, I theorized that focusing on advertising as central to visual culture would precipitate increased understanding and critical awareness of an industry that is seamlessly edited into the visual culture of Trinidad and Tobago. Within this study, I begin to tell the story of an industry whose effects are far reaching, but whose contributions to national culture are most often overlooked.

This work notably resides at the nexus of three fields of study: postcolonial studies, moving image studies and advertising studies. Within postcolonial studies, literature on visual culture focuses heavily on literary writing (particularly the novel), and on moving images that fall within the category of narrative fiction (particularly feature films). Positioning advertising within the construction of the postcolonial nation would mean privileging a “subjugated knowledge” within postcolonial studies or focusing on a category of texts that have been previously ignored (Gandhi, 1998) within this field of study, thus building and expanding the canon of postcolonial studies itself.

Through my theoretical positioning of this study, I also set out to augment the fields of study upon which I build, in particular, the field of postcolonial studies. It has long been recognized that nationalism invents nations where they do not exist (Anderson, 1991), and that nations themselves are narrative and discursive constructions (H. Bhabha, 1990a). Studies that examine the discursive constructions of nations from a postcolonial perspective tend to focus solely on textual or narrative analyses without considering how

postcolonial nationhood is negotiated through the broader network of influences surrounding a text, such as the creators, the social world, the political economy, representations, consumption and regulation (Griswold, 2004). In particular, I set out to examine the discursive construction of the postcolonial nation through just such a multiperspectival analysis of advertising, including its texts, its creators, the political economy of an advertising industry, how identities and national identity are negotiated in the narratives and characterizations within advertisements, and the cultural position that television advertisements occupy. In effect, this study will add to the canon of postcolonial studies by providing an in-depth analysis of how advertising, like literature and film, works toward the nationalist ends of defining the borders of that nation's imagined space.

Advertising studies builds upon a hybrid foundation of semiotics, psychoanalysis, and post/structuralist anthropology. Studies within this area of academia focus on advertising in societies characterized by advanced capitalism (Goldman, 1992; Marchand, 1985; Schudson, 1984; Twitchell, 1996; Williamson, 1978). In particular, canonical advertising studies focuses on North American Advertising, offering such titles as *Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society* and *Advertising the American Dream*. On the other side of this analysis, by positioning the postcolonial nation within advertising studies, I will be foregrounding “the exclusions and elisions which confirm the privileges and authority” (Gandhi, 1998) by which the canon of advertising studies is defined. In other words, while advertising studies builds on a foundation of literature written from the perspective of Western privilege, injecting this field of study with the essence of postcoloniality will allow the uprooting of such

established structures of privilege within the field of advertising studies. Articulation of these two disparate fields of scholarly inquiry builds upon the bodies of knowledge of both advertising studies and postcolonial studies. The field of advertising studies has also leaned toward focusing on print advertising, perhaps because their texts provide the static “social tableaux” that provide uni-dimensional texts as the focus of analysis. Focusing on television advertisements provides the field of postcolonial studies insights into how postcolonial national identity is negotiated through the creation, production and dissemination of these moving image texts.

In the guest lecture that provided the genesis of this study, I offered the class the thesis that perhaps studies of film and video production in postcolonial Third World countries should not focus solely on feature films or television programs but should include an assessment of television advertising production, within and around which much of the production and imagining of national visual culture might take place. Starting with a focus on advertising, this study provides insights into how the postcolonial nation is constructed within visual culture.

### *The Trinidad and Tobago Backdrop*

Comprehensive appreciation of the inquiries and findings in this study requires awareness of the contextual Trinidad and Tobago backdrop against which the research is set. The cultural and critical analyses undertaken within these pages deploy a multidisciplinary approach and examine intersections of media, history, culture, economy, government and even geography. This section therefore offers the reader insights into Trinidad and Tobago, including the country’s history of occupation,

colonization and independence, as well as an overview of the historical evolution of the Trinidad and Tobago mass media.

Trinidad and Tobago is a two-island nation at the southern end of the Caribbean archipelago of islands, located less than 20 miles away from the South American mainland, with just 7 miles separating the southwestern tip of Trinidad from the northeast of Venezuela (See Figure 1). Trinidad is the larger of the two and is positioned as the more dominant “sibling” of these twin islands. Promotional materials developed for the tourism industry promote Trinidad metaphorically as a rush of adrenaline, while offering Tobago as the serene sister isle (TIDCO, 2005). If Trinidad is industry, progress, modernity and nightlife, Tobago is tourism, tradition, history and sun. Trinidad is positioned as central in relation to the periphery of Tobago, and this is a factor of more than the size or busyness of the former. The capital of Trinidad and Tobago is located in the northwest of the island of Trinidad, which in modern history has been a focal point in terms of national festivals (Carnival), education and administration, often leaving Tobago and other parts of Trinidad clamoring for equal opportunities and governmental attention.



*Figure 1. Map showing geographic proximity of Trinidad and Tobago to Venezuela*

Trinidad's central positioning within the imagining of the two-island nation is a result of history, geography, industry and economy. In the written history of the nation, Tobago was annexed to the colony of Trinidad for reasons of economic benefits to the colonial powers. Sharing oceanic plates with oil-rich Venezuela (see Figure 1), Trinidad has an economy that originates in its sea-beds where oil-fields are found. As a result of this industrial and economic advantage, the manufacturing sector in Trinidad and Tobago is most heavily represented within industrial estates around Trinidad, and to a far lesser extent in Tobago. Finally, the population distribution within the two islands is further representative of these developmental disparities between the two islands: the population of Trinidad is 1.25 million, while that of Tobago is approximately 54,000.



Tobago itself is problematic in this consideration of a “national” entity called Trinidad and Tobago. In his book *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*, scholar Eric Williams (who was also the country’s first prime minister) considers Tobago’s “betweenity” in relation to the multitude of claims made by colonial powers over possession of Tobago. Writing in 1964 (just two years after independence from Britain), Williams notes that throughout almost 400 years of occupation and battles over colonial rule, Tobago was intentionally and repeatedly left as a wasteland (E. Williams, 1970). This underdevelopment of Tobago continues into the modern era, and Tobagonians frequently voice their disapproval of the government’s negligence of that island’s needs. Even government documents and state-authored papers make references to Tobago as “the sister isle” and thus a periphery in relation to the center of Trinidad. It should be noted, however, that many Tobagonians often wish for secession from Trinidad (Manmohan, 2005). For many in Tobago, secession would mean that Tobagonians would be in control of the island’s development (and for example, responsible for developing the tourist industry of their island). For Tobagonians, dreams of secession are often built upon a desire for separation from their rowdier, less environmentally-focused Trinidadian brethren (House of Representatives, 1996).

Benedict Anderson notes that the nation is an “imagined political community,” characterized by its inherent limits and sovereignty (Anderson, 1991). In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, the nation is defined in terms of its physical borders (the two islands share a common geographical territory defined as Trinidad and Tobago’s land space, waters and air-space) and its governance (with the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago being governed by a central administration). As such, despite the historical and cultural

differences between the two islands, this study considers Trinidad and Tobago as a national entity, drawn together initially in 1886 by a notice written by the Secretary for the Colonies, which stated, "...it would be for the advantages of both Colonies that the Colony of Tobago should be annexed to and form part of the said Colony of Trinidad" (E. Williams, 1964). My research considers the two islands as a nation-state, which became an independent nation in 1962 and then a republic under a new constitution in 1976. In my writing I use the long-form of the country's name ("Trinidad and Tobago") to refer to the nation as a whole, while the individual island names are used where specific reference to one or the other is intended. Similarly, I refer to the people of Trinidad and Tobago as Trinbagonians, which is often considered a clumsy contraction, but the intent of which is to include both Trinidadians and Tobagonians in my considerations.

Regionally speaking, Trinidad and Tobago is a Caribbean nation, a categorization that itself is contested. Scholars and critics argue that "Caribbeanness" is more a function of geography than of culture or history (Lent, 1990; Regis, 2001). While geography has positioned the Caribbean as a region defined by the Caribbean Sea, the territories that make up the Caribbean as a region can be divided historically, culturally or linguistically into four distinct Caribbean categories: the Anglophone Caribbean (including Jamaica, Barbados, St. Lucia, Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago and British Guyana), the Francophone Caribbean (including Martinique, Haiti, Guadeloupe), the Dutch Caribbean (including Surinam, Aruba, Curacao, St. Martin, Saba and St. Eustatius) and the Hispanic Caribbean (including Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico). While such distinctions might be useful in regard to international or regional relations, or when contemplating

literature emerging from these territories, the division of the Caribbean along geographic or lingo-cultural imaginings often proves to be a problematic project, as is evident in the historical differences among Cuba, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

Linguistically, Trinidad and Tobago in the 20<sup>th</sup> century finds commonalities with Jamaica, Barbados and Antigua, where the official language is English, but where local dialects are actually more commonly spoken than “Standard English,” and where vestiges of Patois still influence spoken and written communication. In terms of immigration flows and population demographics, however, the country shares more similarities with British Guyana. In both Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, the dominant ethnic groups are of African and Indian descent, resulting from the influx of slave laborers and indentured laborers, respectively, during the colonial period. In terms of geography and topography, Trinidad and Tobago shares more similarities with Venezuela (including mountainous rainforests, tropical beaches and even asphalt lakes) than with other Caribbean islands. In other words, scholarly studies can position Trinidad and Tobago amid any such groupings and arguments can be made for such positioning, on the basis of cultural flows of globalization.

Trinidad and Tobago could be considered as having more in common with North America than with any of its Caribbean neighbors, since the Trinbagonian landscape is spotted with such North American landmarks as KFC, TGIFridays, PriceSmart, Ruby Tuesdays and Pizza Hut. Inasmuch as Trinidad and Tobago can be categorized as Caribbean nation, former British colony, gateway to South America or adoptee of North America, my research focuses on the specific identity of these two islands as an individual nation-state. As such, in this study I consider the nation-state of Trinidad and

Tobago for the most part in relative isolation from its Caribbean neighbors, except in instances where I refer to specific occurrences of global or regional flows. One specific dimension of the uniqueness of Trinidad and Tobago's identity is its people.

### *Progression of Peoples*

The indigenous people of Trinidad and Tobago were the Caribs and the Arawaks. The national history is most frequently written as beginning with struggles between these peoples, with the more "war-like" Caribs dominating the "peaceful" Arawaks. In contemporary analysis, this history is problematized through the interrogation of these Europeanized characterizations and the fact that this history has been written from the perspective of Eurocentric imagining (E. Williams, 1970). As early as these indigenous civilizations, the island's location made it a strategic "meeting point of different cultures" (E. Williams, 1964). Throughout history, from this indigenous context through to the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century globalization, the islands of Trinidad and Tobago have been the gateway of flows between the Caribbean archipelago and the mainland of South America.

The colonization of Trinidad and the colonization of Tobago are two distinct histories. Trinidad was given its name by Christopher Columbus, who landed there in 1498. While some accounts assert that the island was given its name in honor of the holy trinity of Christianity, others say it was Columbus' observance of the three mountain ranges in Trinidad (TIDCO, 2005; E. Williams, 1964). Spain did not colonize the island until 1532, following which the Spaniards used Amerindian slave labor to work the land. Trinidad remained a Spanish colony until 1797 when it was surrendered to a British naval expedition. Also in the late 1790s, there was an influx of French colonists driven from

Haiti because of the revolution. Trinidad became a colony under the British Crown in 1802 under the Treaty of Amiens. The British Government decided however that Trinidad, unlike Jamaica or Barbados, would not have a self-governing constitution and would instead be a Crown Colony, leaving the power of rule in the hands of the British. In the years prior to emancipation in 1838, Trinidad became a “model colony” where sugar was king, the British ruled and African slaves worked the land (Government, 2005; TIDCO, 2005; E. Williams, 1964).

Tobago’s relationship to Europe followed a different historical trajectory. Tobago was unknown to the West for many years after Columbus had landed on Trinidad and remained inhabited solely by Amerindians until 1632 when the Dutch settled on the island. Over the next 200 years, rival colonists including the Dutch, the English and the French occupied Tobago. In 1783, Tobago came once again under British rule. It was captured by the French in 1781 and recaptured by the British in 1793. It changed hands several more times and was ceded to Britain in 1814 by the Treaty of Paris. The two islands from this time on were under British Rule, and in 1889 Trinidad and Tobago became united as one territory.

The population of Trinidad and Tobago in modern times is divided almost evenly between two majority ethnic groups: Africans, whose ancestors were brought to the islands as slave labor; and Indians, whose ancestors were brought as indentured laborers beginning in 1845. Other groups that make up the population include Portuguese, French, Chinese, Syrians and Lebanese (Government, 2005; E. Williams, 1964). The diversity of people that characterize the history of Trinidad and Tobago is evidence of this nation’s historical development and the cultural forces that have interplayed through early

habitation, colonial occupation and postcolonial migrations. In part, the presence of each of these peoples throughout the history of Trinidad and Tobago precipitates contestation within the national imagining, including questions of inclusions and exclusions of some groups of people within historical accounts of Trinidad and Tobago. To a significant extent, this contestation takes place within and through the mass media.

Such struggles for cultural inclusion (particularly between the two main ethnic groups) also manifest in other tensions between ethnic groups within Trinidad and Tobago. On many levels ethnic relations between Afro-Trinbagonians and Indo-Trinbagonians are harmonious, respectful and result in hybrid forms of cultural expression (Dobriansky, 2003). Trinbagonians use the term “Dougla” to refer to people of mixed African and Indian ancestry, and one can also find examples of this “Dougla Aesthetic” in Trinbagonian cuisine and music (such as “chutney soca,” which is a combination of fast-paced musical forms of Indian and African origin) (Puri, 2004). Racial tensions that arise between Afro-Trinbagonians and Indo-Trinbagonians (Dobriansky, 2003) are expressed in the nation’s politics, economics, and in relation to ideological cultural expressions (Puri, 2004).

One example that summarizes these ethno-cultural tensions between Afro- and Indo-Trinbagonians circulates around the designation of the steelpan as the national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago is the birthplace of the steelpan with accounts of its origin relating to evolution of the steeldrum band from the “Tamboo Bamboo” bands that the freed African slaves used during 19<sup>th</sup> century street carnivals in Trinidad. When the British colonial government banned the Tamboo Bamboo bands in the 1930s and 1940s, the African revelers looked for other percussive means of

expression and found oil drums that had been discarded by Trinidad's oil refineries (PanTrinbago, 2006). The positioning of the steelpan as Trinidad and Tobago's national instrument is controversial because of this alignment of the instrument with Afro-Trinbagonian history. For this reason, Sat Maharaj, the General Secretary of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (a non-profit organization that advocates for Hindu cultural representation in Trinidad and Tobago) often criticizes government legislators for their focus on the steelpan and their neglect of East Indian and other cultures in Trinidad and Tobago (Lord, 2005).

Race and ethnicity are also played out at the level of politics in Trinidad and Tobago. In the present environment, the People's National Movement (in power at the time of this writing) aligns with the Afro-Trinbagonian population, while the United National Congress is predominantly aligned with the Indo-Trinbagonian population. The division of the population along ethno-political lines often results in election controversies and in the December 2001 elections both parties won 18 parliamentary seats each, leaving the final decision (made in favor of the People's National Movement) to then-President A. N. R. Robinson. Whether political, economic or ideological, racial tensions build from a complex web of historical realities and evolve as a result of the contemporary situation in Trinidad and Tobago.

### *Overview of Trinidad and Tobago Mass Media*

Studies of the mass media frequently focus separately on radio, television, newspapers, and more recently upon new media such as the Internet. This study includes cinema within consideration of the mass media within the context of *mediascapes*. Arjun Appadurai uses the term mediascape to refer to "both the distribution of the electronic

capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and . . . the images of the world created by these media" (Appadurai 35). While the term "mass media" is often limited to broadcast media and the press, the term "mediascapes" allows a more expansive consideration of the circulating images and narratives.

The history of "modern" mass media in Trinidad and Tobago begins in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Anthony, 1985). The first printed material cited was a 1786 administrative booklet titled an "ordenza publicada en el Puerta España" (Skinner, 1990). Even before Trinidad and Tobago were united under British rule as one territory, the first newspaper came into being. The *Trinidad Courant* was first published in 1799 as a weekly, which published in English and French and focused on government notices and proclamations. The *Courant* and most of its successors through the 19<sup>th</sup> century mostly reflected the concerns of the government of the day and life-styles of the upper planter class. Indeed, historian Michael Anthony cites only one newspaper, *The Sentinel*, as radical and "championing the cause of the people," fighting for the rights of "the black masses" (Anthony, 1985).

Ewart Skinner makes the point that newspapers in Trinidad were used as arms of colonial administration in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and that this set the stage for the ideological role that newspapers would play in 20<sup>th</sup> century political life in Trinidad and Tobago. While newspapers may indeed have played a central role in building national life, the focus of my study is moving image media and specifically television advertising. As such, while political use of newspapers throughout Trinidad and Tobago's history



may have taken place at a manifest level, this study focuses upon the latency of national identity construction that has taken place in television advertising. Throughout the history of newspaper publishing in Trinidad and Tobago, advertising played a central role in the development and political inclinations of Trinidad and Tobago newspapers. As in other parts of the world, with advertisers paying to place their messages within the pages of newspapers, these publications became more affordable to and accessible by a broader cross-section of the Trinidad and Tobago society.

In 2005, there were three main daily newspapers in Trinidad and Tobago: *Trinidad Express*, *Trinidad Guardian* and *Newsday*. *Tobago News* serves Tobago, and this newspaper is published by the CCN Group (Caribbean Communications Network), which also publishes *Trinidad Express* and owns TV6. Likewise, the Ansa McAl Group publishes the *Guardian*, this group being the second largest conglomerate in the Caribbean. Perhaps it is because of the intimate linking between the newspapers of Trinidad and Tobago and political life that government policy on media most often focuses on newspaper publishing.

Liberal ethics and codes of conduct characterize the Trinidad and Tobago media environment. Indeed, in 2003 Trinidad and Tobago ranked second alongside Denmark in the *Rapporteur Sans Frontier* 2003 ranking of 133 countries' press freedom, behind only Finland, Iceland, Netherlands and Norway (all four of which tied for first place) (Borders, 2003). While the Trinidad and Tobago press are significantly freer than press in most other parts of the world, the muting effects of corporate control should not be dismissed (Brown & Sanatan, 1987).

Chronologically after newspapers were introduced, cinema was next to arrive on the horizon of the mass media evolution in Trinidad and Tobago. While there were cinematic exhibitions in Port of Spain in 1910, the first cinema-dedicated building was the London Electric Theatre, which opened its doors in 1911 and exhibited images of news and such imported titles as “The Leopard Queen” and “Kidnapped Mother-in-Law” (Anthony, 1985; Macedo, 2002). Cinema was popular from the very first day of exhibition, and soon after its introduction the London Electric Theatre could not accommodate the crowds its moving pictures attracted. Audience excitement over cinema grew throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the opening of more cinemas, the spread of exhibition sites across the country and the introduction of “talkies,” with the first sound picture, *Flight*, being shown in 1930 (Anthony, 1985). The heyday of cinema in Trinidad lasted into the late 1980s and early 1990s, with cinemas still showing double features for an affordable admission price and cinema-going still very much a metropolitan experience. Between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the introduction of such new home-based technologies as the VCR, cable television and DVD in Trinidad and Tobago altered how audiences in which audiences and producers related to moving image media in ways comparable to similar changes among some audiences in other parts of the world, including greater control over the viewing experience and new avenues of marketing for film studios (Wasser, 2002). By the early 1980s, cinemas that had been open since the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were closing their doors for good and being converted into churches or nightclubs. This trend continued and cinema gradually became an increasingly suburban phenomenon with multiplexes opening in malls and plazas around Trinidad.



Figure 2. An advertisement in the *Trinidad Guardian* advertises The London Electric Theatre as showing “The World’s Best Films Nightly”



Figure 3. This building, converted into a church in the early 1980s, was once the location of the London Electric Theatre, and became the Astor Cinema later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Figure 4. Deluxe Cinema closed its doors in 2003 to become a nightclub in 2004.



Figure 5. MovieTowne is the new face of cinema in Trinidad and Tobago: a multiplex with 10 screens in a suburban plaza, surrounded by such global imports as RadioShack and RubyTuesday's.

Chronologically next to arrive in Trinidad and Tobago was radio, which was introduced in 1935. Television, however, was not established in the country until 1962, when footage of Independence Day celebrations was shot and transmitted by the first television station, Trinidad and Tobago Television Company. Government owned, this station later took on the moniker TTT, short for Trinidad and Tobago Television. However, it was not until later that year that TTT began regularly scheduled programming. The role of television in the coverage of Independence Day celebrations is not to be overlooked. Indeed the lead-up to Independence Day and the celebrations of the day itself were transmitted to 55 television sets positioned in public parks throughout both Port of Spain and San Fernando.

In laying this historical foundation for my study, I would argue that from this very outset, television in Trinidad and Tobago began as a medium integral to the construction of postcolonial identity. With the Eric Williams-led party in power for the first two decades following independence, TTT was critiqued for representing the voice of the People's National Movement government (PNM). Television continued to play a central role in nation-formation throughout the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly up to 1990 with government operating and controlling the only television station transmitted by broadcast across Trinidad and Tobago. Scholars and media critics assert that this single-station environment was the reason that in 1990 attempted coup leader Yasin Abu Bakr chose the offices of TTT as the center of power from which he orchestrated the events of the days of siege (Medeira, 1991).

In a newly liberalized economic environment (with the attempted coup behind Trinidad and Tobago), the medium of television developed through the introduction of

cable television, the launch of a privately owned local television station (TV6) and the introduction of DirecTV (King, 1991). Where most households had previously been able to access only one television station, almost overnight there were dozens of stations available via cable, or for those areas where cable access was not possible, TV6 offered at least one other viewing option (Hollands, 1991). The television landscape, however, had begun to change even before this. TTT, originally intended to promote local program production and Trinidad and Tobago culture, in the 1980s came under scrutiny of the new government. This National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) government ultimately repositioned TTT toward financial profitability instead of as a public service. The result was a TTT focused on importing cheap programming from North America for maximum profit and increasingly abandoning the more costly option of producing original local programming (Gayelle, 2004b).

While the broadcasting industry in Trinidad and Tobago has grown in a relatively unregulated fashion (Government, 2003), we see here that the mass media in Trinidad and Tobago have evolved often in direct or indirect relation to political changes within the Trinbagonian context. For twenty-four years from 1962 to 1986, the PNM remained in power and balanced programming on TTT between original, local programming and imported programming. This early focus on developing original programming aligned with the nationalistic thinking of the PNM's first political leader, Dr. Eric Williams, but also continued while the PNM remained in power following the death of Dr. Williams. While the programs on TTT reflected Trinidad and Tobago's multicultural context (including such programs as *Best Village* and *Mastana Bahar*), a broader criticism of the



PNM was that the party focused almost exclusively on Afro-Trinbagonian interests, marginalizing the Indo-Trinbagonian population (Hughes, 2005).

The 30-year rule of the PNM ended in 1986 when the newly formed National Alliance for Reconstruction won the general election in a landslide victory, having campaigned heavily on the platforms of reform, inclusion and multiculturalism. The NAR unofficially came to be referred to as the “rainbow party” (Hughes, 2005), and among the party’s reforms were increased numbers of free market policies along with increased focus on foreign investment. Within this context, the government changed the focus of TTT with a new modus operandi of profit-making, translating to increased pre-packaged and imported programs and fewer local programs.

With world oil prices plummeting, the economy of Trinidad and Tobago took a downward spiral, and public discontent began to rise. In 1990, the Jamaat al Muslimeen attempted to overthrow the NAR government, citing an unresolved dispute over lands owned by the Muslimeen and their mission to rid the government of high-level corruption. Following the coup, the NAR continued to liberalize the Trinidad and Tobago market, including the licensing of a new privately owned television station. While the siege lasted only five days, the long-term results were severe. The NAR disintegrated soon after, when the Indian component of the party withdrew its membership, forming the new United National Congress (UNC) under political leader Basdeo Panday. While the PNM returned to power in 1991, in the elections of 1995 and 2001 the UNC and the PNM both won equal numbers of parliamentary seats, resulting in the final vote being left to former Prime Minister and NAR leader, A. N. R. Robinson. Throughout these changes in the administrative power of government, there have been numerous allegations of

excessive governmental control over programming and news coverage. In one instance, government officials (of the UNC government) mandated TTT executives not to cover on the nightly news a speech by the leader of the teachers' trade union. The result was an outpouring of outrage from viewers who emphasized that the ownership of the television in effect lay in the hands of the people, not the state (Fraser, 2005).

The most recent chapter of the interrelated histories of the mass media and politics in Trinidad and Tobago occurred at the end of 2004 and early 2005 when the PNM government under Prime Minister Patrick Manning announced the closure of still government-run TTT. While the government used the findings of a "team of BBC experts" to justify this action, people on the inside noted that successive government administrations had manipulated TTT, abused their power and ultimately rid the station of its popular appeal and credibility. According to one former TTT reporter and commentator, the end of TTT was pre-ordained (Fraser, 2005).

This overview of the historical evolution of newspapers, television and cinema provides insights into mass media development in Trinidad and Tobago. From the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the mass media were predominantly used as arms of the colonial administration, by which local events were surveyed through the colonial gaze. Even during this early period, Trinidad and Tobago was subject to importation of moving image texts. Following independence, successive governments used the mass media in attempts to forge national culture. Ultimately the moving image media have become sites in which collective imagining about national culture occurs and where the global flows of cultural importation are made easily apparent.



### *The Advertising Industry*

Mass mediated advertisements appeared in the *Trinidad Courant* in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and featured mostly estates for sale and notices of runaway slaves (Anthony, 1985), providing evidence that even this early form advertising in Trinidad and Tobago targeted a specific readership or audience. The readership of the *Courant* was mostly representative of the French planter class, which made up a large percentage of the reading population at that time (Anthony, 1985). The messages of these advertisements were directly targeted toward this readership. From the 1800s to the 1900s, advertisements evolved from mostly taking the form of public notices to more competitive approaches, as seen in the early 1900s *Trinidad Guardian* advertisement for the London Electric Theatre, offering the “World’s Best Films Nightly” (See Figure 2). By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the advertising industry was complex enough to warrant formation of an Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and eventual implementation of a government-sanctioned code of ethics. Founded in the 1960s, the ASA had a membership that included the Advertisers Association (an association of the larger local businesses at the time), the Advertising Agencies Association (AAATT) and the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters Association (TTPBA) (Commerce, Year Unknown). The objective of the Authority was:

To develop and administer, for the protection of the interests of the consumers, a code of advertising practice and guidelines for advertising produced, or imported for use, in Trinidad and Tobago (Commerce, Year Unknown).

Eventually the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (a government agency) developed this code of advertising practice into an official government-authored standard, which was comprised of two elements: *Requirements for Advertising – General* and *Advertising to Children and Advertising of Tobacco Products*.

Up until the 1970s, executives from Britain and North America dominated advertising agencies in Trinidad and Tobago (Collier, 2005). Following independence and the Black Power Revolution, the 1960s and 1970s were marked by a decline in expatriate personnel within the advertising agencies (D. Miller, 2000). While Trinbagonians were now at the helm, most of the agencies still maintained their international affiliations and replaced British or American white men with Trinbagonian white men. In short, for many decades, power within Trinidad and Tobago advertising agencies resided within the hands of elite, white men. Two sociopolitical factors came into play here: first was the increased awareness of race that came as a result of the Black Power uprising in 1970 and second was Prime Minister Eric Williams' post-independence focus on localization. These two factors caused advertising agencies to place greater emphasis on the strategic construction of race and class within the commercials by employing talent who were more representative of the ethnic and cultural diversity of Trinidad and Tobago (Collier, 2005; D. Miller, 2000).

The 2003 Trinidad and Tobago Yellow Pages lists 30 advertising agencies, approximately half of which were bona fide members of the Advertising Agencies Association of Trinidad and Tobago (AAATT). In addition to these agencies, there are also approximately 20 advertising consultants and counselors. Membership in the AAATT is dominated by agencies that still maintain their affiliations with multinational

advertising groups. This interplay between the local and the global within the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry is reflected in such agency names as Inglefield/ Ogilvy, Lonsdale/ Saatchi & Saatchi, McCann Erickson Trinidad Limited and Publicis Caribbean. The larger agencies, which also tend to dominate at the annual Creative Excellence Awards, tend to have 45 or more employees, with the mid-sized to smaller agencies employing between 15 to 45 employees. Advertising agencies in Trinidad and Tobago are mostly full-service advertising services, offering a complete range of advertising services from client services (account executives), through campaign conception (creative and copy departments), production and production management (graphic studios and audio-visual personnel), to media planning and delivery (media departments).

This heavy population of advertising agencies within the Trinidad and Tobago environment has been attributed to a combination of the country's status as an oil-producing nation (American Chamber of Commerce, 2003-2004; D. Miller, 2000), the presence of a vibrant manufacturing and export sector and Trinidad and Tobago's position as financial center of the Caribbean (TIDCO, 2005). The energy sector attracts industrial investors, helps to build downstream industries, and builds a population with greater spending power (TIDCO, 2005). Increasingly, this vibrant advertising sector serves other territories within the Caribbean region, with some of the Trinbagonian agencies having branch offices throughout the Caribbean. This study is set within the context of this dynamic advertising industry and within this industry, I will argue, there is interplay among producers, agency personnel, television stations and the state toward the imagining of a national space of visual culture.

This overview of the history of Trinidad and Tobago reveals the multitude of cultural forces brought to bear by flows of people and transitions of colonial attachment. While Trinidad and Tobago geographically sits within the Caribbean basin, it is also important to note the nation's proximity to the South American mainland, from which many cultural influences emerge. Further complicating the ideological and cultural influences in Trinidad and Tobago are the influences of the country's colonial forebears and reception of North American products of cinema and television. Likewise, colonial manipulation, postcolonial struggles and more recently the liberalized environment of intensified global flows have affected the evolution of the Trinbagonian mediascape. What emerges from this introductory discussion is the general picture of how the historical development of Trinidad and Tobago is closely tied to the evolution of the mediascape. Ultimately this historical foundation serves to facilitate a more in-depth appreciation of how television advertising fits into the construction of national identity in the postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago moving image media environment.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Burden of Visual Sovereignty**

When the clock struck midnight on Friday January 14<sup>th</sup> 2005, Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT) signed off broadcasting transmission for the very last time, leaving a nation in a virtual state of mourning. The transition from programming to color bars signified the end of a 45-year era of government-sponsored televised moving images in postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago. The widespread expression of deep emotions in the months preceding and following the station's closure symbolized the profound attachment that people in Trinidad and Tobago had developed to their national television station and the connection between that television station and the formation of a postcolonial national identity. Television news stories, panel discussions, newspaper articles, editorials and viewer letters to newspaper editors captured this outpouring of sentiment, and much of the critical attention focused on the government, whose decision it was to close the station. In the case of TTT, the government had positioned itself as creator and curator of the national moving image culture. The government initiated broadcasting in Trinidad and Tobago with the inauguration of TTT. In addition, the people of Trinidad and Tobago held the government responsible for providing the nation with images of national life within an international context.

How are the mass media implicated in the project of postcolonial national identity formation? What role does a postcolonial government play in strategizing the development of postcolonial national identity through moving image media? How does postcolonial government policy reflect the hierarchy that exists among moving image

media and their role in building national identity? Can a focus on advertising provide new insights into how the mass media emerge as integral to the project of national imagining and postcolonial identity construction? This chapter examines the negotiation of postcolonial national visual culture among the producers of moving image texts (including independent film and video producers, television producers and producers of television advertising), the media houses and the state. Through analysis of discourses that exist within state documents, and through discussion of national visual culture with independent producers, I examine the negotiation of national identity through visual media from a new perspective. I ultimately theorize “visual sovereignty” as a concept that can offer postcolonial theory a new vantage point from which to examine the emergence from the hegemonies of colonial discourse.

### *Theorizing Visual Sovereignty*

The intensity of connection with TTT that the viewing public expressed linked directly to the visuality of television as a medium. Viewer accounts focused on their memories associated with images collected by TTT’s producers that represented Trinidad and Tobago and the rest of the world. It was the iconicity of the moving images that had come to define the station since 1962, and the ability of those images to simulate the national reality (Messaris, 1997) that inspired expressions of sadness when TTT signed off. Indeed, TTT’s closure was part of the larger closure of the National Broadcasting Network (NBN), which also included radio stations, such as Radio 610 AM and Radio 100 FM. For the people of Trinidad and Tobago, TTT had constructed the *common sense* of what Trinidad and Tobago represented, stood for, and looked like from the precise

year the country was born (Barthes, 1973), deploying the power of iconicity, realism and the dominant ideology (Fiske, 1988; Messaris, 1997). Newspaper columnist and television personality Tony Fraser succinctly described the importance of television to post-independence Trinidad and Tobago, by noting:

Television was seen as one element of the accoutrement of independence – a sovereign people needing to communicate with themselves to emerge out of the dark night of colonialism (Fraser, 2005).

The government of Trinidad and Tobago had given the people the gift of these images in 1962 but ruptured the landscape of visual culture in 2005 by taking TTT off the air.

In postcolonial studies, there is considerable focus on how texts become implicated in the project of national imagining (Anderson, 1991; Barker & Peter Hulme and M. Iversen, 1994; H. Bhabha, 1990a; Hjort & Mackenzie, 2000). For nations that are relatively newly emerging from the clutches of colonial occupation, a book or a newspaper can provide a focal point for collective imagining, as was the case with Nigeria's self-imagining through Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Postcolonial studies place analytical focus on printed texts as a result of Benedict Anderson's reiteration of the Hegelian notion that newspapers and novels replace communal morning prayers, by allowing individuals to gain a sense of the imagined community of which they are part. In latter years, however, the field of postcolonial studies has also considered the role of broadcast media and cinema in focusing the imagining of the nation (Hannerz, 1990; Landau & Kaspian, 2002; Liao, 2003; Naficy, 1993; E. Shohat & Stam, 1994). Throughout these studies, individual films or television programs are

positioned as influential in this process, as are entire national film industries such as Hollywood and Bollywood.

For postcolonial theorists then, it comes as no surprise that particularly for nations whose emergence into postcoloniality is relatively recent, broadcasting systems and cinema exhibition can become the focus of governments of postcolonial nations. Government interest in controlling broadcast systems is often expressed through government ownership of stations, legislation of numbers of hours of local programming that stations are required to maintain in order to keep their licenses; passage of laws regarding the content of both television programs and motion pictures exhibited in cinemas, even the days of the week and times at which television programming or cinema exhibitions can be shown.

Through each of these measures and many others like these, governments seek to control the texts to which the national viewing audience is exposed, how they are exposed to these texts, and when. Ultimately in cases such as these, the government of a postcolonial nation seeks to develop, maintain and protect a national sensibility, which includes specific values, cultural attitudes, class relations, gender roles, and so on. At issue here are the practices of postcolonial governments (which are actively engaged in nation-building) and how these governments place different relative values upon the roles and importance of different moving image media in relation to building and maintaining a sense of national identity in these media. To understand this process of negotiation, we need to examine the ways in which the government and other participants involved in the project of national identity formation discuss each other's and their own roles in developing visual media that ultimately contribute to the formation of national identity.



We also require the terminology through which we can discuss this negotiation of postcolonial national identity through moving image media. How can we apply existing terms that define postcolonial self-governance to the evolution of a self-governed moving image mediascape?

In the Postscript of a special issue of *Communication Theory* dedicated to Postcolonial Studies, Lawrence Grossberg notes that while there is an implicit link between communication studies and postcolonial studies, communication studies is largely unaware of postcolonial studies, even though “we are all, in some sense postcolonial” (Grossberg, 2002). This Postscript ends with Grossberg noting what is commonly acknowledged as the project of postcolonial studies: the critique of popular and academic “common sense” as implicated in the colonial history of modernity, including notions of history, identity and subjectivity, culture and communication. If we are to take Grossberg’s assertions at face value, postcolonial studies is the remedy to the hegemony of colonial discourse.

Writing from a more skeptical perspective, Shalini Puri denounces this tendency of postcolonial theorists toward self-congratulation, asserting that even while postcolonial studies offer the position of alterity and the subaltern, the field accomplishes little by way of examining discourses that originate outside traditional, colonial centers of power. In this regard, while post-nationalism sets out to expose how postcolonial nationalisms simply replicate the discourses of colonial hegemony, Puri sees the nation-state as a key axis of power and reproduction and encourages postcolonial theorists to foreground the link between culture and economy in their studies (Puri, 2004). Puri also acknowledges the marginalization of the Caribbean region in the canon of postcolonial studies,

ultimately positioning the region as being of central importance in future theorizations of hybridity and alterity in postcolonial theory. Ultimately Puri argues that if postcolonials and minorities are deemed only as interruptions to the narrative of the colonial nation (H. Bhabha, 1990a, 1990b; H. K. Bhabha, 1994), then postcolonial identity is largely irrelevant, even though the intention of such a perspective might be to include the voices of the postcolonial.

This research takes up the mantle of Puri's work in two regards. Entering the dialog from the perspective of critical cultural studies, my research focuses on the link between national culture and political economy by examining a circuit through which Trinbagonian national culture resonates, including the texts, creators, regulation, identities, representations, consumption and the social world of Trinbagonian advertising. As such, while Puri's work focuses on the analysis of social performance and cultural practices (including festivals, language, music and ethnic identity), my research is grounded within a cultural industry that is more explicitly governed by the link between culture and economy. Since advertising is made up of "commercial messages" and local advertising provides information about products of commerce to people within an imagined community, the medium resides at an important nexus of nationalism, identity and cultural capital, through which I am examining cultural flows within the postcolonial nation.

Puri's critique of Bhabha is that he does not consider the instances in which formerly colonized peoples actively transform the nation. Nor does he account for how marginal nationalisms can pose a threat to the hegemonic centers of colonialism and imperialism. While Bhabha and others consider Third World countries as marginal (and

therefore sites of rupturing the marches of homogenization, modernity and nationhood), Puri argues that this focus blinds Bhabha to the sites of struggle. In other words, if we focus on how the margins (postcolonial nations) relate to the center (colonialism and imperialism), then we lose sight of strategies that the marginalized employ to become their own centers of power. By examining discursive struggles within the arena of advertising I am advancing this important debate in the field of postcolonial studies and therefore will provide perspective on the question of whether the homogenizing force of *nationalism* (read “willed adherence to a community” (Puri, 2004)) can find redemption against utopian desires for postcolonial national sovereignty.

In his article in which he argues for a new international politics beyond the nation state, David Held notes that “sovereignty” is usually taken to mean that a nation state has power and control over its own future: that it has, in other words, “the ability to take final decisions and to make and enforce the law in a given community or territory” (Held, 1996). In discussions of globalization and postcolonialism, there is ongoing debate over whether global flows will result in the demise of the nation-state, or whether such flows cause increased emphasis to be placed on the attainment of sovereignty. Even as these debates continue, the idea of sovereignty continues to be contested (Canclini, 2001; Hardt & Negri, 2000; Held, 1996). In her book, *The Caribbean Postcolonial*, for example, Shalini Puri asserts that postcolonial theorists (who advocate post-nationalism as a way to avoid replicating the structures of colonial power) should not be so quick to denounce the nation-state as a site of power and production for the postcolonial nation (Puri, 2003)

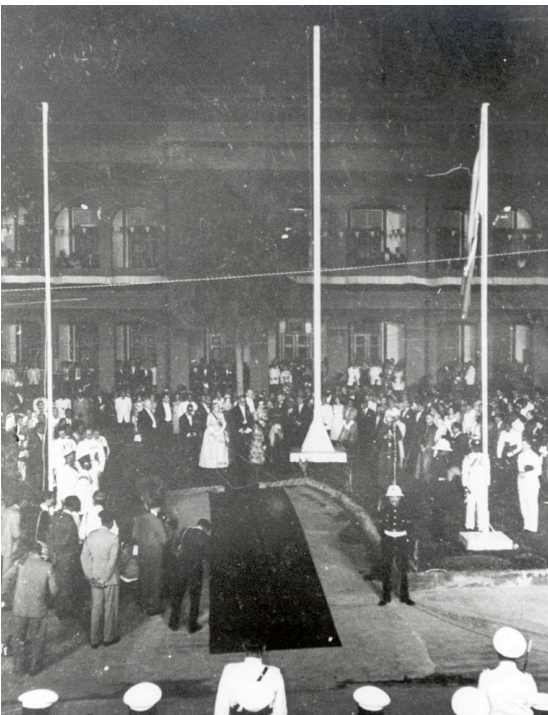
Here, I am applying “sovereignty of the nation state” to the evolution of visual media and the active alliance among producers, the state and audiences toward the

attainment and maintenance of power and control over the structure and content of the visual mediascape and ultimately national identity. Building upon this thinking, I coin the term “visual sovereignty” to refer to discursive production among media producers, their texts, the state and audiences in the construction of national identity through visual media. Let us begin with this definition as a starting point for understanding this concept. But through the analyses in this research I will examine the true nature of visual sovereignty, problematizing and theorizing the concept more closely.

In my introduction to this chapter, I alluded to the significance of the government-owned station TTT to the collective visual imagining of Trinbagonian post-colonial national identity. Based on my definition here, I would argue that the launch of TTT in 1962 marked a significant moment in the chronology of Trinidad and Tobago’s evolution toward visual sovereignty. Obviously, there were prior instances in which the country’s national identity was expressed through visual mass media (for example, books or newspapers). However, the live broadcasting of the symbolic ceremony marking the country’s emergence from colonial rule (the lowering of the British Union Jack, and the raising of Trinidad and Tobago’s red, white and black national flag outside the houses of parliament, or Red House), and the establishment of the country’s first government-owned station in effect symbolized the emergence of a visually sovereign nation: a nation which now had the ability to negotiate its own identity as an imagined community, through moving images regulated by its own state, to the benefit (or detriment) of its own people.



*Figure 6. Lowering of the British Union Jack prior to midnight of August 30, 1962 outside the houses of parliament or Red House in Port of Spain, Trinidad, marking the end of colonial rule in Trinidad and Tobago.*



*Figure 7. Raising of the Trinidad and Tobago national flag at midnight, August 30, 1962 outside the houses of parliament or Red House in Port of Spain, marking the beginning of Independence for Trinidad and Tobago*

The concept of visual sovereignty is integral to the discussion and analysis of how the nation defines itself in relation to other nations and how a nation expresses power and control over its own visual mediascape. Naturally, visual sovereignty is linked directly to the “everyday” notion of sovereignty. Visual sovereignty, however, offers a new perspective from which to examine a nation’s selfhood. Through exploration of this theoretical concept, postcolonial theory will gain insight into how collective imagining is negotiated through moving image media, and how the postcolonial nation balances the homogenizing force of nationalism with the utopian desires for inclusiveness and hybridity within the national imagining. We can think of visual sovereignty as a theoretical concept that advances consideration of internal struggles over who is included and excluded within the visual imagining of a national entity. The attainment of, or evolution toward visual sovereignty is integral to a nation’s control of its visual mediascape, in relation to government policy, and is ultimately integral to the emergence of a nation centered by its own identity.

If, as Held notes, the notion of sovereignty implies that a nation has power and control over its own future, or its ability to take final decisions and to make and enforce the law in a given community or territory, then the focus that governments place on the control of moving image industries in building toward such power and control might be considered one facet of constructing a space of sovereignty. What I am interested in here are the ways in which postcolonial governments express their need to focus on building national culture through their control of what gets expressed within moving image media. It seems that for postcolonial nations and governments, visual culture is imagined as a

definable and finite space within which their nation can control a fractional percentage. The nation's control of this space of visibility is expressed in such terms as licensing of cable providers, legislating satellite television access, defining content laws for television programming and cinema exhibition.

In *Talking With Whom?* Aggrey Brown notes that in 1987, TTT was the only television station in the country and broadcast just 20 percent local programming. With the remainder of the station's programs imported mostly from the USA, Brown considers the possible effects of such programming dominance, noting:

...there is a direct link between a country's obsessive  
enslavement to foreign television programmes and its  
acceptance of alien images, lifestyles and value systems  
that ultimately leads to or reinforces the region's  
dependency (Brown & Sanatan, 1987).

