

**Never-ending Cycles and Revolutionary Ends:
Revolt and Rebirth in the Contemporary Caribbean Novel**

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As we grow older as a race, we grow aware that history is written, that it is a kind of literature without morality, that in its actualities the ego of the race is indissoluble and that everything depends on whether we write this fiction through the memory of hero or victim. (Walcott 2)

The statement by St. Lucian author Derek Walcott expresses four notions crucial to our understanding of the relationship between the people and history of the Caribbean: that history is written, and if it is found to be badly written it can be re-written; that the way our history is plotted determines our perceptions of ourselves as a people, that is, as it shapes national and individual ego; that history is a kind of fiction, not fact or science but a narrative containing a certain element of invention; and that Caribbean history still carries the legacy of the old dialectic of master and slave on which our colonial identity has been founded.

The re-writing of history has been a constant endeavor for twentieth-century Caribbean writers. Emerging from a common experience of colonialism and slavery, Caribbean authors (historians, novelists, and poets alike) have found a history written by the Other that begets a self-image that is not self-made, a history where the "process of exclusion, stress, and subordination" (White 6) that makes up a historical text has produced a narrative in which the Caribbean self cannot find itself. Hence the need (evident in most contemporary Caribbean historiography and literature) to replot this history into a narrative where, as Walcott puts it, the "ego of the race is indissoluble."

The need to shed Eurocentric views of history arose with a renewed sense of urgency in the late fifties and sixties, a period when most Caribbean islands were preparing for independence or for re-definitions of their relationships with the metropolis--events which would bring to the fore the need for self-definition in terms other than those imposed by the colonial power. The difficulties in fulfilling this need, however, became apparent immediately; it required not only the restructuring of the narrative of the Caribbean past but also the elaboration of a different historiographical tradition.

At the vanguard of this effort to re-elaborate the narrative of Caribbean history we find novelists as well as historians. Novelists, not hampered by the methodology and ideology of trained historians (not to mention the historian's need to stick to the supposed facts), have set out to give form to a past that can serve as a basis for a new definition of Caribbean history and, by extension, of the Caribbean self.

In their quest for new approaches to history, Caribbean novelists have tapped many sources: European historiography (chiefly Oswald Spengler and Giambattista Vico); popular culture (carnival, salsa, calypso, etc.); new and imaginative interpretations of historical documentation, as in V. S. Naipaul's The Loss of El Dorado and Alejo Carpentier's El reino de este mundo; the re-writing of one-sided literary accounts, as in Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea; mythical voyages to the heart of Africa from which a new awareness of cultural identity

emerges, as in Simone Schwartz-Bart's Ti-Jean l'horizon; and feminist interpretations of the historical process, as in Rosario Ferré's Maldito amor and Marie Chauvet's Amour, Colère et Folie--to name only a few.

The representation of the Caribbean historical process as a series of inescapable cycles of oppression, rebellion, and renewed oppression is perhaps the most common narrative structure used by Caribbean authors in their depictions of historical processes. The appeal of this type of plot is understandable; it seems perfectly suited to writers who ideologically reject colonial control and the cultural eurocentricity that accompanies it but who witness the perpetuation of colonial relations and the ever-present legacy of the slave system. The structure, which derives in part from the cyclical plotting of historical narrative associated with the theories of Spengler and Vico, allows for the possibility of revolution, destruction of the old and rebirth, and offers the possibility of combining assessments of "things-as-they-are" with a cautious note of hope for revolutionary change.

Since depictions of revolution and popular revolt reveal most clearly the problems and contradictions involved in the reconciling of historical reality with theories of historical change in the Caribbean, I have chosen six novels about rebellion for discussion. These are Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá's La renuncia del héroe Baltasar, Alejo Carpentier's El reino de este mundo and La consagración de la primavera, Earl Lovelace's The Dragon Can't Dance, Paule Marshall's The Chosen Place, The Timeless People, and V. S. Naipaul's Guerillas.

The novels are similar in that they explore revolution and revolt as avenues of social and political change in the region. They depict revolution and revolt as being for the most part unsuccessful--as most in the Caribbean have been--in changing the overall conditions of the area, but these depictions are used to explore the possibilities for positive, meaningful political action, and more importantly, are presented as manifestations of the latent capacities for revolt and change among Caribbean peoples. In the works of most of these writers, unsuccessful revolt is portrayed as a necessary manifestation of the people's underlying rebelliousness against colonial rule and/or neo-colonial controls and carries with it a note of cautious optimism for the future of the region.

Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá's La renuncia del héroe Baltasar is the fictional account of a bloody Black rebellion in eighteenth-century Puerto Rico motivated by the arrest and imprisonment of Baltasar Montañez, a fictional character Rodríguez creates by merging two legendary Puerto Rican figures: Miguel Henríquez, an eighteenth-century mulatto of enormous wealth and prestige, and Baltasar Montañez, a young man believed to have miraculously survived a riding accident in San Juan in 1753.* The novel offers the reader a false history, based on invented documents, which nevertheless has its origin in the people's capacity to create legend out of historical fact.

* Popular Puerto Rican legend attributes the building of the extant Capilla del Cristo chapel in Old San Juan to the commemoration of the miracle of Baltasar Montañez's survival. There is ample proof, however, that Montañez--and his horse--perished in the accident.

Of the many tales told of the presumed miracle of Montañez's survival and the mystery of Miguel Henríquez's career, Rodríguez Juliá has fashioned a vivid tale of murder and Black revenge against the white planters that reads like a Fanonian attempt to return to a tabula rasa on which a new society can be built.

The mysterious circumstances surrounding the career of the fictional Montañez are explored by a fictional historian named Cadalso in three lectures supposedly presented at the Ateneo Puertorriqueño in 1938. The first of these lectures focuses on Baltasar's marriage to Josefina Prats, the daughter of the Spanish secretary of Government. The marriage is arranged by government officials wishing to create the illusion of freedom and possible social mobility for the Black population, represented by Baltasar, by allowing the liberto to marry an aristocrat. The lecture describes how the government's plan fails, as the myth it has created around Baltasar escapes its control and takes hold among his followers. The second lecture focuses on Baltasar's career as Secretary of Government. This period is marked by Baltasar's transformation from shrewd politician into a visionary. It includes descriptions of Baltasar's vision of a "Garden of Misfortunes" and of the erotic drawings by Juan Espinosa in which Baltasar is the subject. Both vision and drawings explore Baltasar's growing apocalyptic view and his belief in murder and destruction as the ultimate freedom. The lecture also narrates the massacre of whites by a mob enraged by Baltasar's arrest on charges brought against him by the Inquisition.

The third and final lecture concerns Baltasar's decision to refuse the government's offer to return him to his post. By refusing, he prolongs indefinitely the rebellion and massacre. The lecture explores Baltasar's visionary madness and his power to lead others into fulfilling his dream of destroying colonial society by, paradoxically, refusing to lead them.

Rodríguez Juliá's tale, being a parody of history (Paravisini 101-08), is essentially "carnavalesque"--the author "playin' mas'." What emerges from this parody is a narrative of eighteenth-century Puerto Rican history as it could have been if colonial rule had given way to the rebellious passions of a Black and mulatto population tired of colonial racial policies. His history, responding to legend as well as to an insistence on the annihilation of the colonial past, tries to use folklore to bring us closer to an understanding of the historical processes through which revolution and renewal are accomplished. In its use of folklore as the basis for a pseudo-historical tale, the novel reaffirms the capabilities for resistance to official culture latent in popular tradition.

By attempting to turn legend into history, La renuncia del héroe Baltasar represents the reversal of the creative process described by Alejo Carpentier in his prologue to El reino de este mundo, a novel based on rigorous documentation and accountability to historical fact. Carpentier writes,

Porque es menester advertir que el relato que va a leerse ha sido establecido sobre una documentación extremadamente rigurosa que no solamente respeta la verdad histórica de los acontecimientos, los nombres de los personajes-- incluso secundarios--, de lugares y hasta calles, sino que oculta, bajo su aparente intemporalidad, un minucioso cotejo de fechas y de cronologías. (15)

El reino de este mundo is Carpentier's retelling of the events immediately preceding and

following the Haitian Revolution through the eyes of Ti Noel, former slave and quasi-picaresque hero who serves as witness to the cycles of revolt and oppression that engulf Haiti from the mid to late-eighteenth century until 1815. In his retelling of this tale, Carpentier transforms documented history into a "magic realist" narrative that emphasizes two aspects of Haitian historical reality: the ever-present legacy of the exploitation imposed by the brutal slave system, and the fantastic/surreal combinations that emerged from the contact of two different world views--one European, the other African--in what Carpentier calls the "magical crossroad" of Cap Haitien.

