

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Divided Unity: Shifting Meanings of Trinbagonian Carnival Music

by

Salisha Renee Baboolal

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN COMMUNICATIONS STUDIES

CALGARY, ALBERTA

APRIL, 1997

©Salisha Renee Baboolal 1997



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-24573-X

Canada

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with two forms of popular music in Trinidad and Tobago: calypso and soca. This thesis examines the way in which these musical genres find an accommodating discursive space to attack the hegemonic ideals of the ruling elite through lyrical and thematic representation, while simultaneously reinforcing (through the incorporation and co-option of) these said hegemonic structures. It additionally seeks to determine if this discursive space provides any real opportunity for the reformation of those innate cultural practices embedded in the Trinbagonian culture. These socio/political functions of carnival music are analysed through two primary categories. The first deals with authenticity and commercialization and the second focuses on the use of this music as a tool for political commentary as opposed to its use as a pleasurable commodity. This second category specifically examines issues of class and ethnicity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the following persons for their valued assistance and contribution to this work: Mr Kayam Baboolal, Mrs Enisha Baboolal, Ms Gillian Babooram, Ms Rosanna Harry, Ms Natasha Hepburn, Ms Jearlean John, Ms Dionne Ligoure, Mr Stanley Niles, Mr Richard Railwah, Mr Arif Saqui, Ms Adilah Saqui and Mr Richard Seupersad.

I especially want to express my gratitude to my parents and family for their unflagging moral support and invaluable time and effort manifested through myriad ways in shaping this thesis: helping in the gathering of extensive research material even at a moment's notice; acting as a much appreciated sound board in those instances when this project seemed to be an unsurmountable task and, finally, for their unfailing belief in my ability to attempt and complete this exercise, even when I myself was in doubt.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval Page	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v-vi
 CHAPTER ONE: Introduction	 1-2
Carnival music	3-6
The concept of hegemony	7-13
 CHAPTER TWO: Cultural theory and popular music	 14
Cultural Studies	14-15
The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies	16-17
Culture - what is it?	17-18
Cultural analysis	18-19
Popular Culture	19-26
Lyrical Realism	26-31
Crossover: Power and Economics	31-36
Hidden Transcripts	36-40
Methodology - Background.....	41-43
Research Methods - Procedure.....	43-48
Validation of Methodology	48-50
 CHAPTER THREE: Carnival music - from past to present	 51-52
The Origin of Calypso	52-53
Calypso - from the 1940s to 1990s	54-57
The Political/Aesthetic divide in calypso and soca	57-64
Soca - Consequences of commercialization	65-68
 CHAPTER FOUR: The Trinidad Carnival	 69-70
Setting the Stage	70-72
The Trinbagonian Fete	73-76
Band Launchings	76
Mas Camps	77-80
Other attractions: Calypso tents, Competitions and Steelpan	81-84
Dimanche Gras	84-86
J'ouvert, Carnival Monday, Carnival Tuesday and Las' Lap	87-92
 CHAPTER FIVE: Analysis of power within social, economic and political factors	 93-95
Carnival's Hidden Discourse	95
The European Aesthetic versus the African Aesthetic	96-101
Carnival - a festival of divided unity	101-111

Two faces of Carnival music	111-118
Calypso - Representational Ambivalence	118-125
Calypso and soca - authenticity versus commercialization	125-130
CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion	131-134
REFERENCES	135-138
APPENDICES: A-E	139-148

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Carnival, a kaleidoscope of vibrant colour, animated images and fascinating shapes coupled with provocative dancing and vivacious music is the national fete (festival or celebration) of the twin island republic of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T)¹. The annual celebration unofficially commences the day after Christmas and continues until the eve of Ash Wednesday, a time frame spanning a little more than two months. Within this period and even long before, there are numerous band launchings², competitions (preliminary and semi-final stages) and fetes (parties). Officially however, carnival in T&T lasts for four to five days within which the finals of all the competitions take place. There are competitions that judge the best bands, there is judging of the Kings and Queens of the bands, steelband competitions³ and finally competitions that judge the musical component of carnival.

¹From here onwards Trinidad and Tobago will be abbreviated to T&T or Trinbago. Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago will be abbreviated to 'Trinis' or Trinbagonians. Trinidad will be used at times to indicate both Trinidad and Tobago.