Here, Brown surmised first that the mainstream mass media in Trinidad and Tobago had not fulfilled their social responsibility of establishing integrity and common heritage. Second, Brown noted the failure of the government to legislate encouragement for local productions. Likewise, in his account of the mass media in Trinidad and Tobago, Ewart Skinner nods to the environmental tensions between local indigenous needs and foreign cultural hegemony (Skinner, 1990). Lynette Lashley in her study asserts that imported television programming resulted in the Americanization of Trinbagonian youth (Lashley, 1995). Even in this preliminary survey of the literature, it becomes clear that a common position exists among scholars questioning the effect of imported television programming. Postcolonial theorists often consider such practices as going against the

popularly and academically privileged notion of a nation's evolution toward a condition of visual sovereignty, in which the nation controls its own moving image media and produces television programs and cinematic features that are representative of an imagined national identity.

Visual sovereignty can be thought of as the result of discursive production among media producers, the texts they produce, the state and audiences in the construction of national identity through visual media. Visual sovereignty is what is often upheld as an utopian goal by state legislators and opinion leaders, who seek to preserve a national mediascape by promoting locally authentic programming and by seeking ways to minimize the “pollutive” effects of global media flows. The creation of such a national mediascape is an utopian goal held by nation states generally, but perhaps more particularly by postcolonial nation states still riding the waves of “creative euphoria and self invention” that follow the rupture of independence (Gandhi, 1998). As suggested in the title of this chapter, visual sovereignty at times becomes burdensome. In other words, while there is general agreement that preservation of the national mediascape is a positive goal, the question of who is responsible for this preservation often results in each component of the visual mediascape, implying that responsibility lies elsewhere.

Establishing the theoretical concept of visual sovereignty has here provided focus on how establishment of media outlets within the context of a postcolonial mediascape can signal the beginning of development of visual national identity. In addition, the use of media to capture and disseminate images that are key to defining a nation's postcolonial identity are also significant in the conception of visual sovereignty. The concept of visual sovereignty is key to my analysis of state-authored documents and media producer



discussions of the role of visual media in nation-building and provides focus in identifying the struggles among these participants.

### *Of Chronicles and Chronologies*

My analysis centers on three state-authored documents that address three different aspects of the mediascape (film, television and advertising), thus gaining insight into the relative importance that the Trinidad and Tobago government places on these three aspects of the moving image mediascape. These state-authored documents are representative of government strategies, recommendations made by state agencies and legislative advocacy (by both state agencies and private citizens or corporations) for involvement by the mass media and the government in the development of national visual culture. This analysis uses the Trinidad and Tobago mediascape to gain insight into how a postcolonial government strategizes the development of postcolonial national identity through moving image media and whether postcolonial government policy reflects the hierarchy that exists among moving image media and their role in building national identity? The documents upon which I focus include: a 2003 document, *A Master Plan for The Strategic Development of The Trinidad and Tobago Film Industry*; the 2002 government initiative *Vision 2020*; and the 1999 Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards document titled *Requirements for Advertising – General*. By focusing on these documents, we will see how the government positions television, cinema and television advertising in relation to development of national culture and also the ways in which the government positions visual culture within the future development of the nation.

Ultimately we will uncover the ways in which a postcolonial government, through official policy, seeks to build a unique, national visual culture.

To balance the perspective gained through analysis of the government documents, I am also including in my analysis the interview responses of two independent producers who shared their thoughts with me about the film and video production industries generally and also the government's role in building Trinbagonian visual culture using moving image media. Including the responses of these interviewees in this discussion, a broader picture emerges of how producers contribute to the development of these documents and what sentiments exist towards government policy related to moving image media and the building of a film and video industry in Trinidad and Tobago. I interviewed the first producer, Georgia Popplewell<sup>1</sup> in person at her St. Clair office in Trinidad in December 2003. At that time, the *Master Plan* had become a topic central to many discussions within the film and video industries in Trinidad and Tobago. There were also significant changes taking place within the moving image media environment, including the imminent launch of *Gayelle Television*. Georgia is a writer, editor and video producer/director and got her start in television at the production company Banyan in the 1980s, which was the parent company of *Gayelle*. Georgia has also worked on international projects such as a Nickelodeon pre-school series, *Gullah Gullah Island*. My interview with Ian Lee took place in February 2005 by telephone. Lee launched his career in video production in 1999 and owns a production company called *Big Fish in a Blue Bottle Productions*, which produces documentaries, television commercials and was involved in the production of the made-for-television feature, *Joebell and America*.

*Vision 2020* is chronologically the last document of the four I consider, and analysis of this document provides insight into how in 2004 the government positioned the role of the moving image media in an idealized future. In effect, this analysis begins at the end of the timeframe focus in this chapter. My decision to examine these documents out of their chronological order is based upon Homi Bhabha's assertion that history is "half-made" since it is always in the process of being made (H. Bhabha, 1990a). In that work, Bhabha considers the nation as perpetually undergoing construction. As such, I want to examine postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago national identity as continually undergoing negotiation. In uncovering the discourses that construct a national identity, I want to move away from the logic of a national narrative, where one event is thought of as following another through a linear sequence of cause and effect. Instead of seeking the linear, causal trajectory of these documents, my intent, in this analysis, is to examine each of the documents as a "partial meaning" in relation to the broader issues of state regulation of visual culture. By adopting this reverse chronological approach, I want to uncover the broader discourses (and not necessarily the linear or causal relationships between them) through what Bhabha notes as a sort of "analytic pluralism," which he asserts is more appropriate to understanding the cultural effects of the nation (H. Bhabha, 1990a). To emphasize the ways in which the relationship between the Trinidad and Tobago government and moving image media is "half-made," and therefore how these discourses of national culture and negotiation of identity are *in media res*, I begin with the as-yet-unfulfilled document *Vision 2020*, thus privileging the unfinishedness of the discursive negotiation through which visual sovereignty emerges.

In the introduction of *Nation and Narration*, Bhabha also refers to the nation as Janus-faced, implying the ways in which the nation defines itself in terms of what it is and what it is not. For example, the nation looks simultaneously outward to define itself in relation to others, and looks inward in terms of who is included within the nation. Here, I also want to consider this metaphor of the nation as Janus-faced in relation to looking simultaneously forward and backward. In the narrativization of the nation amid the array of discourses through which it is imagined, there is a looking forward into the future in terms of intended directions, and a looking backward into the past in terms of privileging certain narratives that have built the nation to that point. It is within the liminality of this dual directionality that the nation comes into focus. It is this liminal moment of facing forward and backward that I hope to capture in the juxtaposition of forward-looking government documents and documents whose publication dates and applicability are (at the time of this writing) already several years in the past. In this context, it warrants noting that visual sovereignty may not be a static condition of utopia toward which postcolonial nations ought to evolve. Rather, this analysis uncovers whether visual sovereignty is best conceived as a condition, a state of being, a space, or a process and how it might be positioned in relation to the nation's inward-outward and forward-backward duality.

Setting out to break the inherent teleology of a chronological account of this history by breaking the chronological order of the issue dates of these three state documents I purposely seek to break with a logical narrative or the sense of an objective "chronicle" of historical events (White, 1978), thus building toward more of a genealogical account, which aims to uncover the discourses of historical knowledge

(Foucault, 1984). The examinations in this chapter thus unfold through purposely *dis-*jointed discourses of nation-formation from the past and present to discover ways in which the visual media and the state have been implicated in the processes of “visual sovereignty.”

### *Vision 2020*

Can a postcolonial government use the development of national visual culture to help define an overall strategy for postcolonial national development? *Vision 2020* was a new plan established in 2002 by the Trinidad and Tobago government with the ultimate mission of making multisectoral and multidimensional changes guiding the nation toward unity, resilience, productivity, innovation, prosperity, discipline, health, happiness, education, self-reliance, respect, tolerance, equity and integrity (Government, 2004). The constituent mission statements and definitions put forth on the government’s *Vision 2020* Website provide insights into the significance given by the government to achieving so-called “developed nation” status. The Website and its statements also provide information regarding the configuration of this desired status in relation to Trinidad and Tobago’s resources, economy, people and image. Twenty-eight sub-committees made up the Multisectoral Group working toward the summative vision, and each sub-committee was defined as responsible for focusing on a specific area of national development. The site listed the “Culture and Attitudes” sub-committee second only to the “Tertiary Education” sub-committee (Government, 2004). The “Culture and Attitudes” section made mention of the role of the visual media in the evolution of Trinidad and Tobago toward “developed nation” status, including reference to film production, the audiovisual sphere,

and multimedia. Specific recommendations of this committee in relation to the visual media include the “exploitation of the entertainment industry as separate from the performing arts” (Government, 2004).

The overview of the “Culture and Attitudes” Sub-sectoral Area defines culture in several capacities. In the context of this sub-committee’s plan for bringing Trinbagonian culture and attitudes in line with developed nation status, culture is defined as follows:

Trinidad and Tobago possesses a plethora of cultural diversity that is manifested in the distinctive learned behaviour of our citizens. Cultural expressions are evident in clothing, cuisine, methods of farming, dance, painting, story telling, folklore, film, art and craft, music and literature and other values and norms common to the nation. It is paramount that we as a people acknowledge, celebrate and preserve our distinctive cultural heritage and identity.

Cultural industries constitute a sector where the creation, production and marketing of goods and services such as film production, the audiovisual sphere, the printed word and multimedia are combined (Government, 2004).

In order to develop the culture and attitudes of Trinidad and Tobago, this sub-committee recommended such strategies as stronger enforcement of intellectual property laws, development and training in archiving and preservation, training in marketing and

promotion, and the promotion of festivals. A key strategy recommended by this state sub-committee is the “development of the music and film industry” (Government, 2004).

The positioning of “film,” “film production,” the “audiovisual sphere” and the “film industry” in this context is worthy of note in two regards. First, at the opening of this document, the overall objective of *Vision 2020* is outlined as being “to prepare a Strategic Development Plan that will position Trinidad and Tobago to achieve developed country status by 2020” (Government, 2004). The inclusion of culture within such a strategy implies that the government considers culture and attitudes as monolithic entities and as controllable through government-implemented programs. Second, government deems these moving image industries as integral to achieving developed country status. The implication is that government sees a place for itself in the development of these industries, since they are seen as central to achieving developed nation status.

The government initiatives set in motion in 2002 through *Vision 2020* position the moving image media as integral to the evolution of Trinidad and Tobago into a developed nation. Discourses within *Vision 2020* suggest that with the timely development of the moving image media, Trinidad and Tobago will become a nation where “Every citizen has equal opportunities... All citizens enjoy a high quality of life... Optimum use is made of all the resources of the nation” (Government, 2004). What emerges from this analysis of the *Vision 2020* document is a sense of how the 2002 administration of the Trinidad and Tobago government imagined the future of Trinidad and Tobago 18 years along. At play here are the grand narratives of progress and modernity continuing with the modes of governance within this postcolonial nation. What warrants mention here is that the

viability and applicability of *Vision 2020* necessitates the acceptance of Trinidad and Tobago's status as a Third World nation desiring First World recognition and status.

Starting my analysis of these three documents with *Vision 2020* allows us to understand the way in which the state negotiated Trinidad and Tobago's status as Third World nation. According to the government-originated discourses within *Vision 2020*, the future of Trinidad and Tobago as developed nation lay in part within the need to develop moving image media. Moreover, it is in part because of perceived lacking development of moving image media or visual culture that Trinidad and Tobago is yet considered a developed nation. Through analysis of the discourses inscribed within *Vision 2020*, government strategy positions visual sovereignty as a means to an end, the end being "developed nation status." According to this document, national visual culture is important only insofar as it will advance the nation toward attaining equal status of nations already defined as "developed." Visual sovereignty, in this regard, emerges as a process, but also as a strategy adopted by the postcolonial nation in order to differentiate itself from other nations. Visual sovereignty involves the nation's deployment of looking inward in order to look outward with greater sense of its own identity, in relation to existing definitions of "development." In this regard, we might say that visual sovereignty emphasizes the margin of postcoloniality in relation to the center of colonial or imperial hegemony.



### *Master Plan*

Do different moving image media bear varying importance in relation to how a postcolonial government perceives the evolution of national identity through those media? Analyzing the *Master Plan* provides an alternative perspective of how the Trinidad and Tobago government positioned one component of visual culture (film) in relation to national development. While *Vision 2020* made general statements about the importance of building visual culture so that Trinidad and Tobago could achieve developed nation status, the *Master Plan* offers the context of how government perceived the economic viability of the local film industry in relation to global flows. The *Master Plan* cited the film and video industries as important in attracting foreign investment (by international film crews) in Trinidad and Tobago.

The 2003 document *A Master Plan for The Strategic Development of The Trinidad and Tobago Film Industry* was the end result of a five-year assessment and implementation plan authored by the Tourism and Industrial Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago. While this *Master Plan* is never mentioned within the strategies of *Vision 2020*, this *Plan* aligned with the discourses evident within *Vision 2020*. The objective of the Plan was summarized as facilitating local and foreign productions and supporting Trinidad and Tobago's indigenous and national cultures, thus allowing local culture to flourish within an open and global world (TIDCO, 2003). The state agency responsible for the development of Trinidad and Tobago's global industrial and tourism positioning authored the *Master Plan*, which results in the focus of this document being almost purely economic. For the most part, this *Plan* cites the economic interests of

Trinidad and Tobago as motivation for targeting foreign film crews that might use Trinidad and Tobago as a location.

In the *Master Plan*, the government defines “film industry” as including “film, television and video industries both foreign and local.” According to the reasoning in this document, the government sees these moving image industries as potentially significant forces in the local economy. The government values the film industry for its ability to employ a wide cross-section of personnel offering skills from creative producers to tradespeople including caterers, transportation facilities and set-builders. The *Master Plan* notes, however, that without the help of the government, the development of an active local film sector will not be possible. Indeed, Jamaica and the Bahamas are cited as regional neighbors whose governments have been actively involved in developing a local film industry and which have therefore gained success in attracting foreign crews to their shores (TIDCO, 2003). The models idealized in this document are those of countries in which the governments play significant roles in the formulation of the local film industries.

In its development of this document, TIDCO invited representatives of the Trinidad and Tobago film and video industries to attend meetings and provide their feedback in developing the *Master Plan*, offering their perspectives as “stakeholders of the film and video industries” (Poplewell, 2004). Independent producers Georgia Poplewell and Ian Lee both individually attended such TIDCO-hosted meetings about the *Master Plan* on several occasions and had slightly different perspectives on the utility and effectiveness of the *Plan* and their hopes for the effect of the plan on the local Trinidad and Tobago industry.

In their individual interviews, both Georgia Popplewell and Ian Lee noted that the *Master Plan* focused on facilitating foreign crews in Trinidad and Tobago. Georgia Popplewell accepted this focus and rationalized it, noting TIDCO's stated mission to encourage trade, tourism and investment in Trinidad and Tobago (Popplewell, 2004). Lee had been to meetings with TIDCO regarding the *Master Plan* approximately three times per year between 2003 and 2005 and was more critical of the *Plan*, noting the tendency to position the Trinidad and Tobago ideal in relation to a market other than Trinidad and Tobago (in this case, Jamaica). Lee also asserted that the *Plan* had suffered because of government restructuring and an uncertainty that surrounded the continued existence of TIDCO, far less the *Master Plan*. Lee lamented, "There's so much talk, and nothing has been done" (Lee, 2005). For Lee, while the government's *Plan* had been ineffective, great progress had still been made by the film and video production industry, including the coming onstream of new television stations focused on local content, including stations run by two production houses. Lee noted the significance that *Gayelle TV* had started as a production house (Banyan Productions) and that SynergyTV had evolved out of a production house, VA Film and Video (Lee, 2005).

Despite the differences in the acceptance of TIDCO's reasoning for focusing on foreign crews, both Georgia Popplewell and Ian Lee commented on what they asserted was a general sentiment across the industry: that on a broader scale, the government should contribute to helping local producers and to facilitating local productions. Georgia Popplewell suggested government's involvement was justifiable since in Trinidad and Tobago "we're receivers in the global scheme... We aren't accustomed to producing" (Popplewell, 2004). The government should help local producers to find their voices,

Georgia noted, and she considered the products of Trinidad and Tobago film and video industries in relation to global film and video productions:

Our products, when we make them, don't look like  
Hollywood. What should *our* films look like? We only see  
Hollywood films (Popplewell, 2004).

In this statement, Georgia noted the difficulty for Trinidad and Tobago producers to get private funding for their works because they would never measure up to the Hollywood standard and, therefore, in the eyes of investors would fail. The government's place in this regard should be to provide funding that was so difficult to secure from private sources (Popplewell, 2004). Lee also noted problems with the *Master Plan*:

There's no help for the local industry when you examine  
what TIDCO's doing. They're trying to bring big studios  
and I don't know why they're focused on that. Major things  
need to change in the *Master Plan*. They need to show  
where they're willing to invest in local producers (Lee,  
2005).

Lee also noted a few pilots for programs he had produced and that it took money to secure funding. The government, he noted, could help fund productions, which then could be shopped to potential investors for further development.

While the *Master Plan* came about as a result of TIDCO's research and discussions with these industry stakeholders, the very nature of policymaking resulted in these sorts of critical discourses being omitted from the final projections and recommendations put forth in the document. Juxtaposing the perspectives of these two

independent producers with an analysis of the *Master Plan* makes it more evident that the achievement and maintenance of visual sovereignty in Trinidad and Tobago is a process steeped in contestation. While the government perceived visual sovereignty as a means to the “end” of achieving developed nation status, the two independent producers implied that a uniquely Trinbagonian visual culture should come about as a result of completely local (governmental and private sector) focus on local moving image production with mostly local benefits. While the government perceived visual sovereignty as a process through which Trinidad and Tobago could define itself in relation to the rest of the world, the producers envisioned visual sovereignty in relation to Trinidad and Tobago itself. Both the state and the two independent producers considered government’s role in developing local visual culture as necessary.

The reasoning throughout the *Master Plan* is somewhat circular. In simple terms, the document asserts that if foreign crews came to Trinidad and Tobago, the economic benefits could be significant and the exposure of using the country as a location would attract attention, thus attracting film crews to use the country as a location. Similarly, in a SWOT-analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) assessment of what Trinidad and Tobago has to offer such international film production crews, the *Master Plan* notes that the country has a “growing number of professionals and highly skilled persons with film and video experience” (TIDCO, 2003). On the flipside of this assessment, however, the document positions Trinidad and Tobago as suffering “a shortage of a range of important skills such as cinematography and location sound expertise and director/producers” (TIDCO, 2003). These contradictions and glitches in inner logic might exist for any number of reasons, including the desire to recognize those

professionals who are actively involved in the film and video production industries, while rationalizing the need for government to contribute to building these industries.

A more textured reason for the internal contradictions of the *Master Plan* (and a reason that is more central to the discussions that follow in this study) might be the limited focus that this document places on the production of television advertisements. Indeed in the document's preliminary analysis of the global film industry, products of the film industry are listed as including documentaries, commercials, corporate productions, government productions, music videos, fashion and catalogue shoots and feature films. After this initial summary, however, the remainder of the document focuses almost entirely on feature film production, both from the perspective of attracting foreign feature film production, and from the perspective of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the local industry. Indeed, in a later chapter I will return to this jump in logic, considering the television advertisement production industry as a central reason for the "growing number of professionals and highly skilled persons with film and video experience" (TIDCO, 2003). However, as evidenced in popular and academic discourse, the state repeatedly overlooks the advertising industry and as a result there is no vision that would draw the resources of this industry into the arena of building visual sovereignty.

The omission of television advertisement production becomes further evident in the proposal's consideration of legislation and incentives that should be implemented. Citing the Canadian model, the *Master Plan* proposes a scheme by which production companies that use local resources can become eligible for tax incentives. While the description of the kinds of works that would be eligible for such incentives is vague, it is apparent that the focus is on feature films, since one distinction made is that the

Government of Trinidad and Tobago should receive on-screen credit. Effectively, this stipulation rules out music videos and television commercials from inclusion in this proposed scheme.

A further issue raised by the *Master Plan* is that of globalization. The vision focus of the document's authors is stated as "redress[ing] the balance of globalization" by "expanding global markets through the cultivation and exportation of ideas to developed countries as opposed to the lavish importation of foreign ideas" (TIDCO, 2003). Yet the question of how the offering of Trinidad and Tobago's natural and filmic resources to foreign crews will ultimately build the country's ability to export its own ideas is never directly addressed. This flaw in the reasoning of the document is glossed over by the summary statement that an active film industry will contribute to the development of Trinidad and Tobago's "indigenous and national cultures" and, in the end, that the government should be responsible for such development.

Analysis of the *Master Plan* and interviews with independent producers leads me to summarize that the Trinidad and Tobago government deems the development of the film industry important on an economic level, and its focus is placed squarely on encouraging foreign crews to use Trinidad and Tobago as a location. By encouraging such foreign production in Trinidad and Tobago, the state reasons that local culture will be strengthened. Finally, according to the *Master Plan*, the state affirms the need for government intervention in the development of all resources needed to build such a foreign-focused industry. According to this government document, the state should be an essential player in the construction of the infrastructure and skill-base required for the development of a film industry. Industry stakeholders such as independent producers,

however, feel that on a broader level than is perhaps possible at the TIDCO level, the government should play a more active role in facilitating local production.

One missing link in the logic of this document is how the government can build the resources required to attract foreign film crews. The major premise of the government's argument is that in order to build these resources and attract these crews, Trinidad and Tobago film and video industries must be developed actively, thus developing the cadre of professionals, skills and physical resources required to become an internationally competitive location. The evidence provided in this document suggests that on some level, these skills, professionals and facilities already exist, and this is indicative of the state's recognition that the infrastructural elements exist. I would argue that the key reason for the existence of these non-rationalized resources is the presence of a vibrant advertising industry, and that it is as a result of film and video production that takes place within the advertising industry that the skilled labor and resources already exist.

Analysis of the *Master Plan* serves to reinforce the evidence that the government's imagined future for Trinidad and Tobago is one in which the nation is internationally competitive as a film location and globally on par with other nations regarding uniqueness and discernability of its national visual culture. According to these two documents, the government deems that, in the past, there has been insufficient development of production capabilities and that increased development of production capabilities and actual products of visual culture are required to attain developed nation status. Analysis of these two documents points to the fact that progress toward the ultimate goal of development of an identifiable and globally competitive national visual



culture is a necessary part of Trinidad and Tobago's evolution toward developed nation status. Ultimately, based on my earlier definition, the Trinidad and Tobago government sees visual sovereignty, or the development and preservation of a national mediascape, as necessary to the nation's evolution toward developed nation status. Through analysis of the *Master Plan* and *Vision 2020*, as well as inclusion of the perspectives of independent producers, visual sovereignty emerges as a bifurcated process through which the nation simultaneously conceives its visual culture as centered on the nation's own identity (producers) and focused externally in relation to other nations (the state). In essence, thus far, my analysis of visual sovereignty affirms the Janus-faced nature of the nation, as facing in two opposite directions simultaneously.

Emergent discourses in both the *Master Plan* and *Vision 2020* describe a government that is torn between developing a unique visual culture of Trinidad and Tobago's own, and living up to "progress" as defined externally. From the perspective of the independent producers, visual sovereignty is best served by internal focus on local producers and local production, which ultimately give rise to new channels of national identity discourse. While the "common sense" of developing national visual culture implicates government in its project, the reality of Trinidad and Tobago's production industries suggests that while government funding would facilitate such development, structures of production evolve into channels of national discourse more organically than might be suggested in either of these two documents.

### *Requirements for Advertising*

What is the importance of television advertising in the development of postcolonial national visual culture through moving image media? What do state-authored documents tell us about how a postcolonial government perceives the role of advertising in this regard? The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is listed on the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce Website as a sub-committee of the Media Sector Committee (Chamber of Industry and Commerce, 2005). According to this source, the ASA was founded in the 1960s by three organizations including the Advertisers Association (“an association of the larger local businesses at the time”), the Advertising Agencies Association of Trinidad and Tobago (AAATT) and the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters Association (TTPBA). The objective of the ASA is cited as:

...to develop and administer, for protection of the interests of the consumers, a code of advertising practice and guidelines for advertising produced, or imported for use, in Trinidad and Tobago (Chamber of Industry and Commerce, 2005).

Initially, then, this code of advertising practice as established in the 1960s was intended to allow the industry to regulate itself. In 1977, however, the Trinidad and Tobago Standards further developed the code into an official standard, which was when the ASA was “designated by the Bureau to administer the standard (Chamber of Industry and Commerce, 2005). This document developed as three individual standards including: *Requirements for Advertising – General, Advertising to Children, and Advertising of*

*Tobacco Products* (Chamber of Industry and Commerce, 2005). Two of the three parts of the original Advertising Standard were since updated: *Requirements for Advertising – General* in 1999 and *Requirements for Advertising: Advertising to Children* in 2000 (Bureau of Standards, 2005).

My focus is on the 1999 version of *Requirements for Advertising – General*, since this document most closely provides insight into the government's vision of the significance of the state in shaping the advertising industry. This document also gives insight into what key advertising industry players and the state see as important values that should be adopted by the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry. Also, the 1999 version of *Requirements for Advertising – General* supersedes the 1977 version of document (Bureau of Standards, 2005). As such, the 1999 document provides an indication of the most recent government position that had been issued at the time of this study.

The document, *Requirements for Advertising – General (General Requirements)*, serves to outline how the advertising industry should structure its advertising, in relation to specific concerns laid out within this Bureau of Standards document. As such, the document is positioned as outlining:

the general requirements for the contents of advertising shown or consumed in Trinidad and Tobago, in any medium, whether foreign or locally generated. It also prescribes additional requirements for the following types of advertisements: advertisements of specific classes of goods and services, advertising directed to specific

categories of consumers, and advertisements in certain media (Bureau of Standards, 1999).

In sum, the document *Requirements for Advertising – General* is prescriptive rather than legislative, with government taking the role of providing ethical guidelines that include “shoulds” and “should-nots,” as opposed to “musts” and “must-nots.” The code also prescribes “requirements for the manner of presentation of advertisements” (Bureau of Standards, 1999).

The broader analysis of the Advertising Standard indicates that where advertising is concerned, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is mostly concerned with decency, protection of special groups (including children), morality and ethics (including advertising of tobacco products). Worth noting in this discussion is that in relation to advertising, the government is not concerned with local content, representation of local imagery, life or culture, or use of local resources in the production of advertisements (Bureau of Standards, 1999).

In other countries, governments legislate the local content of advertising by regulating which components of advertisements must represent local culture. For example, in Papua New Guinea, the state ensures that advertising agencies commission local models, locations and production houses in the production of local television commercials (Foster, 1995). The implication of this Papua New Guinea case study is that the government deemed advertising discourse as significant to the construction of a space of national visual culture. In Trinidad and Tobago, on the other hand, the government did not place any focus on the advertising industry as a channel through which visual sovereignty might evolve. As such, the omission from the *Advertising Code* of any such

regulatory prose that would guide producers of advertising messages to pay attention to production choices in relation to national visual culture, points to the position of unimportance that advertising occupies in the Trinidad and Tobago vision for building visual culture.

In *Vision 2020* the government paints a broad picture of the important role of visual culture playing in moving Trinidad and Tobago toward developed nation status, while in the *Master Plan* the economic benefits of having an active and capable film and video industry are laid out. In the *Advertising Standard*, however, no mention is made of how the advertising industry might be considered in relation to progress toward the achievement of visual sovereignty. This 1999 document, which represents the government's most recent written recommendations on ethical requirements that advertisers should follow, bears no evidence of a developing consciousness of the role of the visual media in improving Trinidad and Tobago's competitive stance within the global environment. It deserves reiterating here that presenting this analysis in reverse order regarding the chronology of these documents presents a more in-depth understanding of both the continuities and discontinuities that become evident in the state's stance on how the mediascape can or should be used to represent a national culture.

Through analysis of the three state-authored documents outlined here, the publication of which spanned the late 1990s and the early 2000s, we gain an understanding of this government's approaches to developing a national visual culture through moving image media. The government of Trinidad and Tobago positioned itself as central to the construction of a space of visual identity. In terms of moving image

media, the government of Trinidad and Tobago has historically placed its emphasis on two aspects of the national mediascape: television programming and film production.

*Vision 2020*, *The Master Plan* and the *Advertising Standard: Requirements for Advertising – General* all offer the voice of the Trinidad and Tobago government at different points along the formative trajectory of the nation's mediascape. Common throughout these documents is the positioning of the state in a central role of control and development in relation to local production of visual culture, but only in very specific realms: encouragement of feature film production in Trinidad and Tobago by foreign crews (using Trinidad and Tobago resources); the maintenance of freedom and ethics of production; and finally, encouragement of production of local television program production.

In relation to advertising, the government's role is situated firmly in the realms of protecting the consumer and establishing a moral or ethical environment in which advertising operates. The state neglects to consider advertising from its strategic construction of visual culture and development of the industries that constitute or contribute to the development of a national identity. If the government did consider the advertising industry as a central component of developing visual sovereignty, the role of this industry would have been mentioned in *Vision 2020* in relation to visual culture and Trinidad and Tobago's future as a developed nation. Likewise, the advertising industry would have been mentioned in greater detail within the *Master Plan* in relation to the existence and development of the local film and video industries. What remains to be considered, however, is how these discourses have translated over time to the construction of the national mediascape and how industry producers have engaged with

these discourses. What emerges here is a clear picture of how the government views the relative importance of film, television and advertising in building visual sovereignty. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, the state saw feature film and television programming production as pre-eminent in its strategy to build national visual culture through moving image media.

### *The State Steps Back*

How is visual sovereignty affected when government reduces its control of the media? Continuing with the reverse chronological approach that I have established, at this point of my analysis, I want to investigate the specific instances in which the Trinidad and Tobago government sought to reduce its control of moving image media. I also want to probe the public responses to the government's shifting approach to control in relation to the mediascape.

In January 1991, less than five months after the attempted coup in Trinidad and Tobago when Yasin Abu Bakr and the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen included the offices of Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT) in their strikes on the nation's capital, I participated in a conference jointly hosted by the Trinidad Express Newspaper and the Caribbean Association of National Telecommunication Organizations (CANTO). The theme of the conference was "Caribbean Media in Times of Crisis and Transformation," and the focus of many of the papers presented by media practitioners, critics, and producers alike, was the imminent deregulation of broadcasting. The collective voice of this conference asked how Trinidad and Tobago might ensure a space of its own within

an increasingly monolithic global mediascape of programming and what should be done to encourage the local production of local programs (King, 1991; Madeira, 1991).

At that conference, then Director of TTT Mary King noted the mandate given by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to increase broadcasting of local production. In her paper, King considered the words of Trinidad and Tobago's High Commissioner to Barbados (J. R. P. Dumas) and his consideration of foreign television programming impacts. Dumas is quoted as considering "self-depreciation [sic]" and "an unhealthy admiration for most things foreign" as end results of the increasing trends toward a new imperialism. Ultimately, Dumas appealed to the state to encourage the development of local programming and protect against the ills of television programming imperialism, noting "I can only appeal to government to introduce quickly, guidelines on the use of foreign television in T&T" (King, 1991). King criticized opinion leaders and media practitioners who (at the time of her writing) in the face of deregulation of the mass media asserted that infiltration of foreign programming should be stemmed. King dismissed such thinkers' calls for the region to be fenced off in order to protect the culture and social customs of the region and asserted that deregulation would actually provide a larger local market for indigenous production (King, 1991).

The "fencing off" of the region against infiltration by foreign programming into the local mediascape referred to by King is integral to the process to which I refer as visual sovereignty. King's assertion was that active policies that would engender visual sovereignty were unnecessary, and that indigenous production (of visual sovereignty) would flourish in a globally competitive mediascape. Deregulation of the media may be considered key to the development of such a mediascape, yet in the Trinidad and Tobago



context critics often argue that without some form of government control (station ownership, mandatory percentages of local programming, etc.), television programming would be dominated by North American content. The end result, it is argued, would be the death knell of the Trinidad and Tobago film and video production industry. Yet quite the opposite might actually be true.

When postcolonial governments decrease their grip on the mass media, it is often accompanied by a move toward liberalization in the market of commodities. This trend became reality in Trinidad and Tobago in the early 1990s under the NAR (National Alliance for Reconstruction) government, which increased the number of television licenses available and opened up television station operation to the private sector, while increasing the number of imported products into the local market. As Mary King asserted, this increasingly liberal environment resulted in an increased number of commodities, which in turn resulted in an increase in activity in the advertising industry, which also caused the growth of industries that served the advertising industry, such as the film and video production industry.

The closure in January 2005 of the longest-running television station in Trinidad and Tobago history catalyzed discussions of the role of the media in national culture and sparked many debates about government's place in defining and structuring that role. One common thread suggested that the state strategy included increasing use of television as a mouthpiece of the government and that the planned 2005 transition of TTT's government-owned parent company NBN (National Broadcasting Network) into CNMG (Caribbean New Media Group) was based on the desire to place television more completely within the control of the ruling government (Kangal, 2004; UNC, 2004).

Whatever lay behind the government's decision to implicate foreign advisors (BBC Technology) in the shutting down of NBN and therefore terminating TTT, the end of the historic television station marked the end of the station's 43 year reign as central to the construction of Trinidad and Tobago's visual mediascape. In a letter to the editor of *Trinidad Express*, one reader considered the closure of TTT symbolic of the government's blatant disregard for the nation's cultural heritage. Stephen Kangal wrote:

This pathological disrespect and lack of appreciation for an historically and culturally important institution of our multicultural broadcasting heritage symbolised in NBN is no different from the neglect of the Magnificent Seven around the Savannah and so many other aspects of our accumulated cultural heritage (Kangal, 2005).

In this letter, the writer refers to seven historic Victorian mansions, located north of Port of Spain, which are reminders of the nation's colonial past. Here, Kangal equates the government's neglect of visual culture in Trinidad and Tobago with the neglect of an architectural heritage. For Kangal, the government had let down the people of Trinidad and Tobago by not respecting or appreciating TTT as a critical component in the development of national visual culture, and therefore a symbol of national identity.

According to media veteran Raoul Pantin, when television arrived in Trinidad and Tobago in 1962, it brought with it images of the North American civil rights movement. Images of American blacks being hosed down and attacked struck a chord with the Trinidad and Tobago populace, recently emerging from a history of European colonization, slavery and indentureship. On top of this, by 1970 (the year of the Black

Power Revolution in Trinidad and Tobago), Trinidadian Stokely Carmichael had become a leader in the American Black Power movement (Pantin, 1990). Discourses of national self-discovery and empowerment of the marginalized elements of Trinbagonian society intertwined within the 1970 Black Power uprisings in Trinidad and Tobago. In an eyewitness account of one protest march that took place that year, Pantin recalls the marchers stopping outside Frederick Street shops to protest the merchants' use of white mannequins to sell clothes to black people (Pantin, 1990). Despite this foreshadowing of the evolution of the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry, however, it was not until later in the seventies, as I will discuss in a later chapter, that advertising agencies in Trinidad and Tobago began to take serious notice of this growing local consumer discomfort with advertising practices of attracting the local by offering the foreign, rationalizing such choices by positioning advertising messages as "aspirational" (D. Miller, 2000).

To understand more clearly the more recent context of decreased state involvement in local production, we need to consider past eras when local programming was high on the government's agenda for nation building. In the 1970s and 1980s there were many programs produced in government-run TTT's studios, promoting local culture including: *Riki Tiki*, a live after-school children's program; *Twelve And Under*, *Teen Talent* and *Scouting for Talent*, three talent competitions aimed at three distinct age-brackets; *Mastana Bahar*, a talent competition focused on Indo-Trinidadian talent; *Indian Variety*, a variety show featuring popular local talent; *At Home*, a cooking program featuring preparation of local dishes; *The Prime Minister's Best Village Competition*, a talent competition among villages throughout Trinidad and Tobago including live dance,

theatre and folksong and *Face of the Nation*, a studio discussion program focused on sociopolitical issues. While developing this slate of local programs was a major accomplishment in first two decades following independence, television also included American imports such as *Soul Train*, *The Love Boat*, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, and *Wonder Woman*, among many other programs that became imported favorites. Even with these imports, the legacy of the local programs are remembered with some nostalgia. Following the closure of TTT, one member of the Opposition pointed to the folly of the administration in government, noting that TTT had been born at the same time as independent Trinidad and Tobago and had served as an “umbilical cord connecting people historically and culturally, and severing this cord would have a devastating impact on the psyche of the people” (Webb, 2005).

The closure of TTT made clear the public sentiment that the government should play a central role in ensuring that the mass media represent local or national culture. Public outcry in 2005 reflected the central role that had been played by TTT in the national imagining, placing television far above radio in this regard, and TTT above other local stations in the national discourse. NBN was the parent company of TTT, The Information Channel (a second government television station) and two radio stations, all of which were closed down in 2005 following the recommendations of BBC “experts” (Kangal, 2004, 2005). Yet the media and public outcry all focused to a large extent on the closure of TTT and remembering TTT (Gayelle, 2004b; Kangal, 2005). As the first television station born with the independent nation, TTT had become synonymous with the nation’s visual imagining of itself. It was via TTT that the Trinidad and Tobago public first saw footage of Hasely Crawford winning the first Olympic gold medal for the

country or Janelle Commissiong winning Miss Universe. It was through TTT's transmission that Abu Bakr announced that the Muslimeen had taken control of the seats of power in Trinidad and Tobago.

Further to the cultural roles played by TTT already outlined, TTT had also become entwined in the annual television coverage of Carnival. For this reason, the government's decision to close the station on January 14<sup>th</sup> 2005, less than one month before Carnival, caused increased consternation among critics and viewers (Editorial, 2005). Alarms were raised in the media about which television station (of the remaining two) would receive a government license to cover the official events within the annual celebration and whether either TV6 or Gayelle would be able to provide, at last-minute notice, the breadth of coverage to which the country had become accustomed. As debates raged in Parliament, the possibility was raised that in the end, Trinidad and Tobago might be forced to receive footage of its own festival from overseas (Editorial, 2005).

In the latter decade of TTT's life, public criticism of the station focused on the lack of local programming carried by the station. In the 1980s, the NAR government changed the focus of TTT to one of profit-making, as opposed to the promotion of local culture (Gayelle, 2004b). Aggrey Brown considered this lack of programming initiative in his 1986 *Talking With Whom*, where he notes:

Despite a large production department, TTT does not attempt documentary investigations nor creative programmes ...the station is supplied with programmes from abroad, mainly the USA with all that that implies as regards quality and propagandistic biases. The station is run

as a commercial venture and has no positive broadcast policies other than seeking to screen programmes which would attract viewers and hence advertisers... (Brown & Sanatan, 1987).

Yet despite such criticisms, when faced with the closure of the station, the collective sentiment of media practitioners, viewers and opinion leaders were overwhelmingly critical of the government for cutting the umbilical cord that fed the viewing public a still-lingering sense of national culture (Wickham, 2005). Letters to the editor and calls to television stations reflected a nation flailing and lost without its televisual umbilicus (Blood, 2005). What would parts of Tobago do without any television reception at all? How could government leave the nation stranded without televised live coverage of Carnival? Indeed, backed into a corner of political quandary by public outcry, the ministry in charge of television licensing threatened one of the two remaining television stations with non-renewal of its license if it did not broaden its signal to cover a wider footprint across Trinidad and Tobago. The end of TTT made it abundantly clear that television was to Trinidad and Tobago as national identity was to postcolonial independence.

When the state steps away from the responsibility of developing visual culture through production of local programming, other producers step forward. In effect, the burden of visual sovereignty passes from state to independent producers because these producers see a void that needs to be filled because of the state's receding involvement in the process of visual sovereignty. Writing in 1987, Brown and Sanatan made note of a program on TTT that provided an alternative to mainstream media. That program was

called *Gayelle* and was produced by the production company I mentioned earlier in this chapter: Banyan Productions. Brown and Sanatan noted the value of *Gayelle*, because this program included rural Trinidad and Tobago in its programming and introduced new perspectives, allowing its presenters to speak in an unaffected Trinbagonian accent using Trinbagonian colloquialisms and mannerisms (Brown & Sanatan, 1987). This program called *Gayelle* therefore stood out against the context of TTT's other programs. *Gayelle's* presenters included Trinbagonian actor Tony Hall and Sprangalang whose dialog was decidedly "Trini," while TTT's other program presenters included Hazel Ward (on *Teen Talent* and *12 and Under*), whose presentation style was decidedly BBC influenced or "Queen's English" affected. *Gayelle* quickly gained popularity with TTT's television audience. The popularity of this program seemed to bring into question the often-heard assertion that Trinidad and Tobago audiences preferred foreign (read North American and BBC) programming over local programming. *Gayelle* would have to wait nearly another ten years for ultimate success, however, since TTT was no longer willing to pay sufficiently to cover even the production costs of the popular program. Indeed, as the program's popularity increased, TTT was willing to pay even less. Laird pointed to TTT's lack of vision as reason for the station's inability to understand the implicit role of government television in the development of local culture and national identity (Hanoomansingh, 1993).

*Gayelle* the program in 2004 became *Gayelle* the television station, bringing to the airwaves and cable lineups many of the same principles of its program predecessor. With TTT still on the air at the time of its launch, *Gayelle* promised 90 percent local programming, compared to TTT's and TV6's 75 percent imported programming. While

programmers for its competitor stations had in the past claimed that it was too expensive to produce local programming and more cost-effective to import cheap but popular programs to maximize viewership and therefore advertising revenues, *Gayelle* set out to turn this equation on its end (Laird, 2004), taking up the mantle of local production in lieu of the state's previous activity in this sphere.

Prior to the station's launch in 2004, managing director of *Gayelle* Christopher Laird considered the erroneous reasoning of the executives in charge of the established local television stations. After less than one year on the air, *Gayelle* measured its success in terms of achieving 99 percent local programming and having been welcomed to the airwaves and to cable television by an avid viewing audience (Laird, 2005). *Gayelle's* program offering included news, sports, music, morning magazine program, live discussions, live performance, and cultural discussions. Most of the programming on *Gayelle* is produced in-house and is aired live. Laird asserted that television becomes most exciting to its viewers when it ceases to be a mere jukebox, citing the elements of "liveness" and "unpredictability" as defining television at its best (Laird, 2004). Indeed, in its first year of operation, *Gayelle* allowed viewers to see the mechanics of production as part of the programs. It was perhaps this liveness and unpredictability that drew audiences to claim that they could not tear themselves away from watching *Gayelle* (Laird, 2005), perhaps because the narrative of the programs appeared to be unwritten and real, thus positioning the viewer as active participant in the writing of the narrative (Fiske, 1988). During airing of the news on *Gayelle*, for example, it was not uncommon for the producer to enter the frame to adjust the *lavalier* microphone on the jacket of the presenter. This self-reflexivity, Laird reflected, was what made the programming



interesting to the viewer and built upon *Gayelle*'s desire to represent authenticity (Laird, 2005).

*Gayelle* and TTT crossed paths once again in early 2005, at which time *Gayelle* was on the ascent, while the government was phasing out TTT. In the second half of 2004, the government of Trinidad and Tobago commissioned British media consultants to assess TTT's role and future and to provide recommendations for the transformation of the station to fulfill the objectives of the government's vision for the station. As an end result of these consultants' recommendations, on December 31, 2004, TTT's management marked the end-phase of regularly scheduled programming by transmitting recollections of the station's contribution to national culture and to building a national televisual archive since its launch soon after the nation's 1962 independence from Great Britain (Gayelle, 2004b). The irony seemed clear: the local program "killed" by TTT had become a television station in its own right, while the station that began the history of television in Trinidad and Tobago, on the other hand, had become a mere reference for discussion within newspaper columns.

The broader story here was that the colonial, BBC-influenced structured style of TTT had lost currency in Trinidad and Tobago, while the localized, less structured style of *Gayelle* had gained popularity and arguably caused a ripple effect on the rest of the visual mediascape in Trinidad and Tobago. In the timeframe examined here (early 1990s to early 2000s), the government continued to postulate the need for Trinidad and Tobago's visual sovereignty, distinct from the moving images that flow into the Trinidad and Tobago mediascape from other territories' moving image mediascapes. Despite this positioning, the government succumbed to the interference of suggestions from BBC

experts, making it evident that forces of colonial hegemony were still at play. In the closure of TTT, three aspects of Trinidad and Tobago's journey of visual sovereignty emerged. First, the localized voice of *Gayelle* became more viable in 2004 than the TTT approach, which related more to colonial antecedents. Second, TTT existed within the national imagining as occupying an important place in local visual culture. And lastly, despite statements made in *Vision 2020* and the *Master Plan*, and despite the national audience's insistence that TTT should be allowed to continue existing, in the final analysis, the government of Trinidad and Tobago placed greater importance upon the recommendations of external auditors whose identities as BBC-affiliated served to reinforce the continued effects of colonial domination. This development indicates that even while the state privileges the importance of visual sovereignty, the process is not unidirectional. Visual sovereignty is a contested process.