The difference in the nature of the historical data used by Carpentier and Rodríguez Juliá is matched by stylistic differences: whereas Carpentier rejects historical discourse in a rigorously documented historical novel, Rodríguez Juliá follows the methodology and language of historical texts to make history out of legend. The documents he creates--diaries, chronicles, letters--are rhetorically self-conscious texts which insist on their own legitimacy as historical documents by their rigorous, albeit exaggerated, observance of the devices of the original.

There is no such observance of the devices of historical discourse in Carpentier's work precisely because he finds such discourse inadequate to express a history that is different from that of Europe. The difference is one of essence: American history incorporates "lo real maravilloso," "todo resulta maravilloso en una historia imposible de situar en Europa" and impossible to relate in European (i. e. academic) terms. The resulting text reads as myth, myth being an essential component of the Caribbean view of history.

Rodríguez Juliá approaches the relationship between myth and history from a different perspective. Since he is working with legend, not with documented history as is the case with Carpentier, he is interested in demonstrating how legend and myth are embodiments of historical truth. Following Vico, Rodríguez Juliá seems to place more faith in the poet's intuition than in the documents available to the historian. Documents are scrutinized, questioned, and often rejected by the fictional historian Cadalso. The authors of letters may lie and self-interest may lead to tampering with documents. The truth of poetry, however, is accepted without question since it gives a voice to myth, a truth more valid than that of history. Within this framework, the poet alone can see beyond the historical enigma.

Carpentier and Rodríguez Juliá share a deep distrust of the ability of historical methodology to uncover historical truth and a belief in the superior ability of the creative writer to express history in a truer form. Their distrust is not unique. Not surprisingly, it permeates views of history among scores of Caribbean writers, and especially since histories written in terms of European-developed methodologies are considered suspect.

At the explicitly theoretical level, however, the rejection of the language and methodology of European historiography does not translate (at least in these texts) into a rejection of European historical thought, since their positions concerning the significance of history as a process follow the theories of Europeans Oswald Spengler and Giambattista Vico.

In La renuncia del héroe Baltasar, the dream of destruction behind Baltasar's renunciation of power (a renunciation that brings about uncontrollable social disorder), his desire to see colonial society disintegrate, seems to imply an apocalyptic view of history, a

rectilinear rather than cyclical view of historical development. But the novel's closing statement, which refers to Baltasar as a "mutation" of the type that surfaces only once in a thousand years, interprets his renunciation of power as signalling the end of the cycle of oppression rather than the end of the society itself. This interpretation echoes Vico's concept of history, which combines "a theory of evolution and maturation in the development of thought from the age of the gods to the age of man with a theory of concomitant degeneration of the moral character of mankind" (Bidney 272). Degeneration, in Vico's world view, can lead to revolution, which by destroying the old order may prepare the ground for a new civilization to emerge.* The parallels between Baltasar's endorsement of destruction and Vico's theory points away from an apocalyptic view of history and towards destruction as an affirmation of the right to rebel against oppression in order to create a new political order. Baltasar's renunciation of power makes freedom from slavery and colonial rule possible and allows the oppressed and manipulated mob to enter history.

Vico's view of the historical process as a progression from rebirth to degeneration is echoed in Carpentier's use of the theories of Spengler, for whom history is the creation of forms out of primal chaos. For Spengler there exist, in place of the empty notion of one linear history, different cultures with their own possibilities of self-expression which rise, ripen, and decay, never to return. In view of his assumption that all cultures are destined to decay and perish, he counsels acceptance of the present reality as "a natural and inevitable condition of the time and . . . a flight from intellection into pure action as a realistic response to the needs of the cultural process in its current stage of development" (1: 21-22). In Carpentier's novel, Ti Noel's experience of cyclical oppression results in the realization that pure action (revolution in this case) is the proper response to the human predicament:

Y comprendía ahora que el hombre nunca sabe para quien padece y espera. Padece y espera y trabaja para gente que nunca conocerá, y que a su vez padecerán y esperarán y trabajarán para otros que tampoco serán felices, pues el hombre ansía siempre una felicidad situada más allá de la porción que le es otorgada. Pero la grandeza del hombre está precisamente en querer mejorar lo que es. En imponerse tareas. . . . El anciano lanzó su declaración de guerra a los nuevos amos, dando orden a sus súbditos de partir al asalto de las obras insolentes de los mulatos investidos. (123)

The narrative structures in these novels flow directly from the theoretical pre-conceptions of the authors. Carpentier uses the cyclical repetition of a pattern of oppression and rebellion as the way to teach Ti Noel (and the reader) the inevitability of fate, from which emerges the realization of the value of action for its own sake. Thus the narration follows a structure where at different historical points between 1790 and 1815, Ti Noel finds the pattern repeating itself until the repetition ends with the historical lesson learned.