²A band is a group of people who come together for the carnival season to 'play mas' i.e. wear costumes and have a good time by dancing and singing in the streets and on stage and basically doing whatever else they wish to do in this season of total abandonment. A band launching is a huge party, also known in the Trinidadian parlance as a fete. This is usually where the people in the band come together and dance, drink, eat, get to know one another, view the different costumes, get acquainted with their respective section leaders, meet the band leader and so forth.

³A steelband or steelpan is the only musical instrument to be invented in the twentieth century (Dewitt & Wilan, 1993). It originated in the West Indies and is made from an hollow oil drum and requires two wooden pansticks whose ends are wrapped in rubber, to play the instrument.

As interesting as these aspects of carnival are, I am intrigued by some of the underlying structures of this celebration specifically concerning one of its key elements: the music. Ian Boxill addresses the issue of the dualistic nature of Caribbean music. On the one hand, he proposes that Caribbean musicians attack the ideological hegemony of the ruling elites through the music's lyrical content and via its socio-cultural roles, and on the other hand, Boxill sees these artists as reinforcing some aspects of this ruling ideology, and in some cases even being 'co-opted', by them (see Boxill, 1994).

Boxill examines the genres of reggae and calypso (under the umbrella of Caribbean music). His analysis is more regional while this study focuses on calypso and soca (under the umbrella of carnival music)⁴. Following Boxill's thesis, I intend to examine how these two genres of carnival music can be seen as sites which allow for the exploration and analysis of my two principal points. The first deals with the constructed binary of authenticity and commercialization and the second examines the role of music as a vehicle for political commentary compared to music seen as a purely pleasurable commodity. These two dimensions are especially germane to the ideological analysis that I will present because they are significant determinants from which the development of meaning can be achieved.

⁴Boxill's analysis deals with several countries such as Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago and even Barbados. By doing this he offers a more regional outlook to his findings. On the other hand, I will be dealing specifically with carnival music (calypso and Soca) in Trinidad & Tobago.

CARNIVAL MUSIC

Carnival music in Trinidad and Tobago comprises a number of different genres. For example, there is calypso, a more traditional form of carnival music whose rhythm is slower, though not necessarily, than other music forms. There is soca, which possesses a faster, more upbeat tempo. There is also chutney music which has a blend of East Indian and Caribbean styles and tempos. These and other genres mix and blend together to produce the extraordinary sounds typical of carnival music in T&T. While an examination of all these genres may indeed be an interesting read, I have chosen to explore only two forms of carnival music - calypso and soca - which represents the stylistic majority of carnival music. It should also be mentioned that the lines of distinction between soca music and calypso are fast becoming blurred, with each increasingly adopting and borrowing the styles of the other.

Errol Hill states that, 'the antecedents of calypso are the praise songs of derision of West African natives captured as slaves and brought to the West Indies' (1972, p. 58). The slaves on the plantations of the British colonies were separated on arrival from their other tribal kinfolk and were placed with other slaves from different tribes in order to isolate them and minimize communication, thereby safeguarding against collective rebellion. Due to many other social factors, such as erosion and eventual loss of indigenous language and forced adoption of European languages, these people formulated their own 'patois' to communicate:

"The slaves sang them [the songs] in their tribal tongue mocking their owners," observed Geoffrey Holder, a dancer and choreographer.

"These frightfully, rightfully suspicious owners made the slaves learn Spanish, learn French, and finally learn English, to detect what was being said about them. . . (Dewitt & Wilan, 1993, p. 10).

Slaves were not allowed to express their own opinions because this might lead to conspiracy against the 'white master'. In response to this, they created verses and rhymes with a double meaning. This motivation to create songs with hidden messages was to enhance covert communication among slaves for countless reasons (social, religious and even political):

... the music had another social function of facilitating role assumption and identification and also acted as a form of communication ...
 ...reference to several other uprisings [were made] which used music as a catalyst for revolutionary activity ... (Boxill, 1994, p. 39).

In the post-emancipation era of the 1830s, this same motivation manifested itself in social and political protest songs. Slaves, or 'free coloureds' as they were called in this formative period of liberation, would still perform the celebratory dances and songs that were sung for their white colonial 'masters', but appropriated for themselves their own unique styles of these cultural practices. In Dewitt & Wilan's words:

... Geoffrey Holder points out that the slaves had a tradition of contention in song and after they were freed, since they had no owners to mock, they started mocking themselves. ... the former slaves also began celebrating Carnival, but with a twist. They turned elegant bourgeois balls into street parties ... (1993, p. 12).