By considering viewing public responses to both TTT and to *Gayelle* in this section, I have positioned television as integral to local visual culture, including the ways in which viewers respond to and interact with such television stations as TTT and *Gayelle*, as well as how the stations choose to represent or not represent local culture within their programming. Through their individual determinations of meaning, viewers of these two channels in particular related themselves to social aspects of national identity formation through television (Fiske, 1988). Also important to note here is that part of the national remembering of TTT also took the form of remembering the television advertisements that made up the whole programming package for viewers. In Chapter 5 of this study, I will return to these recollections of advertising as central in the social positioning of television within Trinbagonian culture.

What comes into focus here is that private sector involvement in the development of the local mediascape resulted in the inauguration of a television station recognized by audiences and critics as television that was decidedly Trinbagonian, and which set out focus its programs on the local production of programming. Similarly, the free flow of commodities into Trinidad and Tobago in the early 1990s marked the dawn of a new era of increased market competition generally, and therefore increased activity within the advertising sector, which had the end result of rapid development of the film and video production industries.

While government documents indicated a broad interest in developing national visual culture, the state seemed unable to decipher how to enter the cycle of moving image production in order to effect visual sovereignty. As became evident through the analyses, the government, like many critics and scholars viewed visual sovereignty as a static end-point toward which a nation should evolve: an ideal of a “fenced off” space or the equivalent of a visual “architectural heritage.” The state’s inability to find the right cue or strategy to catalyze the development of a moving image mediascape within which Trinidad and Tobago could negotiate its own national identity signals a difficulty that arises from conceptualizing visual sovereignty as a space. In order to facilitate praxis or practical application, a more dynamic theorization of this concept is required.

In his theorization of ethnicity, Stuart Hall argues that identity is a process “that happens over time, that is never absolutely stable” (Hall & du Gay, 1996). I first defined visual sovereignty as the “discursive production among media producers, their texts, the state and audiences in the construction of national identity through visual media.”

Returning to this definition after the analyses of government documents and independent

producer interviews, the definition of visual sovereignty as “production” becomes key. Rather than signaling visual sovereignty as a space of ideal utopia for the postcolonial nation state and its self-imagining, reversing the chronology of this analysis points to visual sovereignty as a process of continuous negotiation through which inclusions and exclusions, action and lack of activity, public and private involvement are all negotiated in relation to how the postcolonial nation seeks to control its own mediascape and produce local texts that will fill that mediascape.

### *Conclusions*

Visual sovereignty has emerged, through the analyses in this chapter, as a burden. While all players within the moving image mediascape think that something should be done, each element sees the processes that make up visual sovereignty as the responsibility of some other element within the mediascape. In other words, each component in the Trinidad and Tobago moving image mediascape passes along the burdens of visual sovereignty to other components. In this chapter through analysis of three state-authored documents I have outlined the ways in which the Trinidad and Tobago government contributed to the construction of that national identity.

Through these documents, the government sought to fulfill the utopian goal of preserving a national mediascape by promoting locally authentic programming and finding ways to minimize the “pollutive” effects of global media flows. The creation and maintenance of a national mediascape in Trinidad and Tobago takes place on several levels and requires active colonization of an imagined space within the global mediascape

(Appadurai, 1996). This active colonization is one aspect of the process of visual sovereignty. By considering documents authored by the government of Trinidad and Tobago, articles written by newspaper columnists, letters written by the viewing public and interviews with independent producers, it became clear that Trinidad and Tobago has a richly textured history of defending its mediascape against infiltration by global flows.

In government documents, there was repeated evidence that the state positions the moving image mass media as playing important roles in the formation of national identity. Toward the development of national visual culture leading ultimately to Trinidad and Tobago's positioning as a developed country, government agencies recommended the implementation of strategies by which the mediascape should develop. In the end, however, the government of Trinidad and Tobago played the part of watchdog, protecting citizens in terms of moral content in the mass media, including in advertisements. While government documents indicated intentions to help build local film and video productions, in the end, the government seemed either disinterested in or unable to provide sufficient funding for the development of these industries. Ideologically, the Trinidad and Tobago government stated the importance of a commitment to developing the film and video industries. In actuality, there was little in the way of evidence to suggest that the government would actively contribute to the imagining of Trinidad and Tobago as "developed country" with a developed mediascape representative of local culture, perhaps ultimately hoping that the process of visual sovereignty would take shape through existing activity of local film and video producers without the assistance of the government.

Throughout these state-authored documents, the government positioned Trinidad and Tobago as needing greater development of moving image or visual culture. Trinidad and Tobago, in the government's eyes, never measures up to Jamaica or Canada with respect to government assistance programs, nor does the nation measure up to some unspecified ideal of being a developed nation. In addition, while the state imagined the expression of sovereign nationhood in terms of having a definable (and likely saleable) visual culture, it continues to place emphasis on the opinions of "experts" from afar, who are brought in to provide consultation. Ultimately, the Trinidad and Tobago government was not at ease with guiding or shaping the components of the moving image mediascape in Trinidad and Tobago toward the attainment of visual sovereignty.

Representatives of the production industry, on the other hand, criticized the government for this inactivity. Yet despite this lack of government incentive or involvement in facilitating local production or supporting local producers, the film and video production industries were alive with production activity (Lee, 2005). In the words of Ian Lee, "Everyone just ends up doing their own thing" (Lee, 2005). In other words, there is no concerted effort on the part of producers, nor on the part of government, to work together to build toward the imagined cohesiveness of a film and video industry that fits such international standards as Hollywood, Bollywood or the Canadian film industry. The Trinidad and Tobago film industry was constituted like no other, its development evading even the closest of its film industry neighbors: Jamaica. In each of the countries considered as model markets in the government documents addressed here, there was significant collaboration among state, producers and media stations. In Trinidad and Tobago, however, the individual components of these industries seemed to operate in

isolation from each other. In Ian Lee's words, "There's no sort of collaboration. People are just working in their own vacuums" (Lee, 2005).

In the end, while government played a critical role in igniting the process of Trinbagonian visual sovereignty through the establishment of a television station that carried the newborn nation's first postcolonial moving images to its citizens, it was through negotiation between the state and the private sector of independent producers that the process continued to evolve. In times when the government was paralyzed by bureaucracy, it was the private sector that championed the cause of visual sovereignty through establishment of a new local television station or through the production of television advertising that allowed the film and video production industries to grow dramatically.

Visual sovereignty in Trinidad and Tobago continues to evolve not simply as a result of government intervention, but also frequently because of the lack of it. When government failed to develop state-owned television programming to include a significant percentage of local programs, local producers and advertising agencies stepped up to the challenge of tapping into the audience desire for more local representation within visual culture. "Everyone just ends up doing their own thing," because of a desire to make a living, but also because each person sees their contribution to visual sovereignty as necessary, as a result of the government's inability to completely manage the vastness of the processes of visual sovereignty.

In the state authored documents examined in this chapter, where development of national visual culture is outlined as an objective, no mention is made of advertising. The only document that covered advertising extensively focused on the content of

advertisements in relation to decency and truthfulness in advertising. Indeed it becomes evident through this analysis that advertising is not considered significant in the construction of Trinbagonian national visual culture. However, the fact that Requirements for Advertising sets out to protect consumers and outlines how advertisements should be constructed indicates the government's latent awareness of how advertising can affect the national common sense. As such, while advertising in Trinidad and Tobago is not directly positioned within discourses of building national visual culture, there is concern for how advertisements affect the national good in terms of how they interact with social reality, and how they depict such social concerns as family and sexuality. Indirectly then, advertising is recognized for depicting a "philosophy of life" (Ewen, 2001; Marchand, 1985) or a tableau of social interactions (Marchand, 1985) in Trinidad and Tobago. In the end, it was the government's neglect of the role of advertising as integral to the processes of visual sovereignty that hindered the state's ability to articulate effectively the ways in which the components of the moving image mediascape could be deployed toward the active development of a national visual culture.

In the final analysis, Shalini Puri's thesis is that postcolonial theorists (who advocate post-nationalism as a way to avoid replicating structures of colonial power) should not be so quick to denounce the nation-state as a site of power and production. Postcolonial theorists, Puri points out, are fearful that foregrounding discourses of nationalism will result in the replication of colonial discourses. In this work, I am positioning visual sovereignty as a way to further explore this seemingly irresolvable dialectic. Many studies recognize the ways in which postcolonial nations are imagined, including through novels, newspapers, morning prayers and motion pictures (Hannerz,



1990; Naficy, 1993; E. Shohat & Stam, 1994). Yet the field of postcolonial studies generally fears the ultimate effect of nationalistic discourses. As I have outlined in Chapter One, for nations whose emergence into postcoloniality is relatively recent, broadcasting systems and cinema exhibition can become the focus of governments of postcolonial nations. Wary that such control could signify the possible resurgence of hegemonic colonial control under a different guise, postcolonial theorists either denounce or ignore such practices as neo-colonialisms. Using a multiperspectival approach, this focus on the advertising industry, its texts and creators as a site within which the nation-state exerts minimal influence, will provide insights into precipitation of discourses through which postcolonial nationalism resounds.

As noted by Benedict Anderson in his seminal work *Imagined Communities*, since nations are imagined communities, tangible and intangible structures must be put in place to help these communities to fix their imaginings within defined boundaries (Anderson, 1991). In the words of Arjun Appadurai, these spaces are “zones of danger requiring ritual maintenance” (Appadurai, 1996). In the global ecumene characterized by flows across national borders towards greater homogenization of cultural space, nations that seek to define their own national mediascapes within this global mediascape must wage a war of colonization to define and defend their space of imagining. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, as I have demonstrated in the analyses within this chapter, struggles to define the Trinidad and Tobago national mediascape within the global mediascape have taken place on several different fronts. Throughout these struggles, media practitioners, critics, opinion leaders, scholars and the viewing public have all voiced their opinions about the issue of national cultural identity and the creation and maintenance of such a

national mediascape, and have therefore contributed to the development of a process within which Trinbagonian culture might thrive.

Building upon my earlier definitions of visual sovereignty, from this discussion it becomes evident that while there might be an imagined cohesive in which all components build together toward a utopian space in which local moving image culture is expressed and protected against “invasion” from global flows, in practice visual sovereignty is a transient process through which identity narratives flow via television, film and video production (Canclini, 2001). Through this analysis it becomes evident that there need not be alignment, cooperation or even direct collaboration among the constituent elements of the mediascape in order to build toward visual sovereignty. While producers and government imagine the ideal of all components of the visual mediascape working together, even as they “selfishly” operate in isolation, this independent action results in a space in which local visual culture is developed and through which it can be contested.

While David Held’s analysis of the nation-state suggests that sovereignty is a factor of the government’s interests and action, visual sovereignty emerges through this analysis as contestation among the state, industry producers and also as negotiated with the audience. In future theoretical applications, the concept of visual sovereignty can be used to broaden the examination of sovereignty within considerations of globalization and its effects on the global ecumene. In praxis, governments such as Trinidad and Tobago’s can deploy this concept in their missions to secure a national visual heritage. From the outset of their programs and plans, the collaborative approach to sharing the burden of visual sovereignty should be stressed. Visual sovereignty can be theorized as a burden whose weight shifts through a moving equilibrium of forces. In the broader

scheme of postcolonial studies, *theoretically* the nation-state is a key center of power and production (Puri), and in the case of Trinidad and Tobago the state served as a focal point in the contestation of who was responsible for carrying the burden of visual sovereignty. However, on a practical level, the core function of the state is in the formal defining of the nation, while it is through a confluence of cultural and economic forces that moving image media come to express a singular national identity.

Against the methodological context of a reverse chronology, visual sovereignty might be better conceptualized as a process rather than as a defined, static set of characteristics or a chronological set of events. Visual sovereignty comes to represent a persistent disruption and eruption of an equilibrium of forces. Approaching this analysis from the perspective of a reverse chronology is an attempt to rupture the historical chronicle, characterized by teleology. As such, instead of placing emphasis on drawing lines of cause and effect through a chronology of events, this analysis explored the emergence of discourses through which the negotiation of visual sovereignty takes place.

### Chapter Three

#### Visual Sovereignty and the Intertextual Narration of the Nation

At the end of 2004, major shifts were taking place in the very foundation upon which the moving image mediascape of Trinidad and Tobago rested. In the first instance, Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT) was preparing for final shutdown. Secondly, three new community based television stations were settling into their places in the lineup of local stations, and thirdly, the soap opera *Westwood Park* had come to the end of its final season on TV6 (the privately owned local television station which had been on air since 1990). Against the context of these intense tremors, TV6 promoted then aired a locally-made-for-television feature film, a TV6 production called *Joebell and America*. The production crew, cast, locations, equipment and funding all originated in Trinidad and Tobago. In addition, *Joebell* aired on a Trinidad and Tobago television station to a Trinbagonian audience. The film received almost exclusively positive reviews from everyone who spoke or wrote about it, including casual viewers, culture critics and film reviewers. For all intents and purposes, *Joebell* seemed to accomplish what so few other Trinidad and Tobago film or video productions had accomplished by offering a specifically Trinbagonian narrative, packaged as Trinbagonian and positively received by the Trinbagonian audience for whom it was intended.

In the last chapter, I asserted that visual sovereignty is a process by which a postcolonial nation gains and maintains control of its moving image media and focuses on the local production of texts through which the visual identity of that nation is negotiated. Through analysis of state documents, I also noted the omission of advertising

from Trinidad and Tobago government strategies designed to increase local moving image production and argued that as a result of this omission the state failed to fully realize the process of visual sovereignty through any practical strategies. To examine the ways in which the advertising industry is implicated in the process of visual sovereignty, in this chapter I focus on this period during which major transformations characterized the process of visual sovereignty.

A major shortcoming of postcolonial studies is that in instances when the field examines national narratives through textual analysis of books, films, poetry, theatre, and song, it seldom considers the complete web of meaning through which such narratives are constructed and negotiated. This analysis therefore operates through a juxtaposition of cultural studies and postcolonial studies to examine the text of a postcolonial narrative, but also to interrogate issues of political economy (buying, selling and regulatory issues) and to consider the narrative context of the film (the television station's programming lineup), and how the very commercial nature of television as a medium influenced the production of the text. Just what role does the advertising industry play in the narration of a postcolonial nation? *Joebell and America* (a made-for-television film, which originally existed as a short story with a postcolonial narrative) provides us with a text through which we can examine the interplay among the narration of Trinidad and Tobago as a postcolonial nation, the commercial production of such a narrative and the role of the advertising industry in this postcolonial narration.

### *Narrativization of the Postcolonial Nation*

One area of contestation within the field of postcolonial studies is the very nomenclature used to describe the field. In essence, this field that seeks to uproot the seeds sown by colonial discourses is named in reference to these very structures. The concept of “post-colonial” exists only in relation to the existence of the concepts of “colonial” (Lopez, 2001). To get around this simplistic, if problematic, juxtaposition of colonizer and colonized, Homi Bhabha points to the nation as narrativized discourse, the construction of which takes place cumulatively through every text generated within, by and about that nation (H. Bhabha, 1990a). Bhabha suggests that through analysis of the “process of articulation,” the nation’s narration of itself will emerge (H. Bhabha, 1990a). This chapter seeks to unpack this process of articulation by examining the narrative of a short Trinbagonian film exploring how masculinity, femininity, desire and tensions between tradition and modernity are constructed within the narrative. In *Joebell and America*, we find a narrative that seemed universally accepted as Trinbagonian, since it is written, produced, filmed and edited about Trinidad and Tobago, by Trinbagonians, on location in Trinidad.

These characteristics, along with the widespread local acclamation of *Joebell and America* among critics and audiences made this film an anomaly within the Trinidad and Tobago context, on several levels. *Joebell and America* signified a filmic production that brought together the artistic, popular and commercial spheres of cultural production in Trinidad and Tobago. But what was it about this production that secured its place in the canon of Trinbagonian visual culture? What were the realities that defined the industry

within which producers realized this made-for-television film? What defined the means of production, the producers and the audience of this film? And finally what was the televisual context of the film's airing? In this analysis, I am interested in uncovering what information *Joebell and America* provides about what discourses are negotiated in relation to national identity and how such discourses are integrated into a televisual reality. In sum, I want to problematize a sphere within which a nation negotiates visual sovereignty, in relation to the texts that comprise television programming.

In order to investigate where the process of visual sovereignty takes place in the televisual project of narrating the nation, I am considering the "whole flow" of *Joebell and America* (R. Williams, 1974), or the intertext of the film's narrative and the television advertisements placed in the commercial breaks when the film was aired on TV6 for the first time in 2004. At this level of my analysis, I consider the emergence of narrative themes across the "whole flow" of both television movie and television advertisements. Finally, I analyze the mediascape backdrop against which *Joebell* was produced and aired and the ways in which the film became a product of intersections among advertising, film, video, and television industries. I also analyze audience responses to the film that were recorded in the media by way of letters to editors of newspapers, and articles that covered the production and airing of the film. Finally, I focus on a phone interview with one independent producer whose production house was involved in the production of *Joebell*. This analysis will provide insight into how the postcolonial nation is narrated through the text of a made-for-television film, while offering the reader a practical example of the significance of advertising as both industry and text in that narration.

*Joebell and the Chasm of Postcolonial Desire*

Postcolonial desire can be thought of as a nation's imagining of itself, inspired by a quest to escape ties to its colonial past, in relation to culture, politics and governance. Ella Shohat considers this desire as a diplomatic reference to a nation's resistance to colonial or imperial forces (E. Shohat, 1992). Postcolonial studies problematizes this desire, noting that postcolonial nations are defined in relation to that which they try to escape, and that the field of postcolonial studies is named in direct relation to the toxic influence of colonialism that it seeks to unpack (E. Shohat & Stam, 1994). We might think of the postcolonial nation as existing in the chasm of claiming and simultaneously escaping its own heritage. How is this chasm negotiated within postcolonial texts that are universally recognized as representative of the nation's cultural identity? How does analysis of such negotiation help us build toward a theorization of visual sovereignty?

Earl Lovelace is an internationally acclaimed Trinbagonian playwright, novelist, and short-story writer and author of such canonical works as *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979) and *The Wine of Astonishment* (1982). Lovelace's short story "Joebell and America" was published in an anthology titled *Colonial and Postcolonial Fiction* (E. Lovelace, 1999). Through the characterizations in "Joebell," Lovelace's writing builds on such themes as national identity, first-worldisms versus third-worldisms, desire, migration and experiences of immigration. As with much of his other work, Lovelace considers the frustrations of a postcolonial existence and the liminality of recognizing a colonial past, forging an independent present while seeking a First World future. It is important to consider the original written text of "Joebell and America" not because this



analysis will focus on the adaptation of the short story into a made-for-television film, but for two other distinct reasons. First, “Joebell” as a written text, while originally published in Lovelace’s collections of short stories *A Brief Conversion and Other Stories*, already exists within the realm of postcolonial studies, having been published in this anthology of postcolonial fiction. This is significant because my selection of *Joebell and America* as postcolonial televisual presentation rests in some places upon the positioning of “Joebell” the short story as postcolonial text.

The second reason for introducing the literary origins of *Joebell and America* is to consider the familial influences that manifest in the production of the television film. From short story to screenplay to television film, the narrative of *Joebell* has alighted upon several branches of the Lovelace family tree. The original Lovelace short story of “Joebell,” however, is based on the true story of John Wayne Fortune, a resident of Matura, Trinidad, who tried to enter the United States with falsified documents. John Wayne’s story was transformed from personal account to short story to screenplay to film through a Lovelace family collaboration.

The made-for-television film *Joebell and America* first aired on TV6 in Trinidad and Tobago in November 2004, having been launched a week prior at the Movietowne multiplex, where the offerings are usually 100 per cent Hollywood fare (McFarlane-Alvarez, 2004). This juxtaposition of local text against a mediascape dominated by imported texts also aligns with the symbolic positioning of Trinidad and Tobago and global flows within the narrative of *Joebell and America*. Even at the titular level of this filmic narrative, *Joebell and America* addresses the internal conflict of postcolonial identity. “Joebell” is representative of Trinidad and Tobago, or Trinbagonianness, while

“America” is representative of both colonial and imperial hegemony. Even in the title of this film, the construction of postcolonial is in direct relation to the colonial or imperial.

We first meet Joebell against the opening credits of the film. “Joebell and America” is presented in typefaces that signify the relationship between and juxtaposition of the two signifiers. The word “Joebell” appears in a serif font, signifying tradition and complexity. On the other hand, the word “America” is presented in a larger, bolder, sans serif font, signifying modernity, accessibility, universality and simplicity (Wheildon & Warwick, 1995). America, within these titles, is dominant to the symbolic construction of Joebell. This choice of the different typefaces sets the stage for the tensions that will play out between Joebell as both character and signifier of the postcolonial nation and his dream of America.

Building on the theme of postcolonial desire, both colonial and postcolonial narratives often tell the stories of people trapped between worlds and between discourses negotiated through these worlds. Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* tells the story of Okonkwo, who struggles to protect his Ibo ancestral traditions despite the infiltration of colonial missionaries into his Nigerian village. Based on similar discourses as *Things Fall Apart*, “Joebell and America” is the story of a man trapped between his love for his culture and his desire to fulfill the American Dream. Joebell wants to leave Cunaripo, a village in rural postcolonial Trinidad, to go to America where “everybody have a motor car... and where it have seventy-five channels of color television that never sign off...” (A. Lovelace, 2004). From the beginning of the film, Joebell’s superobjective is to make a better life for himself in America. The dream of America is juxtaposed against the modest reality of rural postcolonial Trinidad. The “better life,” Joebell believes, is

defined by access to symbols of modernity: color television and motorcars. What he knows about America comes partially from what people have told him, but mostly from television images and from films. In the very text of this film, the narrative recognizes the importance of visual narratives in constructing the postcolonial nation's sense of itself in relation to the rest of the world. For Joebell, Trinidad and Tobago is a place from which to escape at all costs in order to reach the dream of America.

The narrative of this film expresses postcolonial desire through Joebell's obsession with American icons. Joebell seeks to escape his postcolonial existence by admiring and mimicking the better life he sees in American films and on American television. Joebell loves John Wayne (which is no surprise considering the story is based on the true story of a man named John Wayne Fortune) and American Westerns; he follows American sports and knows all the key players on the top teams. The choice of the Western as Joebell's favorite genre of Hollywood film is significant the theme of postcolonialism, as Thomas Schatz notes that the Western is integral to America's construction of its own identity and values and examines such conflicts as progress versus tradition in America's own positioning as postcolonial (Schatz, 1981). Joebell loves Westerns because the genre is the essence of America, and because it will take him away from his existence in un-American rural Trinidad, which in contrast to Joebell's imaginings of America is too slow, boring and simple to keep him happy.

In *Joebell and America*, the narrative uses the traditional Trinbagonian musical form of extempo<sup>2</sup> calypso to tell Joebell's story, thus setting up the dangers of postcolonial desire. In the opening montage which includes an exterior night shot, Joebell walks past a group of four men seated outside a rum-shop or "rec" club." Inside this rec'

club, we see Joebell interacting with men gambling on a game of cards. When Joebell emerges from the club again, the four men seated outside begin to sing a slow, drawling traditional extempo calypso to Joebell. In the words of this calypso, these men sing of Joebell in the third person, and warn Joebell to go home and stop gambling. At first, it seems that the calypsonians are representative of a non-diegetic narrative device. This perspective changes, however, as Joebell interacts with the men, answering their warnings. Joebell sings extempo back to the men, singing, “Very soon I will have the ace, when I get up and leave this place.” Joebell uses the traditional extempo calypso form to express his comfort with Trinbagonian culture, his desire to leave the country and his position of control of the narrative. In this instance, the use of extempo complicates the relationship between Joebell’s love for his country’s history and tradition and his contempt for “this place.” Like the postcolonial nation, Joebell oscillates between appreciation for his own identity and contempt for that which defines that identity. Also, like the postcolonial nation, Joebell strives to control the narration of his own story.

It is Joebell’s dream (the text’s representation of postcolonial desire) that keeps him in a state of perpetual fluctuation between his identity as Trinbagonian and his desire to be American. Joebell tells his dream to the people who surround him, from his doubting mother who wants good sense and a stable life to prevail for Joebell, to his girlfriend who ultimately shares his dream and plans to meet him in America once Joebell has established himself there. But desire is not enough to facilitate the realization of Joebell’s migration. Since he has a criminal record, Joebell cannot get the certificate of good character from the local police, which he needs in order to secure his passport. Without the necessary documents required for travel, Joebell will not be able to leave

Cunaripo, nor fulfill his dream. In the film, the mention of the passport provides the viewer with the first manifestation of the nation's boundaries. To leave Trinidad and enter America, Joebell must provide evidence that he belongs within the nation of Trinidad and Tobago, and has been given official state authorization to enter America. It is the boundary between Trinidad and America that represent obstacles to Joebell's flight from his cultural identity.

The narrative tells us that Joebell's dream is unrealistic and itself is the cause of his discontent. He is unhappy with who he is, always striving to be that which he will never be: American. Shortly after the opening credits, the next sequence begins with a medium shot of a donkey eating grass. This interstitial shot serves two purposes. First, the shot situates the narrative in a rural environment, while secondly, the donkey refers to the symbolic constructs of stubbornness, simplemindedness, stupidity, and in the Trinidad and Tobago sense, near obsolescence, all of which are themes and characterizations that play around Joebell within the narrative. Metaphorically, the world thinks of Joebell as a jackass. Throughout the film, people in his immediate environment counsel Joebell about his lack of direction and his social ineptitude. Joebell's mother, his girlfriend and his girlfriend's mother all refer to Joebell as a dreamer, as someone who needs direction, needs a job and need to get in touch with "reality." The shoemaker who makes Joebell's traveling boots warns Joebell against his foolhardiness, guiding Joebell to be more careful with his dreams. This positioning of Joebell as a jackass is later emphasized when Joebell is playing a poker game at the rec' club and he shouts "Jack, Jack, Jack!" At first it seems that Joebell is referring to himself as a jackass for losing, but it is quickly revealed that the jack in his poker hand has allowed him to win the round

of poker and therefore to win back his pride. The world sees Joebell as weak, because he has no respect for his heritage and ancestry and is ready to uproot himself from his family and culture, to pursue his dream and therefore denounce his true identity.

In *Post-ethnic America*, David Hollinger asserts that ethnic identification should be an issue of volition: one should be allowed to choose whether one self-identifies as black or white or Hispanic. In the narrative of *Joebell*, we see Joebell's desire for voluntary self-identification curbed by the realities of national borders. The only possible way for Joebell to enter America, and therefore be American, is by way of a forged passport and an illegitimate document that identifies Joebell as an honorably discharged US soldier. Although Joebell has never been to America, he is not intimidated by the warning of the man who delivers the passport. The deliverer of the passport warns Joebell that he will have to speak in an American accent when he arrives in America in order to convince the immigration officers that he is the man depicted in the passport. Joebell's delight in this prospect reflects his deep connection with American culture. His confidence in his own ability to speak with an American accent comes from his exposure to American films and television. Joebell summarizes both his ability to speak different languages and his identification with America by saying, "I feel American. Is just I ent born there."

In the narrative, we see Joebell as subject of global flows through the Trinbagonian mediascape. He desires being part of that which he has learned about through the mass media, through television, magazines and cinema. He knows how to speak American and understands the roots of American ideology without ever having set foot in America, because of his exposure to American visual culture that dominates the

Trinbagonian mediascape. In this regard, Joebell seems to be passive consumer of imported culture and North American ideology, unable to “un-think” (E. Shohat & Stam, 1994) or unpack the visual texts that have dominated his cultural experience. In Joebell’s world, the question of why American films dominate the Trinbagonian mediascape is never addressed. However the narrative positions the effects of this cultural dominance as tragic.

### *Issues of Authenticity, Identity and Mimicry*

The postcolonial nation is always seeking ways to establish and retain its identity, despite the flows and influences of globalization and the effects of imperialism. Yet in order to have its identity gain currency within the context of globalization, it must in some ways acknowledge its colonial past. In the narrative of *Joebell and America*, we gain a sense of what happens when the postcolonial nation is caught between seeking authenticity in its past, erasing the effects of colonial hegemony and negotiating its identity within the context of globalization and imperial discourses.

A turning point in the film occurs when Joebell feels the tension between wanting to hold on to his Trinbagonian identity, while hoping to escape that identity and flee to America. When Joebell finally arrives in the US immigration hall in Puerto Rico, he is dressed in a cowboy hat, his traveling boots and sunglasses, and he is speaking in a pseudo-American accent. Joebell is confident that his portrayal of an American is as real as the Americans he has seen in Westerns. The immigration official who checks his documents is unconvinced and directs Joebell to a room where he will be questioned. In the interrogation room, without any mistake, Joebell answers a chain of questions asked

by the immigration official. Joebell's confidence soars. He has no doubt in his ability to convince the officials that he is an American citizen. He has learned the rules of this game through global flows into the Trinbagonian mediascape. He has been practicing for this moment his entire life. Joebell is the consummate expert on American popular culture and therefore understands and can adopt an American identity. His confidence plummets, though, when the official asks him to recite the alphabet. Joebell knows the test is deceptively simple. Between the letters of his recital, Joebell flashes back (cinematically achieved through cross-cutting) to his family, his girlfriend, his life and his home, realizing after all that perhaps life in America is not what he wants. With each letter of the alphabet, Joebell's inner thought-voice becomes increasingly defiant. Ultimately he realizes he does not care about America at all. Finally, when he delivers the British pronunciation of "zed" instead of the American pronunciation of "zee," and realizes he has failed the test of "being American," Joebell appears almost relieved to realize his fate is deportation back to Trinidad. The true and ultimate test of whether Joebell is American or not-American is not in his provision of official document, but in how he expresses his identity verbally.

Seeking a place for itself in the global ecumene, the postcolonial nation ultimately finds the uniqueness of its own identity enmeshed with its colonial past. Joebell finally finds fulfillment when all aspects of his identity collide in his imagining: his love for the natural environment of Cunaripo, his longing to be among family and friends and his recognition of his colonial past. Joebell pronounces the last letter of the alphabet "zed" because of Trinidad and Tobago's colonial past and his own education within a still British-influenced system. Finally, Joebell reunites with his girlfriend and is back where



he began (and, the film resolves, where he belongs) in Trinidad and Tobago. While Joebell has not realized his dream of being in America, we are led to understand that he realizes that the American dream pales in comparison to the reality of his life in rural Trinidad.

### *Joebell as Consumer Citizen*

In *Consumers and Citizens*, Nestor Garcia Canclini asserts that with globalization on the rise, there is an increasing trend toward the ideological conflation of consumers and citizens. In this argument, Canclini implies that the condition of postmodernity gives rise to people who identify less with a nation, and more with market trends (Canclini, 2001) and therefore an imagined collective whose participation in public life is defined through consumption, rather than political involvement. However, analysis of *Joebell and America* indicates that globalization does not necessarily mean that market forces have superseded the nation in interpellating the citizen-consumer. To understand how the market plays against the nation in *Joebell and America*, we need to ask: how is the protagonist of this film positioned in relation to consumption? In the end, is it the nation or the market that wins as the basis upon which Joebell self-identifies?

In one scene, a group of laborers including Joebell work at the side of a country road on which we see no cars. The backdrop of this scene is rich green foliage, as are most of the outdoor scenes in this film. Throughout the scene, we see more greenery than sky, indicating that Cunaripo is set in a valley in Trinidad and Tobago. The laborers in this scene are cutting grass at the side of the road. Two women enter the scene, walking along the road and though it is mid-morning, the older of the two women comments on

the fact that the laborers are already finishing their work for the day. “Lucky you,” she says somewhat sarcastically, “I now going to work.” Joebell, it seems has a “10-day work,” or a short-term manual labor appointment offered by the Trinidad and Tobago government, usually involving the cleaning of drains or cutting of grass. Joebell is a working man, but the implication is that he is a lazy worker. In the Trinidad and Tobago context, he is not interested in the stability of a permanent job. Joebell is happy-go-lucky and content living from one ten-day opportunity to the next. His cultural worth in Trinidad and Tobago society is low because he is a temporary, menial laborer who lacks ambition.

Yet Joebell’s very existence is driven by the desire to consume. He wants to get to America so he can become the ultimate consumer, owning a television set and a car like “everyone else in America.” Joebell and his girlfriend Alicia both want to make money, and their dreams to do so largely define their characters and their relationship to each other. Alicia works in the village “parlour” called Last Chance Snackette, where she serves customers from behind a counter, caged with burglar-proof bars. Alicia works at the Snackette so that someday she can finish building the house that her deceased father started building. “My mother wants me to sell it and use the money to go away and study, but... I can’t sell it,” she says. Alicia is rooted in family history and tradition. She is happy to be in Cunaripo and plans to stay there for the rest of her life. Alicia’s rootedness and sense of stability contrast Joebell’s discontent with his surroundings and his desire to be uprooted. For Joebell, consumption is at the root of his motivation to leave his heritage behind, but he never speaks about what work he will do to make money so

that he might become a better American consumer. For Alicia, on the other hand, her desire to make money is built upon her desire to protect her family heritage.

The narrative further plays out this privileging of stability and continuity, through the construct of motherhood. Joebell's mother and Alicia's mother are worried about them. Joebell's mother worries that he doesn't have a plan and that he won't listen to her. "Is like two stick break in your ears," she complains. To rid Joebell of his misfortunes and relieve her own misgivings, Joebell's mother takes him to see a priest, then to see a "seer-man" (a psychic or medicine man). Joebell's mother seeks to protect him spiritually. When Joebell is out of the house one day, she sprinkles holy water around his bedroom. Joebell's mother wants to use religion and tradition to protect him from his desire to possess material wealth and his desire to be possessed by materialism. Alicia's mother also takes Alicia to see the priest to rid her of her desire for Joebell. Both mothers wish for their children innocence and continuation of village tradition. Both mothers denounce the desire for love, change and material possessions, and they prefer the simple, quiet life of hard work and focus on family. The women that surround Joebell guide him back to his roots, with Alicia drawing him back to Cunaripo through her own desire to stay within her community, while his mother draws him back to religion and tradition, guiding him away from desire for consumerism and modernity.

The village of Cunaripo is the backdrop against which these tensions of tradition and desire for modernity play out. Cunaripo is devoid of the trappings of metropolitanism. Throughout the entire film, we see only two cars. Cunaripo is richly forested, its greenery interrupted only by modest houses, churches, village meeting places, and winding roads. In each exterior shot, we see the roads as narrow and winding,

without painted lines, and without neatly trimmed edges where the grass meets the road. Cunaripo, like Joebell, is rough at the edges. Despite being rough at the edges, Joebell is a smooth “saga boy,” flashy in character, comfortable in his own skin and a charmer. He is happy in his environment where everyone knows his name and where in the middle of a hot day, he can take a river bath and sing at the top of his lungs. Joebell is evidently happy with his being and with his environment, yet the attraction of America haunts him and his desire to consume seems at first to outweigh his contentment in Cunaripo.

In the first half of the film, Joebell is wanton in his desire to get to America, willing to sacrifice heritage, love and culture to get there. There is, however, a turning point in this narrative where we finally become aware of Joebell’s more profound *raison d’être*. Joebell seems to be a hapless drifter, but in one conversation with his mother, Joebell’s essence becomes clear. When Joebell’s mother reveals her concern about Joebell paying to get the illegal letter so that he can get his passport, Joebell responds:

Ma, this world is just a hustle. Everybody running some kind of game, putting on some kind of show. And the only thing that separates people is that some people have power and others don’t have none. Who in, in. And who out, out.

And that is what I kick against (A. Lovelace, 2004).

In this moment, it becomes clear that Joebell might not be the drifter that everyone indicts him to be. At this point in the narrative, Joebell finally stands up for his beliefs: Joebell stands in opposition to the power structures that exist and that allow those in power to control the status quo, while those without power have to play the game by the rules of

the powerful. In this moment, Joebell's journey through transformation to empowerment begins.

In the end, the dream of America dissolves, because of an inner realization. Joebell begins to dream of Alicia and of Cunaripo, and he realizes that his desire, all along, was to be home. The shift from wanting to go to America to wanting to go home, however, comes as no surprise because throughout the narrative, Joebell is happy and fulfilled in his environment, always smiling and quietly philosophical in his contentment with being himself. He has been pulled in one direction toward an existence defined through consumption, represented by his dream of going to America. Pulling him in the other direction, Joebell's desire for his home in Trinidad (represented by countryside, family, tradition and Alicia) emerged triumphant.

The narrative of *Joebell and America* suggests that it was Joebell's diet of mediated images depicting America as nirvana which made him want to flee Trinidad to go to America. Yet the filmic construction depicts Cunaripo as devoid of media. Even though Joebell repeatedly refers to television and films and sports programs, we never see a television within the frame. The only time we become aware of mass media is in Last Chance when Joebell reads captions from a newspaper. In the first instance, it is because Cunaripo is so devoid of the artifacts of popular culture that he so loves, that he wants to leave the valley. He wants to be in America, which is the source of all things popular. By the end of the narrative, however, because Cunaripo is so pristine and unpolluted by modernity, Joebell readily decides to stay. While the intrusion of North American visual culture into Trinidad and Tobago's moving image mediascape lured Joebell away, the simplest unit of linguistic brought him back. Joebell realized

that he was Trinbagonian and “not American,” because of his British pronunciation of “zed,” reminding him of his Trinbagonian roots and his desire to be home. In this, the narrative seems to suggest that the survival of postcolonial identity within the context of globalization, must be hinged upon recognition of that identity’s colonial past. In the characterization of Joebell, the tensions of postcoloniality play out: the desire to remain grounded in the past of history and tradition is conflicted with dreams of development and progress toward First World country status and the need to escape the shackles of a colonial past.

By the end of *Joebell and America*, we realize that national discourse supersedes discourses of globalism. When Joebell thinks of leaving Alicia, he reflects on Adam and Eve and notes that a man is never whole until he finds the other half of himself. At the end of the film, Joebell is reunited with Alicia and is complete. Joebell is complete when he is in touch with the roots of his identity and the things that complete him: his woman, his heritage and his culture. In the lyrics of the song that closes the film, the narrative also emphasizes the themes of completion through union and the importance of national identity. In that song, the phrase, “together we achieve” makes reference to the national motto that appears on the Trinidad and Tobago coat of arms (See Figure 8). The narrative suggests that Joebell and Trinidad and Tobago are strongest when they are united as one, when they are focused on building a cultural heritage, with the nation steering its own narration. The story of *Joebell and America* suggests that postcolonial identity is complete only when it recognizes the totality of its pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial past, and only then can it withstand the ideological pressures of globalization and imperialism.



Figure 8. The Trinidad and Tobago coat of arms and motto “Together We Aspire. Together We Achieve” the words of which are echoed in the song that closes the narrative of *Joebell and America*.

This analysis of *Joebell and America* provides insight into how the narrative of this film addresses postcolonial identity in relation to tensions between progress and tradition, between self and Other, between colonial and postcolonial and between consumption and citizenship. Through its negotiation among these dualisms, the postcolonial nation continually defines and redefines itself in terms of what constitutes it and how it defines itself in relation to other nations. The postcolonial narrative emphasizes what Homi Bhabha refers to as the Janus-facedness of the nation, looking perpetually in two directions: forward and backward, inward and outward. More insightful to us as postcolonial theorists, however, *Joebell and America* signifies that the postcolonial nation can realize its desire to thrive within the global ecumene as a culturally distinctive entity only through inclusion of the nation’s colonial past in its imagining of itself.

Gaining a more *contextual* understanding of *Joebell and America* requires analysis from a perspective beyond the film's narrative. The complete flow of discourse surrounding the airing of *Joebell* on TV6 is a more fragmented narrative made up of more elements than just the duration of the actual film. Within the context of local versus global programming, the concept of flow takes on new significance. *Joebell* stood out as significant in the Trinidad and Tobago mediascape because of its devotion to local production style and values. Everything about *Joebell and America* represented Trinidad and Tobago, including its cast, crew, writers, locations and production aesthetics. However, only a small audience viewed *Joebell* as a self-contained narrative without interruption, when the film premiered during the formal launch function at Movietowne. The remainder of the Trinidad and Tobago audience saw *Joebell* as a television movie within the TV6 evening programming lineup. As such, it is important to consider this text not in isolation as a self-contained narrative, but rather as it was viewed by most of its audience in its programmed context, placed within a television schedule and more particularly with advertisements and promotional messages inserted into its narrative.

Raymond Williams' concept of *flow* provides us with a useful theoretical framework for considering the relevance of *Joebell and America* in the broader context of Trinidad and Tobago television programming. My argument is that when television advertisements are representative of an otherwise minimally represented localness, and these advertisements are placed within the context of imported programs, there is a rupture in the flow between local advertisement and foreign program. The viewer is required to make a categorical leap from one culturally influenced set of production



values to another. On the other hand, when local advertisements appear within a local program, the flow is more seamless. According to Williams, television offers more than simple monolithic program narratives:

What is being offered is not, in older terms, a programme of discrete units with particular insertions, but a planned flow, in which the true series is not the published sequence of programme items but this sequence transformed by the inclusion of another kind of sequence, so that these sequences together compose the real flow, the real 'broadcasting' (R. Williams, 1974).

This “real flow” is similar to what John Fiske refers to as a succession of images that constitutes the cultural experience of watching television (Fiske, 1988), and it is this succession of images that I consider within the context of the TV6 airing of *Joebell*. In this next section, I consider the flow that emerged when *Joebell and America* aired on TV6 in November 2004, complete with promotional spots and advertisements that were inserted within the program’s time-slot. Table 1 below provides a complete summary of the flow of programming including all of these elements. As becomes evident here (See Table 1), there are several disparate themes that emerge through this summarization of the program and the inserted elements. What thematic intertextuality exists across filmic narrative and advertisement or promotional themes?

Segment Number	Program Segment	Narrative Synopsis and Emergent Themes
1	TV6 Promo	“A TV6 Movie Presentation” Station identification and self-promotion
2	<i>Joebell</i> (Act I) Titles and Introduction	<i>Joebell</i> opening sequence Character and setting establishment Introduction of Joebell’s dream: going to America
3	Beauty Clinic Day Spa Ad	Be more beautiful Self improvement <b>: discontent and improvement</b>
4	CLICO.com	Take the insurance company with you You could if you wanted to
5	KC Ice Blass Mints	Local candy Refreshing : <b>improvement</b>
6	Bed Quarters	Happy Holidays from Bed Quarters : <b>Christmas</b> Deck your bedroom
7	MET Wholesale	<b>Christmas and consumerism</b>
8	Sital Careers	Get the career you want : <b>discontent and improvement</b>
9	TV6 Promo	TV6 as top television station TV6 has the top 20 shows
10	<i>Joebell</i> (Act II)	Mother prays for protection for Joebell She fears he dreams too big Church and “seer man” are consulted to protect Joebell Temptation Redemption in nature (a river bath)

Segment Number	Program Segment	Narrative Synopsis and Emergent Themes
11	Nandlal and Sons	Wholesalers sale for <b>Christmas</b>
12	National Lottery	Win big prizes : <b>chance</b>
13	Indian Music Concert	Bollywood performer in Trinidad live in concern (Babul Sypriyo) : <b>international, hubridity</b>
14	Sital Careers (repeat)	Get the career you want: <b>discontent and improvement</b>
15	Yufe's Stores	Buy exciting <b>Christmas</b> gifts
16	Joebell (Act III)	Spirituality through death in the community Live pan in mise en scene Love and promises Gambling and loss Introduction of the illegal passport
17	Carib Beer Comedy marathon	Live comedy show, local talent
18	Amral's Travel	Flights to New York : <b>America</b>
19	KC Butternut confectionary	Children love Butternut
20	Sital Careers (repeat)	Get the career you want: <b>discontent and improvement</b>
21	Amral's Travel	Flights to New York: <b>America</b>
22	Unique books and Sports	Hulk action figure and BMX bikes (imported desire)
23	Joebell (Act IV)	Gambling Tempting fate
24	American Stores	Santa comes from North Pole to shop at American Stores <b>Christmas</b>
25	Diana Power Mints	Man on the street testimonials Local expressions in relation to mint
26	Ferris Bargain City	<b>Christmas</b> shopping Bargains
27	Southern Food Basket	Local and international favorites International quality
28	Joebell (Act V)	Joebell cuts his hair (dreadlocks) Cutting off roots Transformation into "American" begins People who leave Trinidad are traitors The scam

Segment Number	Program Segment	Narrative Synopsis and Emergent Themes
29	Courts Furniture Stores	Credit Beats Cash Hire Purchase <b>Consumerism</b>
30	Eastern Credit Union	Get a loan, invest Put life in balance: <b>Consumerism</b>
31	Reliable Appliances	Parts and services
32	KC Candy Ice Blass (repeat)	Refreshing mintiness
33	Sital Careers (repeat)	Get the career you want: <b>discontent and improvement</b>
34	Joebell (Act VI)	Departure Joebell “plays Yankee” Testing Failing the test Recognition of love for home Realization and self-love Fearlessness Return to home
35	Joebell Closing credits	Song: “Together” Together achieving, aspiring, growing Joebell and Alicia together The Nation together
36	Flores de San José Music video	Parang Venezuelan influence in Trinidad Christmas music

*Table 1. The flow of Joebell and America, including the made-for-television film, promotional spots and advertisements placed within the film’s narrative.*

Two primary themes that emerge through consideration of the flow of *Joebell* are those of Christmas and consumerism, reflecting the time of year, the dominance of Christianity in the Trinidad and Tobago culture and the consumerist desire to complete the cycle of commodity production by purchasing consumer products (Canclini, 2001). From one commercial break to another, advertisements offer direct calls-to-action, such as “buy,” “get,” and “take,” thus positioning the viewer as a consumer of materialism. Underlying these advertisements is the Trinidad and Tobago tradition of “putting away

house” for Christmas, when families clean and paint their homes from top to bottom, throwing or giving away old items and bringing out or buying new items. These advertisements deploy a traditional practice to increase capitalist behavior. In terms of advertising, this draws the viewer into a tradition of renewal that is an integral part of Trinidad and Tobago Christmas.