The narrative structure of La renuncia del héroe Baltasar begins with an expression of the traditional political solutions to the problems posed by colonization (in this case, the

* This aspect of Vico's theory of historical development parallels Fanon's concept of a "tabula rasa," the theory of revolution and total destruction of the colonial order as the way to establish new societies in the Caribbean. La renuncia del héroe Baltasar can be read as a depiction of the destructive and renovating power of total revolution following a Fanonian blueprint.

appeasement offered to the slave population by Bishop Larra in the shape of a marriage between the mulatto Baltasar and the daughter of the Spanish Secretary of Government) and ends proposing revolution and the creation of a new order as the only alternative to colonization. Finding political solutions powerless to end colonization and slavery, the novel seeks a resolution in destruction and rebirth. Thus the plot follows Baltasar's career as he develops from a crafty politician to a visionary whose obsessive apocalyptic credo finds in murder and destruction the only roads to revolution and change; furthermore, it moves away from Cadalso, the historian seeking rational explanations for historical events, and towards the figure of the poet who can see beyond the political enigma. The poet's vision opens the way to a transcendence of the master-slave dialectic and the destruction of colonial rule which echoes Carpentier's call for action for its own sake in the hope that it can lead to a cultural and political breakthrough.

II

Earl Lovelace's The Dragon Can't Dance revolves around the "indigenous tradition of slave resistance that finds expression in the ancestral masking rituals of [the Caribbean] carnival" (Cooper 12). It follows the story of the people of the yard on Alice Street on Calvary Hill in Port of Spain, Trinidad, through several carnival seasons and a street revolt in which several men from the yard declare themselves as the People's Liberation Army and briefly draw on popular support.

The novel presents carnival as the embodiment of an oppressed population's inherent capacity for revolt. Carnival both embodies and contains the impulse to rebel, demonstrating its latency but exhausting its capabilities. Aldrick, who year after year plays Calvary Hill's dragon with quasi-ritualistic devotion, explains that

"This is the guts of the people, their blood; this is the self of the people that they screaming out they possess, that they scrimp and save and whore and work and thief to drag out of the hard rockstone and dirt to show the world they is people." He felt: "This is people taller than cathedrals; this is people more beautiful than avenues with trees." (137)

The plot develops around the uses of the energy and capacity for rebellion implicit in carnival (Reyes 107-20), examining their potential for creating socio-political change. To that end, it explores the violence of the steel or pen bands and the ability of calypso to give voice to social protest. But it is in Aldrick's dragon dance that we see the embodiment of this potential violence:

For two days Aldrick was dragon in Port of Spain . . . He was Africa, the ancestral Masker, affirming the power of the warrior, prancing and bowing, breathing out fire, lunging against his chains, threatening with his claws, saying to the city: "I is a dragon! I have fire in my belly and claws on my hands; watch me! Note me well, for I am ready to burn down your city. I am ready to tear you apart limb by limb." (137-38)

The central issue of the novel is that of both carnival and calypso becoming bourgeois; that is, being wrenched from their connections with the people and ceasing to be the container (in both

meanings of the word) of the people's protest. The wrenching from the roots is exemplified by the emergence of corporate sponsors--multinational companies such as Coca-Cola--for the street bands, sponsorships which force them to compromise their traditional styles and customs. To Fisheye and Aldrick the sponsorships are tantamount to the disenfranchisement of the "little fellars" (Reyes 114):

It seemed to [Aldrick] that they were losing a battle with the times, with the people on the Hill. The people wanted to move on, to change, to make peace with their condition, to surrender the rebellion they had lived for generations; and they saw Fisheye, Aldrick, and the other fellars at the Corner . . . as the witnesses to that bequeathal, who continued to fight on, whose eyes disturbed, challenged, accused them of abandoning their sacred war, that they [Fisheye, Aldrick, and the other "fellars"] continued to wage. (180)

Once the band from Calvary Hill led by Fisheye and Aldrick realizes that carnival has lost its capacity to express and contain the essence of the people's struggle, they resort to an aborted revolt that elicits the support of the people but that they are unprepared and unable to turn into concrete political action. The revolt is an extension of Aldrick's dragon dance and fails for the same reasons: the rebels, like Aldrick, were "looking to someone else to make a decision," they were looking to someone else to take over and follow the revolt to a political conclusion, just as Aldrick refused any personal emotional involvements that would lead to responsibility.