Many years later, after the islands gained independence from their various colonial powers, (Spain, France and Britain) the aforementioned cultural practices developed along various trajectories. No longer were these people simply mimicking what was given to them through the still ubiquitous influence of their colonial oppressors but, rather, they became involved in a process that was to change the way in which the world would see them and, even more importantly, it would change the way they saw themselves. This active awareness would be reflected in all of their forms of cultural expression.

P.C. Alleyne-Dettmers coined the term, 'meta-masking' to mean, 'the lateral process of cultural borrowing of standard forms available in the environment, and dissecting, discarding, reshaping, even transvaluating these to produce other masks not only with alternative meanings and values but cast in another form or language that is intricately linked to the Trinidadian's artistic quest for national identity' (1993, p. 5). She uses this term to examine another facet of carnival, that of the 'mas' (masque or costume), but I have found it equally applicable to the music aspect of carnival.

Alleyne-Dettmers states that at this stage (after World War II and more significantly, since 1962, when Trinidad and Tobago gained independence) the Trinidadian people were no longer handicapped by the cultural shackles of their colonial oppressors or even by their previous indigenous identities⁵, but were in fact able to free themselves artistically 'to move towards a growing national consciousness' (1993, p. 6). She goes on:

With these processes in mind one can no longer relate carnival to any particular class or to its diverse sets of cultural identities (Afro-Catholic White European, indentured East Indian or Chinese) since these distinct cultural strands are interwoven into a multiple complex of artistic expression that can only be labelled Trinidadian. Carnival has thus made the transition to a socio-cultural whole becoming Trinidad's quintessential medium of cultural expression, highly formalized and systematic yet

⁵By 'previous indigenous identities' I mean those identities that were brought from Africa, India, China, and so forth, that can be seen as 'homogenous' in that these identities originated from a specific cultural destination, i.e. the African culture, the Indian culture or the Chinese culture, as opposed to the Trinidadian identity, which can be seen as heterogenous, due to its composition from pockets of the many cultural influences which it is shaped by, to form a unique whole.

I am aware of the existence of cultural heterogeneity within the cultures of the aforementioned countries. For example, within Africa alone there can be numerous cultural differences relating to geographical factors, tribal affiliation and the like. However, for clarity sake, I have reduced these inner distinctions and categorised these cultural variations under one geographic label.

autonomous, seeking and grappling, forming, unfolding. It is thus the ultimate statement of a people's total experience (1993, p. 8).

Alleyne-Dettmers states that the Trinidadian carnival can be seen as a 'cultural whole'. She describes the event as a movement away from any distinct relatedness to any particular class or ethnicity and instead sees a tendency within the event, to embody all that is Trinbagonian. In her attempt to capture the continual process occurring within the carnival, she refers to the process of 'meta-masking' in a manner similar to Dick Hebdige's use of 'bricolage' on his work on subcultures (see Hebdige, 1979). Stated briefly, 'bricolage' is the process of taking objects, signs and/or practices and appropriating different meanings to the conventional ones that are attributed to them, and in so doing, one associates new meanings on to these objects and practices (O'Sullivan et al., 1994).

As one of the more significant forms of a people's cultural expression, I wish to explore both the carnival event and its music, not in the way that Alleyne-Dettmers sees it, as a 'socio-cultural whole' but rather in a manner which examines how both these sites, the event and the music demonstrate occasions in which the people use the practices of carnival to capture different meanings which simultaneously reinforce and criticize the ruling ideologies of the dominant elite attesting to the fact that the unified socio-cultural whole is not so unified. Additionally I wish to determine if this discursive space within the practices and the music of carnival provides any real opportunity for the reformation of those innate cultural practices embedded in the Trinbagonian culture.

THE CONCEPT OF HEGEMONY

My approach employs Gramscian theories of culture, especially his perspective on the concept of hegemony, through which I will examine my two principal points for analysis - authenticity versus commercialization and music as political commentary versus music as pleasurable commodity.