On a deeper level, there are cultural connections among the advertisements for companies that offer new suites of furniture on sale for the Christmas season, the supermarket that provides customers with shopping of international standards, and Joebell’s desire for all things American. Joebell loves America because “everybody have a motor car” and it is the place where “everything big.” For Joebell, America is the Mecca of materialism. Meanwhile, for sale in Trinidad is the American Dream from a store called “American Stores” (which is really a Trinidadian retail outlet, masquerading as American). In Trinidad are shops where Santa, who is the God of materialism and hedonism (Belk, 2000), comes to check his list twice and to shop. In the film, consumerism exists in specific physical places within the narrative: in the Snackette, where Joebell buys a coconut drop, in the rec’ club, where he buys drinks and gambles money; and in the shoemaker’s shop, where he cannot get his traveling boots until he comes up with the money. While in the real world in Trinidad and Tobago, advertising is part of everyday life, in *Joebell and America*, Cunaripo is a world devoid of signs of consumption and advertisements. There are no televisions, and the only signs of advertising are on the wall outside the rec’ club where two beer bottles are painted. The implication here is that the ideal world of postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago operates through structures of capitalism, yet it negates the existence of commercial media and

advertising as a key component of the existence of the postcolonial nation. The general absence of advertising in the world of Cunaripo mirrors postcolonial theory's own neglect of advertising as integral to the nation's imagining of itself.

Another thematic grouping that emerges from this summary of program elements within the whole flow of *Joebell* is that of self-improvement, discontent with self, and desire for the commodity sign (Goldman, 1992). From the beauty spa to the company offering career services, the advertisements placed within *Joebell* offer the viewer ways of improving self, whether through skin treatments or career changes. "You can be a better you," the ads promise. The commodity signs here are perfection, betterment and improvement, and the products offered are the means by which these root values might be obtained.

For the character Joebell, betterment first takes the shape of a dream to go to America. Later in the story, Joebell thinks he is bettering his odds of getting to America, and therefore his chances of improving his life through consumption, by changing his image. Joebell cuts off his dreadlocks and emerges from Victory's barbershop clean-shaven and perfecting his "Yankee" accent. In the film, self-improvement comes at a price, both monetarily and in terms of cutting off one's roots. Ultimately, however, Joebell realizes that happiness cannot be attained through consumption, or through existence within pure capitalism. By the end of the narrative, Joebell muses that he can best express his self-improvement through self-acceptance and cultural consciousness.

Two central themes play out in the whole flow of commercials and film. First, there is the interpellation of the individual through the discourses of nationalism and consumerism. Second, there is the existence of commodities as signifiers of cultural

identity that are in perpetual states of readiness. Joebell continues his transformation from country boy to “American” man by donning a hat, sunglasses and fur-trimmed leather jacket. Joebell confirms his identity through choices of consumption. In this narrative, America is the simulacrum of consumption, and as a commodity itself, it always lies in wait. The “motor cars” and television sets, of which Joebell repeatedly dreams, remain in an imagined perpetual state of readiness for his consumption. Similarly, in the advertisements that complete the whole flow of *Joebell*, the products lie in a perpetual state of readiness for the viewing public’s consumption (Williamson, 1978). The living room furniture awaits purchase and placement within the consumer’s home, the day-spa awaits clients whom they can help to make beautiful.

Chance-taking is another important theme that emerges from the flow of *Joebell*. Joebell takes chances at the poker table in the local rum-shop, hoping to win the money to travel to America. Aligning with this discourse of chance, risk and investment, *Joebell* viewers are enticed with big prizes and encouraged to take the chance of playing the national lottery. The recognition of chance positions Joebell, and likewise the consumer, as having free will or agency. Joebell and the viewing consumer can choose not to play, or can choose how to play. The overarching narrative suggests that it is worth taking a chance if the pay-off is sufficiently high.

It becomes evident through the narratives of *Joebell* and the advertisements that economic capital is a major motivating force in daily Trinbagonian life. Advertisements for loans, investments, and credit, encourage consumers to make more, and have more, so that they might consume more. The thematic treatment of money as central to Trinidad and Tobago culture repeats within the flow of this program. Money is what Joebell needs

to secure his forged passport, his plane ticket, and his boots for traveling. Everything that will allow Joebell to become American requires money. Being American or being in America is part of *Joebell's* dramatic spine, so the stakes for achieving either are high. If he does not win the poker game, he will not advance toward his dream. In the first part of the film, his desire to be a full-fledged consumer in the land of consumption seems to justify the risk of playing poker. As the narrative moves toward the didactic conclusion, however, Joebell learns that the honorable reason for earning financial capital is to have power so that one can preserve and protect one's cultural heritage.

Another theme that emerges within this overarching narrative is hybridity of Trinidad and Tobago culture. One advertisement promotes a live concert to be held in Trinidad featuring a Bollywood superstar. This advertisement interpellates the Indian population within Trinidad and Tobago. The theme of hybridity is further advanced at the end of the first airing of *Joebell and America* when TV6 aired a music video of a Soca Parang group called *Los Flores de San Jose*, reflecting the influence and proximity of Venezuela at play in Trinbagonian culture. Parang is a musical form that originates in Venezuela and is popular at Christmastime in particular areas around Trinidad and Tobago, where large "Spanish" or Venezuelan populations settled. Lopinot is one such village, which was where *Joebell and America* was filmed. Soca parang is the hybridization of soca (itself a hybrid form of soul and calypso) and parang. While the lyrics of traditional parang are in Spanish, soca parang lyrics are in Trinbagonian English. The airing of a soca parang video after *Joebell and America* indicates the cultural influence of nearby Venezuela and the layers of hybridity that exist within Trinidad and Tobago culture. The film's narrative also portrays Trinidad and Tobago as constituted by



hybridity. Joebell's brother lives in Venezuela, and Joebell is advised that it is through Venezuela (and then Puerto Rico) he will find easiest access to America. Throughout the flow of the program, Venezuela is a gateway for cultural flow into and out of Trinidad and Tobago.

The whole narrative flow of *Joebell* including film and advertisements constructs Trinidad and Tobago as a place of hybridity that is African, Indian, Chinese, Venezuelan, spiritual, consumerist, and rural. In Trinidad and Tobago hybridity takes on complex configurations. There are complex hybrid cultural forms, such as soca parang, and even chutney soca parang (soca parang with an Indian influence), in which two distinct cultural influences merge to become a new distinct cultural form. However, Trinbagonian hybridity also implies the coexistence of cultural forms in their "original" form. Hybridity, in this case means the emergence of new forms of cultural expression with the continuation of original streams of cultural influence.

The dominant theme throughout the flow of narrative in the televising of *Joebell and America* is the myth and fetishization of America. The advertisement for Amral's travel promises flights to New York, where many Trinbagonians complete their Christmas shopping or visit relatives. From the Trinbagonian perspective, in *Joebell* and in the advertisements, the promise of New York and of America is prosperity, consumerism, quality of life, and quality of products and services. The ad for *American Stores* offers furniture and appliances that are marketed through the signification of Americanness. Furniture and appliances sold by American Stores must be American or of American standard, and therefore of the highest quality. Similarly, the promotional spot for TV6 promoting the station's top placement in recent media surveys explains that the

TV6 lineup offers the Top 20 shows on television in Trinidad and Tobago. The program excerpts of all the featured programs are noticeably imported North American television shows including *Cedric the Entertainer*, *The Young and the Restless*, and *The Bernie Mac Show*, among many others. In *Joebell* the simplicity of rural life in Trinidad and Tobago is portrayed as more authentic, more desirable and leading to greater happiness than the promise of consumption and the imagining of “America.” Yet in the flow of *Joebell*, the fetishization of “America” within Trinidad and Tobago mediated discourse is still prevalent.

My narrative analysis of *Joebell and America* uncovered the ways in which postcolonial identity is implicative of such themes as modernity versus tradition, coloniality versus postcoloniality, and consumption versus national identity. Placing narrative analysis of *Joebell and America* alongside analysis of the flow of *Joebell and America* as televised on TV6, however, allows for a more in-depth understanding of how the narrative of the film intersected with advertisement themes. Analyzing the film within the context of the flow in which it was programmed provides insight into the complete text received by the viewing audience of *Joebell* during the TV6 broadcast. Indeed several major common themes emerged (including Christmas, consumerism, discontent, improvement, America and hybridity) and became juxtaposed through this analysis, including the ways in which Trinbagonians fetishize America. According to the narrative constructed by this whole flow, Trinbagonians ultimately imagine the USA as a utopian space of pure consumption. While the narrative of *Joebell* closes didactically encouraging Trinbagonians to appreciate their own culture instead of idealizing that of other countries, advertisements still offer the ideal of America through branding or the offering of

services that will allow Trinbagonians access to the American dream. Discussion of *Joebell and America* as narrative text within a specific context adds dimension to the analysis and an understanding of the text as presented within the medium of its transmission.

In more ways than one, *Joebell and America* is representative of a text produced through the struggles of visual sovereignty and the concerted effort of several agents to facilitate the growth of the moving image mediascape in Trinidad and Tobago. *Joebell and America* as self-contained filmic narrative and as a programmed flow, reveals the tensions between postcolonial nation (signified by Joebell), its colonial past, and its present and future as characterized by imperial domination. *Joebell and America* emerges as an ideal text in which the Janus-facedness of the nation is manifest. Joebell is symbolic of postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago, a nation that seeks to define itself in defiance of colonial and imperial hegemonies. Facing inward, Trinidad and Tobago defines itself as comfortable with its own identity, still trying to conform to a designated space and function within the global ecumene. Facing outward, Trinidad and Tobago yearns to be considered among other nations considered as “developed” or “First World.”

In the larger picture, ideal Trinidad and Tobago is a unified hybridity, which will not conform to the rules of progress defined by North America. Trinidad and Tobago is rural and lives within its own definition of space and time. The contradiction is that the dream of America is what defines Joebell throughout the narrative, whether he is moving toward the dream or away from it. In a similar light, Trinidad and Tobago is defined in relation to the colonial other (Britain) and the imperial other (the West). It is in the limen between Joebell and his dream, in the immigration hall, that the “real” Joebell finally

emerges: he is distinctly Trinbagonian. Similarly, in the case of the Janus-faced nation, it is in the limen between the nation facing inward and outward, forward and backward, toward colonialism and away from it, that the hybrid space of national identity emerges. Likewise, for postcolonial theory, it is likely that by recognizing the field's dualism in its desire to privilege postcolonial national identity while erasing colonial structures of power that the field might avoid nationalism's evolution into cultural hegemony that resembles neo-colonialism.

*Joebell and America* provides us with an example of how through the process of visual sovereignty, texts can emerge that facilitate the flow of discourses of national identity. Through agreement among several participants in the development of a distinctive Trinbagonian mediascape (including *Joebell* producers, the television station, advertising producers and the audience), a filmic narrative came into being that represented Trinidad and Tobago's quest for visual sovereignty and all the challenges implied therein. Through discursive production of the whole flow of this narrative, Trinbagonians struggle to preserve visual culture that is distinctly Trinbagonian and that characterizes hybridity.

### *Challenges to the Process of Visual Sovereignty*

In Chapter Two, I established that the process of visual sovereignty is contested, with participants in the process agreeing on the national significance of building a locally-defined and regulated moving image mediascape but disagreeing on where responsibility lies for this process and how it should be negotiated. Independent producers often claim that there are insufficient financial resources and few funding

possibilities through which their productions can be brought to fruition. Yet *Joebell and America* became a reality and emerged as a success story within the Trinbagonian moving image mediascape. But what were the challenges that confronted the producers of this film, and how did they overcome these obstacles?

Before I analyze challenges that faced *Joebell and America* as a production, I want to review briefly the context of the Trinidad and Tobago mediascape. In November 2004, when *Joebell and America* first aired, there were six local television stations on the air in Trinidad and Tobago. These included TTT, TV6 (the station launched in 1991 shortly after the attempted coup and amid a changing environment of media liberalization), SynergyTV (a station owned in part by soca<sup>3</sup> star Machel Montano), ieTV (a station that launched in 2003, began 24-hour programming in 2004, and is owned by the parent company of film and video production company Video Associates), the Information Channel (or TIC, a government station, which also came into being in the 1990s era of liberalization), and Gayelle Television (the new community television station that launched in February 2004).

While this number of television stations reflects a high per capita population of television broadcast frequencies, the ultimate trajectory of two of these stations paints a more textured canvas of the Trinbagonian mediascape. In November 2004 when TV6 brought *Joebell* to the airwaves, both TTT and TIC were in the process of being phased out by the government, marking the end of an era of television in Trinidad and Tobago. The percentage of local programs on all Trinbagonian television stations in November 2004 was arguably at an all-time high, with Gayelle, Synergy and ieTV all broadcasting near-100 percent local programming.

The weekly lineup on TV6 had also changed, particularly in relation to local programming. In fact, *Joebell and America* was in production even while another local television narrative was coming to a close. *Westwood Park*, the TV6 prime time soap opera that had reached a historic sixth season, claiming its place in history as Trinidad and Tobago's first local soap opera to be ranked among the top ten programs on television, had come to an end (Islandeevents.com, 2004). In the face of increasing competition from newcomers such as Gayelle, Synergy and ieTV in the local programming arena, by November 2004 TV6 had strengthened its dedication to increasing local program content (Maharaj, 2004). So with *Westwood Park* no longer in production but with some of the production monies from the *Westwood Park* budget still in its coffers, TV6 reallocated these funds into the production of *Joebell and America* (Laird, 2005). The end of *Westwood Park* amounted to an opportunity for the producers of *Joebell*.

In other ways, however, *Westwood Park*'s history of reception amounted to a degree of uncertainty for producers and station executives. Throughout the soap opera's seasons of first runs, reception of *Westwood Park* by viewers and critics was ambivalent. As I will elaborate in a later chapter, some reviewers applauded the soap's producer-director Danielle Dieffenthaller for producing something local that was sustainable and marketable beyond Trinidad and Tobago (Pires, 2003), while others considered the soap negatively against the contextual history of local television production because of its adherence to an imported formula (Gibbons, 2004; Laird, 2004). Proponents of the serial celebrated *Westwood Park* for reaching a landmark 100 episodes and for being aired as far north in the Caribbean as Jamaica, and in Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx via the

Caribbean International Network (CIN) (Caribupdate, 2003). At the same time, critics noted *Westwood Park* as trying too hard to fit a North American model including narrative structure, acting styles, and story focus (Annabelle, 2004).

Producers made *Jobell and America* a reality using production monies left over after *Westwood Park*'s production came to an end. While these two productions came into being as a result of the same television station's focus on providing local programming to audiences and aired on the same television station, the audience and critical reception of *Jobell* was quite different from reception of *Westwood Park*. Almost unanimously, audiences received *Jobell* positively, partly because the director allowed a "natural" Trinbagonian acting style to emerge, which seemed authentic to viewers and critics, perhaps because it reflected true-to-life styles of communication for Trinbagonians. Reviewers also made laudatory comments about *Jobell and America* for the attention paid by the film's producer to details of production design and for celebrating Trinidad and Tobago culture and geography. The comparison between the two TV6 productions becomes clear in the casual words of one viewer:

I am sure that when Trinis heard that Sunday night TV6 lineup entailed a local movie production, humorous images of *Westwood Park* and *Flight of the Ibis* with all those Yankee talking characters were swirling around their heads blinding them to the fact that maybe, just maybe a local production would come close to capturing an image of our society the way we all know it exist [sic]. Well the makers of "Jobell [sic] and America" definitely does [sic] not fail in this venture. They deliver an exceptional,

beautifully shot film based in our own picturesque back yard,  
 which is guaranteed to have scenes that will impress even the most  
 merciless of critics (Triniflix.com, 2004).

This viewer's comments reflect the negative local audience reception that surrounded other Trinidad and Tobago motion picture and television productions, such as *Westwood Park* and *Flight of the Ibis*. Other viewers reported feeling a "sense of joy and pride" when watching *Joebell and America* on local television (Nawrang, 2004). Another viewer who wrote her own review of *Joebell and America* noted that this film "paved the way for local film making." In her "final verdict" after viewing the film, this viewer asserted:

We should not be shy and so venture gallantly into that  
 whole new world which is our own selves. The time has  
 come for our own movies, stories and ideas to grace our  
 screens. We have what it takes (Annabelle, 2004).

The words of this review seem to mirror the narrative of *Joebell and America*. The message across an intertextual consideration of *Joebell* is to let go of fears of expressing who "we" are. Shortly after the film's airing, one reviewer, a newspaper columnist and social commentator, considered *Joebell* in broader terms, in relation to the culture of the country of its origin. "Joebell in America, to put it simply," George John wrote, "is a triumph for Trinidad artistic endeavour" (John, 2004). While viewers and critics ultimately received *Joebell and America* positively, expression of viewers initial trepidation points out how local productions must prove themselves on their own merit as well as in relation to previous not-so-successful local film and video ventures.



Another challenge that confronted *Joebell* was an audience that views local productions critically. This is not simply a result of the audience's dislike of local moving image aesthetics. Rather it emerges as a result of the Trinbagonian audience's exposure to a diverse array of moving image texts from widespread popularity of Hollywood films and North American television programs, to appreciation for British films and television programs, and the showing of Bollywood films in cinemas and on television. Indeed, this discerning audience of viewers noted the marked differences between the production values of *Westwood Park* and *Joebell and America*, the former criticized for its poor standards of acting and production design, while the latter was celebrated for the high standards set throughout the production. These differences can be attributed to numerous variables, including the necessary time constraints of producing a soap opera in several locations (not in studio, like most North American soap operas, due to the lack of a sound stage in Trinidad and Tobago). But an interesting production fact comes to the surface in one magazine's behind-the-scenes view of *Westwood Park* (Pires, 2003).

An interview with Danielle Dieffenthaller revealed that because the soap opera featured characters and settings representative of upper class Trinbagonian society, the production required gaining access to upper class homes. Dieffenthaller provides insight into the difficulty of asking these Trinbagonian elites to disrupt their lives for the sake of the production of a soap opera. As such, subsequent shoots were seldom possible, since people would usually deny access beyond the first shoot. This fact makes further comment on the shoestring budget within which production of the soap opera took place, since the producers of the soap opera were unable to offer sizable payment to owners to use their houses for locations (Pires, 2003). *Joebell and America*, on the other hand, takes

place primarily in rural settings in modest homes. Perhaps while the upper class location-owners of *Westwood Park* were unimpressed by having their homes featured on television and therefore more hostile toward the television production industry, the middle- to lower-class location-owners of *Joebell and America* were more receptive to and therefore more cooperative with the needs of the production unit. For *Joebell*, more cooperation spelled more time per shooting sequence, which spelled greater attention to detail, shot composition and overall elevation of production values. While both productions were shot on video, this difference in availability of locations created a difference in final perception of production values. While TV6 transmitted *Joebell and America* to a critical audience, it met with audience expectations as a result of the reality of the film's location shoots.

While there seems to be common consensus among government agencies, independent producers, critics and viewers that Trinidad and Tobago should increase the numbers of local film and video productions that define the Trinbagonian mediascape, there are challenges that face production houses and independent producers along the way. One production house owner who was involved peripherally in the production of *Joebell and America* spoke in my interview with him about the difficulties faced in the production of this motion picture. In every aspect of this production, the challenges of producing a feature film in Trinidad and Tobago became evident. While in the relative context of other Trinidad and Tobago film or video feature productions, the production budget for *Joebell* was cited as being relatively sizeable (Lee, 2005; Popplewell, 2005a), the location shoot quickly gobbled that budget and forced the crew to find creative ways to stretch the budget to allow for completion of the film. Instead of paying high

equipment rental costs for HMI lights (halogen metal incandescence lights, which are expensive lighting packages), cinematographer and Director of Photography Walt Lovelace used makeshift reflectors and natural lighting (Popplewell, 2005b). In another example of how budget limitations affected this production, three weeks prior to the start of production producers had not yet found the lead actor who would play the titular role of Joebell. Through a network of Trinbagonians around the world, producers located Trinidadian opera singer Brian Green, who was flown in from Paris and who agreed to take the role far below his normal pay scale “for the love of Trinidad” (McFarlane-Alvarez, 2005).

From this part of my analysis, it becomes evident that both the production and positive reception of *Joebell and America* was overdetermined. By late 2004, the visual mediascape of Trinidad and Tobago had evolved so that audiences were more receptive to local productions than they had been in previous eras. Further, the existence of increased numbers of local television stations offered more local programming, creating a competitive environment in which each television station strived to stay competitive by offering new, more innovative local programming that offered audiences differentiated products. What made *Joebell* different from other locally produced texts that spotted the mediascape during this period included its basis as a literary work by an internationally renowned Trinbagonian author and therefore its positioning as a quality feature made-for-television presentation. *Joebell and America* gained acceptance as “quality television” because of its literary origins and its alignment with discourses of national identity and cultural heritage. In effect, audiences received this made-for-television film positively because of its high-culture appeal to specific moral, intellectual and socioeconomic

sectors within Trinbagonian society. Finally, *Joebell* found a niche on TV6, filling a void left by the ending of the narrative of *Westwood Park*. On each of these counts, the production industry, audiences, and the television station on which it aired all supported *Joebell and America* as an important project that should be brought to completion, a historical accomplishment in the development of Trinidad and Tobago visual culture.

Lack of government facility, a disinterested private sector, hypercritical audiences and fearful networks are all cited as challenges to the growth of film and video production industries in Trinidad and Tobago (Hanoomansingh, 1993), yet *Joebell and America* overcame these challenges and won audience and critical respect on many levels. If, as I noted earlier, *Joebell* is a text produced through the struggles associated with visual sovereignty, its successful production and acceptance among audiences and critics alike are evidence of how the process of visual sovereignty can manifest through textual and contextual negotiation.

### *Conclusion*

Television in Trinidad and Tobago in 2004 took a sharp turn toward dramatically increased local programming. Within this time period, television station executives dealt with the fact that increasing their percentages of local programming could increase their competitiveness within the local television environment. After decades of local programs being shunned by television stations and audiences alike, programming executives of the six stations on air in November 2004 in Trinidad and Tobago seemed to reposition local programs into saleable commodities within an exponentially more competitive local

television environment. Developments in the mass media in Trinidad and Tobago provided evidence of an intensified period during which Trinidad and Tobago visual culture was actively shaped and privileged over imported culture, a period during which the process of visual sovereignty became intensified.

*Joebell and America* as filmic narrative was the story of a man who realized that his dream of finding happiness and fulfillment in America would take him further away from his authentic self. When Joebell lost his roots, he became a caricature of himself, immediately identifiable to the “real American” in the immigration hall as being “from the islands.” In trying to be more American and giving up the truth of his Trinbagonian identity, Joebell became a clown. The film *Joebell and America* seems to encourage Trinbagonians to realize the superficiality of dreaming of going to America and to embrace the beauty of the simple life that surrounds them, a simplicity that itself is an imagined reality, based on an idealized past. In *Joebell*, life in Trinidad and Tobago is free from the trappings and traps of late capitalism. This idealism reflects a life that eludes the complexities of machinated society, which are built upon complex structures of capital. The rum-shop or recreation club where Joebell gambles and the *parlour* where his girlfriend Alicia works are the only places where we see any evidence of commodification in Trinbagonian life. Outside the rum-shop, the wall is painted with large branding elements of Stag Beer. Inside the parlour, less central to the framing, only a few products were visible on the shelves behind Alicia’s counter. Other than this, rural Trinidad in *Joebell* is free from commodification.

As a result of the popularity of *Joebell*, hopes about the development of a Trinidad and Tobago film industry came, once again to the fore:

The question comes to mind, is it possible to have a viable film industry in Trinidad? The Prime Minister in his budget speech spoke of Government's intention to develop a film industry in this country. I do hope this will become an actual reality. The support of both the Government and the private sector is essential for this anticipated development to take place (Nawrang, 2004).

In the mediascape context against which *Joebell* was aired, local programming became more representative of local Trinbagonian culture. As such, a circular relationship developed. The increased presence of local programming on television stations created a hunger for more local programming (Laird, 2005), which facilitated the ease with which television stations could sell slots within local programming to advertisers and advertising agencies. In this regard, there is an interweaving of discourses that originate within several sites in the Trinidad and Tobago mediascape: with local producers who call for more opportunities for local productions to be created through increased corporate funding; with the audience providing positive feedback and calling for more local productions; with corporations that begin to see the profitability (in terms of corporate image) of involvement in local productions; and with the state, which pronounces its intention to build the film industry and situates tax incentives to encourage local production.

As I have already considered, in the Trinidad and Tobago context, audiences and critics often consider the commercial form base and pollutive. Indeed, in the context of *Joebell and America*, newspaper columnist George John lamented the presence of

advertisements, which interrupted the narrative of the film. I quote his argument at length here to include the full arc of his assertions:

The pity is that the TV6 production was marred by advertising messages that hit the screen at times when the drama was about to reach its peak. We are accustomed to this vulgar interference with what is on screen during test cricket matches. A batsman gets out and before one can tell exactly how and why the ads take over. Sunday's presentation of *Joebell* suffered from this intrusion. It is difficult to believe the station could not have persuaded the advertisers to bunch their messages at the end of the film in the interest of preserving its artistic integrity (John, 2004).

The Lovelaces' pristine work of art was partly damaged, according to John, by the vulgarity of the ads placed in the timeslot. If John were to have his way, television commercials would be zoned into a separate program space where their ill effects could manifest outside of the literary presentation. John's desire for the expulsion of advertising messages is similar to the omission of commercial media from Cunaripo and the wider world in *Joebell*, and correlates with a comparable trend within the field of postcolonial studies: the omission of advertising and its webs of meaning (including the inherent commercial nature of its form) from the postcolonial canon.

While the juxtaposition and contradiction of themes in the flow of *Joebell* provides interesting focus for this analysis, there is one other question worth raising in relation to John's damning of advertising. As is made evident from the tabular summary

of advertised products, there was a vast array of products, services, cultures advertised within the whole flow of *Joebell*. While each audience review recognized the celebrate-the-local theme of *Joebell*, it seems from John's consideration that the "local" that should be celebrated is represented by high art and literary work that is commercial-free, precisely the same way that Cunaripo was free of commercial media. Yet it was the very placement of these "vulgar" ads that allowed TV6 to develop a budget for the production and sustenance of *Westwood Park* and for the production and promotion of *Joebell and America*. There is an aversion to considering the place of television advertising in the development of industry infrastructure and industry personnel. For builders of national visual cultures, postcolonial theorists and viewers alike, television advertising has always occupied the realm of a "necessary evil:" something that oils the wheels of television production and programming, but that we would all rather "zap" into non-existence. The local that deserves celebrating on television, according to such reviews as John's, remains outside the realm of television advertising, yet it is in television advertising that Trinidad and Tobago television has been most consistently local.

In *Joebell*, ideal Trinidad and Tobago, represented by rural Lopinot (as Cunaripo) was mostly advertisement-free. Parallel to this, ideal visual culture in Trinidad and Tobago is void of advertising. As George John asserted, the texts of moving image narratives would be better served if ads were omitted or removed. Additionally, as I demonstrated in chapter one of this study, government documents that seek to develop visual sovereignty omit advertising from their considerations. From these discussions, it becomes evident that for critics, audiences and production industry participants, the ideal position for advertising to occupy in Trinidad and Tobago is in a separate sphere,



separate from visual culture that is privileged as representative of national culture. As I have shown in this chapter, the personnel, financing and physical infrastructure that serve the advertising industry are often put into service in the development of filmic narratives, yet the recognition of these intersections remains unnoticed and unrecognized. It is this lack of recognition that results in the slow and sporadic development of the film and video industry in Trinidad and Tobago. On the practical end of this analysis, the production of *Joebell and America* evidences the ways in which the advertising industry can contribute toward the actual production of a local filmic production.

On a more theoretical level, analysis of *Joebell and America* as a postcolonial text that manifests the process and struggles of visual sovereignty fixes attention on a major shortcoming of the field of postcolonial studies. The omission of comprehensive consideration of the economic realities that govern the narration of the postcolonial nation results in analyses that are one-dimensional. Indeed, the process of visual sovereignty in its entirety takes place in the interstices among texts and between texts and their contexts, as became apparent here in the analysis of *Joebell and America*.

Advertising was the necessary means by which the producers made the television film and also completed the televisual context within which the audience received the film. As postcolonial theorists, analysis of postcolonial texts within the commercially defined context against which that text exists allows us to consider issues that collide within the negotiation of national identity and the narration of the postcolonial nation.

*Joebell and America* stood out as both a shining example of the process of visual sovereignty and an anomaly within the Trinbagonian mediascape. The process of visual sovereignty defined a “national need” to produce this made-for-television film, with

advertising supplying the capital for its production, the programming context through which the narrative discourses flowed and some of the personnel and equipment that produced the program. Through this analysis of *Joebell and America* we have examined the essence of postcolonial studies, both in terms of the reality of the postcolonial nation forging its identity in relation to “not colonial” and in relation to the field of postcolonial studies being positioned as a “post” in relation to a “colonial” past. The postcolonial nation is defined by hybridity of identities including vestiges of the nation’s colonial past, struggles that define the nation’s postcolonial present and the global reality that contextualized the nation.

The character Joebell signifies postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago, his dream of America mirroring Trinidad and Tobago’s desire to successfully compete within and acculturate into the global ecumene. Joebell’s final realization that the essence of his dream is really about going home and re-rooting himself in Cunupia signifies the postcolonial nation’s desire to establish and preserve a distinct visual culture despite global flows. Joebell finds peace when he embraces the core of his identity as citizen of postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago, and similarly for Trinidad and Tobago, the process of visual sovereignty comes to fruition when the nation embraces the hybridity of its own “true” identity, even including its colonial past. In broader terms, the project of postcolonial studies might not be to escape the colonial pasts of nations, but rather to recognize the essential hybridity that defines postcoloniality.

## Chapter Four:

### Hybridity, Globalization and Visual Sovereignty in Advertising

In November 2004, the nation's oldest television station, Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT), prepared to go off the air permanently within the following three months. At the opposite end of its evolutionary timeline, the new community channel Gayelle prepared to celebrate its first anniversary, recapping ten months of broadcasting success and acceptance by the Trinidad and Tobago viewing audience. Within this same calendar month, during which TV6 first aired the locally produced made-for-television film *Joebell and America*, an article appeared in one of the nation's three top daily newspapers in which the reporter focused on the production of what the viewing audience assumed to be "local" advertisements, which in fact had been produced outside of Trinidad and Tobago (Allahar, 2004).

Set within the context of increasing representation of local culture in the Trinidad and Tobago mediascape, this newspaper article appeared in the Business supplement of the Trinidad and Tobago *Newsday* and focused on an interview with Douglas Brunton, Creative Director of Corbin Communication, which is a mid-sized advertising agency in Trinidad. This article was an exposé piece revealing practices normally hidden in Trinbagonian advertising, with Brunton positioned as defending these Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry practices. Brunton's defense in this article brought to mind a slate of similar discussions I shared with industry colleagues having worked on an advertising campaign that was produced in Venezuela for a Trinidad and Tobago bank. The significance of my own experiences and involvement in this outsourcing practice

become evident within this chapter. Even though research took place many years after I had worked on the bank campaign, I became aware of my own defensiveness concerning the reasons that advertising agencies frequently choose to produce an advertisement for a Trinidad and Tobago company outside of Trinidad and Tobago.

In my discussions thus far in the broader study, I analyzed the ways in which government and independent producers in Trinidad and Tobago negotiated their roles in the construction of a visual culture and a national mediascape through moving image media. In this chapter, I assert that in postcolonial nations where there is minimal presence of moving image representations of the “local,” television advertisements become texts that offer spaces of “nation-making.” When advertising producers use resources other than those available within the immediate environment of the postcolonial nation, questions of authenticity and legitimacy arise in relation to the questions of national identity in advertising texts that are produced.

Advertising is an industry that uses national identity to interpellate a unitary audience, particularly, as we shall see, in a postcolonial environment such as Trinidad and Tobago. With this in mind, in what ways does the recognition of the practice of outsourcing within the advertising industry precipitate discussions of national identity as represented within moving image media? What does outsourcing of production within the advertising industry imply about the broader mediascape in Trinidad and Tobago? And what do these currents of global flows tell us about the feasibility of visual sovereignty in a postcolonial environment?

Specifically, in order to understand the significance of representing national identity within the advertising industry, I want to examine how agency personnel discuss

the practice of outsourcing; reasons these agency representatives provide for choosing to outsource television advertisement production when the local production industry seemed so vibrant; how advertising agencies and production companies dealt with and discussed this practice and why this practice of outsourcing seemed to take place amid discourses of defense and guilt. How do global flows get played out at the level of production? What aspects of postcolonial nationalism are expressed in such instances of global production within local advertising? While in the previous chapter I began to position advertising as an integral force at play in the process of visual sovereignty, in this chapter I want to dissect a specific Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry practice and examine how discourses of local national culture are manifested in that context. Examining this point of suture between the local and the global will uncover how hybridity and alterity are manifested within this postcolonial environment, and ultimately how hybridity and alterity relate to visual sovereignty and the postcolonial nation's attainment of a visual center of its own.

*The Global, The Local and the Ad*

Within the realm of studies on globalization and mediated discourse, studies are common that consider global flows and their "effects" on broadcasting (D. Morley, 2004; D. Morley & Robins, 1995; D. a. K. R. Morley, 1995; Parks & Kumar, 2003) and on cinema (Armes, 1987; Hilmes, 2002; T. N. G. Miller, John Mucmurria and Richard Maxwell., 2001; E. a. R. S. Shohat, 1994) within national contexts. Less common are studies that examine similar trends and their implications within the advertising industry. As a result of my research within this chapter, I want to examine how concerns for

globalization and its effects filter into the advertising industry and, more particularly, investigate what study of these flows through the advertising industry in a postcolonial nation might tell us about the advertising industry and its relation to the building of a postcolonial national identity.

Literature that makes up the canon of Advertising Studies can be thought of as falling within three major interrelated theoretical approaches. There are studies such as Judith Williamson's foundational *Decoding Advertisements*, which couch analysis of advertisements within a Structuralist approach, using both semiotic and psychoanalytical theory to consider ways in which advertisements use signifiers to make products mean something to consumers (Goldman, 1992; Goldman & Papson, 1996; Jhally, 1987; Schudson, 1984; Williamson, 1978). A second approach that exists within the canon of advertising studies builds from the first but lands more centrally in the camps of critical and cultural studies, examining how ideology and discourse circulate within advertising messages and how texts of advertisements negotiate race, gender and class and how such themes reverberate throughout the advertising industry itself (Ewen, 2001; Marchand, 1985; O'Barr, 1994; Schudson, 1984). Finally, there are approaches that focus almost entirely on the study of advertising through the lens of political economy, examining how political institutions and the political environment influence the advertising industry, and indeed, how the advertising industry influences global politics (Anholt, 2005; Klein, 2002; Mooij, 1998).

Within this latter category, studies that connect globalization and advertising draw this link through a variety of configurations. Studies originating within the discipline of business communication offer how-to perspectives of achieving a global advertising

strategy, including how to deploy resources of global advertising agencies and how to tailor advertising messages to local markets (Anholt, 2005; Mooij, 1998). On another level, other studies consider how global advertising campaigns proliferate signs of the global within the local environment (Goldman & Papon, 1996; Klein, 2002). What is notable in each of these studies is that advertising is seen as a transformative phenomenon or, applying the thinking of Arjun Appadurai, advertising is one element within the mediascape through which forces of globalization flow (Appadurai, 1996). In other words, these studies examine how, as advertising texts flow across borders, they influence and affect cultures in which they land. Across these theoretical approaches, scholars have analyzed advertising in terms of how it juxtaposes commodity symbols and commodity signs, how advertising interpellates consumers in relation to the messages in ads, how advertising designers (including writers, artists and producers) use race, class and gender to place products within a social context and finally how local, regional and global flows affect and are affected by advertising.

Throughout scholarly work that falls within the area of advertising studies, there is also a dominant focus on the “underbelly” of advertising. Researchers set out to uncover the ways “admen” manipulate audiences in order to consume what they might not otherwise desire, or how creative advertising strategists choose to depict distorted versions of society. Common throughout these works is the revelation of how advertising *deceives*, a factor of the origin of such critical work in Marxist analysis. Critical academic studies view advertising, by its very nature, as packaging and selling deception to consumers, through application of magical color schemes intended to entrance, and as construction of mystical messages that masquerade as science. The presence of the

commodity within the narrative of advertising texts activates the tendency for scholars to undress the ways in which advertising actively deploys ideology in order to interpellate the consumer (Jhally, 1987; Williamson, 1978).

There is a secondary issue, which must be considered within the context of this discussion: the issue of *truth* in advertising. In his book *Captains of Consciousness*, Stuart Ewen asserts that advertising ideology is founded centrally upon the tenet of truth (Ewen, 2001). In other words, since codes of advertising ethics around the world are built upon the premise that advertising messages must be truthful and must not deceive consumers, consumers may assume that the advertising industry operates at every level based on striving towards an ethic of truth. At the advertising industry level, there are specific tenets by which the industry is guided, and practitioners treat truth as objective, measurable and as something that can be discerned through official inquiry (Bureau of Standards, 1999; FTC, 2005). In a general discussion of ethics in advertising, Chris Moor of Ogilvy and Mather asserts that “Ads for reputable companies never lie” because the companies can prove their claims to their corporate counsel, lawyers, to network approval committees and to the FDA and the FTC (Moore, 2004). But further along in his discussion Moore notes, “we tell the truth... but not always the Whole Truth.” While this philosophical underpinning of the advertising industry is not central to my discussion, I mention it here because some of the interview responses and articles, which form the basis of my analysis, set up their arguments or defenses in relation to what they deem as “truth in advertising.” A challenge throughout this analysis has been to distill discourses of national identity from this overarching philosophy of “truthfulness.”



Returning to research more closely aligned with this present chapter, Robert Foster analyzed the significance of the relationship between advertising and national identity formation in his article “Print Advertisements and Nation Making in Metropolitan Papua New Guinea” (Foster, 1995). In this article, Foster investigated the environment of Papua New Guinea and the passage of a law requiring that all advertising material must be produced by local advertising agencies, employing local talent. If an agency did not employ these local elements in the production of a commercial, then authorities would consider the production a criminal offense. In the Papua New Guinea context, the government perceived representation in and production of advertisements as important to national identity formation. The Trinidad and Tobago context is very different from the Papua New Guinea environment, in that within the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry, representing the local using the global is, in some regards, considered accepted practice. The questions that arise here are: how does this global-as-local representation fit against the broader discourse of “truth in advertising” at an industrial level, and what information does this provide us regarding the role of the advertising industry in building visual sovereignty?

Foster implies that the advertisements he examined are textual representations of a collective imagining of the Papua New Guinea nationalist identity, because their production is officially limited to take place within Papua New Guinea. In the case of Foster’s research, the nation has been commodified and the commodity has been nationalized within the advertising. The purity of the nationalistic expression in Papua New Guinea advertising points toward the objectification of the nation, and the constitution of national culture as solidified, and as something that citizens can *possess*,

as they might possess a commodity (Foster, 1995). But how does the configuration of this relationship change in an environment characterized by hybridity?

*Finding the Global in the Local*

Formal investigation for this chapter began with the discovery of a newspaper article in the *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday* in which an advertising agency Creative Director discussed the recent trend in outsourcing the production of television advertisements. This practice of outsourcing had been taking place in various forms since the 1970s and 1980s, but in 2004 it drew the attention of this newspaper reporter sufficiently to warrant the writing and publication of this exposé. Yet questions arose regarding the timing of the article, the justification for the revelation and the ways in which the reporter and the Creative Director discussed the practice of outsourcing. I used reference to this newspaper article as a means by which I could initiate open discussion with advertising industry and film and video industry personnel about a practice that had previously been a well-guarded secret within the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry. As in many other industries, the advertising industry in Trinidad and Tobago tries to hide the ways in which globalization affects production. Sut Jhally refers to the “magical nature” of advertising, and perhaps it is because the advertising industry seeks to hide the means of its magic that outsourcing remains a hidden reality within the advertising industry. As a former professional practitioner within the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry, I too had experienced the desire to hide the means of production at a general level, but particularly in relation to the use of any non-Trinidad and Tobago production elements.

For all these reasons, discussing the practice of hiding global elements in local Trinidad and Tobago advertisements with representatives of the advertising industry was a challenge that required a certain degree of sensitivity. In a close-knit market such as Trinidad and Tobago where talent pools and locations are definitively finite, advertising agencies often consider new voices, new locations and new production techniques part of the agency's arsenal of secret weapons, which are collectively wielded in order to edge-out the competition during creative awards or in competitive creative presentations to win new clients. When *Newsday* printed the article featuring Creative Director Douglas Brunton, a once-hidden practice within the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry became common knowledge, opening opportunities for more candid discussions both among agency personnel and within film and video production circles.

Beginning with this article, I examined ways in which the reporter positioned the advertising industry and the words she chose to describe the practice of outsourcing and its implications. Next, I examined the article in relation to how the article represented Brunton as explaining why the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry engages in outsourcing of production. Through this analysis of the newspaper article, two discursive themes emerged: the first was "economic necessity," and the second was "foreignness," both of which became key to the interviews and analysis of those interviews, upon which this chapter builds.

These two discursive themes served as starting points in my discussions with advertising agency personnel. In some instances, the participants with whom I discussed the issue of outsourcing were former colleagues, including agency personnel and executives with whom I had worked and representatives of companies with whom I had

worked on a consultative basis. On the other hand, some of the participants were people whom I had not met or spoken with prior to this study. At times I was aware that this former involvement made it easier for me to gain access to executives within these advertising agencies. At other times, I maintained awareness that my involvement in the industry might prevent some disclosure on the part of participants. When I sensed that this might be the case, I brought this concern into the discussion and encouraged the participants to state any concerns they might have about my line of questioning.

I conducted these interviews in person within two separate periods. The first period of interviews took place in Trinidad between December 2003 to January 2004, while the second period of in-person interviews took place in Trinidad between December 2004 and January 2005. In addition to these in-person interviews, I also interviewed participants by telephone, administered questionnaires via email, and in one case engaged in live online chat. I tailored each interview to the individual participants based on research and personal awareness of their career paths and involvements in the advertising or film and video production industries. By focusing on each person's individual experiences and perspectives of the industries, I tried to ensure that my representations of this industry would be polyvocal and multiperspectival.