The novel, serving as a warning against the abandonment of the rebellious spirit of carnival, ends on a brighter note. Returning to the Hill after a five-year prison stint for his role in the revolt, Aldrick searches for Sylvia (the emotional commitment he previously avoided).

A similar assessment of the energy and potential for change embodied in carnival is evident in Paule Marshall's The Chosen Place, The Timeless People. Marshall's novel is a complex work, rich in varied characters and situations. It is set in a small Caribbean village, peopled by an indomitable but struggling community whose strength to deal with misfortunes is rooted in their strong ties to the landscape and its history. Merle, the protagonist, appears paradoxically as the embodiment of both the villagers' strength and their vulnerability. She is a strong and determined but deeply wounded woman, haunted by her past and regretful of having lost her daughter, now in Africa with her father.

The plot follows the development of an American foundation's research and aid plan for the village, headed by a sympathetic and well-meaning Jewish-American researcher; and it allows Marshall to develop two central themes: the importance of history in developing national and personal identity and the need for Caribbean economic self-sufficiency as the only way to preserve independence. The celebration of carnival by the Bournehills villagers depicted in the novel embodies these themes.

The small village of Bournehills, in Marshall's presentation, "might have been selected as the repository of the history which reached beyond it to include the hemisphere north and south" (402). Like Merle, who stands as a representative of the landscape, it is a place

despoiled, its substance taken, but a place whose "vital center remained intact," impressing the visitor with a "sense of life persisting amid that nameless irrevocable loss" (5).

The strength of Bournehills comes, not surprisingly, from its connection to history. It had once been the setting of the only spot of history worth relating in Bourne Island: a slave rebellion under the leadership of Cuffee Ned, which managed to drive back the colonial forces in a fierce battle. As a result of that confrontation, the former slaves lived for two years "as a nation apart, behind the high wall, independent, free" (102).

The story of Cuffee Ned is the symbol of Bournehills's pride; it sets the villagers apart from the rest of the inhabitants of Bourne Island as people solidly rooted in their proud past. Each year, they re-enact the revolt in the Bournehills masque during carnival, a quasi-ritualistic re-enactment whose purpose is to keep the spirit of the revolt alive, fulfilling their duty as a people waiting, believing that "only an act on the scale of Cuffee's could redeem them" (402).

Marshall's depiction of carnival as ritual underscores two themes: that of the ability of history to fuse people into one single experience and that of the latent capacity for revolution and renewal found in people who once shared heroic experiences and are waiting for the chance to repeat them:

... more than ever now that dark human overflow, pressing its way through the choked street past Barclay's Bank and the air-conditioned offices of Kingley and Son's and the department stores with their barricaded windows, resembled a river made turbulent by the spring thaw and rising rapidly--a river that if heed wasn't taken and provision made would soon burst the walls and levees built to contain it and rushing forth in one dark powerful wave bring everything in its path crashing down. (289-90)

In their depictions of carnival, both Lovelace and Marshall emphasize carnival's ability to contain and preserve the latent potential for social and political change embodied in this form of popular expression. They underscore carnival's roots in history, roots that explain the endurance, amid poverty and stagnation, of the people of Calvary Hill and Bournehills. In this sense, the potential for rebellion embodied in carnival makes possible their determination to carve a future out of the remnants of their past.

III

The hopefulness of Lovelace's and Marshall's positions concerning the possibilities of Caribbean self-renewal are most clearly seen when compared to the assessment of hopelessness offered by V. S. Naipaul in *Guerillas*. The representation of popular revolt in Naipaul's work seems to underscore a conviction of the ultimate powerlessness and irrelevance of the resourceless islands of the Caribbean.

In *Guerillas*, Jimmy Ahmed, Naipaul's pathetic, pseudo-visionary leader, seems to represent the irrelevance. Touted as a black leader in London, he returns to his Caribbean

island to form a farming commune and repeat pointless slogans. His relationship with Roche, a former South African activist who has written a book about his imprisonment and torture, and Jane, Roche's English girlfriend, points to the futility of his attempt at escaping the master/slave dialectic, without which his revolutionary rhetoric has no meaning. The irony comes from the realization that popular revolts will not change the situation since Jimmy's Caribbean and Jane's England cannot escape what history has made them: former colony and former imperial power, both societies mutilated and caught in the dialectic of exploitation.