Antonio Gramsci was a 'second-generation European Marxist' and is known for his revolutionary work in Cultural Studies, specifically for developing the concept of 'hegemony' while in an Italian prison (Fiske, 1990, p. 176). Gramsci used 'hegemony' as a concept for understanding social relations and power. Hegemony was used to explain the persistence of oppressive, class-riddled societies where conditions existed to provoke proletarian revolution (Gramsci, 1973; Boxill, 1994). The concept of hegemony refers to the ability of the dominant classes to exercise and achieve a form of negotiated control, whether it be socially, culturally, politically or economically over the subordinate classes. This control is not absolute or unchallenged. It is a process whereby 'consent is seemingly won' by a dominant group over a less dominant group, not through coercive measures overtly applied to the subordinate classes, but rather through ways which make the people acquiesce and choose interests which seem to coincide with their own 'well being'. The reality, however, is that these interests serve largely to promote, strengthen and proliferate the ideology and welfare of the dominant classes in this relationship.

There are several ways in which the concept of hegemony can be described. Not all definitions would concur with the one offered above but in my estimation, that is the one that fits most appropriately with Cultural Studies. Nevertheless, one can observe three main features

of this concept: an establishment of a common sense; the idea of 'winning consent' and finally the idea of leadership which advocates that people consent to allow others to make decisions for themselves.

Many theorists have discussed and debated this concept of hegemony. The following is an encapsulation of the perspectives of a few of these researchers on 'hegemony'. Andrew Ross (1989) argues that in order for a relationship to be hegemonic there must be a few prerequisites. The first must be that power is possessed not by one class or one race of people but rather by one cohesive group which may consist of a diverse number of social factors. Second, there must be a successful containment and incorporation of the interests of the subordinate classes. Additionally, the interests of the power-bloc are also incorporated with those of the less empowered classes in a manner that is presented as, 'popular', cohesive and 'unified' (establishment of a common sense). Third, Ross notes that 'Traditional Intellectuals' who are associated with 'rising' classes or groups, who have become 'independent,' are sought after to legitimate the popular consent of these interests due to the cultural authority embodied in those individuals. It should be noted however, that often times these persons are unaware of the role that they perform in articulating and promulgating the beliefs of the dominant power-bloc⁶. Finally and perhaps most importantly is the perceived image of 'winning consent' in order to achieve and maintain cohesion and containment (Ross, 1989).

Additionally, other critics (Boxill, 1994; Bennett, 1986) hold similar views on what constitutes Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Stuart Hall sees hegemony as, "a condition of social

⁶One can see this as one of the many functions performed by some calypsonians and soca artists in the Trinidadian culture.

ascendancy, of cultural, moral, political leadership by a particular social bloc" (in Bennett 1986, p. 47). Tony Bennett describes society as being defined by the relation between two antagonistic classes. This relation is less focused on domination of one group over another but consists more of the 'struggle for hegemony'. This hegemony is obtained via the power-bloc's ability to 'accommodate' or 'find space for opposing class cultures and values' (Bennett, 1986). Bennett continues:

A bourgeois hegemony is secured not via the obliteration of working-class culture, but via its *articulation* in bourgeois culture and ideology As a consequence of its accommodating elements of opposing class cultures, 'bourgeois culture' ceases to be purely or entirely bourgeois and becomes, instead, a mobile combination of cultural and ideological elements derived from different class locations . . . (1986, pp. xiv- xv).

Consequently, the ideology that is obtained by both 'antagonistic classes' at this point is not one consisting of purely ruling-class beliefs, nor is it comprised of purely working-class values.

Rather, what is achieved is a mutable, negotiated version of both. Robert Gray suggests that:

Class hegemony is a dynamic and shifting relationship of social subordination, which operates in two directions. Certain aspects of the behaviour and consciousness of the subordinate classes may reproduce a version of the values of the ruling class. But in the process value systems are modified, through their necessary adaptation to diverse conditions of existence; the subordinate classes thus follow a 'negotiated version' of ruling class values. On the other hand, structures of ideological hegemony transform and incorporate dissident values, so as effectively to prevent the working through of their full implications (in Bennett, 1986, p. xv).

Having been given a myriad of perspectives on this definition of Gramsci's concept of hegemony, I will now show how it can be used to best examine the two main points of contention concerning the ambivalent characteristic of carnival music. The first point to be examined in this thesis deals with the issue of authenticity versus commercialization within calypso and soca music. Advocates of calypso (the more traditional style of the two) believe that this is an art form that has retained its role in the Trinidadian culture and as such, is considered

to be the more 'authentic' form of the two genres of carnival music. By contrast, soca is seen as having 'sold out' as it has become a more commercialized version of Trinbagonian music. The debate is concerned with the dichotomy of music for art, supposedly engendered by calypso and music for money, characterizing soca (Ali, 1997a; Boxill, 1994; Sankeralli, 1997; SC, 1997).