### *Industrial and Legislative Backdrop*

From one interview with representatives of the film and video production and advertising industries to the next, I became more aware of both the competitiveness and the intimacy of the Trinidad and Tobago industry than I had been prior to the interviews. Geographically, the major advertising agencies in Trinidad and Tobago are all located

within a three-mile radius of each other, mostly within the Port of Spain suburbs of Woodbrook, Newtown and St. Clair, with the major points of power being St. Clair and Newtown where many of the agencies that are members of the Advertising Agency Association of Trinidad and Tobago (AAATT) are headquartered (including All Media Projects Limited (AMPLE) McCann Erickson, Rostant, Inglefield/ Ogilvy, Lonsdale/Saatchi and Saatchi, Valdez and Torry, and Collier, Morrison and Belgrave). In many ways, this geographical proximity, combined with the transience of agency personnel from one agency to the other, creates an industry where agencies are highly aware of each other, both physically and in terms of business activity. In addition to this, the agencies are often required to compete with each other, both for Creative Excellence Awards and in competitive bids where multiple agencies are required to make creative presentations to the same client in order to win that client's business (or in advertising terms, to win that "account").

Despite this environment of intense competitiveness, however, throughout these interviews, the participants were willing, if not eager, to share their experiences. With both production personnel and advertising agency personnel, there was a general sense of pride among the participants, in terms of their participation in "an exciting industry" and a passion about their work. Many of the participants had spent much, if not all, of their professional lives and careers in the production or advertising industries. There was a general sense that the participants were "happy to oblige" and to participate in this study, perhaps since to date there has been no comprehensive written history of the advertising or production industries in Trinidad and Tobago produced.

While Trinidad and Tobago has no law that legislates the use of local resources in the production of local advertisements (unlike the previously cited case of Papua New Guinea), the practice of outsourcing in Trinidad and Tobago seems to contradict broader government-originated discourses that encourage “local” emphasis and involvement in relation to moving image production. As outlined in the first chapter of this study, while the *Master Plan for the Strategic Development of the Trinidad and Tobago Film Industry* makes little mention of the role of the advertising industry in possible development of the local film industry, the overall position stated in this document is that the government should encourage and facilitate the local production industry. The 1999 revision of the *Requirements for Advertising* was derived from *British Codes of Advertising and Sales Promotion* and the *Independent Television Commission Code of Advertising Standards and Practice* and sets out prescribed standards for the general requirements of advertisements in Trinidad and Tobago (Bureau of Standards, 1999). Despite the fact that this document focuses on the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry, and that the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (a government agency) is listed as the “body corporate” within which this advertising standard resides, the only stipulation this document makes in relation to use of local versus foreign resources or images relates to the “use of foreign material or editorial material in advertisements,” where the document states:

The fact that material used in an advertisement is used in other countries, or originates from publications other than advertisements shall not be an excuse for any breach of this standard (Bureau of Standards, 1999).

Despite the leaning of the government in other documents toward encouraging local production, there is no such recommendation in this advertising-focused government-approved document, and, as seen in the passage above, the Standard makes specific notes about material that is imported, and thus appears to be built upon the assumption that outsourcing elements of advertising production is commonplace.

For the purpose of this discussion, I consider television advertisements that include elements of outsourcing as being divided into two tiers. In the first tier are commercials produced for the Trinidad and Tobago market that are produced in a location outside of Trinidad and Tobago. In this category of commercials, the location is not defined as set in Trinidad and Tobago. An example of an advertisement that might fall into this first tier might be a commercial shot in-studio, using entirely package shots within the studio. In this case, the interior of the studio has a neutral representational function within the commercial, and the shot of a product “pack-shot” which has been shot in a studio in Venezuela might not be differentiated from the pack-shot of the same product shot in a studio in Trinidad and Tobago. The second tier of television advertisements that possess elements that have been outsourced, includes advertisements that have been shot in a location outside of Trinidad and Tobago, chosen for its ability to mimic Trinidad and Tobago. An example of this second tier would be the commercials identified by Douglas Brunton in the *Newsday* article, including the Guardian Life commercial, shot in Venezuela. In this advertisement (which I discuss further in the last chapter of this study), Venezuelan locations and talent are used to represent Trinidad and Tobago settings and talent to produce a narrative that specifically addresses Trinbagonian culture.

Commercials in the former category are more closely aligned with representation that takes place generally in the construction of visual advertising texts, where, for example, a group of unrelated models might be used to represent a family of related people. Let us use the term “neutral outsourcing” to refer to this former category. I am more interested, in this study, in the latter category of outsourced television commercials, where advertising agencies select non-Trinbagonian production facilities, locations, and models for their ability to mimic Trinbagonianness. Let us refer to this latter category as “specific appearance outsourcing,” since the decision to outsource is based upon a deliberate intent to manipulate elements in the *mise-en-scene* to mimic specific perceptions of Trinbagonianness. The latter category offers greater insight into how the advertising industry deals with issues of national identity and what this means in relation to the building of visual sovereignty, and for this reason such advertising is the focus of this chapter.

The newspaper article that served as impetus for analysis in this chapter focused on advertisements produced by several Trinidad and Tobago advertising agencies. The focus in this article on the advertising campaigns produced in both Venezuela and Costa Rica was perhaps a result of concerns that arose because of the increase in local programming on television in Trinidad and Tobago. While other aspects of the moving image mediascape in Trinidad and Tobago were moving toward increased focus on “authentic” representations of Trinbagonian culture, the advertising industry seemed to be moving in the opposite direction, toward a status quo in which outsourcing, according to this article, is commonplace.



While the 2004 newspaper article presented the practice of outsourcing as a recent phenomenon, advertising agency personnel countered that this practice had been part of advertising production in Trinidad and Tobago for decades. The *Newsday* article specifically noted:

Whatever it may be, a trend noticed of late is that these advertisements are not being produced locally, but are being done outside of Trinidad and Tobago (Allahar, 2004).

It becomes clear, through close reading of this section of the article, however, that observation and recognition of the trend is recent, not necessarily the practice of outsourcing itself. Seeming to align with this article, in my interview with him, advertising agency Managing Director Ian Collier added dimension to this by relating his experiences gained both from working within advertising agencies in Trinidad and Tobago and from having established his own company in the U.S. that had, during the 1980s, provided television commercial production services to agencies in Trinidad and Tobago. Collier noted:

Outsourcing has been going on for many years. We have seen production of advertisements in the U.S. as well as in Venezuela, which is a hop, skip and a jump away from us, and we really get a nice standard in terms of equipment and a complete package (Collier, 2005).

Collier also cited an earlier example of outsourcing, using the landmark Guardian Life television commercials (which I analyze in a later chapter), to illustrate his point. Frequently spoken of by advertising professionals and members of the viewing audience

in terms of their unique Trinbagonianness, these two commercials were produced in the 1980s in black and white film and featured the music and acting talent of two renowned veteran calypsonians. Even though Trinbagonians considered these advertisements as landmarks in the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry, many elements of their production took place outside of Trinidad and Tobago (Collier, 2005). Collier noted that the commercials were edited with his production company, at the time located in Colorado.

While Collier noted that outsourcing in the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry had been taking place over at least three decades, it is important to note that in the 1980s, TTT was the only television station within the Trinbagonian mediascape. In that environment, there had been a shift toward importing packages of North American programs. As such, in that time period, if there had been any public awareness or media coverage of outsourcing in the advertising industry, there would perhaps have been less implied negativism than was expressed in the 2004 *Newsday* article. The point here is that the more “authentic” local representation there is within a moving image mediascape, the more attention is drawn to the texts that offer an artificial construction of the local. As the Trinidad and Tobago film, video and television offerings grow in number and popularity, there are an increasing number of questions surrounding the continuing practice of outsourcing.

In his interview discussion, Collier considered outsourcing with respect to the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry in relation to a broader global phenomenon, where an industry that in previous times only looked inward within the nation, now has to consider its market in relation to an international web of connectivity:

If we really have to study the advertising industry *vis-a-vis* the local market, one has to always keep the consumer in focus. One also has to keep in mind that we're finding ourselves in a situation where we're no longer as insular as we were before. We were restricted in terms of offerings of products but now the market is more open and we have CARICOM<sup>1</sup> and the Free Trade Area of the Americas<sup>2</sup> closed behind that. In the business community, there's expansion of mind and thinking. We're less an individual unit and more part of a whole and so the restrictiveness of doing everything locally is lessening (Collier, 2005).

In this interview, Collier also considered how this expansion has affected the Trinidad and Tobago consumer, particularly in relation to how that consumer is able to accept advertising texts as combined elements of production that may have taken place in different parts of the world. Increasingly, Collier asserted, clients of advertising agencies will want a campaign produced that can be used in different parts of the region, or in different markets in which a company operates. For example, the national airline of Trinidad and Tobago (BWIA) might request a campaign that is relevant not only in Trinidad and Tobago, but also in Barbados, St. Lucia, Guyana and St. Vincent, in order to maximize the company's advertising production budget spend. Sometimes a television advertisement is produced in Trinidad and Tobago, but through simple changes to such elements as the voice-over, the production becomes applicable in other territories such as

Jamaica or Barbados (Collier, 2005), where accents are differentiated from the Trinidad and Tobago accent.

Several examples of this exist within the Trinidad and Tobago market. One television campaign for Kerrygold Butter comes to mind and serves to illustrate this point. Kerrygold Butter is an Irish product, distributed in Trinidad and Tobago through a local distributor, which was a client of Inglefield/Ogilvy. The television commercial centered on a warmly-lit breakfast table in close-up. Muffins, breads, pastries and a pack of Kerrygold Butter are featured on the table setting. From one version of this commercial to the next (as seen on the show-reel of one of the campaign's producers), the skin-color of the hand that spread the butter on the bread changed to suit the intended market, as did the voice that delivered the voice-over and tagline. In other examples, an existing car commercial shot for a European or North American market would be re-edited to include a Trinbagonian voice-over.

In the *Newsday* article, Douglas Brunton attributed the practice of outsourcing in the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry to practical economic and industrial necessity because of a lack of "ancillary industries to go along with advertising" (Allahar, 2004). In my conversation interview by telephone, Ian Collier made a similar assertion, referring to the comprehensiveness of the production packages that are available in more developed markets such as Venezuela or the United States (Collier, 2005). Particularly in the case of film production, using 16mm or 35mm film, this becomes more significant, since full-scale film production (more than video production) tends to require larger crews of professionally-trained personnel including cinematographers, lighting designers, directors, and set-builders. From personal past experience within the Trinidad and

Tobago advertising industry, there is a general sense where film is concerned that it requires greater specificity of capabilities such as checking the gate, loading magazines, and using the right film speeds. As a result, when shooting on film, advertising agencies prefer the security of a fully equipped and skilled production unit. Both Brunton and Collier rationalized the practice of outsourcing elements of production by the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry through consideration of the comprehensiveness of advertising production requirements.

Astra Da Costa, Managing Director (and founding partner) of All Media Projects (AMPLE, a mid-sized advertising and public relations agency), had a different perspective on farming-out production work beyond the shores of Trinidad and Tobago. Asked about the benefits, concerns and issues of having production markets such as Venezuela contributing to the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry, Da Costa noted:

I feel very strongly. I think we have the talent and we have the capabilities here. It becomes a way for the agency to increase its mark-up (Da Costa, 2005).

Here, Da Costa separated her approach from other colleagues, whom she considered to be engaging in outsourcing for reasons beyond quality of work produced. For Da Costa, outsourcing was a way to add premium value to television advertising production. Citing an example of a television advertisement that AMPLE produced, Da Costa noted:

We did a TV spot for BP, which because of a combination of music and images, caught people off-guard. We chose to produce it locally and if we had gone abroad, we would have gotten a totally different quality. But it was just

testimony to the fact that the message could be conveyed

by local endeavor (Da Costa, 2005).

I want to draw a parallel here between a comment by Ian Collier that I earlier outlined and this assertion by Da Costa. Collier noted the “nice standard” that Venezuelan production houses provide to Trinidad and Tobago advertising agencies. Da Costa makes this distinction in a different way but still notes that AMPLE would have gotten a totally different quality from external producers. While Collier and Da Costa adopted opposite stances in relation to the acceptability of the practice of outsourcing in advertising production, both of their responses reflected their acknowledgment of a distinct Trinbagonian moving image production aesthetic that resulted in television advertisements produced entirely in Trinidad and Tobago having a different “standard” or “quality” than those produced externally.

This quality is what makes advertisements produced in Trinidad and Tobago distinct from advertisements produced elsewhere: it is what Robert Foster refers to as the objectified nation as likened to a commodity. For the viewing or reading audience, Foster asserts, to consume specific products that are imbued with such nationalism is equivalent to consuming the nation. Consumption of these products and advertising for the products therefore becomes symbolic of becoming more representative of that nation. As such, the outsourcing of production elements in Trinbagonian advertising results in the hybridization of the commodity’s constructed image. When advertisers make national identity part of this hybridized commodity image, the overall effect is the hybridization of the consuming public’s identification with the nation.

Da Costa was not the only participant who shared this perspective on outsourcing. On this other side of the issue of outsourcing within the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry context are the local production houses. In one interview, a production house representative indicted the advertising agencies for sending to other markets productions that could be executed by Trinidad and Tobago production houses.<sup>3</sup> Like Da Costa, this representative of the film and video production industry attributed the practice of outsourcing to financial motivations:

A lot of the time, we can do the quality of work. It's just another way the agencies try to jack-up the prices to their clients. It's amazing that sometimes an agency is willing to spend lots of money in Venezuela and if you try to give them a similar cost, you get raised eyebrows... If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys (Anonymous, 2005).

In this analysis of the intersections and collisions among the advertising industry and the film and video industries, this production house perspective points to the rationalization of the practice of outsourcing by asserting that Trinidad and Tobago advertising agency representatives generally do not respect the abilities of their colleagues in the film and video production industries.

From the perspective of historical development, the film and video production industries in Trinidad and Tobago have evolved through more nationally focused lines of development than the advertising industry. Indeed, some key players of local production houses got their start in visual media production at the first television station in independent Trinidad and Tobago, TTT (Art, 2005). Timmy Mora is one such person,

who worked with TTT, then launched Video Associates, a video production company, which local investment giant CL Financial later bought. Mora's career started within a government-owned television station, in an era when TTT was most strongly focused on local programming. As a result of this link between the first television station and local production houses, and because film and video production houses are cultural producers, on many levels, it is more difficult for film and video production house personnel to embrace the prospects of outsourcing production.

It can be argued that each of the participants in these interviews asserted their views based on their functional position in relation to the advertising industry. The executive of the agency that engages in outsourcing rationalized the practice, while the executive of the mostly indigenous agency spoke against the practice, like the local producer whose bottom line suffered as a result of the practice. However, this spectrum of perspectives among both advertising agencies and production houses can be attributed more broadly than simple financial gain to the historical origins of these industries in Trinidad and Tobago. In the 1960s, Trinidad and Tobago advertising agencies were mostly foreign-based, with local offices operating in Trinidad and Tobago providing services to the local market but still controlled fiscally and managerially from the United Kingdom or the United States (Collier, 2005).

As more "local" agencies came into being, the affiliations with multinational agencies remained and developed further. Even up to 2005, agencies with international affiliations dominate the advertising industry in Trinidad and Tobago, reflected in such agency names as Inglefield/Ogilvy, Lonsdale/Saatchi & Saatchi and the former Hernandez/Foote, Cone & Belding. These international affiliations took different forms



from one agency to the next, but were generally manifested through financial holdings, the adoption of corporate philosophies or application of methodological approaches of the international affiliate (Collier, 2005).

These international affiliations also resulted in (and continue to result in) specific benefits for Trinidad and Tobago advertising agencies. In many cases, local agencies win clients at the local level based on an international alignment between a global account and a global agency (Collier, 2005). For example, in one particularly famous case, global corporation Nestlé mandated at the international level a removal of its business from Foote, Cone and Belding, which at the Trinidad and Tobago level resulted in the division of Hernandez/Foote, Cone and Belding into two competing agencies: one which served Nestlé, and one which could not. In addition, multinational corporations often provide advertising collateral material for global products, services and brands through an international affiliate to the local agency for use in Trinidad and Tobago. As a result of this history and practice of integrating the global into the local in relation to their genealogy as well as their business practices, many advertising agencies in Trinidad and Tobago accept the practice of outsourcing as a necessary step toward procuring the most competitive (in terms of budget and production values) production package on behalf of their clients (Allahar, 2004; Collier, 2005). The very nature of advertising agency business is to pull together skills and abilities toward the production of a final campaign or advertisement. For example, an advertising agency is required to hire photography studios and jingle producers to put together an advertisement. While many advertising agencies in Trinidad and Tobago possess full creative ability to produce most elements of campaigns, they are still required to look beyond their own organizational limits to

“outsource” services whether on a local level, a regional level or an international level. Advertising agencies literally become the agents of production in Trinidad and Tobago.

Notably, while the focus of this chapter is the practice of outsourcing within the advertising industry, throughout this discussion I have focused solely on outsourcing of television advertisement production. Indeed, most outsourcing of production within the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry takes place specifically within television advertisement production. Asked about the relationship between outsourcing and television advertising production, Astra Da Costa noted:

This is an interesting dichotomy. We expect print and radio to be done locally. Typically, foreign print ads don't resonate with people. You wouldn't go to Venezuela or Costa Rica for press. I think there's a general feeling that they know TV technology and we don't. In a sense, the television thing has been spoiled because of the scandalous furniture ads. Even though the production values of those are great, they come of as just another local TV spot. Particularly for high-end, corporate, the industry looks abroad. For retail, though, it's local (Da Costa, 2005).

In this response, Da Costa is referring to “furniture ads,” which include advertisements for Courts Furniture and Appliances, American Stores and Standards. The ads for these furniture companies generally feature local comedians, inexpensive locations (either shot in-studio or in-store), with the on-camera talent usually speaking in the Trinbagonian vernacular, often associated with the mass public or lower-middle to lower class. Her

assessment here implies that the existence of these “low-budget” or “low-class” local advertisements has given local production of television advertisements a bad reputation. As a result local production standards are associated with low standards, not because of an implicit quality concern, but because the advertising strategy of these retail advertisements is to reach a mass, retail market. The aesthetic of these commercials is reflective of a strategy, which is translated into production style, but Da Costa sees that this style has become representative of the quality of work that Trinbagonian production houses produce.

Da Costa’s observations and assessments are multifaceted in their relevance. Her assertions bring to light the question: what is it about television technology that makes it less likely for a Trinbagonian producer to excel in television advertisement production than his or her Venezuelan or Costa Rican counterpart? And why is this the case for television, but not for newspaper or radio advertising? I would argue that the prevalence of imported programs on postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago television served to establish “foreign” (read “British” and “North American”) television production values as superior to the indigenous Trinidad and Tobago production style. In post-independence, press and radio were easier media for local writers, designers and producers to gain access to because of lower cost of equipment and therefore greater accessibility to a broader cross-section of Trinidad and Tobago society. In addition, production costs and advertisement insertion costs for both radio and television are much lower in Trinidad and Tobago than television. For this reason, while local production for radio and press has continued to increase so that “local” is the norm in both media, in television, imported programs and advertisements have maintained a right of place within the Trinidad and Tobago

mediascape. Imported television texts are the “nice standard” against which the Trinidad and Tobago film and video production industry continues to be measured. In terms of industry standards, therefore, local production standards are doubly indicted in relation to television advertising. First, local standards are associated with low quality (intended for lower classes) and second these standards do not measure up to the standard of imported television fare.

Another of Da Costa’s assertions that warrants further discussion is the distinction between high-end corporate advertising and retail advertising. Corporate advertising includes advertisements that address “prestige, advocacy or issue, image, take-over bid and financial advertising” (Jefkins, 1984). Retail advertising, on the other hand, sells the establishment, attracts customers to stores, and sells goods in a store (Jefkins, 1984).

While all forms of advertising messages can provide information about both the advertiser and the intended audience, I would argue a distinction between corporate and retail advertising. Corporate seeks to position the company itself, while retail advertising seeks to attract through call-to-action. According to Da Costa’s assertions, when companies want to position themselves, outsourcing is accepted as normal. On the other hand, when companies seek to attract the mass public to their stores, Da Costa asserts, the accepted production practice is to “go local.”

In essence, corporate advertising requires a more complex process of signification than retail advertising. While retail advertising focuses its message on inspiring action (come into this store to get this product), corporate advertising requires the intended audience to link one signified concept (the branding of a corporate entity) to another abstraction (a moral or ethical value). Advertising that uses the national to interpellate

national identity in the consumer's imagination tends to fall into the category of corporate advertising. For example, in the case of the Guardian Life advertisements I describe later, the advertising agency uses national culture and ideals to construct an image for the corporate entity of Guardian Life as aligned with national values, and therefore aligned with the consumer who imagines herself as part of that community. Perhaps because of the complexity of this process of signification both in encoding and decoding, Trinbagonian advertising agencies employ what they perceive as more advanced technology of external markets (including Venezuela and Costa Rica) to ensure effective visual representation of the encoded signification.

Foster's article notes that when consumers buy a product that advertisers position as aligned with the nation, they are consuming the nation as commodity. What we can note here is that Trinbagonian advertising commodifies the nation and nationalizes the commodity through the processes of globalization and corporatization. Foster's research focused on Papua New Guinea advertising, which he noted, the government of Papua New Guinea mandated be completely produced in Papua New Guinea. In the Trinidad and Tobago context, outsourcing is integral to production of the commodified national imaginary, which ultimately points toward supra-nationalization and the implication of hybridity in the production of visual sovereignty.

Both advertising agencies and film and video production houses are sites of production in Trinidad and Tobago. In full-service advertising agencies, in-house production includes graphic design production for print advertisements. At the local level advertising agencies "outsource" production of radio commercials to local audio production houses and production of television ads to local film and video production

houses. Other than print production, advertising agencies outsource much of their work either locally or internationally. On the other hand, production is the core business of Trinbagonian film and video production houses, and production takes place using their in-house personnel and resources. The greater the percentage of production work that can be kept in-house, the greater will be the year-end billings for that production company. In contrast, according to both Da Costa and Lee, when an advertising agency is able to rationalize the practice of outsourcing, this could result in increased income for the agency. Both in terms of their economic viability and their existence within the realm of originality, production houses seem fundamentally opposed to the practice of outsourcing in the production of advertisements in Trinidad and Tobago.

This examination of outsourcing illuminates the ways in which the global intersects with the local within the Trinidad and Tobago industry. This discussion provides understanding of the contextual economic and industrial reality against which Trinbagonian advertising represents the national, the textual representation of which I will examine in later chapters. In this analysis it became evident that advertising agencies in Trinidad and Tobago have been outsourcing television advertisement production for at least three decades. We have also seen that public disclosure of the practice at the end of 2004 was set against a moving image mediascape in which local production increasingly was becoming the norm, particularly on television, which agencies were more likely to outsource than print or radio production. Advertising agency executives view Trinidad and Tobago production houses as offering a different, and in some cases lesser production standard than production houses in North America, Venezuela or Costa Rica

and Trinbagonian advertising agencies tend to outsource production of corporate television commercials more than production of retail television commercials.

### *Outsourcing and Visual Sovereignty*

In Chapter One of this study, I noted that the government of Trinidad and Tobago has placed greatest emphasis on feature film production and television programming in its strategy to develop visual culture as part of its Vision 2020 plan, which will take Trinidad and Tobago toward “developed nation status.” Also in that chapter, I noted the government’s lacking focus on the advertising industry as an integral participant in the building of a national visual culture or space of visual sovereignty. In this chapter, through examination of the practice of outsourcing, the placement of the global within the local became an evident reality within the advertising industry, despite the government’s intention to develop local visual culture.

In his analysis of the nationally-focused advertising industry in Papua New Guinea, Robert Foster noted that advertising seeks to hail an imagined collective. Further, Foster states, when the advertising industry is nationalized, as it was in Papua New Guinea, the imagined nation becomes a commodified object which audiences consume through viewing a product’s advertising and through purchasing a product imbued with national character. The work of this chapter points toward a more textured relationship between the national imagining and advertising than was signaled in Foster’s work.

In Ian Collier’s interview, this advertising agency managing director noted that as a result of such historical events as independence in 1962 and the black power uprising in 1970, advertising agencies in Trinidad and Tobago were required to become more “consumer-focused” in order to “appeal to the local market” (Collier, 2005). In this reference, Collier alluded to an earlier era when advertising agencies in Trinidad and



Tobago may not have been so “consumer-focused,” perhaps more representative of the business class and the elite than the working class. In post-independence, Prime Minister Eric Williams encouraged the localization of all industries, while (following the black power uprising, businesses became more aware of implications of selling to “the masses.”

In the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry there are connections among the descriptors: “retail advertising,” “local production” and “low class” or “low quality,” while at the other end of this equation there are links among the descriptors: “corporate advertising,” “outsourcing” and “upper class” or “high quality.” Yet these associations are specific to television advertising, which is a factor of the historical context of television advertising in Trinidad and Tobago. The important point is that the national audience is hailed, not only through commodification, as Foster suggests, but also through a preference for messages produced as a result of global flows and the transcendence of national borders. The national audience is addressed by an industry defined through supra-national function and therefore by an industry characterized by hybridity.

The interconnectedness between the advertising industry and the film and video production industry becomes clear in this analysis, though we are left with a somewhat circular paradox. The reason that advertising agencies tend to “go abroad” to produce corporate television commercials is because the standard for television production values continue to be non-Trinbagonian. Similarly, the reason that the Trinbagonian style of moving image production has taken almost five decades to be established is because of the minimal number of local film and video production presented on television and in cinemas in Trinidad and Tobago. Between 2004 and 2005, however, with the increased

number of Trinidad and Tobago television stations focused on local culture, a new environment emerges, which privileges “Trinbagonian-ness.”

I have earlier positioned visual sovereignty as a process through which we can examine the postcolonial dialectic of privileging the nation, without succumbing to nationalistic discourses, which are considered similar in origin to colonial discourses. We have thus far defined visual sovereignty as encompassing the processes of discursive production among media producers, their texts, the state and audiences in the construction of national identity through visual media. If the advertising industry occupies a central position in the evolution of Trinidad and Tobago toward visual sovereignty, then paradoxically Trinidad and Tobago’s unique national visual culture is defined by a mediascape defined through global flows and characterized by hybridity.

We can further consider this hybridization of postcolonial visual culture through analysis of representations of national identity in advertisements and its evolution through time. In the early days of Trinidad and Tobago’s postcoloniality, amid a new environment of independence and national identity formation, the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry focused changes within the industry on representation. The new face within advertising following independence was brown and more representative of the masses, and therefore more representative of the advertising industry’s imagining of the national audience: an identity characterized by hybridity. In this post-independence era between the 1960s and 1970s, and arguably even into the 1980s, the battle for visual sovereignty was waged on the front of phenotypic representation.

In the 2004-2005 era in Trinidad and Tobago, the new arena within which the processes of visual sovereignty unfold is production. What comes to light through this

discussion of outsourcing within the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry is that the advertising industry in Trinidad and Tobago can be viewed as integral to the process of visual sovereignty. While other aspects of the moving image mediascape appeared to be moving toward increased local representation, this study of television advertising revealed other forces at play within the moving image production environment. Additionally, because of the central position that the Trinbagonian advertising industry occupies, production trends that exist within the advertising industry also have effect more broadly throughout the Trinbagonian moving image mediascape.

The process of visual sovereignty is defined through negotiation of national identity, its production and representation within the advertising industry, and as analysis in this chapter has demonstrated, hybridity defines this industry. The postcolonial nation finds its own center of power through representations that are defined by and produced within an environment of hybridity. The idea that identity can be hybridized is based upon the assumption that prior to this hybridization, there were identities that might be characterized as “pure.” As such, study of hybrid identity and its representation unmasks the process of hybridization and the component “pure” original identities from which the hybrid form is constructed. In this chapter we have examined the hybrid origins of discourses that went into the production of visual sovereignty in television advertising, which offers a view of the commodified national imaginary. Stuart Hall suggests that cultures built on hybridity are not in danger of succumbing to dreams of cultural purity, or ethnic absolutism, yet through incorporation of non-local identities and representations, the nation can gain a stronger sense of its collectively imagined identity. The broader implication of the findings of this chapter is that while visual sovereignty is

a process through which a nation defines and realizes its distinctive identity through visual culture, this process is characterized by *inclusion* rather than *exclusion* of supra-national ideological and cultural discourse. The nation's desire to express its imagination of itself through visual culture raises fears of hegemonic oppression and absolutism, yet in postcolonial nations such as Trinidad and Tobago, this process of visual culture implies inherent hybridity and therefore building towards eclecticism rather than monolithicism.

## Chapter Five

### Exploring Visual Sovereignty Through Third Media

Trinbagonian advertising agency personnel often assert that Trinbagonian film and video production houses do not offer the “nice standard” that the agencies seek for their clients, particularly in the production of corporate television commercials. For this reason, Trinidad and Tobago advertising agencies seek the services of production houses in Venezuela and in Costa Rica. This much became evident in Chapter Four of this study. While this is key to understanding the ways in which hybridity becomes implicated in the practice of producing television commercials and therefore in the building of visual sovereignty, this discovery also brings to light other questions related to Trinidad and Tobago’s moving image culture: are there specific production aesthetics that exist within the Trinbagonian moving image mediascape? What factors contribute to the development of these production aesthetics? How has Trinbagonian television advertising affected or been affected by this production aesthetic?

To examine these questions, in this chapter I focus on analysis of two distinct texts. First I examine an episode of a Trinbagonian television soap opera named *Westwood Park*, which ran for nine years between 1995 and 2004. Second, I analyze programming on Gayelle Television, both on the first day of the station’s life and on Gayelle’s one-year anniversary. I selected *Westwood Park* because it was one of only three soap operas ever produced in Trinidad and Tobago, breaking many records and receiving mixed reviews during its time on television. Some viewers criticized the soap for copying non-Trinbagonian norms, while others recognized the tenacity of its

producers. I chose the episode on which I focus because it was set within the temporal context of 2004 when other key developments were taking place in the Trinidad and Tobago moving image mediascape<sup>1</sup>. I chose to focus on the first day of programming and on the one-year anniversary programming of Gayelle during this time-period, since during these timeframes Gayelle producers, programmers, on-camera personalities and viewers were focused more explicitly on the accomplishments, commendations and criticisms of the channel's first year of operation. By engaging in textual analyses of these three texts, I will explore production aesthetics that provide glimpses of a Trinbagonian visual style and how that style compares to norms of western visual style.

In this chapter, I articulate these glimpses of a Trinbagonian production aesthetic and question how these examples represent a space of expression of Trinbagonian visual culture. I analyze the spectrum of responses to these texts among audiences and producers, also considering this reception as represented through newspaper articles. I also analyze interviews (in-person, live online chat and telephone) with film and video production industry personnel and media critics. In this chapter, I seek to adapt the concept of Third Cinema to a conceptualization of Third Media. Further, I want to examine how a definition of Third Media can be used to determine an indigenous or national production aesthetic.

By applying the concept of Third Media in this way, I want to examine how an aesthetic manifests as a postcolonial nation's negotiation through the process of visual sovereignty. To explore how Third Media might be defined within this context, I use definitions of Third Cinema in existing literature in conjunction with postcolonial theory. Finally, I consider the ways in which advertising is forced to operate in new ways within

a Third Media environment, thus providing greater understanding of how the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry intersects with and develops alongside indigenous film, video and television production industries and therefore its integral role in the process of visual sovereignty.

The analyses in this chapter will extend the body of knowledge that exists at the intersection of postcolonial studies and media studies. In this chapter, I set out to answer the broader questions: How might we use glimpses into a visual aesthetic to investigate the theoretical conception of Third Media? What alternatives are there for advertising in new media environments characterized by Thirdness and the postcolonial nation? Finally, what do these analyses contribute to the broader discussion of visual sovereignty in Trinidad and Tobago?

### *Textual Analysis from the Third Media Vantage*

I have already established that throughout scholarly literature, advertising remains predominantly unaddressed as a form of mediated discourse through which the postcolonial nation state gets imagined. Postcolonial literature most commonly juxtaposes the nation with forms such as the novel and film, and postcolonial theorists aver that the nation was first imagined as a community through literature in written form (H. Bhabha, 1990a; Hjort & Mackenzie, 2000). In one exception to the norm of privileging the novel and the film in postcolonial studies, in the book *Images and Empires* Paul Stuart Landau considers the ways in which figurative images have played a critical role in the mediation of relationships between the colonizer and the colonized in Africa. While the other contributing authors in this collection of articles cover multiple

sources of images including magazines, product packaging, motion pictures, newspapers, cartoons and posters, in one chapter within this work, Landau considers the work of advertising images and their appeal and fascination for African viewers and readers (Landau & Kaspin, 2002). While Landau and the other authors within this volume investigate the ways in which viewers and readers in Africa received and negotiated their own identities through these images, there is little consideration of advertising and the postcolonial nation beyond advertising as text. To explore advertising within a postcolonial environment beyond the text of advertisements, I turn to the literature of Third Cinema.

Literature on Third Cinema is ideally located at the intersection of postcolonial studies and moving image media studies, in its examination of power structures in Third World societies, and cinemas of third spaces (Guneratne, 2003; Pines & Willemen, 1990). My interest here is to use Third Cinema to achieve a broader conception of Third Mediascapes, questioning how Third Media might be characterized, and where advertising might be positioned within such a Third Mediascape. The theoretical conceptualization of Third Cinema rests upon the foundational work by Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, who created a manifesto for Third Cinema titled, “Hacia un tercer cine (Towards a Third Cinema): Notes and Experiences on the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World.” As the subtitle of this work suggests, in this manifesto the two authors defined the term as cinema that recognizes the decolonization of culture (Chanan, 1997; E. a. R. S. Shohat, 1994; Solanas & Getino, 1973; Stam, 2003) but also as cinema that is representative of a Third Worldist



perspective, representing underdevelopment, experimentalism and subversion (Chanan, 1997).

Within Third Cinema literature, some studies make distinctions between the categorizations of Third World Cinema and Third Cinema. The term “Third World Cinema” describes cinema originating in so-called Third World countries, while the term “Third Cinema” more broadly defines cinema that upturns the relationship between spectator and text established in Hollywood Cinema (Guneratne, 2003). While Third World Cinema more rigidly refers to geographic origins, Third Cinema lacks boundaries of definition (Guneratne, 2003) but broadly implies cinema that is opposed to imperialism in terms of its stylistic approaches, narrative content, and production values (Pines & Willemen, 1990). Third Cinema can be thought of as being rooted in the more fundamental positioning of “thirdness” and “third spaces” as characterized by hybridity, liminality and transgression (H. Bhabha, 1990b). Third Cinema also expresses new culture and changes in society (Chanan, 1997).

Four specific dimensions of Third Cinema definition are integral to the discussions within this chapter. First, Third Cinema tends toward inclusiveness. This theoretical categorization can include cinematic narratives focused on any story and any subject (Pines & Willemen, 1990). Second, Third Cinema often presents cinematic narratives rooted in national cultures and addresses national or regional boundaries (Pines & Willemen, 1990). Thirdly, Third Cinema is alternative to First and Second Cinemas, the former of which is exemplified by American Cinema, the latter of which includes such categories as cinema d’auteur, art cinema, independent cinema and new wave cinemas (Guneratne, 2003). Last, and fourthly, Third Cinema is thought of as reversing

the colonialist gaze, upturning power structures constructed through the historical processes of colonialism (Guneratne, 2003). According to Solanas and Getino, Third Cinema is a cinema of decolonization, representative of a desire for national liberation, standing against myth, racism and bourgeois ideology. Third Cinema is the cinema of populism (Chanan, 1997; Solanas & Getino, 1973).

While the first three of these characteristics of Third Cinema could apply to American Cinema, the fourth characteristic is uniquely aligned with the categorization of Third Cinema. For this reason, I will focus on the last of these theoretical characterizations of Third Cinema in order to advance hypothetical conceptualization of Third Media. Building upon this thinking, Third Media might be thought of as media of decolonization that reverses the colonialist gaze, represents a desire for national liberation, stands against myth, racism and bourgeois ideology, and is populist media.

In his book, *Third World Mass Media and Their Search for Modernity*, John Lent examines ways in which mass media in the Commonwealth Caribbean modeled themselves upon the ideology of modernity, measuring their successes based upon their approximation of First World mass media models as ideals. Lent examines how the mass media in the Commonwealth struggled to advance toward this ideal of modernity, even while there was “not enough money, technology, and trained personnel to operate the media” (Lent, 1977). Lent focuses on the lacking resources that existed in the Caribbean at the time of his writing, thus making it impossible for Commonwealth Caribbean media to achieve equal status of First World mass media. Lent’s perspective places these First World mass media in a privileged position as examples for the mass media of developing Third World countries.

In the same way that Third Cinema opposes First World hegemony, a theorization of Third Media might also stand in opposition to such hegemonic discourse. In particular, in this theorization, I want to emphasize that like Third Cinema, Third Media might be positioned as mediated populist discourse. Solanas and Getino also positioned Third Cinema as standing against bourgeois ideology. Similarly, we can think of Third Media as representative of the ideologies that define the masses, rather than ideologies of the elite. Unlike Lent's categorization of Third World Media as searching for the ideals of modernity, Third Media is in search of a self-defined aesthetic and liberation from elitism, imperialism and the bourgeois ideology. Through the three texts I have identified, I will examine the ways in which a Trinbagonian moving image aesthetic is negotiated. It is worth noting here that the Trinbagonian moving image aesthetic is made up of countless component aesthetics. In this study, I will not attempt to define the complexity of *the* Trinbagonian aesthetic. Instead, I will analyze one component aesthetic that comprises the wider Trinbagonian aesthetic. Exploring this category of Third Media allows us to examine media of postcolonial nations as possessing centers of their own, and therefore as integral components in the process of visual sovereignty.

#### *A Trinbagonian Moving Image Aesthetic*

In the book *Questions of Third Cinema*, one contributing author considers the question of aesthetics by noting that it is “always a non-dialogue between those who subscribe to the conditioned world order and those who stand to gain from a reconstructed forum” (Taylor, 1989). In this analysis of black cinema, Taylor asserts that any discussion of a cinema aesthetic is “hopelessly entrenched within the favored

discourse of cultural imperialism” and a reference to classical beauty, as defined within the European middle class or even the aristocracy (91). Making a categorical move away from Western aesthetics, Taylor bases his discussion of post-aesthetics on the principle that “creativity is differently located, perceived and valued in varying cultural situations” (104-106). Taylor therefore asserts, “recognizes the local validity of ‘pre-aesthetic’ creativity” (106). In other words, post-aesthetics erases the hierarchical assumptions inherent in Western aesthetics, by recognizing individual cultures as differently expressed and represented. Theoretically, the post-aesthetic perspective offers a way to examine creative discourses that counter Western bourgeois cultural imperialism.

Though his work is intriguing, Taylor’s theorization of post-aesthetics flounders in much the same epistemological terrain as the theorization of the post-colonial. Post-colonial theorists often seek ways to build a post-colonial discourse without building upon colonial or neo-colonial discursive structures. Similarly, in building a post-aesthetic perspective, Taylor struggles to move beyond the Western bourgeois aesthetic and ultimately conceives an aesthetic that is, simply, an alternative to Western aesthetics. Despite these challenges in his discussion, in this study I want to use Taylor’s pitfall to opposite effect. By theorizing visual sovereignty we can examine how postcolonial theory can move beyond the postcolonial dialectic: privileging the self-centered, self-powered nation without turning toward neo-colonial discourse. I am exploring glimpses of a postcolonial moving image aesthetic in an environment in which several participant forces actively sought the process of visual sovereignty. As I have demonstrated in previous chapters, such was the environment in Trinidad and Tobago in late 2004 and the first half of 2005. I begin with the soap opera.

*Glimpses of a Trinbagonian Aesthetic in Westwood Park*

In 2004, the soap opera *Westwood Park* that had aired on TV6 in Trinidad and Tobago for nine consecutive years came to a conclusion. A newspaper article appeared in *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*, written by a local social commentator and columnist, placed much of the blame for the termination of *Westwood Park* on the shoulders of corporate Trinidad and Tobago. The soap opera had set and broken many records during its nine-year run, including becoming the longest-running local series in Trinidad and Tobago television history (Pires, 2003) and being the first Trinidad and Tobago television series to be shown in other Caribbean territories (including Jamaica), as well as in a local market in North America (Dieffenthaller, 2005) and in the UK (Islandeevents.com, 2004). Despite these accomplishments, throughout the time period that *Westwood Park* was on the air, problems of recognition and severe challenges in securing financial support for the production of the soap opera plagued the producers (Dieffenthaller, 2005).

In several newspaper and magazine articles published throughout the lifespan of this soap opera, responses to the series revealed that both the viewing audience and critics differed in their opinions about the merit or worth of this serial production. Several themes surrounding the cultural aesthetics and values of local productions emerged through initial analysis of these articles. While some articles expressed support for the production of *Westwood Park* and empathy with its producers, others seemed to lambast the series for specifics related to its production style and values. I am engaging this analysis of *Westwood Park* on three levels: through textual analysis of the soap opera itself, through analysis of newspaper and magazine articles and finally through analysis

of interviews with producers, in particular with the producer/director of the soap opera herself, Danielle Dieffenthaler. Through my discussions with Dieffenthaler, I wanted to gain insight into her experiences and how she collaborated with or struggled against structures of power within Trinidad and Tobago society. Within the context of that interview, I focused more specifically on the challenges that Dieffenthaler faced in such areas as financing and gaining the support of corporate Trinidad and Tobago. As such, my analysis of *Westwood Park* seeks the Trinbagonian aesthetic within the soap, while also considering economic and industrial factors that influenced aesthetic development of the soap opera.

Referred to in one magazine article as “indubitably the most influential Caribbean television show on the air today” (Pires, 2003), *Westwood Park* followed the stories of two fictional upper class Trinbagonian families, the Du Soleils and the Gunn-Monroes. Themes of power, manipulation and deception figured prominently in the overarching narrative of this soap opera, building at a local level on the culture of Trinidad and Tobago bacchanal.<sup>2</sup> Character interactions within the world of *Westwood Park* were typified by blackmail, murder and adultery, and adding to the “scandal” were characters who were cross-dressers, money launderers and elitists. One overarching theme that emerged over the nine years of the *Westwood Park* narrative was class conflict within Trinidad and Tobago society, among social climbers, and between the working class, the elite class and the nouveau riche.

In his work on this subject titled *Speaking of Soap Operas*, Robert Allen considers the generic construction of the soap opera, the history of its development and how its reception in American culture has historically changed over time (R. C. Allen, 1985).

Within this work, Allen considers “A Reader-Oriented Poetics of the Soap Opera,” asserting specific textual norms within this genre such as: use of white, middle class interior spaces, use of close-ups, two-shots, invisible editing, camera movement that is motivated by character-movement, and narrative significance in audio (R. C. Allen, 1985). The collection of articles in the book *To Be Continued: Soap Operas Around the World* demonstrates the global popularity of this media phenomenon, pointing to the cultural specificity of the form in different locations around the world, while noting that the soap opera always carries low cultural value (R. Allen, 1995). Since *Westwood Park* resides within the generic classification of soap operas, I am using Allen’s observations and theorizations to examine specific structures and themes within this Trinbagonian soap, while also considering how the series deviated from the norms of North American soap opera.

This episode of *Westwood Park* was the first episode of the final season of the soap opera, and is therefore representative of the soap opera’s narrative toward the end of its trajectory. As such, we will gain a sense of the how the narrative moved across the syntagmatic gaps created between seasons (Allen), and the how the soap opera manifested in the advanced stages of its evolution. My intent here is to examine ways in which aesthetic norms of North American soap opera (as defined by Allen) are represented in this episode of *Westwood Park*.

The first ten minutes of this episode of *Westwood Park* are spent catching up with the characters through an edit of scene segments from the previous season. In this montage, a female character finds a dead body in a house, a male character threatens another male character and a woman pleads with her husband to stay with her. The

characters within this world are revealed as liars and schemers. Through this sequence of medium and close shots, it becomes apparent that the world of *Westwood Park* is heavily female-dominant, and that the characters are from a cross-section of Trinbagonian society, as represented through race and class. This opening montage (within which there was one commercial break) is followed by the opening credits, the design of which are indicative of tensions that will be revealed within the narrative of this episode. The *Westwood Park* beginning sequence, which appears in the opening credits and is used to transition in and out of commercial breaks, uses a background of brown. The texture of this background is reminiscent of crocus bag cloth or flour bag cloth, suggesting localness, naturalness and indigenous Trinbagonian culture. The texture and color of this background also denotes rural life and tradition. Set against this background, are the letters “WP” and the words “Westwood Park.” All letters are an uppercase serif font, suggesting strength, elegance and civility. In effect, this billboard represents the essence of *Westwood Park*: the juxtaposition and tension between poor and rich, country and city, progress and tradition, simplicity of rural origins versus complexity of metropolitan desire. More broadly, this opening billboard speaks to a common soap opera theme of the mundane versus the elite. This latter tension mirrors similar themes in North American soap operas (R. C. Allen, 1985).