The irony is accentuated by the fact that when the revolt finally comes it is nothing but a pointless skirmish; furthermore, the brutal murder of Jane is a meaningless gesture since the struggle against individuals is pointless when the enemy is the past. "The revolt is simply a new and more desperate version of the ingrown dialectic of slave and master" (Neill 44). As one character points out,

All this talk of independence, but they don't really believe that times have changed. They still feel they're just taking a chance, and that when the show is over somebody is going to go down there and start dishing out licks They would go crazy if somebody tells them that this time nobody might be going down to dish out the licks and pick upon the pieces. (189)

What Guerillas forces us to contemplate is the possibility of Caribbean societies being "damaged beyond repair," of the legacy of colonialism being a perpetual purgatory of neo-colonial despair. Michael Neill finds the historical vision of Naipaul's writing to be

. . . profoundly pessimistic . . . for, matching Naipaul's Fanonian indignation at the destructive legacy of Imperialism, is a deepening despair at the seemingly irremediable confusion left in its wake. It implies, in its way, a critique of imperialism even more radical than Fanon's: for it asks us to contemplate the possibility of organic societies damaged beyond repair, of a world incapable, in any imaginable future, of putting itself together again. (54-55)

The Chosen Place, The Timeless People and The Dragon Can't Dance draw, from similar depictions of unsuccessful revolts, conclusions radically different than Naipaul's. For Merle and Aldrick the understanding of the lessons of history embodied in carnival is the starting point of a new life in which they re-elaborate their goals and turn from passivity to positive socio-political action. In both cases, the ability to act positively at the socio-political level entails a resolution of the personal and emotional dilemmas that had resulted in an ambivalent commitment to social action. Carnival, as an annual rite of passage for the peoples of Bournehills and Calvary Hill, moved "from an accepted socio-historical state (as things are), to *communitas* (Carnival and the false sense of equality and happiness), to reincorporation (as things are again)" (Reyes 109). But the ends of both novels find the protagonists looking for ways to change "things as they are," using the energy embodied in carnival to break the oppressive circumstances to which the "little fellars" have to return on Ash Wednesday.

Likewise, La renuncia del héroe Baltasar and El reino de este mundo underscore the role of positive action in opening possibilities of socio-political transformation. These two novels

share with The Chosen Place, The Timeless People and The Dragon Can't Dance the conviction that the apparently never-ending cycles of oppression and revolt that have characterized Caribbean history can be broken. Thus they provide an alternative to the vision of despair apparent in more pessimistic accounts such as Naipaul's Guerillas.

IV

Carpentier's La consagración de la primavera offers a textual example of the type of historical narrative structure possible in a post-revolutionary Caribbean. Obviously interpreting the Cuban Revolution as the long-awaited historical breakthrough (and a model for revolutions to come), he sets aside the cyclical pattern that characterized his historical fiction beginning with El reino de este mundo and embarks on a linear analysis of twentieth-century revolution and war that leads from the 1917 Russian Revolution to the consolidation of the Socialist Revolution in Cuba after the Bay of Pigs triumph. In what is perhaps the most systematic analysis of the threads connecting the struggles for radical political change in the twentieth century to appear in a contemporary novel, Carpentier depicts the 1917 revolution, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, etc., not as cycles (as he did with similar events in El reino de este mundo) but as progressions that will ultimately lead the protagonists to an unqualified acceptance of the Cuban Revolution. Using dance as the metaphor for revolution, he draws a direct line that links Stravinski's Le Sacre du printemps to post-revolution Cuban ballet performers in what is the most obvious indication that the historical cycles have been broken.

Carpentier's own progression from a cyclical to a linear view of history, responding as it does to his interpretation of the significance of the Cuban Revolution, underscores the connections between particular ideological stances concerning the capacity for revolutionary change in the Caribbean and the choice of a particular narrative structure to tell the historical tale.

The texts discussed above show the tensions between textual representations of Caribbean historical process and the ideologies and theories of history that precede them. These novels show that the re-plotting of the Caribbean's past Walcott calls for will not be arbitrary, that it will be historically constituted and structured in relation to specific historical events and ideological interests. They also show, however, that their contribution to the development of Caribbean historiography may very well be found in the revelation of the prevailing conviction that the breaking of never-ending cycles is possible and that the Caribbean novel can point the way to a freer future.

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