This binary of authenticity versus commercialization as it is imposed on both forms of carnival music relates to hegemony in the following manner. It is seen as a movement which identifies the 'authentic' art form, calypso, as rooted in and embodying the ideals of the people. This is seen in direct opposition to the music's commodified counterpart, soca, which is considered to have relinquished its ties to the commentary of the people's social and political lives, and instead focuses on purely monetary gains in a capitalist society. The question that begs to be asked is, how is the establishment of this 'taken for granted' knowledge about the 'rootedness' or 'authenticity' of calypso as opposed to the 'inauthentic' or commercialization of soca, employed in a way that allows for the achievement of a negotiated control of the ruling ideology.

The second point to be examined deals with the divide in which on the one hand, calypso is considered a vehicle for political commentary due to its innate characteristic of criticizing the actions of the ruling power-bloc, and on the other, soca is seen as advocating a movement away from the interests of the working-class through its focus on notions of 'harmony' 'unity' and feelings of equal comraderie, notions which coincide with and perpetuate the ideology of the ruling elite.

This second divide examining the music as political commentary and pleasurable commodity relates to hegemony in that, calypso is seen as preserving the platform of the people

to question and criticise the ruling ideology of the dominant elite by serving as a forum for social and political commentary (Hill, 1972; Rohlehr, 1992a; Sankeralli, 1997). Soca, on the other hand, due to its emphasis on unity, comraderie and the carefree ambience of carnival (what I call the carnival aesthetic) is seen as overlooking or masking the true goings-on of the social and political injustices that calypso sings about, in favour of perpetuating the illusion of togetherness, that works to the advantage of the dominant elites.

I must reiterate that hegemony plays a pivotal role within both these illustrations due to the fact that there exists an accommodating space for the articulation of contradictory ideologies in the music. However, to examine calypso or soca music by themselves makes little sense. It is more meaningful to immerse them in their cultural background, specifically within the context of the Trinidad carnival. My focus here will be to explore the observation: since carnival is a specific period in which the order of life is somewhat suspended and inverted, it can be looked at as a discursive space in which the concept of hegemony is perhaps challenged and/or reinforced via the cultural texts of its music component.

My approach comes from a perspective seeking to analyse music as a cultural practice. I am examining one of the more popular forms of cultural expression i.e carnival and its musical components from an insider's position as a member of the Trinidadian society. I believe that my identification as an educated, female member of the middle-upper class within this society is of vital significance if only to clarify the perspectives that I bring to this analytical exercise. In my estimation this personal location is essential because it helps to determine the way in which this analysis will be shaped as opposed to if this thesis were attempted by another individual from a different socio-cultural locus.

In Chapter Two, I discuss cultural theory and popular music offering a background overview to this interdisciplinary approach to communication study. I explore the politics of culture and the ideology of cultural practice. I also outline some of the key concepts that I will be using and discuss the more germane writings as they apply to my topic. I explore some of the works on popular music and its contexts including those which delve into the semantic relationships between music, politics and society. I also detail the methodology that I employ in this thesis.

In Chapter Three, I examine and critique how the theoretical material of Chapter Two specifically applies to calypso and soca. I look at what has been written about carnival music as it relates to the concept of hegemony and I attempt to identify any inconsistencies and/or shortcomings in the literature offering alternative critical analyses. I begin with a brief history of the origin of carnival and then proceed to examine the literature specifically dealing with my two sites for analysis: the construction of binaries i.e. authenticity versus commercialization, or folk versus mass and finally music's role as political commentary versus its role as a pleasurable commodity.

In Chapter Four, I introduce my case study with what Clifford Geertz calls a 'thick description' of the practices of carnival (see Geertz, 1973). My insight gained from being a member of this culture and a participant-observer of the T&T carnival, for over twelve years will be used and analysed to present a complete picture of this national celebration while locating calypso and soca in its most showcased context.

In Chapter Five, I continue somewhat with the 'thick description' of Chapter Four, but I examine carnival and its musical components from a perspective which provides an insight into

some of the underlying structures of this event. I also introduce and develop my analysis of how the concept of hegemony is incorporated into and transmitted through the practices and music of the Trinbagonian carnival.