The use of space in *Westwood Park* is somewhat different from that in the North American soap opera form that Robert Allen describes. While Allen notes that close-ups and medium shots are used most frequently in soaps and that focus is placed on interior space and facial expressions, in *Westwood Park* there is an even balance between exterior locations and interior locations and between long shots and medium to close shots. In this



episode alone, locations included four houses, an office, a hospital, a city street and the wharves. Visually, the space of *Westwood Park* is broader than its North American counterparts, offering the viewer frequent glimpses of the landscape against which the narrative is set and lending itself to greater realism. The audio of *Westwood Park* also delivers more ambient contextualization of the narrative than the sound-stage or studio muteness of most episodes of North American soap operas.

The use of multiple locations (both interiors and exteriors) in *Westwood Park* is the result of three factors. First, there is no sound stage in Trinidad and Tobago, which might be dedicated to shooting such a series. For this reason, location shooting is the norm. Second, the video and television production studios that exist in Trinidad and Tobago (at the time of this study, the main ones included TV6, TTT, TIC, Video Associates, Advanced Dynamics and Stefan Jones Productions) are available at high hourly costs and their availability is largely dependent upon production priorities, which are, most frequently, television advertisement production. Lastly as a result of these first two factors, in Trinidad and Tobago it is easier and cheaper to secure a location than a studio, and as *Westwood Park* director/producer Danielle Dieffenthaller noted, many productions become reliant upon the goodwill of location owners (Dieffenthaller, 2005). While North American soap operas make limited use of location shooting (to mark special occasions in the diegesis, for example a wedding, or in attempts to boost ratings), *Westwood Park* used location shooting because of the production reality that defined the Trinidad and Tobago environment.

A personal insight into this production reality also relates to the postcolonial condition. In a 1994 conversation (long before the commencement of this study) with

Trinidadian cinematographer MacDonald Canterbury, I had inquired about the absence of a developed filmmaking industry in Trinidad and Tobago. Canterbury referred to the limited vision of the Trinidad and Tobago government, stating that in prior years he had been in personal contact with the National Film Board of Canada, which in the 1970s had offered the Trinidad and Tobago government comprehensive assistance in the building of a sound stage, including provision of materials, professional expertise, equipment and labor, toward helping Trinidad and Tobago to build its film industry. According to Canterbury, the Trinidad and Tobago government declined the offer from Canada, stating that Trinidad and Tobago should be entirely responsible for building its own film industry.

While the trail to the accuracy of this account runs cold beyond my conversation with Canterbury in 1994, I mention it because the story itself is replete with postcolonial discourse, implicating Trinidad and Tobago's postcolonial condition. In one instance we must note the country's lack of a soundstage as symbolic of Trinidad and Tobago's inability to produce cinematic quality that might compete with so-called developed country production values and standards. On another level, the story implies that the Trinidad and Tobago government was indignant in its response to Canada's offer, suggesting a national desire to transcend being positioned as a charitable cause among nations, an early stage of the process of visual sovereignty. The result of this expression of independence in visual production was that years later, the producers of *Westwood Park* had no other choice but to shoot the soap opera completely on location, giving the soap opera a distinctly Trinbagonian flavor.

As with North American soap operas as noted by Allen, *Westwood Park* mostly makes use of Hollywood narrative conventions, except in a couple of instances. For example, positioning the spectator as an ideal quasi-omniscient observer of events (R. C. Allen, 1985), hiding the ways in which the story is created through invisible camera movements and editing, therefore building an illusion of reality. In terms of framing and camera movement, in *Westwood Park*, static shots prevail and character movement motivates camera movement. In some instances, however, these conventions are broken, and camera movement becomes shaky. Throughout most of this episode of *Westwood Park*, the spectator is positioned as observer of the illusion created through the visualization of the narrative. There are two specific points, however, when the text becomes more explicitly an open text. In the first instance, the character Sahara has accused Jason Du Soleil of lying. Sahara probes Jason's claims of suffering with amnesia, saying, "You know how rare amnesia is? You only ever hear about it in movies and soap operas!" The effect of this retort is dual. On one level, this draws the viewer's attention to the position of spectator. The mention of the term "soap opera" might make the viewer aware that she is watching a soap opera. Momentarily, the spectator is no longer focused solely on wanting to close the syntagmatic gaps created in the narrative but becomes aware of a layering of reality. On a second level, this self-reflexiveness removes the boundary between the spectator's position as observer of illusion by placing the characters in *Westwood Park* on a similar plane of awareness and reality as the spectator. Both spectator and characters are on a higher rung of reality than "movies and soap operas" where amnesia is accepted as both normal and believable.

How does this narrative self-awareness change the way in which the narrative interpellates the viewer? By making reference to the conventions of soap opera upon which *Westwood Park* builds, the narrative blurs the boundaries that separate the audience from the world of the narrative, while interpellating common consensus among the creators of the soap opera, the characters within the soap opera and the audience it addresses. In this moment, the narrative draws the spectators, creators and characters into recollection of the conventions that define the soap opera experience. The mention of the use of amnesia as a narrative device in soap operas confirms the rules that define the relationship among the characters in the soap opera world, and between the narrative construction and its spectators. The narrative simultaneously confirms these conventions while rebuking them, acknowledging the historical, generic origins of *Westwood Park* while creating a new plane of conventions upon which this Trinbagonian soap opera operates. In effect, this line of dialog suggests that we (the spectators, characters and creators) all have common understanding of how amnesia fits into North American soap opera conventions. It also informs the spectator that while *Westwood Park* makes use of these conventions, it also offers new conventions of soap opera specific to the Trinidad and Tobago context. The narrative hails the viewer as an imagined collective with common understanding of generic conventions, while interpellating the viewer as an active participant who questions and upturns those conventions.

The second instance in which *Westwood Park* blurs lines between spectator and narrative illusion is during the closing credit sequence, which includes outtakes of that episode. Here, the closing narrative blurs lines between actor and character and the viewer is able to see within this montage of shots the mechanics by which the producers

create the illusion. Within the frames of these outtakes, we see boom microphones, the director, the clapboard and other cameras. The viewer sees outtakes of many of the shots that made up the episode, but this time we see actors fumbling lines and hear the laughter of the crew and other cast members in the background. The decision of the producers of *Westwood Park* to reveal the mechanics of the illusion and to draw the viewer's attention to the plane of reality upon which *Westwood Park* exists points to a desire to remind the viewer that the narrative exists as fiction, separate from an objective reality. In effect, the producers offer the viewer a knowing wink, positioning the viewer as co-producer of this narrative. In these moments, the spectator is invited to participate in the construction of the visual illusion that defines narrative. While this blurring of the line between spectator and illusion is not completely different from all North American soap operas, I make note of it here because it takes on distinct significance in the context of the postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago moving image mediascape.

In *Theatre of the Oppressed* Augusto Boal builds upon Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* noting that ordinary theatre is an instrument of the dominant class, keeping a line drawn between spectator and actor, with the spectator simply accepting what he is told happens in the narrative (Boal, 1985). For Boal, a Theatre of the Oppressed can become an instrument of subversion, by which hegemonic structures are questioned and the line between actor and spectator becomes blurred, deriving a hybridization between the two to become *spect-actors*, who can observe while simultaneously intervening in the narrative process (Boal, 1985). In some ways, *Westwood Park* offers such hybridity to the viewer who is not simply a passively positioned spectator of an illusive (and elusive) reality but is more activated in her

awareness of how such an illusion is created and of the conventions that govern the creation of the illusion.

*Westwood Park* fits the general categorization of a soap opera, conforming to many of the norms defined by Allen in *Speaking of Soap Operas*, including following the narrative norms and aesthetics of Hollywood cinema. What emerges from this analysis, however, is a realization that *Westwood Park* is not simply a carbon copy of its North American antecedents. In many ways *Westwood Park* comments upon the norms of North American soap opera by toying with its conventions. At times, like some more recent North American soap operas such as *Passions*, this breaking with convention takes on the appearance of a knowing wink shared with the viewer who also shares knowledge of these conventions. In other instances, *Westwood Park* breaks conventions as a result of an industrial reality that defines the Trinidad and Tobago production environment.

The narrative of *Westwood Park* seeks ways to build upon narrative conventions it borrows from North American imports that air in the Trinidad and Tobago mediascape, while constructing new conventions by implicating audience, creators and characters as participants in the forging of these new conventions. While we have not considered the entire narrative arc of *Westwood Park* as a complete soap opera, analysis of this episode points to both the creators' and spectators' awareness of existing generic conventions, and an active decision on the part of the producers to create something that does not completely align with these conventions. This episode of *Westwood Park* speaks to a desire to redress the imbalance of imported to locally produced texts on Trinbagonian television, by offering a narrative that builds upon audience awareness of imported

conventions, while questioning the logic of those conventions within the Trinidad and Tobago context.

*The Quest for Visual Sovereignty Catalyzes a Trinbagonian Aesthetic*

My interview discussions with *Westwood Park* producer Danielle Dieffenthaller revealed that this producer, along with other industry participants whom I interviewed, all held common sentiments regarding the Trinbagonian industry. Among them were common passions for participating in building an active film and video industry and for the need to work together toward such development (Lee, 2005; Popplewell, 2004, 2005a). The participants' responses to my questions revealed how closely each of these producers linked their individual careers with the arena of visual culture production. The developments within the moving image production industries affected the individual lives and careers of each producer. It was a deep-rooted passion to build an environment defined by visual sovereignty that drove the producers to create moving image media texts characteristic of a Trinbagonian aesthetic.

Throughout my interview with her, Dieffenthaller's tone fluctuated between pride (in relation to the triumphs that she experienced in the nine years the soap opera had been on the air) and frustration (over the challenges of producing the 100 episodes that resulted from ten years of production). From beginning to end in this interview, it became clear that what had begun as a personal project for Dieffenthaller had grown into a production that became representative of the structural integrity of the Trinidad and Tobago moving image production industries. Dieffenthaller's responses told the story of how a production survived despite widespread corporate and public disinterest and how *Westwood Park* became one of the most celebrated television series in Caribbean history. This director



revealed the polar opposites in reception of this soap opera among different socioeconomic and professional groups in Trinidad and Tobago.

In her recollections of her personal impetus that catalyzed the idea of *Westwood Park*, Dieffenthaler reminisced about her individual goals in relation to the film and video industry in Trinidad and Tobago:

I had a plan and I do have a plan. I want to get into feature film, not just television. I want to do something that the world can see. I think Trinidad and Tobago has so many stories. But back then I didn't think I was ready. I wanted the production to be completely Trinidadian and Caribbean, but we weren't ready. So I thought, let's do a soap opera and that way we could get over all the bad acting, the shaky technical thing, and it would be a good way for us to figure out what we needed to do to get a production together (Dieffenthaler, 2005).

Two issues arose in this part of Dieffenthaler's discussion, including the desire to create feature films that were uniquely Trinbagonian and the need to build production capabilities in order to accomplish that. In many ways, in the beginning Dieffenthaler considered *Westwood Park* as a "hard-knock film school" (Pires, 2003) that would establish the cultural foundation and technical abilities to produce a feature motion picture of international standard.

The issue of securing financial backing or sponsorship recurred throughout my conversation with Dieffenthaler, as well as in newspaper and magazine articles that

provided other insights into the difficulties of producing this series. From the genesis of the soap opera in 1995 to its end in 2004, the challenges of budgetary constraint affected decisions at every level of production. In her recollections of production management in the early years, Dieffenthaller noted:

We had no sponsors whatsoever and it was out of the goodness of everyone's hearts that we got things started. We would ask people to star in it until we got sponsors. People jumped on board and it was like everyone thought it was time to get the TV industry going (Dieffenthaller, 2005).

Initially, according to Dieffenthaller's recollections, it was the desire to complete an indigenous production that attracted unpaid talent and crew to the project. Indeed, this contributing to productions "for the love of it" echoed an earlier interview with a video production house manager, who had noted a similar practice in relation to the production of the made-for-television film, *Joebell and America*. In Trinidad and Tobago, moving image media production often gets accomplished through the contributions in kind or service by industry professionals. The desire among producers and other participants to advance the process of visual sovereignty often catalyzes the process itself.

This realization points to another point of difference between the North American model of soap opera that Robert Allen defined and *Westwood Park*. Allen asserts in many areas of his research that soap opera (like most mass media production) is driven by economics or the profit motive. In the 1930s, soap operas were produced to solve an advertising problem, and advertisers used them to attract audiences during daylight hours

(R. C. Allen, 1985). Additionally, Allen notes that soap opera producers ensure that narrative form follows economic function, or more simply put, that programs are efficiently profitable. While Allen focused on economics from the perspectives of advertisers, sponsors and networks and does not address the perspectives of cast and crew in relation to salaries and pay-scales, the implication in his writing is that cast and crew benefit financially from this economic imperative in the North American model of soap operas.

In the Trinidad and Tobago environment, however, according to Dieffenthaler, the desire to build the television production industry was what initially drove production of *Westwood Park*. While Allen points to soap operas as “narrative texts in service of an economic imperative,” *Westwood Park* seemed to be a narrative text in service of nationalistic and cultural imperative. Perhaps ultimately the producers, cast and crew hoped to create an economically feasible industry, but in the interim, it was the producers’ desire to define a space within which they could create uniquely Trinbagonian cultural texts. In other words, the quest to catalyze visual sovereignty provided immediate incentive for those who participated in the production of *Westwood Park*.

Regional discourses of localization within the moving image media also figured prominently within the initial establishment of *Westwood Park* within the Trinidad and Tobago moving image mediascape. Dieffenthaler made reference to a mid-1990s conference session hosted by the Caribbean Broadcasting Union and held in Barbados during which participants addressed the issue of television stations facilitating the development of local television programs. At that meeting, according to Dieffenthaler, representatives of TV6 claimed to have secured programming rights for *Westwood Park*,

even before such a deal had been negotiated (Dieffenthaler, 2005). When representatives from TTT returned to Trinidad following that meeting, they contacted Dieffenthaler to find out whether in fact that deal had been finalized, perhaps under some pressure from their board of directors to provide answers to the CBU call for increases in indigenous programming. After subsequent negotiations, *Westwood Park* first found a home within the TTT programming schedule, but within the first seasons was taken across to TV6, where it continued to run until its end in 2004 (Dieffenthaler, 2005). The success of the soap opera, the production of a Trinbagonian aesthetic and therefore the catalysis of visual sovereignty also gained incentive and support from a wider regional imperative.

From the outset, both TTT and TV6 emphasized the difficulties of airing locally produced programs, constructing their cases for positioning *Westwood Park* as non-premium programming. Since *Westwood Park* spent most of its nine years on the air on TV6, Dieffenthaler referred to the outlook of representatives of this station with regard to airing local programs:

TV6 said it was so much harder to sell local programming. They never saw the potential to sell beyond these shores and worried about how they were going to recoup their production costs. I always thought that it's not just for Trinidad, it's for everybody. When the first survey came in, we beat all the other soap operas and they were stunned (Dieffenthaler, 2005).

In her recall of these perspectives of the television station executives, Dieffenthaler countered that she had always suspected that local television programs could attract significantly larger audiences than imported programs but that the “Western Peninsula

mindset” of the television station executives kept them from making this realization (Dieffenthaler, 2005). Her reference here was to a metro-centric attitude which exists in Trinidad and Tobago, where dominant ideology represented in the mass media is often and has been historically reflective of the middle to upper class population that lives west of the nation’s capital, Port of Spain. Dieffenthaler also noted that while she wanted to develop something distinctively Trinbagonian, she considered it a narrative with regional relevance. At the root of this assertion is the perennial concern of producers in Trinidad and Tobago: how can commercial moving image production sustain itself financially in such a small market? The solution often provided is to market the production beyond the shores of Trinidad and Tobago, “up the islands” in other Caribbean territories. While the goal of producing *Westwood Park* may have been to advance the process of visual sovereignty, the producers also developed the series with an eye on regional marketability. While visual sovereignty seeks to develop a distinctive moving image culture within a national mediascape, in territories such as Trinidad and Tobago, the sustainability of such a process may also rely on constructing narratives that appeal to other markets.

Dieffenthaler noted that the difficulty experienced by television station representatives in selling a local production to advertisers and sponsors was indicative of the fact that sponsors or advertisers “never quite understood what the consumer was thinking or doing” (Dieffenthaler, 2005). Further, the director of *Westwood Park* noted that the soap opera found its greatest appeal within the working class throughout the Caribbean territories where it was televised, a perspective that had come to light during her own interactions with viewing audiences throughout the region. The difficulty of

getting television station executives and sponsors on board further emphasized Dieffenthaller's interactions with representatives of the advertising agencies:

This was also what the ad agencies were saying. Initially, we went to the ad agencies. They didn't see the benefit of selling their clients the opportunity to put money into it. They could never spin it and figure out how they could make their percentage off it. I think they wanted to know, "Where is my trip to Venezuela to edit or to shoot?" They didn't help us in any real way (Dieffenthaller, 2005).

In this regard, Dieffenthaller viewed the advertising agencies as similarly reflective of the "Western Peninsula mindset." From this perspective, anything that seems to appeal to the working class is not considered saleable to corporate clients who prefer generally to target the middle class and prefer to use images representative of the middle class as aspirational attractions for the lower class consumer. The implication here is that despite the economic viability of a locally produced program, if the program is seen as representative of or appealing to the lower, rural classes in Trinidad and Tobago, neither television programmers nor advertisers will promote or support the endeavor. Like many of the characters within the narrative of *Westwood Park*, the business class does not want to associate with "country bookies."<sup>3</sup> This also reinforces my earlier assertion that *Westwood Park* was in service of a cultural imperative – reinforcing broader social ideals. The tension between the lower, rural class and the upper-middle suburban class also reflects the tensions represented among the characters who populate the diegesis of *Westwood Park*.

Among advertising agency representatives and television station executives, Dieffenthaler noted, there seemed to be distaste for local programming. At the level of the television stations, programming executives never “got behind it” and never promoted the soap opera as a premium product. During the time that *Westwood Park* was on the air, televised promotional spots for programming on TV6 would focus heavily on the imported television programs. In her discussion, Dieffenthaler attributed this attitude to the effects of being a former colonized territory:

I’ve always said that we are still post-colonially traumatized. That self-hate still persists to today and people still think foreign is better. It’s only now they’re recognizing that there’s a lot of good and exciting things about local productions. People sometimes say things like, “It was a real good show for a local show.” And I ask, why for a local show? Why not just, “It was real good show full-stop?” (Dieffenthaler, 2005).

Wrapped up in this discussion with Dieffenthaler was what was long-accepted discourse among Trinidad and Tobago television executives that Trinbagonian audiences do not like to watch locally-produced television programs (Hanoomansingh, 1993).

Dieffenthaler’s first-hand experiences as director and producer of a local soap opera revealed a different perspective: that while local programs can gain tremendous grass-roots popularity, television stations, advertising agencies, and in general, the business class in Trinidad and Tobago have not translated support for local productions into financial backing or sponsorship with the exception of a few specific sponsors.

One social commentary writer noted the incongruity of the difficulties experienced by *Westwood Park* producers in securing financial support, noting, “In one of *Westwood Park*’s many deep ironies, it struggles to break even financially while lavishly depicting a lifestyle of seriously conspicuous consumption” (Pires, 2003). In a similar vein, an article written in 1993 considered the reasons that a popular local television program called *Gayelle* (which years later gave birth to a community television station, as outlined in previous chapters) disappeared. Through his interview with Christopher Laird (of Banyan Productions and later of *Gayelle TV*), in this article Peter Hanoomansingh summarized that in Trinidad and Tobago, television is not a democratic cultural medium. Television is, instead, an instrument of the business class (Hanoomansingh, 1993). In Trinidad and Tobago, as in many countries around the world, hegemonic control of the medium rested within the ideological structure of the upper and middle classes.

While the Trinbagonian business class did not strongly support *Westwood Park*, by comparison *Joebell and America* was promoted more along the lines of “premium product” positioning that Danielle Dieffenthaler said *Westwood Park* should have received. Perhaps *Joebell* received this marketing advantage because its narrative was based upon a literary text originally been written by an author who is established amid the canon of internationally recognized Trinbagonian writers. While *Westwood Park* may have been received with reservations about the cultural worth of the series, *Joebell and America* was received as a cultural text whose adaptation into moving image production was recognized amid the business class as worthy of public reception. In addition, as



Robert Allen notes, soap opera as a narrative form is devalued because its conventions are characterized by and seen as appealing to women (R. C. Allen, 1985).

At the end of this discussion with Dieffenthaler, it became apparent that within the context of regional discourses, broadcasting regulatory bodies emphasized the need for local television stations to encourage local production. Meanwhile at the Trinidad and Tobago local level, neither TV6 nor many corporate sponsors or advertising agencies supported the continued production of *Westwood Park*. Even while the soap opera broke records established by previous local soap operas, *Westwood Park* was not supported as a premium product. *Westwood Park* appealed to the mass public of Trinidad and Tobago because of its narrative form as a soap opera and because of its representation of class structures in Trinbagonian society. Despite this broad popularity, however, the end of 2004 brought with it the last episode of *Westwood Park* because of insufficient corporate support.

In many ways, *Westwood Park* shared characteristics with North American soap operas. Syntagmatically, the series followed the rules of soap operas: not closing its narrative until the end of its nine-year run, offering redundancy from one episode to another and creating gaps that drew the viewer from segment to segment through a desire to close these gaps (R. C. Allen, 1985). Paradigmatically, *Westwood Park* also presented similarities to the North American soap opera including a complex web of characters engaged through tensions of poor versus rich, rural versus metropolitan, tradition versus progress, and mundane versus elite (R. C. Allen, 1985).

To summarize the glimpse into a Trinbagonian aesthetic that this analysis of *Westwood Park* provides, however, we must consider the ways in which this soap opera

deviates from the North American norms. *Westwood Park* producers made use of locations in constructing both the interior and exterior spaces of this soap opera due to the lack of a soundstage in the country. Typically, North American soaps are shot almost exclusively on soundstages, except on special occasions. The effect of location shooting in *Westwood Park* is a series whose text tangibly represents certain cultural realities within Trinidad and Tobago, such as architectural styles and relationships between people and the spaces they inhabit. The result of the use of locations in *Westwood Park* is a privileging of the local in creating the landscape within the diegesis. A second way in which *Westwood Park* deviates from the North American norm is the invitation of the spectator behind the line of illusion. However, there are instances of more recent North American soap operas also using self-reflexive techniques, which effectively rules this difference out as exclusive to *Westwood Park*. Finally, the relationship between textual production and economic imperative in *Westwood Park* deviates from the North American standard. The North American soap opera is considered a narrative text in service of a profit motive. On the other hand, producers created *Westwood Park* toward the creation of a Trinbagonian aesthetic, so that Trinidad and Tobago might actualize visual sovereignty.

In the beginning of this analysis, I theorized Third Media as media of decolonization that reverses the colonialist gaze, represents a desire for national liberation, stands against myth, racism and bourgeois ideology, and is populist media. Through this analysis, *Westwood Park* emerges as a text that represents a desire for national liberation through distinctive local expression and representation, and as a text that transgresses rules of generic convention. The collective desire for postcolonial visual

sovereignty inspired the production of *Westwood Park*. It was this yearning that served as an incentive for production, and catalyzed the development of this Trinbagonian aesthetic, its producers motivated by desires that transcended remuneration and economic fulfillment.

### *A Gayelle Aesthetic*

While the battle to keep *Westwood Park* alive came to an end on TV6, the Trinbagonian moving image mediascape evolved through a new manifestation on the community television station, Gayelle. This section of my analysis will provide a description of a production and programming aesthetic of Gayelle The Channel through descriptions programming on the station's first day on air in February 2004 and during the station's one-year anniversary in February 2005.

When Gayelle commenced operation on Monday, February 16, 2004, its 6 a.m. transmission on cable Channel 7 and UHF Channel 23 began with a newscast featuring former TV6 reporter Charlene Ramdhanie. Smiling broadly, Ramdhanie welcomed viewers to the new station as though collectively the viewers had stepped into the studio. "Good mornin' Trinidad and Tobago, and welcome home to the Gayelle! This is, at last we own television!" The name of the station<sup>4</sup> and the style of its presenters positioned the station as definitively local, unlike others (TTT and TV6) which had gone before it. After Ramdhanie's newscast, and a series of miscues where alternately audio and video haphazardly signalled in and out (as seemingly a novice control room operator got the hang of the control suite live on-air), the opening billboard for Gayelle's morning program *Cock-a-doodle-doo* came on screen with audio of Bob Marley's "Three Little

Birds,” in reference to the program’s three hosts: Errol Fabien, Wendell Etienne and Magella Moreau. With a dissolve into an in-studio live shot, the viewer entered the world of *Cock-a-doodle-doo* where the three presenters sat on stools behind a newsdesk, each of them adjusting their microphones reminding each other, “Allyuh, we live!” and reassuring the viewer with, “Okay, we ready!”

Both the first newscast and the first morning program (*Cock-a-doodle-doo*) set the stage for what would become the *modus operandi* for Gayelle: live programming that teetered on the edge of unexpected extemporaneity. At one moment during *Cock-a-doodle-doo* that first morning, as the hosts chatted about the new station and about what they had each done over the weekend, Fabien asked Moreau, “So what you get for Valentine’s Day?” Moreau responded without thinking, “Oh shit!” and hastily the three hosts apologized to viewers for the obscenity, explaining that the team had to get accustomed to being live on-air. The connotation on that first morning’s programming was that “we own” television would be replete with mistakes and discoveries all taking place without much of a plan for the viewer’s pleasure, a standard that was confirmed and repeated throughout the station’s first year of programming.

Another feature of that first morning’s *Cock-a-doodle-doo* that became a common feature on many programs in Gayelle’s schedule were the live on-air viewer calls. Throughout the morning’s programming the hosts encouraged viewers to call and offer their perspectives about recent events in Trinidad and Tobago, or about the station or its hosts. To this request viewers responded by calling to say, “Allyuh looking so nice!” The hosts asked each caller to identify from which part of Trinidad and Tobago they were calling, and whether they were receiving the station via cable or via antenna. As call after

call came in, it became clear that Gayelle was more than a community station limited to St. James and the environs of Port of Spain, as calls came from east Trinidad including Barataria, St. Augustine and Arima, as well as from south Trinidad, including San Fernando. With each call, the tone of Gayelle as community-oriented became clear. “Morning, morning” was the normal exchange, and the tone was more reminiscent of the warm, but casual greeting between two neighbors passing on any street in Trinidad or Tobago than between television personality and viewer.

Kevin Howley asserts that community media (such as the programming on Gayelle including *Cock-a-doodle-doo*), is characterized by locally-oriented and participatory programming in “response to the encroachment of the global upon the local. Howley also notes that community media seeks to assert local cultural identity in active opposition to the forces of globalization and cultural hegemony (Howley, 2005). We find examples of this response to cultural hegemony in Gayelle’s approach to programming as exemplified by *Cock-a-doodle-doo*. This morning program addresses the Trinbagonian viewer through rhetorical address, using vernacular language and colloquial expressions to interpellate local cultural identity, therefore activating participation at the level of local audience.

In addition to the daily newscast and *Cock-a-doodle-doo*, other programs that became popular during Gayelle’s first year of operation included *Spalk* and *Philo-Mania*. On the weekly talkshow *Spalk* (short for Sports Talk), presenter Anil Roberts (widely known as coach to Trinidad and Tobago’s Olympic bronze medalist swimmer George Bovell) spoke about Sports in “Trini” talk at such a high volume that in the first few episodes he joked that the producers would have to put his lavalier microphone lower

than for most others. With in-studio guests, Roberts offered “high performer” status to individuals or organizations that stood out as positive contributors to Trinidad and Tobago or gave a “steups<sup>5</sup>” to individuals or organizations who had done something ignorant or negative. In one segment, Roberts held up various newspaper clippings so that the camera could zoom in, to reveal a strange or incredible headline or photo. Once Roberts had explained the headline or photo the camera would shake and Roberts would let out a long, “Whaaaaaaat!” In Roberts’ style and the production aesthetics of this program, the viewer encountered expressions of Trinbagonian culture so specific in their address that only viewers with understanding of Trinbagonian cultural identity could fully comprehend their significance. *Spalk* built loosely on the structure and content of sports talk shows one might find on ESPN (such as *SportsCenter*) with weekly guests including local sports personalities and in-studio discussions of recent games and matches. *Spalk* differed from its North American equivalents in the casual attire of its host (Roberts always wears shorts and a t-shirt and appears on camera wiping his brow with a rag) and its mode of address as distinctly not-standard English. On almost every level, *Spalk* deviated from established norms (North American, British and Trinbagonian) of sports talk television, and like *Westwood Park*, sought ways to build on the conventions that defined its genre through manipulation of the program’s aesthetics.

*Philo-Mania* featured a character *Philomena* played by local actor Deborah Maillard. Philomena was the cleaning woman at Gayelle, working-class, loud and intrusive. While Philomena was a character, on the program she would chat with real-world personality Kailash Bedi about relationships or gossip about goings on in Gayelle. After the first few episodes, viewers would call in to Gayelle complaining about the

cleaning woman and asking why they let that annoying cleaning woman on air in the studio. The presenters of other programs who received such calls would play along with the gag, fielding comments about the annoyance factor and Philomena. In the context of Gayelle's programming, it was difficult for the viewer to discern whether Philomena was a performed character, or if the camera was simply "capturing" the antics of a "real" person. While this innovative program lasted (until the character became the subject of a legal case focused on character creation and ownership issues), the show's presenters and other people within the Gayelle family refused to clarify whether Philomena was performed or real. As such, the program toyed with viewers' attitudes toward social class as expressed in the real-life Trinidad and Tobago context versus in the world of performed television. Viewers who knew that Philomena was a performed character perceived her as humorous, while viewers who thought she was a real person, considered her annoyingly crass. Ultimately, *Philomena* offered viewers the opportunity to confront existing stereotypes and preconceptions that prevailed within Trinbagonian society, while operating under the guise of reality show or comedy. I would argue that in the case of *Philomena*, Gayelle offered a completely new genre of programming, which was neither purely comedy nor reality television, and blurred lines between performance and reality, again activating the viewer's imagination in ways they had never experienced through previous television programming.

Each of these programs on Gayelle The Channel brought a different aspect of Trinidad and Tobago culture for the audience that appealed as much to viewers as it did to advertisers and their advertising agencies. Advertising agency managing director Ian

Collier postulated the reasons for Gayelle's success in securing advertising dollars while offering almost completely local programming:

They have a particular style, which is very suited to local products and to market leader types of products and we've tended to use the style of the station more in its live format than in recorded format. We arrange call-in programs or promotions on Gayelle or get the presenters to use products on the set, or place branded mugs and jars on the set (Collier, 2005).

The implication here is that while TV6 offered a model of television programming fashioned upon North American models, airing predominantly North American programs in its lineup, Gayelle was offering completely local programming, the aesthetic of which provided a suitable environment for investment of indigenous advertising budget dollars. In the TV6 context, where North American products were positioned as "premium" and therefore as drawing prime advertising budgets, a local production such as *Westwood Park* was positioned as not of North American standard, therefore not premium, and by extension not worthy of allocating prime advertising budgets. Further, the aesthetic of "localness" presented within Gayelle programming provided an environment where "products appear as if they belong" (Collier, 2005), and this placement within the live programming is supplemented with actual commercials.

In February 2005, Gayelle prepared to celebrate its one-year anniversary. In celebration of the anniversary, Gayelle CEO Christopher Laird joined Magella Moreau and Wendell Etienne on the live morning program *Cock-a-doodle-doo* to answer



questions about recent newspaper reports of firings from Gayelle's news team, to speak about the station's accomplishments and to offer projections for new directions in the second year of Gayelle's operations. Throughout this discussion and during in-person interviews I shared with him, Laird noted that from the early days of Gayelle, the station's managers had struggled with how to break many of the conventions that stand as "good practice" in broadcasting. In particular, Laird noted, news posed an interesting challenge:

We were never happy with the traditional format of news.

We thought, why does news have to be presented from behind a desk with a person in a suit and tie. It wasn't

Gayelle's style (Fabien, Etienne, & Moreau, 2005).

The style of news that subsequently emerged for Gayelle established itself during the station's live coverage of Hurricane Ivan on September 7, 2004, which featured in-studio presenters fielding calls from around the Caribbean region, as Ivan wreaked havoc in Grenada and Jamaica. Even news on Gayelle came to be characterized by viewer participation and a local flair expressed through presenters using Trinbagonian parlance to provide their own commentary and perspective on the news-stories on which they reported. News on Gayelle became symbolically representative of a distinctive Trinbagonian style, typified by casualness and off-the-cuff presentations.

Laird noted in his summary of Gayelle's style that the station had always strived to be human, to be personal and not to be stiff. "We're good at extemporizing," Laird observed, and wrapped up in this statement was reference to both the abilities of Gayelle's on-camera presenters and to broader Trinbagonian culture. *Extempo* calypso

competitions have long been part of the Trinidad Carnival calendar and feature calypsonians engaged in playful battle by discrediting each other's reputations, through live performance, which is characterized by the singing of impromptu calypso with each verse ending with the refrain, "Santimanitay" patois that originates from the French "sans humanité," or "without humanity." The spontaneity and playfulness of extempo were also evident in *Cock-a-doodle-doo*, *Spalk* and *Philomena*. In extempo, we also see the influence of French culture in the predominantly African-originated musical form of calypso reflecting the influence of hybrid identity within Trinbagonian culture. This hybridity is also apparent in the programming on Gayelle which itself seeks to merge and manipulate existing conventions.

The analyses of three programs that became popular during Gayelle's first year of programming provide additional glimpses into Trinbagonian moving image media aesthetics. Gayelle offered programming that we can categorize as community media in that it addressed a segment of the national population, spoke in voices representative of the community it addressed, and sought to redress the imbalances of globalization within the Trinbagonian mediascape. While some of Gayelle's programming built upon existing conventions of North American or Trinbagonian television programs, it also actively sought and developed ways in which such conventions could be manipulated to better reflect Trinbagonian culture and more effectively interpellate the local viewer as participant in producing a local reality.

While Gayelle aligns with some basic tenets of community media, for our purposes we can also examine its programs as representative of Third Media. In effect, the programming on Gayelle came into being as a result of the producers' desires to

represent local cultural identity and to explore how the Trinbagonian mediascape might be liberated from global flows, too many imported programs and the resultant ideological hegemony that is implied. The hosts of Gayelle's programs spoke in the local vernacular, deploying distinctive characteristics of Trinbagonian cultural expression (such as playful spontaneity) to address their audiences and activate participant observers. Generally, Gayelle programs represented the linguistic and interpersonal style of the masses, and specifically sought to undress existing Trinbagonian television standards of "correctness" and "appropriateness." Third Media as glimpsed through analysis of some of Gayelle's programming uses discourses of hybridity, representation of local cultural identity and activation of the audience to transgress the hegemony of global dominance within a national mediascape characterized by postcoloniality.

### *Conclusion*

By expanding upon Third Cinema literature and through analysis of television programs from Trinidad and Tobago a new understanding of thirdness in relation to mediated moving images comes into focus. Extrapolating characteristics from Third Cinema theory, Third Media emerges as media that is created out of a desire to counteract the discourses of cultural hegemony that exist within a postcolonial environment, resulting from both colonial rule and imperial domination through globalization. The postcolonial nation may be twice subject to ideological domination: once through the forces of colonialism and then through the forces of imperialism. Through the

development of Third Media, a postcolonial nation can upend the cultural hegemony that exists within its mediascape.

Through analysis of *Westwood Park* and analysis of sample programs from Gayelle's first year on-air, glimpses of Trinbagonian moving image aesthetics emerge, which are built on a specific desire to create a space of national expression through visual media. The producers who stood behind both the soap opera and the television programs on Gayelle all operated out of a desire to catalyze formation of these spaces of local visual culture and developed specific aesthetics in their productions, which became integral to this process of visual sovereignty. In effect, the desire to advance the process of visual sovereignty became a catalyst in the process itself. Also significant in this analysis is that as was the case with Joebell, the ability to secure advertising dollars dictated the success of producing *Westwood Park*, while sponsorship dollars funded the production of programs that offered a local aesthetic on Gayelle. In fact, it was the lack of advertising support that caused *Westwood Park* to come to an end in 2004.

The link between class and moving image production in Trinidad and Tobago is complicated indeed. In the case of *Westwood Park*, the program attracted lower classes, therefore decreasing interest among advertisers and their advertising agencies, who were typically more representative of middle to upper classes. Upper class advertisers' and advertising agencies' disdain for the lower class viewers therefore hampered local production of television programs. On the other hand, as we found through discussions in a previous chapter, local production of television advertisements tended to take place when the products and services being advertised were intended for a lower class or mass audience, whereas corporate messages intended for a higher class audience were taken

outside of Trinidad and Tobago where agencies could achieve a “nicer” production standard. On Gayelle, this relationship between class and production was such that advertisers recognized the distinctive local style as an opportunity to reach specific demographics of the audience. Third Media operates within the economic realities that define the environment in which it is produced, and within which it is received.

Using these analyses as the basis for this theorization, Third Media can be theorized as comprising of narrative texts in service of national visual culture, the production of which stems from a collective desire to advance the process of visual sovereignty. While Third Media can borrow from conventions that originate outside the local culture, it reappropriates these conventions so as to be more representative of local cultural identity and therefore more effective in its interpellation of the local audience. Metaphorically, we can think of Third Media as operating within an economically defined environment, but not driven solely by a profit motive. Third Media is, in essence, media in which narrative form follows nationalistic and cultural imperatives, but which often relies on financing generated through production and placement of advertising.

The creation of Third Media texts is integral to the process of visual sovereignty, since the production of these texts arises from the desire to develop a space of national cultural expression within the global mediascape. Yet Third Media does not completely eradicate or ignore the intrusions of global flows into the local mediascape that it seeks to transcend. Instead, Third Media finds ways to manipulate the manifestations of these flows by incorporating them into new, hybridized forms of expressions that are typical of local cultural identity and become representative of a nation visual culture within the postcolonial context. As we began to see in previous chapters and continue to uncover

here, the process of visual sovereignty is not built on absolutist desires to eradicate Other within the mediascape. Instead, visual sovereignty finds ways of incorporating Others into a hybridized, local cultural identity expressed within the postcolonial moving image mediascape.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Trinidad and Tobago's Advertising Awards:**

#### **Visual Sovereignty and Ideological Control**

In the third quarter of each year since 2000, between October and November, advertising agencies in Trinidad and Tobago convene under formal circumstance to recognize the winners of that year's industry awards. Similar in structure and objective to such other internationally recognized awards as the Clios and the Addys, the Advertising Agency Association of Trinidad and Tobago (AAATT) Annual Creative Excellence Awards ceremony is a climactic date on the calendar of that country's advertising industry. In this chapter I will analyze the structure of the AAATT Creative Excellence Awards, towards understanding what values and discourses drive this industry in its pursuit of "excellence."

In October 2000, the AAATT marked the beginning of a new era in the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry with the hosting of the first annual Creative Excellence Awards. The dawn of this period of advertising history in Trinidad and Tobago signalled an increase in the self-awareness of this industry fueled by the desire of advertising agency personnel to publicize their accomplishments in the shape of awards won both locally and internationally. Beyond the obvious self-promotion that evolved as a result of the advertising agencies winning awards, the positioning of these awards within the industry and the structural configuration of the awards signified increased competitiveness among constituent agencies in the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry. The evolution of these awards between 2000 and 2004 is indicative of the

cultural position occupied by the advertising industry and signifies how this industry envisioned its role within the broader culture of Trinidad and Tobago. Through analysis of these awards I will examine the discourses that govern the political economy of the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry interrogating the specific aspects of the advertising profession that the industry collectively privileged.

In this chapter I examine the ways in which the annual AAATT Creative Excellence Awards (along with the more recently publicized Addy Awards) served as barometers within the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry, making evident the industry's emphasis on specific ideals while providing indication of the advertising industry's central position within the mediascape of Trinidad and Tobago. I engage this analysis through examination of newspaper articles that provided coverage and commentary on the awards, analysis of newspaper op-ed pieces that commented on the role of the AAATT and the agencies within the mediascape and finally through interviews with advertising agency personnel, including an interview with a former President of the AAATT. In the first two years that the awards were hosted, I had the opportunity to attend the formal function as a participating member of the advertising industry in Trinidad and Tobago. Throughout my analysis, I weave my recollections of those occasions into my description, providing the reader with first-hand descriptions of these events. I also examine the placement of focus on specific definitions of excellence within the advertising awards and the ways in which participants in the awards discursively negotiate the meaning and implication of excellence within the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry.



The findings in previous chapters demonstrated that between 2004 and 2005, the process of visual sovereignty involved intense changes within the Trinbagonian moving image mediascape, including the ending of the country's longest-running soap opera, closure of the government television station and an increased number of television stations that were focused on offering higher percentages of local programming. Through analyses in the first five chapters of this study, I have positioned advertising as central to the process of visual sovereignty in a postcolonial environment in terms of how advertising dollars make it possible for producers and television stations to bring local productions to the national audience. We have also examined that discourses of national identity flow between narrative media texts and the advertisements that are interspersed within these texts. Finally, we have seen that advertising production in a postcolonial environment fosters global flows and hybridity, yet facilitates production of distinctive national visual culture within a mediascape. In each of the chapters so far I have considered the ways in which agents (producers, advertising agency personnel and mass media house representatives) within a postcolonial nation actively pursue the development of a space of distinctive national expression within the moving image media, and how advertising fits into this quest.

Specifically, the research in this chapter was inspired by such questions as: what similarities and differences exist between the AAATT annual awards and other advertising awards recognized internationally, such as the Clios? What discourses are privileged in the honoring of specific advertisements over others? What can the structure of the awards and the work recognized as award-worthy tell us about the advertising industry in this specific postcolonial environment? What do these awards signify about

the overall cultural position occupied by the advertising industry within the process of visual sovereignty?

### *Where Advertising Resides*

Studies of the cultural position occupied by the advertising industry became prevalent in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with works by such writers as Sut Jhally, Naomi Klein, James Twitchell, Stuart Ewen, Roland Marchand, Michael Schudson, and Mark Crispin Miller. Each of these authors considers to differing degrees the centrality of the advertising industry in shaping broader cultural trends. On one end of the spectrum, Michael Schudson asserts that advertising has less ideological effect than its practitioners give it merit. Indeed, in concluding this argument, Schudson positions advertising merely as an indicator of how much an advertiser values a product or service. In other words, according to Schudson, advertising is not powerful enough to change buying habits or create desire among consumers. Rather, advertisers will invest advertising dollars in products and services that are already perceived to have a significant consuming market (Schudson, 1984). My argument in this study obviously counters Schudson's major assertion, by examining advertising as a central force in the process of national identity formation through visual media.

My positioning of advertising as central to postcolonial identity formation aligns more closely with the thinking of James Twitchell. In his book *Adcult USA*, Twitchell considers advertising as *the* central institution within, or the lingua franca of, American culture. This is the reason, Twitchell argues, that significant advertising catch-phrases come to be integrated into everyday use (Twitchell, 1996). According to Twitchell,

culture is effectively carried on the back of ads, and ultimately he asserts that advertising plays such a crucial cultural role in (post)modern society that if a mass medium cannot carry advertising, it is unlikely to survive. Twitchell builds this argument, noting that public broadcasting has ultimately introduced advertisements into a previously advertising-free channel, euphemizing the presence of advertisements by referring to them as “underwriting announcements.” Twitchell also predicts that book publishing will ultimately revert to an earlier period practice of including advertisements within the pages of its products. In sum, Twitchell’s thesis is that without advertising to support the cost of its production and dissemination, a mass medium will likely not survive.

While Naomi Klein might agree with this positioning of the “image as everything,” Klein’s focus is on the cultural criticism of the advertising industry, the role it plays as global navigator in a world of sweatshops and the future of the advertising industry in an increasingly anti-corporate environment (Klein, 2002). Meanwhile, in his analysis of how advertising negotiates modernity, Roland Marchand focuses on the ways in which advertising serves as a social tableau, providing glimpses into societal norms such as manners of dress and technological capabilities (Marchand, 1985). Along similar lines, Stuart Ewen positions “admen” as “Captains of Consciousness,” implicating the middle class in a culture of consumption and desire (Ewen, 2001). Finally, Mark Crispin Miller asserts that while the practices of advertising try to go unnoticed, individual advertisements want to stand out and seek to make the consumer doubt herself and therefore consume to assuage that guilt (Crispin Miller, 1988).