Finally, in the conclusion I point to a reiteration of the position taken in this thesis to provide a descriptive and critical account of T&T's carnival music, rather than offer a conclusive treatise on this subject. I also acknowledge the fact that more work can and should be done in this area, specifically on the implications of hegemony on Trinidadian carnival music.

This topic dealing with hegemony and Trinbagonian carnival music is not one which has been examined in great detail. Most of the literature on Trinidad carnival, calypso and soca tends to either emphasize an historical approach, most dealing with an earlier time period from the 1950s to the 1980s, or it tends toward a more aesthetic description describing the music in a manner paralleling a portrayal in a tourist brochure (Hill, 1972; Ottley, 1995; Ali, 1997a; Lee, 1997). There seemed to be a dearth of insightful information on modern-day carnival music dealing with hegemony and the complex issues that such a subject can arouse. Even though this work is not meant to be conclusive in any way, I feel that the path that I have chosen from which to examine this cultural practice is one that will bring a much needed critical perspective. At the very least, I hope that this thesis will act as a worthy document that will do justice to my research question and be viewed as a stepping stone to a thorough, albeit humble, addition to the numerous works on Caribbean music and culture.

Chapter 2: CULTURAL THEORY AND POPULAR MUSIC

This chapter will review cultural theories on popular music. First, it will examine what is meant by Cultural Studies. Second, it will draw reference to one of the founding institutions dedicated to the development of Cultural Studies and briefly discuss some of the key figures in this field. Third, it will examine proposed definitions for the term culture and outline one of the more salient limitations of cultural analysis. The concepts of popular culture and hegemony will be explored and their relation to one another will be discussed. From there I will look at some of the works on popular music theory paying particular attention to the concepts of lyrical realism, crossover and hidden transcripts. The objective is to examine what has been written and provide some critical analysis of the material. Finally a brief outline on methodology will be given.

CULTURAL STUDIES

Stuart Hall (1980) states that the discovery of absolute beginnings in matters of an intellectual nature is somewhat rare. The pursuit and study of intellectual matters is instead more accurately described as being defined by ‘continuities and breaks’(Ibid, p. 16). These times are marked by a reformulation of ideas and a reconfiguration of questions. Re-structuring of information introduces new ways of examining knowledge and thus different points of departure are established. According to Hall, ‘Cultural Studies, in its institutional manifestation, was the result of such a break in the 1960s’ (Ibid, p. 16).

Richard Johnson poses the question, ‘what is cultural studies anyway’?(1986/87, p. 38). The answer to this comes not from any single definition of what Cultural Studies is, but rather may be found in what it does. Cultural studies is a process of assembling knowledge about lived

practices and the connection that they have to the construction of society. For Johnson, Cultural Studies deals with:

. . .the historical forms of consciousness or subjectivity, or the subjective forms we live by, or, in a rather perilous compression, perhaps a reduction, the subjective side of social relations (Ibid, p. 43).

He cites three principal features of Cultural Studies. First, there is an openness and theoretical versatility to this field of study. Cultural Studies is not a traditional academic discipline such as Physics or Biology. Instead it is interdisciplinary as it draws from a number of different academic areas such as Literary studies, Sociology and History (O'Sullivan et al., 1994). Second Cultural Studies is characterised by a 'reflexive and self-conscious mood'(Johnson 1986/87, p. 38). It examines individual and collective identities and explores the questions of 'who I am ' or 'who we are' of culture (Ibid, p. 44). Third, Johnson states that the aspect of critique is important to the field of cultural studies (Ibid, p. 38). This critique is regarded not as simple criticism of that which is being studied, but rather it entails a widening of scope to draw from several disciplines in order to attain a more complete understanding of the subject of study. Johnson states:

. . . not criticism merely . . . but procedures by which other traditions are approached both for what they may yield and for what they inhibit. Critique involves stealing away the more useful elements and rejecting the rest (Ibid, p. 38).

Cultural Studies therefore examines the relation between texts, practices and social relations. It was the approach taken to study and develop communication studies in Britain.

THE CENTRE for CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL STUDIES

As previously mentioned, Cultural Studies as an institutional manifestation, that is, as the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) arose out of a break in the 1960s. However the impetus for such an undertaking can be traced to the 1950s. In this period of a post-war boom, Britain was experiencing social, political and economic changes. With the rise of television, public discussion of the threat of Americanization, an observation of the new conservatism of the working class and a realization that old models of understanding politics were no longer adequate, new approaches for comprehending these social changes were being put in motion. These approaches were manifested through the pioneering texts of three individuals in particular: Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*, Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution* and E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (Hall et al., 1980, p. 16).

These works sought to understand the social, political and economic upheaval that British society was experiencing at the time. More significantly Hoggart, Williams and Thompson (in their own way) attempted to answer and assess certain germane questions concerning these shifts in the social, cultural, political and economic spheres of British society at that time, such as, 'what type of social formation was now in the making ? What type of social and cultural shifts would this transformation bring ? How were these historical processes to be qualitatively understood and assessed ?' (Ibid, p. 17). These questions along with others would come to be the focus of not only these particular individuals, but would become a key objective for the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies, almost a decade later.

The Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies was established in 1964 and began as a post graduate research centre at the University of Birmingham. Under the Directorship of Richard Hoggart who at the time was a Professor of Modern English Literature, the centre would aim to 'begin research on contemporary culture and society, studying cultural forms, practices, institutions, their relation to society and social change' (Ibid, p. 7). Reflecting Cultural Studies' interdisciplinary characteristic, the centre would employ works from Williams and Hoggart in the field of Literary studies; Thompson from History; Hall from Sociology and later on, Tony Bennett, Simon Frith, Howard Becker, Paul Willis and Dick Hebdige on aspects of popular culture. The work of these researchers in examining subcultures, youth cultures and other 'unconventional' aspects of culture would revise the traditional notion of what was deemed appropriate for the focus of study, thereby advocating a more serious attitude towards the study of popular culture.

CULTURE- WHAT IS IT?

The term 'culture' seems deceptively simple at first glance. When asked to define this elusive word, most people think about the factors that comprise a culture: language, food, dress, customs, attitudes, religion and so forth. This is not an incorrect response, but culture consists of all of these aspects and much more. Ben Agger captures the enormity of the study of culture by saying, ' . . . Cultural Studies addresses familiar scenes, taken for granted knowledge, the quotidian. It is virtually a study of life . . . ' (1992, p. 6). Raymond Williams (1983) is less vague in his description of culture and offers three broad definitions. The first is used to refer to a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development. The second suggests a

people's particular way of life: for example, the practices of people within the celebration of carnival. The third definition looks at those texts and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity, whose principal function is to signify and bring meaning to people, as examples of culture. This would allow one to refer to television, popular music and soap operas as cultural texts (Williams, 1983).

However, Clifford Geertz argues that '... culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly described' (1973, p. 14). From the numerous interpretations of this one idea, it would seem that saying culture is a deceptively simple term is a grave understatement. It would appear that this term denies any single, linear definition (Agger, 1992; Dunn, 1986; Geertz, 1973). For all intents and purposes of this paper, I shall define culture as a people's living index which embodies their practices and experiences as well as representing a site for contention, negotiation and change. I will now discuss what it means to study culture by doing cultural analysis and examine one of the more prominent limitations of this mode of analysis.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS

According to Geertz, cultural analysis is 'guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses' (1973, p. 20). There are, however, limitations to this method of cultural analysis. Perhaps the most overlooked of these stems from the central idea of 'culture' or 'Cultural Studies': it is never finite, there always seems to be another revelation to be discovered. Geertz acknowledges this restriction of cultural analysis by

noting its innate incompleteness, 'And worse than that, the more deeply it goes, the less complete it is - It is a strange science whose worst telling assertions are its most tremously based, in which to get somewhere with the matter at hand is to intensify the suspicion, both your own and that of others, that you are not quite getting it right' (1973, p. 29). Tony Dunn also recognises this inadequacy by saying, 'Cultural Studies is a project whose realization . . . is forever deferred' (1986, p. 71).

The question that remains now is, with the innumerable notions of culture and the blatant limitations of its method of cultural analysis, how does one attempt to efficiently address this subject of study. The answer to this may come from realising that there is no single efficient way from which to accurately capture the enormity of culture. Attempts are made in the hope that intelligent hypotheses are offered, tested and proven. There is always room for new points of exploration and analyses, corroborative instances and discrepancies. Consequently the strength of this approach comes from the realization that one's knowledge on matters such as these, which are highly interpretive is 'marked less by a perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate . . .' (Geertz, 1973, p. 29). With this having been said, I begin the next task of distinguishing and examining popular culture with the objective of demonstrating how the concept of hegemony can be used to efficiently analyse one of its facets: popular music.