Despite the recognition within these studies of the important socio-cultural function that advertising plays, as James Twitchell noted in his 1996 writing, within

certain corners of academia advertising continues to be sidelined. As I have outlined in Chapter Two of this study, for the most part, the canon of postcolonial studies focuses on such literary texts as novels and films in consideration of how the nation gets imagined. When postcolonial studies includes advertising in its purview, it focuses on representation of the nation in texts of advertisements and how postcolonial audiences negotiate meanings and imagine their contextual community through the texts of these advertisements (Foster, 1995; Landau & Kaspin, 2002). While I have also included such analysis within this broader work, my interest in this chapter is in further investigation of advertising's role in the process of visual sovereignty by examining structure and industry discussions of the local annual advertising awards.

As such, while other studies have examined whether advertising is central to society because of the ideological work that is done within the construction of advertising messages, in this chapter I consider the ways in which the Creative Excellence Awards effectively control the ways in which creativity is expressed within the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry, and how these awards tend toward privileging the hegemonic discourses at play within that industry, which, I argue, ultimately get played out more broadly in the contextual evolution of visual sovereignty within this postcolonial mediascape.

### *Agencies and Their Advertising*

There are few periods within the Trinidad and Tobago calendar that advertising agencies become the focus of media coverage. An example of such an instance occurs when an advertising agency hires a new high profile member of its team. Another such

instance is when a team from an agency participates in overseas training. In both of these first two examples of advertising agency publicity, the accomplishments are individual, and it would be a matter of coincidence if ads publicizing such accomplishments for different agencies appeared within the same time period. The periods following the advertising awards specific to Trinidad and Tobago (the AAATT Creative Excellence Awards) and the American Advertising Federation Fourth District (Florida and the Caribbean) Addy Awards were two other periods during which advertising agencies in Trinidad and Tobago publicized their own accomplishments. Since the advertisements for the various agencies all appeared within the same time-frame following these awards, analysis of the graphic and textual themes of these print advertisements, along with analysis of related news articles and interviews with industry representatives, gives us a snapshot of the significance of the awards to the collective industry. Through these analyses, we will also uncover how the agencies view their own work in relation to the broader cultural context.

Following the time-periods of these two annual advertising awards shows, advertising agencies that participated in and won within specific categories in the awards provided coverage of the awards that their agency had won, ladening the pages of local newspapers with publicity articles (likely arising from public relations press releases) and promotional advertisements, the content of which aimed to build the public awareness of that agency while building industry respect for that agency's work. The broader goal of these articles and ads, however, was perhaps to recruit new clients who were as yet unaligned with an agency. The ultimate prize might have been for an agency to secure a new client by "stealing" an account from a competitor agency.

I have established, in previous chapters that the advertising industry plays a pivotal role in the process of visual sovereignty, and that between 2004 and 2005 major changes in the Trinbagonian moving image mediascape characterized this process. In keeping with these discoveries, it stands to reason that analysis of the discourses that circulated during one of the few times when the advertising industry celebrated its own successes will lead us toward more in-depth understanding of what drives the industry that is centrally located within the process of visual sovereignty.

### *Irony, Ideology and the Advertising Industry*

An ironic contradiction exists within many advertising industries throughout the world: “advertising agencies don’t advertise [themselves].” Generally speaking, this practice is not formalized within codes of practices, nor can it normally be found written within a book of advertising ethics, yet the agreement stands across agency lines and national borders. Advertising agency personnel and industry critics frequently provide at least three different reasons for this seemingly contradictory practice, all of which are positioned within an unwritten code, or “gentleman’s agreement.” One reason given is that advertising agencies seek to focus the consuming public’s attention on their clients, not on themselves. A second reason provided is that agencies agree on a formal level not to poach each other’s clients, and advertising would have this direct or indirect effect. On a third, more latent level, critics of this industry claim that advertising agencies see their work as focused more on creative positioning rather than on selling (Marshall, 2004).

This unwritten agreement for advertising agencies not to advertise, is characteristic of an industry that seeks to position itself as comprised of respectful

professionals who are guided by ethics, honorability and self-effacement. To build their enterprise, advertising agencies in Trinidad and Tobago rely on word of mouth referrals from existing clients to potential new clients, as well as on the publicity they gain from advertising their own accomplishments at the award ceremonies. On the one hand, agencies position themselves as being in business solely for the benefit of their clients (therefore agencies focus their resources on promoting their clients and not themselves), yet the agencies seek to be recognized for their creativity, which as we shall see is not of direct measurable benefit to agencies' clients. A façade of ethics guide the operation of the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry, which under scrutiny reveal incongruous and ironic discourses circulating within that industry.

Generally, award shows in any industry are often recognized as being self-congratulatory and self-adulatory. In *Behind the Oscars*, Anthony Holden notes that the Oscar awards were originally launched to encourage growth in the motion picture industry and to control the unions, ultimately asserting that the Oscars are the Academy's key to control of the industry's structure and to define the ideologies that drive creativity within motion picture production (Holden, 1993). In the context of the Trinidad and Tobago, the AAATT Creative Excellence Awards seek to control both the discourses that govern the advertising industry and the people who gain recognition for contributing to these important discourses.

### *Creativity*

One discursive theme that governed the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry was that of creativity, which appears as a descriptor in the very name of the awards:

AAATT *Creative Excellence Awards*, and was reflected in the copy within the newspaper articles I analyzed. Among these articles, one headline read “Advertising Agencies Tap Creative Juices,” while within article copy, there was reference to “creative prowess,” and “the country’s most creative minds.” In a similar vein, the articles quoted the speech by AAATT President Glen de Verteuil in which he made reference to the fact that Trinidad and Tobago advertising agencies were expected to “deliver creative of an international standard while staying true to the uniqueness...” of Trinidad and Tobago (Guardian, 2004). De Verteuil was also quoted as outlining the AAATT’s mission of raising the standard of “our creative product.” In De Verteuil’s iteration of the AAATT’s mission there is evidence of a tension that we will see is repeated in other aspects of the Creative Excellence awards: the tension between local relevance and international standards.

Further analysis of this focus on creativity as a qualifier reveals a positioning that is key to the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry. Creativity is simply one aspect of the business activity of advertising agencies, which generally includes account management or client services, media planning, and production. If each of these aspects of the industry were valued equally by the industry, it would stand to reason that the AAATT could host awards that focused on any of these areas. While the individual awards do recognize the work of account executives, media planners and buyers and producers, the AAATT awards focus on the creative concept behind the advertisement.

In the advertisements designed by the agencies themselves, creativity also became a thematic highlight. In one advertisement for Rostant Advertising, for example, the headline read, “Celebrated Creative Thinkers and Achievers,” with graphics and copy



positioning Rostant Advertising alongside Albert Einstein and Alexander Graham Bell. In this advertisement, the work of advertising is described as including “brilliant ideas” that “achieve extraordinary results” (See Figure 9). Through this alignment, the creative personnel within Rostant Advertising are juxtaposed against other “outstanding creative minds.” Rostant Advertising is therefore positioned as being of international and historical importance through comparison with Einstein and Bell.



Figure 9. A newspaper advertisement featuring Addy Awards won by advertising agency Rostant Advertising

Former President of the AAATT Ian Collier illuminated part of the reason for this focus on creativity. In his interview, Collier noted that the AAATT recognizes that larger

agencies, whose clients tend to have bigger budgets, have the benefit of securing cutting-edge production facilities, unlike their smaller agency counterparts, whose smaller accounts (or clients) might not have such large advertising budgets. To level this playing-field, Collier noted, AAATT recognized the creative concept evident within the work, rather than the execution of that concept (Collier, 2005). This approach to judging advertising award submissions is not, however, unique to the AAATT awards. The Clio Awards website also notes:

Clio does not instruct the jury, other than to encourage it to award ideas, rather than mere execution. Clio supports an honest, democratic and non-political system of judging.

Each piece is judged on its own merits (Clio, 2005).

While Collier notes that this approach serves to level the playing field in the judging of large and small client campaigns, the implications of this practice deserve additional comment.

On the surface, “awarding ideas,” allows smaller agencies with typically smaller client advertising budgets to compete more evenly against the larger agencies. Despite this veneer of egalitarianism this practice does not acknowledge where advertising agencies place credit for these “ideas.” Most often, a major portion of the credit is given to the creative director of the agency. It stands to reason that a larger agency will more likely hire a creative director who possesses a more impressive *curriculum vita*, since that agency would have the financial ability to pay higher salaries and therefore attract well-recognized creative directors. By rewarding the idea behind, rather than the execution of an award submission, the AAATT is rewarding the work of the idea-generating people

within the advertising industry. In effect, advertising awards therefore single out the efforts and ideas of the creative personnel at the top of their industry: the advertising elite. It is also worth noting that because of the cost of tickets, advertising agencies will normally purchase a limited number of tickets which are distributed to their senior, high profile personnel, leaving the more junior, lower salaried personnel to find ways to pay the high price for a ticket, further limiting participation in the awards ceremony to the agencies' upper management, including the creative elite.

The broader issue here is that within the context of the advertising awards, “*creativity*” is privileged even above the importance of “*effectiveness*” of the advertising message. In other words, while advertising seeks to raise awareness for brands, products and services, eventually leading to increased consumer activity focused on products and services, these awards do not recognize excellence achieved in the area of increasing consumer awareness or ultimately increasing consumption. The advertising industry in Trinidad and Tobago comes together once per year to celebrate the degrees to which its personnel can express themselves creatively, not to recognize the caliber of the service the agencies offered their clients, nor do they convene to acknowledge the successes enjoyed by clients whose revenue might have been boosted through successful advertising campaigns.

By focusing on the attainment of excellence expressed through creativity, the advertising industry seeks to distinguish itself from other aspects of the marketing process. The difficulty of achieving creative excellence within the advertising industry was revealed in my interview with former agency owner David Inglefield, who noted that,

Creative talent is still seen as something that anyone can do. It is not taken seriously. People applying for senior creative positions may have training in anything from agriculture to Chinese dancing, but they think they can write ads (Inglefield & Inglefield, 2005).

We see, in this interview response, that there exists within the industry a desire to position the work of advertising personnel as specialized and requiring special training and the acquisition of specific skills, proving that not just anyone is qualified. On another level, articles that covered the awards function also emphasized the difficulty of achieving the standard of creative excellence that the AAATT Creative Excellence Awards recognizes.

In this regard, one newspaper article referred to award categories in which no winners were selected because in those instances “the judges felt that the work in those areas did not measure up to accepted international standards” (Newsday, 2004). The judges of the AAATT Creative Excellence Awards are invited from an international pool of advertising experts (Collier, 2005; Gayelle, 2004a). In the 2004 AAATT awards, judges came from Los Angeles, Denmark and Jamaica (Gayelle, 2004a). The judges, therefore, are not regular, on-going participants in the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry. While this approach to judge selection is intended to ensure fairness and objectivity in judging, it also means that non-Trinbagonian advertising experts are responsible for judging the relative creative excellence of Trinbagonian advertisements that may be distinctive to Trinbagonian culture.

In essence, the international (read non-Trinbagonian) judges invited by the AAATT to judge the submissions come to influence profoundly the creative choices made within the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry. Ultimately the judging process comes to be defined by the imposition of non-Trinbagonian standards of “creativity” on Trinbagonian work. A specific example of this became evident during one of the award shows I had the opportunity to attend: the AAATT Creative Excellence Awards of 2001. In a speech addressing the gathered audience of advertising agency personnel and their clients, one of the international judges noted the difficulty of their job because of the caliber of submissions but also because in the Trinidad and Tobago market, things like jingles are still the order of the day. This judge expectedly based his judgments of Trinbagonian advertising on non-Trinbagonian advertising norms and also suggested a degree of backwardness in the Trinbagonian industry, implying that jingles were passé in other markets and therefore dismissed the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry’s penchant for jingles as outdated also. By subjecting local creativity to non-local criticism, the structure of the AAATT awards did not allow consideration of the cultural and historical significance of music within the Trinidad and Tobago context, where music is integral to cultural identity, and narrates stories of historical origins and contemporary hybridity. By importing the discourses upon which the creativity of submissions would be judged, the AAATT neglected the cultural specificity of how Trinbagonian agencies use music, images and words within advertising to interpellate the audience it intends to target.

Instead of seeing the cultural complexity and historical significance of music in Trinidad and Tobago advertising, the international judge simply dismissed the practice as

Trinbagonian advertising practitioners being stuck in a past era, an assumption he based on his evaluation of non-Trinbagonian advertising industries. This *denial of coeval time*, or inability to recognize the different course of evolution that different cultures undergo, is just one of the possible challenges that must arise year after year, as non-local judges are invited to judge local creative excellence in advertising. However, we should also note that this judge's exposure to Trinbagonian advertising trends might also have influenced his own perspectives.

One possible reason why the AAATT Creative Excellence Awards are judged each year by a panel of international judges might be that the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry is relatively small and close-knit, thus making it difficult for the AAATT to find a panel of Trinbagonian judges who have no awareness of which agencies were responsible for producing which campaigns and who therefore were unbiased toward the submissions. There is however a second reason that is of greater importance in our discussion of visual sovereignty.

A key reason offered by AAATT and its constituent agencies for inviting international judges was to raise the standard of Trinidad and Tobago advertising. Several newspaper articles made reference to quotes from Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry personnel who noted the importance of making sure that creative work produced by Trinbagonian agencies measured up to international standards. In his interview, David Inglefield, formerly of Inglefield/Ogilvy and Mather considered the benefits of bringing international judges to the AAATT Creative Excellence Awards and of the submission by local agencies to such regional or international awards as the Addys. Inglefield asserted:

There is more awareness for the advertising industry. With

foreign judges, agencies are pushed to produced more effective work...not just pretty ads, but ads that deliver a message (Inglefield & Inglefield, 2005).

In this quotation, as with the references within the newspaper article coverage, the international judges are positioned as raising the expectations of creative excellence within these awards. It is implied here that if the judging were left to Trinbagonian judges, the standards of creativity would not be as high as they are with the introduction of international judges.

We have seen in this section how creativity played out as a primary discourse within the annual AAATT advertising awards in Trinidad and Tobago, which is not dissimilar to advertising awards in other parts of the world. However, in the context of this period of intensified visual sovereignty in Trinidad and Tobago certain aspects of how AAATT awards controlled creativity are worth noting. By rewarding creativity within the advertising industry, the AAATT signaled the preeminence of the industry's elite, specifically creative directors whose core function was to define the expression of creativity in the texts of advertisements. In addition, by structuring the awards in this way, the AAATT rewarded creativity rather than the effectiveness of the advertising in creating business for the advertisers served, thus aligning advertising with artistic endeavor more than with marketing component. Finally, the selection of international judges had the effect of ignoring the cultural specificity of expression within advertising, pointing to the higher importance placed on attaining "international standards" than recognizing local expressions of creativity. Yet it is possible that the reverse effect was also true: that Trinbagonian cultural expressions in advertising also affected the

perspectives of the non-Trinbagonian judges. In effect, while other aspects of the Trinbagonian moving image mediascape were subject to a period of intense visual sovereignty, which was effectively underwritten by the advertising industry, the advertising industry itself focused on finding ways to raise its creativity to standards defined outside of its own local imagining. As asserted by John Ashcroft, however, this clash of cultural influence does not imply the complete domination of one set of cultural influences over another, but rather the emergence of a position of thirdness in which both cultural positions are changed through the intercourse (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2003). In this instance, I would also assert that the work of the Trinbagonian agencies also influenced the perspectives of the international judges.

#### *Individualism versus Collectivism*

Analysis of the AAATT awards also uncovered a tension between discourses that privileged both individualism and collectivism. In his article that examines “Capitalist Realism at the Clio Awards,” Jonathan Dee considers a similar tension in the context of the Clio Awards, pointing out that:

One might guess that the rationale for celebrating artistic excellence in advertising would be to lift the artists themselves out of that anonymity, for one night at least. Alas, the awards are presented not to individuals but to their agencies... (j. Dee, 1999).

The AAATT awards similarly appear to recognize individual contribution to award-winning work at the level of the printed award certificate. (See Figure 10 below). During



the formal live function, however, award presenters recognize the name of the winning agency, not the name of the individual recipients. Also, as Dee points out in the case of the Clios, in the AAATT awards, ushers hastily take the individual recipients onto the stage to collect their trophy or certificate, then without given the opportunity to offer an acceptance speech, the awardees are unceremoniously ushered off-stage. At the AAATT awards, like the Clio awards (but unlike the auteur discourse of film), creativity is a function of the collective advertising agency, and therefore collaborative, not individual.



Figure 10. A sample award certificate illustrating the individuals recognized within the advertising agency.

This tension between individualism and collectivism further played out through the sub-themes of stardom, celebrity, and Hollywood. In this regard, some articles referred to members of the advertising industry as stars. One article referred to the award ceremony function as a “Hollywood type show,” while another article noted that guests arriving at the awards ceremony walked along a red carpet and were greeted by paparazzi photographers (Street, 2004). The Hollywood positioning of the 2004 AAATT awards show became evident even in the newspaper advertisement that promoted the award show. This half-page black and white advertisement used a clap-board as its dominant visual, drawing reference to a cinematic production. The headline read, “This Red Carpet Event of the Year Promises to Bring Out the Stars!” (See Figure 11).



*Figure 11. A newspaper advertisement promoting the AAATT Creative Excellence Awards as a Hollywood-esque event featuring celebrities or stars.*

In her introduction to a collection of articles on stardom, Christine Gledhill positions a star as a social sign that can be thought of as:

carrying cultural meanings and ideological values, which  
express the intimacies of individual personality, inviting  
desire and identification; an emblem of national celebrity...  
a product of capitalism and the ideology of individualism  
(Gledhill, 1991).

In the case of the Trinidad and Tobago advertising, the industry positioned advertising agency representatives as stars in order to use them as what Gledhill refers to as “an industrial marketing device” (Gledhill, 1991), since the construct of stardom was less about the role of these so-called stars in the production, circulation and negotiation of meanings, identities, desires, and ideologies, and more about how the use of a Hollywood positioning might attract attention to the industry itself. In addition, in Gayelle The Channel’s coverage of the awards, the “fans” waiting along the red carpet for the “stars” to arrive were holding placards with the names of agencies rather than the individuals representing those agencies. While the star system in Hollywood is historically linked to creating and promoting personae based on the images of individual celebrities, the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry used the general concept of stardom to emphasize a broader representation of the cultural position occupied by the industry itself.

While seeming to privilege individualism, like other advertising awards, the AAATT awards make evident the collectivism that exists within the Trinbagonian advertising industry. Writing from an academic perspective, Juliet Dee examines the

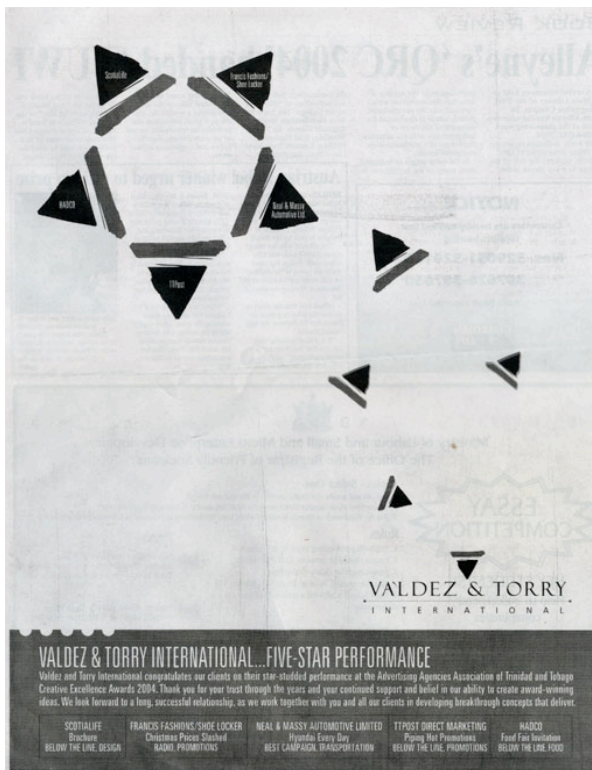
“reference groups” that advertising creative directors must consider while making commercials. Dee notes these reference groups include:

1: the ad agency which hired them, 2: the advertiser who hired the ad agency and who is solely interested in whether the commercial sells the product, 3: the network executives who clear the commercials for airing, 4: the viewing audience to whom they are pitching the product and 5: those who represent artistic excellence or achievement such as the Clio Organization in New York (J. Dee, 1993).

In her analysis of interviews with advertising director Joe Sedelmaier, Juliet Dee asserts that for advertising creative directors, the latter group who represent artistic excellence, take on secondary importance to the advertiser who hired the advertising agency. In the Trinbagonian advertising industry, while creating commercials, creative directors (and therefore the advertising agencies they represent) must consider all of the reference groups outlined by Dee. However, because of the increased importance placed on winning awards, in Trinidad and Tobago, the individuals and organizations that represent artistic excellence begin to supersede all the other reference groups in importance. In particular, creative directors in advertising agencies often use the lure of winning awards to sway the opinions of the executives of their agency as well as the executives of the advertising account they serve.

This analysis points to the tensions between individualism and collectivism within the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry. While the advertising awards make small mention of the individuals who have contributed to a campaign, the agencies emerge as

the true stars of the Trinbagonian advertising industry. Creative endeavor within the advertising industry falls under the stewardship of the agencies as collective bodies of influence. While the creative perspectives of the individuals within each agency obviously play a role, the industry recognizes the hybridization of those individual creative influences as a collective effort. In effect, the production of one advertisement is the result of collaboration among client representatives, agency executives, creative directors, art directors, graphic designers, and producers, each of whom bring their unique cultural perspectives to the development of the advertisement. In the Trinidad and Tobago context, this hybridity of creative influence is a factor of professional background and skills as much as it is a factor of racial and ethnic origin and social class.



*Figure 12. The awards won by advertising agency Valdez & Torry are featured in this newspaper advertisement.*





Figure 13. A newspaper advertisement for Lonsdale/Saatchi & Saatchi publicizing awards this agency won

### *Hollywood*

As I noted earlier in this chapter, the AAATT aligned its Creative Excellence Awards with the prestige and exclusivity of Hollywood. Photographs of agency personnel that appeared in newspaper articles showed attendees dressed formally in black-tie and gown with some creative flair. In addition, the venues of the AAATT awards that were chosen from year to year also reflected this gala positioning of the awards, including the Trinidad Country Club, the Trinidad Hilton, and Queen's Hall, all of which are associated with formal events of some grandeur. Finally, the ticket price for attendees of this function was TT\$295 (Trinidad and Tobago dollars, approximately equivalent to US\$50

and considered a high-priced event), a price that further assured exclusivity of attendance at the event. In sum, the overall tone of the AAATT Creative Excellence Awards show was one of formality and ceremony. In effect, the 2004 AAATT awards function positioned the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry as equivalent to Hollywood, a positioning that was reflected in the advertising and publicity surrounding the awards.

This alignment with Hollywood also suggests that the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry viewed itself as fulfilling a similar role as the Hollywood film industry, producing moving image texts, which (I will argue in the next chapter) have far-reaching cultural impact. This Hollywood positioning of the AAATT Creative Excellence Awards reached even beyond the limits of the industry itself and in 2004 prior to the night of the awards, Gayelle TV presenter Errol Fabien interviewed people on the streets about their favorite advertisements, seeking a sort of “viewers’ award” for most popular advertisement.

In other ways too, the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry became important to a broader audience within this period as another Gayelle presenter, Anil Roberts, introduced into his live program *Spalk*, discussion of print advertisements that deserved both positive and negative comment. In this segment of his program, Roberts would hold up newspaper advertisements to a camera, and he would offer either “props” or a “steups”<sup>1</sup> to the advertising agency responsible for the piece, depending on whether he thought the advertisement was appealing, if he considered the advertisement to serve a positive social purpose, or whether he viewed the ad as degrading or nonsensical.

Each of these individual incidents served to reveal that the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry served a more integral cultural role than simply “selling messages.”

Both through the industry's positioning of itself as "like Hollywood" and the audience's recognition of specific local advertising industry texts, it became evident that the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry fulfilled a role similar to the cultural role fulfilled by a national film industry. Instead of stars of cinema, Trinidad and Tobago celebrated its stars of advertising and instead of recognizing a "Best Motion Picture," the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry recognized a "Best Advertising Campaign."

In terms of their industrial function, the AAATT Creative Excellence Awards were close in their objectives to other advertising awards (in terms of recognizing outstanding creativity within the advertising industry). On the level of cultural function, however, the AAATT Awards were closer in significance to the Academy Awards. This positioning of the Trinbagonian awards were indicative of the importance placed on the advertising industry by the industry itself, as well as by the national audience of viewers.

### *Conclusion*

On an everyday basis, the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry, like many advertising industries around the world tends toward self-effacement at an industrial level, as well as at an agency level and at an individual level. As noted by Mark Crispin Miller, the work of the advertising industry tends to go unnoticed, while the work of individual ads seeks to be recognized (Crispin Miller, 1988). However, the advertising awards provide one opportunity for Trinbagonian advertising agencies to promote their prowess within the industry.



I have previously established in other chapters that the advertising industry plays a central role in the process by which postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago seeks to establish a space of distinct visual national identity as expressed through the country's moving image media. In this light, examination of the discourses upon which the Trinbagonian advertising industry builds recognition of excellence within the industry illuminates discourses that are therefore central to the process of visual sovereignty.

In this chapter, we have seen, based on analysis of the annual Creative Excellence Awards, that the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry privileges creativity above any other function within the advertising agency. By focusing on and rewarding creativity through advertising awards, the advertising industry can align itself with inspired "high art." The industry's focus on creativity, which, according to Ian Collier, reads as "concept" (not production values), also means that there are a select few people within the agency ultimately responsible for the genesis of this creativity. The Trinbagonian advertising awards demonstrate that the industry negotiates the tensions between individualism and collectivism, but ultimately privileges collectivism. The AAATT Awards celebrate creativity that is the result of collectivism, since agencies (rather than individuals within the agencies) are positioned literally as agents of creativity.

While the AAATT executive notes that the awards challenge Trinbagonian agencies to represent local culture while rising to international standards, this analysis points to these international standards as paramount in deciding which advertisement won an award. Without full knowledge or understanding of the cultural specificity of the signified coding within the advertising messages, non-Trinbagonian judges assess the

work of Trinbagonian advertising agencies that is intended to interpellate Trinbagonian audiences. In this way, the AAATT awards serve to control the ways in which agencies express their creativity since to remain competitive the agencies must promote the awards they won, and winning of awards therefore becomes a primary motivation in the agencies' work.

Trinidad and Tobago has emerged from a colonial past in which "the best that is thought and written," was assumed to have been written and thought by Europeans (E. Shohat & Stam, 1994). In Trinidad and Tobago, the contradictions of postcolonial culture become evident through this analysis of the advertising industry and its awards. Even as Trinidad and Tobago seeks to develop its own identifiable indigenous visual culture, the advertising industry (which positions itself and which I have in earlier chapters positioned as central to visual culture in this nation's imagining) readily accepts imperial hegemony in the form of international standards by which the local advertising industry will be raised up to greater industrial strength.

I have previously noted that 2004 and 2005 were marked by intensification of the process of visual sovereignty in Trinidad and Tobago. I have also established that in several regards, the advertising industry is an integral component of this postcolonial nation's construction of a distinctive national visual culture. What is noteworthy about the findings in this chapter is that despite the 2004 to 2005 contextual environment of intensified visual sovereignty in Trinidad and Tobago, the advertising industry (which occupied a central position within the nation's visual culture) sought a path of evolution built on a foundation of imperial ideology and elite class hegemony.

Since we have established that the Trinbagonian advertising industry is integral to the process of visual sovereignty, then discourses upon which this industry is centered also represent discourses that are central within the process of visual sovereignty. In this chapter, we see visual sovereignty as a process characterized by a tension between individualism and collectivism, a finding that echoes an earlier finding that the individuals who operate within the national mediascape “end up doing their own thing,” while actively contributing toward the collective process of visual sovereignty. Yet discourses of collectivism ultimately prevail in the process of visual sovereignty. The analysis in this chapter also emphasizes the tension between the local creativity and international standardization with non-local representing higher standards, as we also saw in the earlier analysis of the practice of outsourcing within the advertising industry.

The existence of these tensions and discourses within the process of visual sovereignty imply a process characterized by hybridity. In the tension between local and international standards of creativity, while the Trinbagonian advertising industry privileges non-local standards, I would also argue that the imposition of the hegemonic discourses of “international standardization” onto local creativity forces a position of thirdness to emerge, which is neither completely local, nor completely transformed through the imposition of international standards. The industry’s emphasis on collectivism is also indicative of hybridity within the advertising industry and therefore within the process of visual sovereignty since collectivism within the advertising industry implies a collaboration among multiple influences (including people of varying professional backgrounds, skill sets and cultural heritage) to produce a singular cultural artifact or advertisement.

We have seen that visual sovereignty is a process through which the postcolonial nation transcends colonial discourses and sets out to resist the forces of imperialism. Hybridity and its new “transcultural forms” of expression presents a space in which the colonizer and the colonized exchange cultural influences rather than one dominating the other (Foster, 1995). In this chapter, while the Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry mimicked Hollywood and imported judges to assess the work of local agencies, ultimately these discourses were reappropriated into the context of Trinidad and Tobago culture. This condition of hybridity that emerges as integral to visual sovereignty presents us with a process that is simultaneously characterized by the hegemony of imperialism and a postcolonial context that seeks distinctive definition of national cultural identity.

## **Chapter Seven:**

### **The Textualization of Visual Sovereignty in Television Advertising**

In the preceding chapters of this work, I have noted several ways in which advertising plays a central role in Trinidad and Tobago society and culture, from the establishment of sophisticated local film and video production facilities being a factor of an active advertising industry, to the ways in which television station advertising revenues facilitate the production of local television programs and development of local television stations. In this chapter, I will analyze the texts of three television commercials produced for one local company, the popularity of these commercials and the discourses of race, class and gender that emerge through the characterizations, narratives and representations in these advertisements.

The central cultural position of television advertising in Trinidad and Tobago, which I have established in the preceding chapters of this study points to the ways in which the advertising industry creates both functional and discursive foundations for the broader moving image environment, upon which the postcolonial nation negotiates a distinct national visual culture. Also, through a theorization of Third Media, I have noted ways in which Trinbagonian moving image media aesthetics represent a desire for national liberation and asserted that the examples of Third Media are texts in service of visual sovereignty. Yet an important question remains to be answered: what do the actual texts of television advertisements tell us about the ways in which discourses of national identity become embedded within the advertising industry? How are race, class and gender negotiated through the texts of advertisements that are identified by a national

community as representing that community? How do these textualized discourses relate to the process of visual sovereignty of the postcolonial nation?

In Trinidad and Tobago, television advertisements are frequently the subject of casual discussions in workplaces, in schools and on the streets (D. Miller, 2000). These discussions often take the form of quoting a line of dialog from a television advertisement or the re-appropriation of taglines into everyday speech. One particular example is a seasonal television advertisement for a chain of local furniture and appliance stores in which a female character sat on the lap of a cheeky Santa Claus. Many years later Trinbagonians would quote one line of dialog in this advertisement in response to an out-of-place action, exclaiming extra-contextually, “San-ta, you somet’ing else, eh?” Local and imported advertisements are the subjects of such discussions. In many ways, both local and imported advertisements have inspired such integration of their advertising phraseology into the everyday Trinbagonian vernacular.

Within the forty-plus years of television advertising in Trinidad and Tobago, however, two local television advertisements are spoken about most frequently, broadly and with greatest reverence (GuardianHoldings, 2003b; Hernandez, 2005; Popplewell, 2005a; Q, 2003). Shot in black and white 16mm film, this couplet of commercials were for Guardian Life, a Trinbagonian general insurance company. Since their launch in the 1980s, these two commercials have been cited by members of the viewing audience and by advertising industry people as the best that Trinidad and Tobago advertising industry has ever produced. Over twenty years later, Trinbagonians in 2005 still recalled the commercials in vivid detail and were able to make the connection between the company advertised and the combination of music and images produced. Two decades after these

commercials had first aired, Guardian Life launched a new campaign, which the Trinbagonian viewing public received with somewhat comparable excitement.

### *National Ad-entity*

In her 1978 book, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*, Judith Williamson uses both semiotics (Ferdinand De Saussure) and psychology (Freud and Lacan) to analyze the texts of print advertisements and to demonstrate that advertisements perpetuate ideology. By applying the principles of semiotics, Williamson is able to examine how advertisements juxtapose objects and values and how the texts of advertisements exchange meanings and values through the transformation of signifiers into signifieds. Through close analysis of the use of images in three Guardian Life advertisements, we can uncover the ways in which advertisers use object placement and sign juxtaposition to manipulate meaning and to evoke specific values and discourses through the texts of advertisements.

Roland Marchand, on the other hand, examines advertising through the ideological construct of “The American Dream,” positioning advertising as creating social tableau of what goes into defining that dream. According to Marchand, the American dream is about belonging to the right socioeconomic class, and advertising positions the products being promoted as offering ways into that class or ways to reaffirm one’s belonging to that class. Applying Marchand’s mode of analysis, we can examine what defines the Trinbagonian dream and perhaps gain understanding of how the elite class of advertising agencies and advertisers define a way of life to consumers in Trinidad and Tobago.

In *Culture and the Ad: Exploring Otherness in the World of Advertising* (1994), William O' Barr considers the ways in which he might interpret what advertisements mean by investigating what advertisements mean to their audiences, by considering what creative people within advertising agencies intended advertisements to mean, or by engaging in scholarly analysis of the advertisements applying theoretical models to such analysis. In his discussion, O' Barr points out that Williamson instructs readers how to interpret advertisements and that she assumes the position of analytical expert, noting that most people are unable to discern hidden meanings in advertisements. To address these omissions, O' Barr employs an interpretive triangle through which meaning is generated to consider the author, the audience and the critical interpreter within his analysis of advertisements (O'Barr, 1994). Despite this stated intent, O' Barr excuses himself from making the author a central part of his analysis, noting:

too great a concern with author intentionality can misdirect attention away from the important role that the audience plays in constructing meaning... Whatever meanings they do have are supplied entirely by their audiences, not by those who construct the advertisements (O'Barr, 1994).

As such, while O' Barr makes his reader aware of the importance of the triumvirate of author-audience-interpreter, his focus and main interest (like those of Williamson and Marchand) lie in revealing the findings of his expert analysis of advertisements and conveying to his readers how he believes ideologies are revealed within the texts of advertisements.



O' Barr's work is instructive in offering methods by which scholars can analyze the representations, and I return to O' Barr's initial statement and intent in *Culture and the Ad* to analyze advertisements using an increased diversity of perspectives. Indeed, in his book, O' Barr seems at first to substantiate the need for scholars of advertising to invoke the perspectives of author, audience and interpreter, but then remains focused on his role in interpreting the advertisements as expert analyst. In my approach here, I consider a broader conception of "author" than simply the copywriters or creative directors to which O' Barr makes reference. In this study, I am asserting that the advertising industry as a broader whole is implicated in the project of advertising production instead of merely the individual creative people who were responsible for the authoring of a specific advertisement. In the chapter six, we saw that the AAATT Creative Excellence Awards focus on rewarding the work of the creative elite within advertising agencies, but that the nature of advertising production is collaborative and includes sharing of meaning among clients, several contributing individuals within the agency, production personnel and audiences. In this chapter I am positioning these productive components as significant in the overall process of advertising production, and therefore seek to include a cross-section of these perspective in my analysis. Toward this end, in the early stages of analysis I used the perspectives of advertising industry representatives, independent producers and audience members to identify which advertisements they commonly identified as important Trinbagonian television commercials.

Writing from a cultural studies perspective, Wendy Griswold asserts that one can achieve in-depth comprehension of a cultural object through analysis of the creator, the

receiver and the social context of that cultural object (Griswold, 2004). It is therefore by invoking this multiperspectival approach that I will analyze these three advertisements, examining the three narratives (the cultural objects themselves), the industry that produced the advertisements (the creators), the audience that provided their opinions of the advertisements (receivers) and the cultural reality of Trinidad and Tobago against which the advertisements came into being (social world). It also warrants noting that Griswold's definition of "creator" is broader than O'Barr's idea of the authors of advertisements being creative directors and copywriters within advertising agencies. Griswold refers to a network of multiple creators that brings into being every cultural object, and as such, in the context of these three advertisements, I examine the interrelated network of authorship that exists within the advertising industry including producers, production houses, and clients, all of whom contribute to the production and development of a television advertisement.

In other chapters within this study, I have considered the general omission of advertising from the canon of postcolonial studies. There are studies, however, which consider the construction of national identity within the text of advertisements. For example, in his article, "Wheat, Barley, Hops, Citizenship: Molson's 'I Am [Canadian]'" Campaign and the Defense of Canadian National Identity through Advertising," Ira Wagman recognizes the omission of the role of advertising, marketing and public relations as "important cultural technologies" that shape constructions of the national imaginary (Wagman, 2002). In particular, Wagman is most interested in "The marshaling of national symbols and stereotypes for the selling of commercial products" and "the relationship between advertising and nationalism" (Wagman, 2002). In this article, the

author focuses on how advertisers use local fears of global flows to protect their market-share. In an important concluding paragraph, Wagman surmises:

Through an analysis of the historical context behind corporate advertising campaigns, we will be able to understand the fusion of corporate threat onto national threats that has occurred (Wagman, 2002).

In this excerpt, Wagman asserts that corporations deploy the imagined necessity of protecting national borders against the threats of globalization and immigration within their advertising, so that they are able to protect their own identities against the threat of other corporations. Wagman argues that corporations use the innate desire of citizens to defend their imagined community of nation to inspire similar sentiments of loyalty and protection to a corporation or brand. Throughout this article, Wagman addresses the issues of negotiating national identity through advertising and interpellation of the national audience by using symbols of national identity.

This chapter examines the use of symbols of Trinbagonian national identity in three advertisements cited by audiences and representatives of the advertising and production industries as examples of key Trinbagonian advertisements. However through this analysis, we will move beyond Wagman's assertion that advertising uses representation of national identity to interpellate audiences to examine how discourses of national identity and imagined community align with the more specific project of creating a space of distinct visual culture within a national mediascape.

*Guardian Life Advertisements as Cultural Objects*

Using Griswold's Cultural Diamond as the basis of analysis, I engaged the perspectives of audience members (receivers) and industry practitioners (creators) in relation to the three television advertisements (cultural objects) and the social world that contextualized the texts. I also examined the advertisements using both textual and industrial analyses. Through this multiperspectival approach, I allowed the findings of my discussions with audience members to influence the choice of advertisements that would serve to focus this study. Likewise, I used these findings to inform interviews with industry experts and personnel. As such, I began this study through the questioning of several audience members using a convenience sample. Through in-person, email and telephone interviews, I asked each participant to name an advertisement they considered representative of local Trinbagonian culture. Responses to this question then informed the choices of television commercials that are the textual subjects of this chapter.

The question I posed to participant members who were representative of the television viewing audience was couched within the present tense: "Can you think of any television commercial or television commercials that represent local Trinidad and Tobago culture?" Participant responses focused on commercials that were on air at the time of the interview or that had recently aired. The television commercial that viewers cited most frequently was the commercial for Guardian Life (an insurance company) titled *The Ganges and the Nile*. As such, I began my investigation by focusing on the text of this 2003 60-second commercial.

Two participants who had made reference to this 2003 commercial for Guardian Life also recalled a dyad of Guardian Life commercials aired two decades prior and made

the link between the representation of local culture in the 2003 Guardian Life commercial and the 1980s commercials. In addition, during my interviews, an independent producer and a newspaper columnist also made reference to these two commercials with noted admiration and reverence. As a result of these discussions that pointed toward these two 1980s Guardian Life commercials as occupying important cultural positions in Trinidad and Tobago, I expanded my initial analysis to include the Guardian Life commercial aired in 2003 and the two Guardian Life television commercials originally aired in Trinidad and Tobago in the 1980s. In addition to audience responses, I also engaged the perspectives of advertising executive Ian Collier, who provided additional insights into the production of the 1980s commercials.

### *Television Advertisements as Guardians of National Culture*

Guardian Life is part of the Guardian Holdings Group, whose website makes reference to the 2003 advertising campaign *Ganges and the Nile* within the text of two different pages on the site. A webpage titled “Management Discussion and Analysis,” describes the corporate significance of this advertising campaign. I quote this page at length to provide the reader with a complete perspective of the ways in which the advertiser describes the campaign and its importance within popular culture and national identity:

One Loving Nation: The Ganges and The Nile advertising campaign, started in 2002, had an enormous impact on community consciousness in Trinidad and Tobago and undoubtedly positioned Guardian Life as a model corporate

citizen in Trinidad and Tobago and the region. Looking beyond our own corporate aspirations and goals, the advertising addresses the needs, views and dreams of the people we serve, in the country in which we operate.

Released at a time of political uncertainty, Guardian Life's musical message of hope and unity clearly demonstrates the company's unwavering commitment to nation building. The song's composer and singer, David Rudder, together with leading sitarist, Mungal Patasar, struck a chord of national pride, serving to rally the support of all ages, races and religions. It is in continuation of this message that GLOC has declared Integration as the company's theme for 2003 -- integration not merely in word, but in deed, and in the delivery of integrated financial services (GuardianHoldings, 2003a).

In this description of the perceived significance of this advertising campaign within the population of Trinidad and Tobago, Guardian Life represents as a corporate citizen who, by producing and airing this advertisement that built on themes of national unity and nation-building, had given a gift to Trinidad and Tobago, demonstrating the company's devotion to the values and ideals of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, who are both citizens and potential consumers of the Guardian Life product. The key terms that Guardian Life webpage uses to describe the commercials include "national unity," "inclusion," and "integration."

In a previous chapter, I have written about the low percentage of local programming that filled the airwaves in 2003 (prior to the launch of the new local television stations in 2004). Indeed, during this time period, the three local television stations, TTT, TV6 and TIC imported 75 percent of their programming. While this was the case with television programming, during the time that the Guardian Life commercial “The Ganges and the Nile” aired, the commercial breaks during the nightly news on TV6 revealed that television advertisements were mostly local. The following table provides a glimpse of the degree to which visual and audio content of television commercials was based on local culture during two 2003 TV6 commercial breaks:

<b>Product advertised</b>	<b>Audio Content</b>	<b>Visual Content</b>
<b>Commercial Break #1</b>		
Barbados	“Never a dull moment” jingle. Caribbean voices with Caribbean beat.	Beaches, couples of mixed ethnicity, Caribbean scenes
Courts (Furniture and Appliance store chain)	Voice over: Courts spokesperson (Trinidadian)	Still photos of appliances. Text highlighting affordable prices.
KFC: Rio promotion	Music and Voice Over (Trinidadian)	Set in local Trinidad restaurant, local models.
Guardian Life Insurance Co.	David Rudder’s calypso <i>The Ganges and the Nile</i>	Beach scenes, Trinidadian celebrities including David Rudder
<b>Commercial Break #2</b>		
Coca-Cola	Calypso-Soca jingle	Trinidadian models against Coca-cola graphics
Cardiac Clinic	Voice Over (Trinidadian)	Images of equipment and clinic exterior
Trinidad Express Newspaper Promotion (win a Toyota)	Voice Over and Music (Trinidadian)	Batman/Riddler parody with excerpts from foreign Toyota ad
Kerrygold Skim Milk Powder	Adult Contemporary jingle	Beach scene with local couple
TV6 television advertising	Voice Over and sound effects	Three archers shooting arrows at “Target Audience” in Trinidad forest.

*Table 2. Sample television commercials during consecutive commercial breaks during prime time local news programming on TV6 (June 23, 2003)*

What I am asserting is that the key reason that Trinbagonian television advertising used “local” discourses (while Trinbagonian television programming imported most of its content) is that commercials seek to identify with common cultural identity among their intended audiences. They are the “uneasy persuasion” to which Michael Schudson refers in the title of his book with that name (1984). In the words of one advertising agency executive, “strategic necessity demands the projection of local culture into advertising messages as much as possible” (White email interview, 2003). And as one audience member noted, “Personally I would respond more and would be more persuaded to purchase based on things I can appreciate and would be meaningful to me” (Mathison, 2003). Advertisers must speak the language of local visual culture in order to persuade audiences to buy and use their products. In Trinidad and Tobago, the use of local culture in 2004 to 2005 television advertising takes on specific significance when we consider the earlier foreign focus of the industry in the 1960s and early 1970s. The implication is that with increased consumer awareness about postcolonial national identity comes the necessity for advertising to speak to consumers using representations of this identity.

In many ways, television advertising sells cultural identity more than it sells products, services, or brands, particularly in the case of “lifestyle advertising.” Stuart Hall refers to cultural identity as “collective” and that which “people of a shared history and ancestry hold in common.” Hall also asserts the need for Caribbean cinema to explore such “oneness” that underlies all the other, more superficial differences (Hall, 1992: 221). As I will demonstrate, such oneness of cultural identity is also applicable to corporate television advertising. In this way, the Guardian Life commercial, *The Ganges Meets the Nile*, can be seen as packaging and selling Trinidad and Tobago culture and idealized



national identity perhaps more than it sells Guardian Life's brand equity or its products and services. But before venturing further into a discussion of the discourses of the Guardian Life advertisements, a description of the text is certainly warranted.

The Guardian Life *The Ganges Meets the Nile* advertisement is a story of racial, ethnic and national unity in Trinidad and Tobago. The commercial opens with several long and medium shots showing Trinbagonians in different settings: a woman in an office with subdued lighting, men working in the canefields, children playing in the streets, and people in a small community market with street vendors. In a sequence of quick cuts, these people are shown in medium shots and close-ups, being drawn away from their individual activities. The more intimate framing of the shots in which the people are being called away suggests the increased individual significance of this moment. Ultimately, the advertisement reveals that they are called away to join each other, to walk, dance and trot through rural streets, two streams, each following a leader. In its essence, this commercial is about two streams of people coming together as one.

Once the two streams of people are formed, they travel through the scene in opposing screen directions, implying that they are moving toward each other. Toward the end of the commercial, they meet on a beachfront, where a river runs out to the sea. The two leaders of the streams of people reach out their hands, clasp hands and embrace, followed by embraces and hugs among the many other people behind them. In the final shots of this ad, the congregation of people on the beachfront is shown to include firemen, children, women, elderly, people of varying ethnicities, and all are greeting and embracing each other. An overhead shot of this congregation of people on the beach becomes a wider aerial shot, which becomes an animated, more distant shot. Finally the

shot becomes computer generated and amid this congregation of people, a star emerges, eventually rendering the star within the Guardian Life logo, which remains on screen against a backdrop of a beach while the voice over iterates the company's tagline, "Guardian Life, looking after life."

The words of David Rudder's calypso, "The Ganges Meets the Nile," refer to the two dominant racial groups making up Trinidad and Tobago's population: African and East Indian. The visual story told in the Guardian Life commercial is of Trinbagonians from all walks of life heeding a call. In the culmination of the advertisement, the people come together on a beach where they greet and hug each other. Celebrities including Janelle Commissiong (Miss Trinidad and Tobago who won the Miss Universe Pageant in 1977), Mungal Patesar (a renowned Indo-Trinbagonian musician) and various local sports figures are featured in the commercial. Participants recalled the ad as representative of Trinidad and Tobago culture for several reasons, including its use of music and recognizable faces and for the "trueness" of its representation of local culture.

This ad depicts Trinidad and Tobago as essentially *natural*. People leave office buildings and are called away from their everyday activities to rural areas, including canefields, and finally, to a beachfront. In this television commercial, idealized Trinidad and Tobago is depicted as rural and traditional. According to the commercial, ideal Trinidad and Tobago is also a multiracial and ethnically integrated national unity that transcends race and ethnicity. This racial and ethnic integration is also highly intimate. The hand-clasp of the two stream-leaders against the backdrop of the national flag (See Figure 14) does not end the depiction of togetherness; there are nose-rubs and embraces. The narrative of this advertisement seems to suggest that Trinbagonians are friendly and

are happiest when they are with other Trinbagonians. They also prefer to leave behind their individual identities as office workers, canefield workers, and as school children to heed the call for national unity. Indeed, the conciliation of the two groups takes place outside of “modern” society, outside of city streets, against a backdrop of nationalism as depicted by a flag, and nature as depicted by the beach. The narrative of this advertisement suggests that the people of Trinidad and Tobago can achieve national unity within the context of nature, where all people are equal.



Figure 14. A highly symbolic keyframe pulled from the Guardian Life Commercial, *The Ganges Meets the Nile* in which Afro-Trinbagonian calypsonian David Rudder and Indo-Trinbagonian master sitarist Mungal Patesar embrace in front of the Trinidad and Tobago national flag. In the background are Venezuelan extras representing Trinbagonians

Finally, idealized Trinidad and Tobago is made up of two equal "rivers" of people, the Ganges and the Nile. Indian and African are conveyed in the title of the commercial, the lyrics, and hybridity of the music. This is a calypso with African roots, hybridized with sitar representing the Indian influence. This is not Chutney Soca, however, which, if

it had been chosen by the producers, would have indicated a more complete fusion between soul, calypso and Indian rhythmic song accompanied by the dholak (drum), the harmonium, and the dhantal (born in Trinidad and Tobago). Ideal Trinidad and Tobago celebrates cultural and ethnic hybridity, yet not complete integration. These visual and aural representations of Trinbagonian culture suggest that hybridity does not involve the coalescence of cultures into one homogenized culture. Rather, the commercial implies that hybridity involves all identities maintaining their distinctness coming together to create not one position of thirdness, but many positions of thirdness.

Participant audience members repeatedly cited this commercial as an example of representation of local culture in television advertising. Yet its production history tells a different story. While this commercial was conceptualized by a local advertising agency, it was filmed on location in Venezuela, and all models except the celebrities are Venezuelan, chosen for their ethnic phenotype—African, Indian or mixed. The celebrities were chosen perhaps as iconic representations of Trinidad and Tobago culture, the location as iconic representation of Trinidad and Tobago scenery, and the "extras" as generalizable representations of the Trinidad and Tobago population. This advertisement provided a snapshot of Trinidad and Tobago with its requisite racial representation and therefore satisfied the Trinidad and Tobago audience's desire for a particular kind of "authenticity."

The Ganges and the Nile are the rivers whose influences and confluences, as cited in David Rudder's song, are most evident in Trinidad and Tobago culture. The original lyrics of David Rudder's "The Ganges and the Nile" tell of both the historical pain and glory of Trinidad and Tobago. The second verse includes a critique of Trinbagonian

politicians, all the while celebrating the power of the people to unite despite political realities:

Them boys with their hidden agendas  
 And the mind benders  
 The people done take in front  
 Various smart men and politicians can come along if they want  
 Cause we movin' with a power and a glory  
 See how we float in style  
 One lovely nation, under a groove, the Ganges has met the Nile  
 (Rudder, 1998).

In the original rendition of the lyrics of “The Ganges and the Nile,” Rudder implies that despite the politicians’ trickery and deception, the people of Trinidad and Tobago are already united across racial and ethnic bias. For Rudder, while the politicians use racial and ethnic unity as political strategies, the strived for condition always already existed in Trinidad and Tobago culture.

In the television commercial, the song is effectively edited to form the music bed, bridging the first and last lines of the first verse with sampled lines from the chorus. The result is a seamless rendition of the lyrics that leaves out the negative critique of politicians as "smart men" and politics as "politricks," therefore focusing solely on a rallying call to national unity:

Many rivers flowed, to this naked isle  
 Bringing fear and pain, but also a brand new style  
 As the river flows,  
 there are those who will change its passage  
 But every common man,  
 got to understandup and send a message  
 So put up your hand if you understand now . . . Come  
 See how we movin'; watch how we grooving  
 See how we step in style  
 One lovely nation under a groove  
 The Ganges done meet the Nile  
 Cause the people got the power and the glory  
 See how we float in style  
 One lovely nation, heading to salvation, the Ganges has met the Nile  
 (Rudder, 1998).

Even as Rudder's lyrics were used to privilege this idealized Trinidad and Tobago, the constitution of this ideal was even more complex than was at first evident. There is a third "river of influence" that flows in the visual and subtextual story of this commercial: the Orinoco. As a result of production choices made by the advertising agency who created this commercial, Venezuelan people and the Venezuelan landscape represent authentic and ideal Trinidad and Tobago. On another level, this commercial also idealizes Venezuelan production technology over Trinbagonian production technology.

The lyrics of the original calypso take on added significance when considered in the context of this specific television commercial. Rudder's lyrics refer to "hidden agendas," "mind benders" and suggest that the people are far ahead of those who have hidden agendas. Interpreting these lyrics in relation to the reception of the advertisement, constructing Venezuela as Trinidad in order to present an "ideal" Trinidad to the audience might be considered a "hidden agenda." Similarly, the advertising agency and advertiser who used this construction to sell the Guardian Life corporate agenda to the public could be considered "mind benders," who try to sway the opinion of the audience by using representations of an idealized unified national community. While many interviewees stated their appreciation for the commercial as a whole, others criticized specific elements of the text for its representations.

The reception of this advertisement across Trinidad and Tobago was mixed. In my discussions with her about the popularity of this commercial, one newspaper columnist referred to the "fakeness" of the commercial, but not in relation to any perception of the Venezuelan elements. Jaye Q made reference to the Guardian Life *The Ganges Meets the Nile* commercial as "corny" and asked, "Where are the *Douglas*'s?" In her response, Jaye Q implied the omission of individuals of mixed Indian and African descent from the Guardian Life commercial and stated her opinion that the advertising industry tends not to include representations of Douglas in their construction of Trinbagonianness (Q, 2003). Daniel Miller's article examined the representation of ethnicity in Trinidad and Tobago advertising by noting:

The emphasis, then, is on the brown-skinned. These may  
either be Dougla, the local term for the child of an African

and Indian, or 'red', which implies a more general mixing, often slightly fairer than a Dougla. Their importance may be seen as simple financial expediency: 'because of the limitations of budget, and many situations where not too many people were involved, you particularly avoided identification with only one ethnic group, unless that was specifically the intention. Now one tended to find someone who looked as much Negro as Indian, in other words a cross between the two (Q, 2003).

In Jaye Q's response, however, was the implication that ethnic mixing in Trinidad and Tobago advertising focuses on "redness" or what Miller refers to as "a more general mixing" which Jaye Q noted as being more specifically African-European or African-Chinese than African-Indian. The reason for the historical omission of Douglas from advertising might be found in what Shalini Puri refers to as the historical lack of acceptance of "doularization" (Puri, 2002). In the Trinidad and Tobago context, doularization often gets equated with racial dilution from both the African and the Indian perspective and therefore provokes discussions of diminishing racial purity and cultural identity. Essentially, doularization, like its counterpart *mestizaje*, problematizes issues of racial identity, the definition of which relied on a system of differences. To effectively communicate Trinbagonian identity within the advertisement, the producers sought to represent this system of differences, therefore making the coming together of these disparate identities more dramatic in the final sequence. Again, in this representation of hybridity within the commercial, hybridity is less about assimilation of



identities into each other and more about co-existence of multiple distinct identities.

This commercial expresses the theme of national unity by focusing on ethnic integration as expressed through hybridity of the collective, rather than hybridity within the individual. In other words, the hybridity that gets privileged in the Trinidad and Tobago context consists of particularized identities existing within a common space, rather than blending of identities into a singular monolith. The recurring theme of hybridity (in the context of Trinidad and Tobago's negotiation through visual sovereignty) therefore takes on added significance through the analysis of this advertisement. We saw in Chapter Six that the Advertising Excellence awards became symbolic of tensions between the individual and the collective. The paradox of visual sovereignty is that while the process constitutes a negotiation of distinct national visual culture, it simultaneously implies hybridity within the imagined collective, including the influence of cultural forces beyond the boundaries of the nation. While the project of visual sovereignty seems ideologically aligned with discourses of purism and exclusivism, the analyses thus far in this work point to the process as being characterized by a hybridity that includes multiple distinct identities within the process.

For Jaye Q, Guardian Life's *The Ganges and the Nile* included people of African descent, people of Indian descent and people of mixed African-European descent, but for political reasons, no douglas or people of mixed African and Indian heritage. To end her response to the question of representing Trinbagonian culture in television advertisements, Jaye Q noted, "The two best television advertisements [in Trinidad and Tobago] were the Sparrow and Kitchener ads" (Q, 2003). This participant's direct link between the 2002 Guardian Life commercial (*The Ganges Meets the Nile*) and the 1980s

Guardian Life television commercials echoed the Guardian Holdings website. On a page titled, “Social Responsibility,” the company positioned the cultural importance of the 2002 advertisement as building upon the “landmark” accomplishments of the 1980s Guardian Life advertisements:

Guardian Life of the Caribbean has also effectively used corporate advertising to drive home a message of patriotism and national pride. The landmark Kitchener and Sparrow advertising of the 80s - the first musical video - is still well recalled today. More recently, the combination of 'David Rudder's 'The Ganges and The Nile' words and music with the haunting East Indian music played by Mungal Patasar received overwhelming commendation. By showcasing leading personalities David Rudder, Mungal Patasar, Janelle Penny Commisiong-Chow, Michelle Khan, Deryck Murray, Stacy Sui Butt and Darrell Brown, the case for national unity on every front was driven home electronically on television and on radio and reinforced through print advertisements” (GuardianHoldings, 2003b).

The two Guardian Life television advertisements to which the newspaper columnist and the Guardian Holdings Website made reference were television commercials that featured two popular veterans of calypso, The Mighty Sparrow and Lord Kitchener. Both of these commercials were shot in black and white 16mm film by local cinematographer MacDonald Canterbury and aired for many years (Collier, 2005). Throughout the years

during which these advertisements ran on television, there were stories of viewers calling family members to the television set to see the ads. The audience received these television commercials with great excitement. For many viewers, these two advertisements (edited to the music of the two relevant calypsonians, and featuring the calypsonians themselves acting within the visual narrative) became the first local music videos ever produced. It was perhaps no coincidence that these two commercials first came on the air in Trinidad and Tobago at a time when music video was becoming popular at an international level through such channels as MTV (Collier, 2005). To investigate the discursive reasons for the popularity of these two commercials, I begin by describing the narratives of the two commercials. While Guardian Life's commercial reel includes these two commercials in 60-second, 30-second and 15-second versions, I will focus on the 60-second versions to summarize the complete long versions of the commercials.

These two Guardian Life commercials first aired in 1986, both featuring popular calypsonians singing about perilous situations. The narrative of the commercial, told through visuals and adapted calypso lyrics, make the connection between preparing for peril by cherishing life, which becomes possible through the insurance that Guardian Life provides. Both of the commercials begin in full-color with a hyper-pixelated image which de-pixelates into a close-up shot of the calypsonian singing to the camera. This image then breaks apart through pixilation into a scene from a dream sequence or flashback, shot in black and white. The final sequence of both commercials brings the narrative back to "present day" or "reality" by reverting to use of full-color, with the calypsonian ultimately walking out of frame through a door, and resolving to the Guardian Life logo

in full-screen. In both commercials, the calypsonian acts as narrator, sharing with the viewer the conditions under which he nearly lost his life, and making the link between the affirmation of life's importance and the assurance of having insurance coverage from Guardian Life.

The commercial featuring The Mighty Sparrow (Slinger Francisco) uses Sparrow's renowned calypso "Ten to One is Murder" as its narrative foundation. This commercial opens with the pixilated image of Sparrow in close-up. In this opening sequence, Sparrow sings to camera as the shot transitions to a black and white exterior night scene of a *parlour* (small eatery) and mini-mart set against a rural setting. Throughout this scene, we see Sparrow running from a gang of men who are out to get him. Medium shots of Sparrow's feet running down steps, Sparrow peering from a doorway and running down a street depict the calypsonian's flight. The shots that visually depict the threat of the gang include a long-shot of ten men, elbowing each other to get a shot at Sparrow, one of the gangsters overturning a table in the parlour in which Sparrow is eating, a close-up of a man spitting threateningly, a medium shot of a man roughing up Sparrow, close-up shots of knives being drawn, long and medium shots of the gangsters throwing bottles and stones after Sparrow, and a close-up shot of a hand breaking a bottle on the curb of a pavement. The last shot in this dream or flashback sequence is a close-up of a fear-stricken Sparrow rushing toward the camera.

In both the Sparrow and the Kitchener advertisement, the protagonist enters an underworld in which antagonists confront and threaten. The calypsonians are brought back to reality and safety and find the ultimate reward of protection from the advertiser. In the Sparrow commercial, this resolution is represented through reversion to full-color

and a close-up shot of Sparrow's hand switching off a stereo, then snapping shut a briefcase. In effect, Sparrow switches off the calypso, which has been the source of the nightmare. Through the security that the advertiser offers, the calypsonian is able to shut out the darkness of the underworld and threat of his past. Sparrow picks up the briefcase, opens a door. In the final shot before the logo sequence, Sparrow walks through a door into white light.

The audio of the Sparrow commercial makes a loose link between the threat of facing ten men who are out to kill, and being insured by Guardian Life. There is a seamless transition between lyrics that have been added for the sole purpose of the commercial and the lyrics that existed in the original 1961 Sparrow calypso "Ten to One is Murder:"

Life's intensity

Keeps us strong

Through all eventualities

I nearly lose my life...

The still of the night

I was real in a fright

Me against ten!

Ten vicious men I remember

I had a chicken at Club Miramar (10 to 1 is murder)

I saying to myself this was mi las' suppah (10 to 1 is murder)

They say how I slap de gyal from Grenada (10 to 1 is murder)

Well the leader of the gang was hot like a peppah (10 to 1 is murder)

And every man in the gang

Had a white-handled razor (10 to 1 is murder)

Bottle an' stone fallin

But no place to shelter (10 to 1 is murder)

I hear “puttoo-pow!”

Life is paramount

I can attest

The most precious gift

I can tell

Ordinary life is stronger at Guardian Life

Where you are protected forever.

To Life! (L. Guardian, 1986a)

Viewing the Sparrow commercial from the perspective of 2005, the violence depicted in this commercial is startling. One can only imagine that in the 2005 context of Trinidad and Tobago, with violent crimes and kidnappings frequently depicted on the front covers of the daily newspapers, that the pitch for this 1986 campaign would never leave a Trinbagonian agency's brainstorming session. In 1986, however, the violent scenes in this commercial might have seemed closer to a Hollywood movie than to the everyday experiences of the business class. While Sparrow's calypso “Ten to One is Murder” was based on Sparrow's real-life experience, the depiction of such violence in this 1986 advertisement would therefore have seemed far enough removed from middle class (the target consumer of the advertisement) reality to be included in a television advertisement.

The commercial that features Lord Kitchener (Aldwyn Roberts) begins with a close-up of Kitchener wearing his trademark Fedora hat and singing to the camera. This shot pixilates into a long shot of Kitchener and a woman fondling each other in an exterior cemetery setting at night. Again, the pixilation represents the protagonist's descent into a hellish past and into an underworld of otherworldly beings. Kitchener jumps up when he realizes that ghosts, spirits and phantoms surround them in the cemetery. These creatures are depicted in long-shots and medium shots as a ghastly white face whose mouth drips blood, a goat-like devil's mask, and a skull-shaped head wrapped in billowy cloth. Kitchener runs from the otherworldly creatures that try to grab him but accidentally bumps his head on a wrought iron gate in the cemetery and falls toward a low-angle camera into an open grave. Kitchener's visions also include a white horse and a cross, which are shown in long shot through a fog effect. The final shot in this black and white nightmare sequence is a close-up of Kitchener holding his head and grimacing as he screams "Life!" This shot transitions through pixilation back to the safety of present-day reality, to a full-color closing sequence in which Kitchener puts on his jacket and hat, opens and walks through a door into bright white light, which resolves into the Guardian Life logo full-screen.

The juxtaposition between past and present in both of these commercials represents an integral discourse that emerges through analysis of these texts. In both commercials the past represents disorder, lawlessness, darkness, horror and threat to life. The black and white film heightens the drama of this environment, adding starkness and mystery to the representations of the past within the two commercials. The present is full of life and a corporate environment provides order and reassurance of personal safety. The

juxtaposition of black and white and color film also provides information about the cultural meaning of these filmic choices in Trinidad and Tobago at the time of their launch. The Guardian Life commercials use black and white to represent past or altered reality and color film to represent present day reality, an opposite approach to *The Wizard of Oz*, which used black and white to represent Dorothy's waking consciousness and color to represent her distorted fantasy. While it is the black and white segments of both commercials that audiences remember, the narratives of the commercials privilege the safety of a corporatized present.

Like the Sparrow commercial, the music of the Kitchener commercial is based upon a seamless joining of lyrics that promote Guardian Life and the lyrics of an original Kitchener calypso. The music begins by celebrating life, then transitions to Kitchener's description of his nightmare:

As I look around frightfully  
 It was me and the gyurl under a tree  
 I nearly bus' mih head  
 The living running from the dead  
 Run! Do say doh rock de yard  
 Come leh we play a game of card  
 Run!  
 Well is now I really running in trut'  
 Mih foot stick in a bamboo root  
 Run! I fall down inside a tomb



Well with the scream I make

I sure that the whole world shake.

I now in big trouble

This time I sure I see the devil.

I see a tall white horse

On top a big black cross

As I bawl to get out of death (L. Guardian, 1986b)

Emerging from his nightmare, the Kitchener lyrics revert to a celebration of life and the link, finally, to Guardian Life as a protector of life. Like the Sparrow commercial, this Kitchener commercial also stands out as daring from the analytical perspective of 2005, touching on themes of the occult and death, while offering the services of an insurance company.

I have already noted the similarities in the narrative structures of these two commercials and the broad juxtaposition of color film with black and white, but there are other similarities that also become evident through this analysis. While the dream or flashback sequences of the two commercials diverge into two different genres (the flashback sequence in the Sparrow commercial could be considered film noir, while the dream sequence of the Kitchener commercial could be categorized as fantasy or horror), there are other similarities that deserve noting. As Ian Collier noted, these two commercials were modeled upon a music video model (perhaps influenced by Michael Jackson's *Thriller* video which first aired in 1983), and as such, in the opening sequence of both commercials, titles are supered over the medium shot of the calypsonian to read:

## Kitchener / Sparrow

## “To Life”

## Guardian Life”

A second similarity that emerges is in the characterizations, dramatizations and portrayals of the flashback and dream sequences, which draw to mind Bakhtin's descriptions of the grotesque. According to Bakhtin, the grotesque body is never complete, outgrows its own limits and in effect blurs the boundary between the inside and the outside of the body. For Bakhtin, the grotesque body “is blended with the world, with animals, with objects” (Bakhtin, 1968). This blending of the body's inner world and outer world suggests transgression, profanity and queerness, which in the Sparrow commercial we find in a close-up shot of one of the gang-member's torso and trousered lower abdomen. In this shot, the gangster's pants zipper gapes open revealing nothing but blackness, which reflects the blackness of night that surrounds the gangsters. This shot suggests that in this confrontation, profanity (the suggestion of the gangster's pelvis) transgresses its normal containment (the trousers) and becomes one with the outside world where it is night. Also in this shot, the gangster lunges a knife toward the camera, replacing the phallus that has been made absent. There is also representation of the grotesque with the gangster who spits in order to threaten Sparrow, the fluids of his internal body escaping into the exterior world.

In the Kitchener commercial, representations of the grotesque include the death mask that helplessly salivates blood, the walking-dead that grasp for the living, and the half-human half-goat hooded devil. The salivating zombie in the Kitchener commercial

mirrors the grotesque representation of the rough, spitting gangster in the Sparrow commercial, while the living dead and the devil constitute hybridization between the living human world and the unknown world of the afterlife. In both commercials, these black and white sequences that focus on the grotesque take place in the borderlands of the protagonists' minds, between past and present, and between reality and fantasy. The threats in these underworlds transcend their own bodily limits, spilling into the world of darkness around them.

Like the later commercial *The Ganges and the Nile*, these two advertisements present a theme of hybridity, or the combination of elements with distinct origins. In *The Ganges and the Nile*, the coming together of two streams of culture resulted in hybridity within an imagined unified national community. In the Sparrow and Kitchener advertisements, the representations of grotesque bodies suggested a transgression of bodily limits and a blending of the inside world with the outside world.

What is surprising about these two commercials is the ways in which they confront the life-death binary through vivid visual metaphors. In the Sparrow commercial, Sparrow runs from his death and the threat of knife-wielding gangsters. Kitchener, on the other hand, at first seeks sexual fulfillment among the dead, then tries to elude the living dead, then sinks into the underworld by falling into a grave. In the closing sequences of both commercials, the calypsonian protagonist ultimately escapes the depicted tensions between life and death, crossing into what seems to be an afterlife through a doorway that leads into white light. The corporate message here is that through life insurance offered by Guardian Life, policyholders can live on after their death (through insurance that provides for next of kin, presumably). The final sequence particularly of the Kitchener

commercial became all the more poignant following Kitchener's death in 2002. Through the visualization in this commercial, Kitchener is eternally walking into the light (See Figure 23).



Figure 15. In a screen captured from the *To Life* commercial, Sparrow flees the ten men who want to kill him, in the black and white past-nightmare sequence.



Figure 16. The darkness of the past continues to play out in this shot in which Sparrow's would-be murders threaten him with knives



Figure 17. This shot juxtaposes the gangster's open pants zipper with his lunging knife-wielding hand. The open zipper represents the grotesque body... always unfinished, creating a liminal space between the outer darkness and the darkness inside.



Figure 18. The closing sequence of *To Life*, in full color, shows Sparrow walking into the “afterlife.”



Figure 19. In the second *To Life* commercial, Kitchener seeks sexual fulfillment in a cemetery, among the dead.



Figure 20. Kitchener runs away from the walking dead emerging from their graves in a cemetery.



Figure 21. The grotesque face of a zombie, helplessly drooling blood in this keyframe from the Kitchener version of *To Life!*



Figure 22. The grotesque half-human, half-goat representation of the devil as hooded form, from the Kitchener version of *To Life!*



Figure 23. In the full color closing sequence, Kitchener walks through a doorway into the “afterlife”





Figure 24. In *The Ganges and the Nile* unity gets represented through hybridity within the imagined community.



Figure 25. Hybridity in *The Ganges and the Nile* is implied by representing individuals of specific ethnic origin. Here a woman of African descent represents Afro-Trinbagonianness.



Figure 26. A shot from *The Ganges and the Nile*, represents “pure” Indian identity.

### *Conclusions*

The similarities between the *To Life!* commercials and the later *Ganges and the Nile* advertisement are structural. All three of the commercials I have analyzed here use popular calypsos as their music beds, using visual sequences to effect a music video in the form of an advertisement. One can almost imagine an agency manager or account executive, confronted by the need for a new Guardian Life corporate campaign, recalling the earlier success of the Sparrow and Kitchener advertisements. It is quite likely that the brief for *The Ganges and the Nile* built upon a desire to reproduce those earlier successes. Aside from this structural similarity, however, the older commercials are distinct from the newer commercial in terms of actual story, thematic influence and aesthetic presentation. The *To Life!* campaign confronts dangers that exist in a world beyond everyday reality, offering comfort in corporate reassurance. While *The Ganges and the Nile* uses idealism and the discourse of national unity to draw the audience closer to the Guardian Life identity.

While the methods of communicating the corporate identity of Guardian Life in these three commercials are different, there are common themes that emerge that provide insight into how ideology plays out in the discursive interpellation of the imagined Trinbagonian community. Despite the use of non-Trinbagonian locations and talent to represent Trinidad and Tobago in *The Ganges and the Nile*, the audience responded mostly positively to the representations of local imagery and national unity. In this commercial, the advertiser hailed a “national audience” brought together through hybridization of the imagined collective. According to the discourses embedded in this

commercial, the distinct space of Trinidad and Tobago's self-imagining is characterized by particularized (and pure) individual identities brought together into a utopian environment characterized by collective hybridity.

The *To Life!* campaign interpellated a national community by using a juxtaposition between opposing forces on multiple different levels. These two commercials built on tensions between past and present, celebrating calypsos that had been popular in earlier years, therefore privileging an earlier era of Trinbagonian culture. The commercials also explored the tensions between life and afterlife, between a safe present and an imagined, dangerous past. These tensions culminated in the commercials through representations of the grotesque, which appeared within the nightmare sequence of each commercial. In the Sparrow commercial, the grotesque took on the shape of gangsters, one lunging a knife at Sparrow, while the other spat in preparation for a fight, each character's interior self escaping through orifices into the outside world. In the Kitchener commercial, the grotesque took the form of otherworldly creatures: a cross between a goat and a human, living dead walking the cemetery and a face drooling blood, their states of being defined by transcending the boundaries of human body existence.

The audience members interviewed who pointed to these commercials as archetypal Trinbagonian culture represented in television advertising because of the use of popular Trinidad and Tobago music and recognizable Trinbagonian celebrities. Yet through analysis of the texts of these commercials, common themes emerge that relate directly to my findings in earlier discussions of national identity as implicated in television advertising in Trinidad and Tobago. While each of these commercials stood for advertising texts that were distinctly Trinbagonian, hybridity and liminality emerged as

central constructions in all three of these commercials. The advertising industry privileges distinct individual identities that collectively constitute Trinbagonian cultural identity, in which these identities remain particularized. What emerges from this analysis is that the space of moving image expression in which postcolonial national visual culture is negotiated is not constituted by a single, unitary identity. Instead, the process of visual sovereignty comprises hybridity of a collective of individual identities co-existing (not merging) in a liminal sphere and the negotiation of an always-unfinished national identity.

## Chapter Eight

### Conclusions

The field of postcolonial studies is caught between the desire to build cultural identities that stand against colonial and imperial hegemony and the fear that building such cultural identities within the context of national discourse ultimately will result in the rise of neo-colonialism, leading us back to purist conceptions of supremacy, genocide and ultimately a world order characterized by ideological oppression. What can postcolonial studies offer to solve this paradox? The problem is that nationalism has the power both to rouse people who are unlike into unity (H. Bhabha, 1990a), thus simultaneously offering cultural positions of difference and alterity while transforming such a roused populace into a purist community seeking to erase cultural difference.

The need to solve this postcolonial dialectic is urgent, as the postcolonial moment continues to evolve toward nationalisms that are expressed with increasing vehemence. Several authors have already examined the notion of hybridity as offering the potential to define new zones of power within the postcolonial nation by allowing cultural identity of the colonizer and the colonized to co-exist within one imagined community (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2003). The theorization of hybridity in postcolonial studies focuses on how two or more cultures influence each other within a postcolonial environment, rather than how one culture related through the hegemonic control of colonialism to another. The thinking behind theorizing hybridity in this way forces us to recognize the mutual cultural influences at play within a postcolonial environment.

This study turned to the postcolonial Caribbean (left out of much postcolonial literature) in search of a solution. Trinidad and Tobago's present condition is bracketed by colonial hegemony on one end of its history and imperial hegemony on the other. For similarly postcolonial countries operating within an environment marked by increasing global flows, we must ask: what hopes are there for creating a national culture, if such a project, from its outset, is laden with fear? It is a daunting task for such nations to undo the damage of colonial rule, while simultaneously negotiating a postcolonial identity and manoeuvring through the landmines of neocolonial possibility. On first consideration, a study of television advertising within the twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago seems an inappropriate location to seek solutions to such a complex, seemingly insoluble dilemma. Yet through a multiperspectival analysis of this industry in this national context, we have gained a more in-depth understanding of the postcolonial dialectic.

Building upon the concept of sovereignty, which Benedict Anderson has identified as one of two inherent characteristics of nations (the other being that they are imagined), I have theorized in this study, the concept of visual sovereignty. I first defined visual sovereignty as the discursive production among media producers, their texts, the state and audiences in the construction of national identity through visual media. Early in this theorization I offered that the concept is integral to the discussion of how the nation defines itself in relation to other nations, and how a nation expresses power and control over its own visual mediascape. In other words, we might think of visual sovereignty as the processes through which a postcolonial nation defines what is included and what is excluded in the visual imagining of itself.

Visual sovereignty offers the field of postcolonial studies the potential to examine how the nation negotiates the collective imagining of itself through moving image media, and how the postcolonial nation balances the homogenizing force of nationalism with the utopian desires for inclusiveness and hybridity within the national imagining. While the postcolonial nation seeks to control its own narration, we saw in Chapter Two that visual sovereignty can become burdensome, and that the participants in this process often point to other participants as being responsible for governing the process. In a follow-up document to the *Master Plan*, the Trinidad and Tobago government has noted that motion picture and television might be entertainment to the developed world, but that to many developing nations, visual culture must be “harnessed and used for national growth and development” (Team, 2005). While government may take this seemingly honorable position, the ability of government to effect any change beyond facilitating foreign crews, is often limited, as it was in the case of Trinidad and Tobago.

Even while representatives of the moving image production industry criticized the government for its lack of efficacy and claimed that there is no sort of collaboration among participants in the process of visual sovereignty, production of a national moving image culture transpired at the independent level through television advertising. The advertising industry is key to this independent production of visual sovereignty since this industry is the reason that much of the personnel and infrastructure exist in Trinidad and Tobago in the first place. Additionally, the central role of advertising in the operation of commercial television facilitates the production of texts that become significant in Trinidad and Tobago’s imagining of itself (such as *Joebell and America*). Television advertising also allows new television stations devoted to offering an unprecedented



percentage of local programming (Gayelle The Channel) to come into being. Despite the passing of this like the proverbial buck, television advertising ensures that visual sovereignty is always already underway within Trinidad and Tobago's postcolonial mediascape. However, because of the government's neglect to include television advertising production in its plans to develop the moving image production industries, it is, as yet, unable to connect the dots between the active production industry that already exists, and the lack of a formal film and video production industry within Trinidad and Tobago.

Visual sovereignty emerged, through the analyses of the preceding chapters, as a process that occurs across texts, contexts and means of production. This process is characterized by, and culminates in, an environment of hybridity and global flows and emerges through textualized discourses that are produced in service of national culture. The theorization of this process of visual sovereignty is complex as it defies its own logic. Even as the process seeks to establish a distinct national culture within a postcolonial moving image mediascape, it incorporates images, discourses and aesthetics that are not inherent parts of that national culture. Visual sovereignty is a process of "betweenity" (to borrow a word from Trinidad and Tobago's first Prime Minister in his description of Tobago). As a process, it is characterized by hybridities, tensions and contradictions that necessarily exist within an environment of oscillation and change.

The process of visual sovereignty materializes at the limen where the inside becomes the outside, or where the nation imagines itself as ending and other nations beginning. This process can be found in the balance between the nation's postcolonial past and its imperialized present. Caught at this figurative site of tension through which

all of these opposing forces operate, we can see that visual sovereignty is defined through hybridity, liminality and alterity. Visual sovereignty involves the definition of new structures of authority and what Homi Bhabha refers to as new political initiatives and discourses (H. Bhabha, 1990b).

In this study, hybridity, liminality and alterity manifested in distinct hues of Trinbagonianness arising from the historical existence of these discourses throughout the nation's history. The history of Trinidad and Tobago depicts waves of colonialist intent washing over the two islands, their currents originating in Spain, France, Holland and Britain, their purposes to subjugate Native American, African and Indian cultures. Contemporary Trinidad and Tobago national cultural identity is the sum of these cultural forces along with the influences of the Middle East (Syria and Lebanon) and the Far East (China, and to a lesser extent Japan). Hybridity in broader Trinidad and Tobago culture translates into the country's music (chutney soca, soca parang and chutney soca parang), cuisine, dance and even the names of celebrity performers (including a Syrian calypsonian with the sobriquet "The Mighty Trini"). Each of these examples of Trinbagonian hybridity represents the merging of two or more distinct forms of cultural expression into one new form (soca itself is a hybrid form resulting from soul music and calypso music, and chutney soca parang is a further hybridization of soca with Indian and Spanish influences). In the Trinbagonian advertising industry, the hybridity of thirdness (or alterity) implies the co-existence of multiple distinct identities, some of which themselves are hybrid entities.

Advertising and all of its component aspects (including its industrial structures, its personnel, its texts and economic functions) emerged, in this study, as ideally positioned

within a postcolonial nation's visual culture to examine the ways in which visual sovereignty emerges throughout different aspects of a nation's mediascape. The discourses of television advertising spill across the flow of programs into which, and between which, television stations place advertisements. In the Trinidad and Tobago context, the producers, discourses, and infrastructure of television advertising interact with and become integral to the production of other moving image texts. The industry encourages the use of external resources in the production of its texts, bringing new techniques and aesthetics into the Trinidad and Tobago environment. And finally, the texts of television advertisements offer insights into how the national audience imagines itself and how a postcolonial national identity might be negotiated through visual culture in an environment where local motion picture production has been limited.

Trinidad and Tobago has served as an ideal backdrop for the theorization of visual sovereignty, its national cultural identity characterized through discourses of postcolonialism, imperialism, nationalism and hybridity. Trinidad and Tobago is a Caribbean island nation and for this reason, national identity relates directly to the definition of the nation's geographical boundaries defined by its shorelines. Along the seafront there is literal negotiation of the national space in the limen where the land meets the sea, and where "within Trinidad and Tobago" is defined in relation to "outside Trinidad and Tobago." We can equate this naturally occurring negotiation between the land and the sea at the boundary of Trinidad and Tobago's shoreline with visual sovereignty, which emerges as a process characterized by contestation, oscillation and negotiation.

Despite the apparent ideal location of this nation for the backdrop of this discussion, visual sovereignty has broader applicability than the context of Trinidad and Tobago. Postcolonial studies focuses on nations that were colonized by European nations within the period termed “modernity,” and takes specific interest in former colonies whose struggles for independence were or are rife with problems of racism and cultural imposition. For such nations, visual sovereignty is an important theorization that can provide focus in the examination of how continuing negotiation of national identity gets played out in the moving image media. Even while this study was being written, the term “visual sovereignty” became attached to the development of indigenous media among Native American cultures who themselves have been the subjects of colonization (Scanlon, 2004-2005).

The significance of this discussion to the field of postcolonial studies is that the omission of the advertising industry as a complex multifaceted phenomenon (comprised of personnel, infrastructure, ancillary connections to other industries, texts and intertexts, and defined by economic or financial structures that often exist within postcolonial mediascapes) from the discourse of study of postcolonial national identity results in incomplete understandings of how a nation that has emerged from the throes of colonial domination forges a space of its own through which it expresses a distinct visual culture. A study of television advertising as a complex whole allows us to gain greater depth of understanding of how nations ritually maintain the “zones of danger” of their imagined boundaries (Appadurai, 1996) through the visual media, and the economic realities that contextualize this process. By including an in-depth analysis of advertising within postcolonial studies, we are forced to acknowledge that the evolution of national identity

(in this case expressed through visual media) is a function of multiple factors including globalization, cultural negotiation (through national literature, cinema and media), government legislation, material reality, economic necessity, and postcolonial desire. Since advertising provides the economy by which film and video production take place and through which commercial television stations are able to continue operating, this industry literally underwrites the process of visual sovereignty. Yet despite this relationship, postcolonial studies (like the government of Trinidad and Tobago) neglects to acknowledge the significance of the industry in catalyzing the process of visual sovereignty.

As James Twitchell suggests, in the present era, a medium must carry ads to survive (Twitchell, 1996). Similarly, the process of visual sovereignty in Trinidad and Tobago relied on the advertising industry for the finance, personnel, equipment and infrastructure necessary for the development of an active film and video industry and the production of texts that could be identified as distinctly Trinbagonian. While the field of postcolonial studies traditionally focused on the role of newspapers, novels and motion pictures in the construction of an imagined community, it is through multiperspectival analyses of the advertising industry that we can discover a detailed understanding of the complexity of this process. It is through such analyses that we realize that new sites of power and new structures of authority, leading to the strengthening of the postcolonial nation do not necessitate the rebirth of discourses of purism and eradication of Other, if the process by which a nation “comes into its own” is itself defined by hybridity and alterity.

The stories that remain to be told in this wider overall narrative of moving image media and postcolonial visual sovereignty are many. Beyond the scope of this study lie many other stories of creative lives spent molding the shape of the advertising industry, of commercials whose effects ripple through the Trinidad and Tobago culture long after their media runs are complete, and of film and video production personnel and infrastructure whose alliances and allegiances change almost as quickly as the running time of the commercial messages they craft.

Even as I write this concluding chapter, the mediascape in Trinidad and Tobago continues to traverse through a phase of intense evolution, negotiating the very issues addressed in this study through an ongoing process of visual sovereignty. In the second half of 2005 a new television station launched in Trinidad and Tobago. Owned by the same company (Trinidad Publishing Company) that owns the oldest daily newspaper in the country (The Trinidad Guardian), Cable News Network 3 (CNC 3) focuses on coverage of news and current events. The station began broadcasting in September of 2005 after a brief battle with the Telecommunication Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, which questioned the station's license only days prior to its originally scheduled launch date (Richards, 2005).

This study has been written during a peak period of activity in the process of visual sovereignty, which itself has provided challenges, such as keeping up with the rapidly changing environment. A second implication here, however, is that the present state of evolution of the mediascape in Trinidad and Tobago leaves room for future studies to examine these and other related events and changes. Like the narration of a nation (H. Bhabha, 1990a), this study and its theorizations are incomplete as they stand.

There are, on a few different levels, questions that remain to be answered, which can offer direction to future researchers. As the Caribbean is key to understanding hybridity and alterity in postcolonial theory, at the level of Trinidad and Tobago's visual mediascape, we can continue to ask how will visual sovereignty evolve within that nation's moving image environment? On a broader level, the theorization of visual sovereignty should inspire us to continue seeking new dimensions in which (and likely across which) the postcolonial nation imagines and narrates itself.

## Notes

### Chapter One

<sup>1</sup>Arjun Appadurai uses the term mediascape to refer to "both the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and . . . the images of the world created by these media" (Appadurai, 1996).

### Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup>I refer to Georgia Popplewell by either her full name or her first name as opposed to only by her last name, to avoid confusion with her brother Curtis Popplewell who co-owned the production facility Big Fish in a Blue Bottle with producer Ian Lee.

### Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup>John Fiske notes Barthes' distinctions between texts that are readerly or writerly, but refers to television as a *producerly text*, in that it is both popular, open and relies on discursive competencies that the viewer already possesses (Fiske, 1988). I use *producerly* here to address the ways in which a text can become popular, while remaining open to discursive positioning.

<sup>2</sup>*Extempo* is a form of calypso in which the performer improvises while singing. It is cited as one of the earliest forms of calypso.



<sup>3</sup>*Whe-whe* is an “illegal game based on impulse, dreams and other portents where numbers correspond with ‘marks.’ The ‘banker’ will ‘buss the mark’ (reveal what the symbol is) on the ‘turf’ (area where the game is played) and anyone who has the correct number or symbol is a winner (Mendes, 1986).

<sup>4</sup>*Soca* is a musical form indigenous to Trinidad and Tobago, defined as a fusion between calypso and soul, or calypso and R&B, more generally encompassing contemporary calypso with a faster tempo than traditional calypso, more percussive structure and usually elements of brass.

## **Chapter Four**

<sup>1</sup>CARICOM is the Caribbean Community, an organization that builds toward economic and social integration in the Caribbean region, including a desire for a single market approach to labor and trade (CARICOM, 2005).

<sup>2</sup>The FTAA or Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) seeks to unite 34 democracies in the Americas into a free trade zone, in which barriers to trade among member nations will gradually be removed (FTAA, 2005).

<sup>3</sup>In some instances, participants indicated their preference to have one part of their interview responses included under the condition of anonymity. In such instances, their responses are quoted without specific citation.

## Chapter Five

<sup>1</sup>While analysis of one of the last episodes of *Westwood Park* provides this insight, it also warrants noting that often when a soap opera's syntagmatic structure nears its end, the paradigmatic rules that have been followed throughout the series are often ruptured (R. C. Allen, 1985).

<sup>2</sup>The term *bacchanal* generally refers to scandal, arguing or confusion, but in the Trinidad and Tobago context takes on cultural specificity (Mason, 1999). Trinbagonians often delight in a culture of bacchanal where private business is exposed, and gossip reveals hidden secrets. Trinidad Carnival is often referred to as a spectacle of bacchanal.

<sup>3</sup>*Country bookie* is Trinbagonian parlance for country bumpkin or a person who lives in the deep country area and is still ignorant of the modern way of life (Mendes, 1986). This term is used condescendingly.

<sup>4</sup>The Caribbean term *gayelle* is used to denote a cockfighting or stickfighting arena, coming from the Spanish "gallera" for cockpit.

<sup>5</sup>A *steups* is a loud sucking of the teeth, which expresses annoyance.

## Chapter Six

<sup>1</sup>A *steups* is a loud sucking of the teeth, which expresses annoyance.

## **Chapter Seven**

<sup>1</sup> Dougla is a colloquial expression in Trinidad and Tobago, referring to people of mixed Indian and African heritage

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