POPULAR CULTURE

Tony Bennett acknowledges the definition of the term 'popular culture' as one characterised less by any straightforward formula and identified more through its exclusion of those forms and practices of 'high culture':

The term had previously been used quite loosely to refer to a miscellaneous collection of cultural forms and practices having little in common beyond the fact of their exclusion from the accepted canon of 'high culture' (1986, p. xi).

In the past, popular culture for critics such as F.R. Leavis, Theodore Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, typically focussed on its morally corrupting influences and its supposed dearth of aesthetic richness as compared to its antithesis, high culture (Ibid, p. xi). Today, however, with the significant strides that have been made towards the development of this corpus of literature, popular culture, has come into its own right as a legitimate subject, worthy of impartial and elaborate study (Ibid, p. xi).

In the 1970s Cultural Studies was informed by two often conflicting perspectives: structuralism and culturalism. As such popular culture was defined differently by both. On the one hand, structuralism viewed popular culture in a way that emphasized the structural elements of cultural texts and regarded these as the primary force behind the organization and construction of meaning, with little importance being placed on additional contributing factors used in the production and the reception of those cultural texts. This perspective had a tendency to focus on areas of popular culture such as cinema, television and popular writings. Bennett states:

Focusing particularly on the analysis of textual forms, structuralist analysis was concerned to reveal the way in which textual structures might be said to organise reading or spectating practices, often with scant regard to the conditions regulating either the production or the reception of those textual forms (1986, p. xii).

Culturalism, on the other hand, was criticized for adopting a largely essentialist view of popular culture, as it examined it from an almost uncritical and romanticized perspective regarding it as a manifestation of authentic working class values and beliefs. Not unlike structuralism,

culturalism also had its stronghold but, in areas of history, sociology and studies focusing on working class 'lived cultures' or 'ways of life' (Ibid, p. xii). As previously noted, both perspectives were at an impasse as they no longer provided a satisfactory paradigm from which to discuss unfolding and more complex issues. This was another 'break' period from which a new point of analytical departure was needed. The turn would now move towards the direction of Gramsci's work on hegemony (Bennett, 1986). As Bennett remarks:

Gramsci's concept avoids and disqualifies the bipolar alternatives of both structuralism and culturalism. He saw popular culture neither as a site of the people's cultural deformation nor as that of their cultural self-affirmation or . . . of their own self-making; rather [popular culture] is viewed as a force field of relations shaped by these contradictory pressures and tendencies - a perspective which enables a significant reformulation of both the theoretical and political issues at stake in the study of popular culture (1986, p. xiii).

The term 'popular' is one which denies any fixed delineation. John Fiske sees culture not as any specific, concrete object but rather, as he states in his book Reading the Popular, 'Culture making (and culture is always in process, never achieved) is a social process' (1989a, p. 1). Like Raymond Williams, Fiske views this process of culture making as one which encompasses several meanings and relations: those of the self, those of the social system to which one belongs, and those meanings and relations that ensue out of the numerous discourses and texts with which one interacts on a daily basis (1989a).

Fiske adds an additional element to this process of culture making. He states that the resources used to create this popular culture are made from resources obtained from the same social structures that are supposed to disempower the masses and fortify the power-bloc. Consequently, the cultural texts (music, television, cinema et al.,) that ensue from these resources provided by the said social structures will always possess an ambivalent nature:

Popular culture is made by various formations of subordinate or disempowered people out of the resources, both discursive and material, that are provided by the social system that disempowers them. It is therefore contradictory and conflictual at its core. The resources - television, records, clothes, video games, language - carry the interests of the economically and the ideologically dominant; they have lines of force within them that are hegemonic and work in favour of the status quo. But hegemonic power is necessary, or even possible, only because of resistance, so these resources must also carry contradictory lines of force that are taken up and activated differently by people situated differently within the social system (1989a, p. 2).

Fiske's analysis accurately describes the duality which exists specifically within Trinbagonian carnival music. It is a cultural text woven out of the ideological collision of both the dominant power-bloc and the dominated classes. It can be seen as a vehicle which seemingly holds contradictory lines of support and contention for the ruling ideals of the power-bloc and those of the people.

However, despite this ambivalent nature ingrained in these cultural texts or resources, Fiske acknowledges that when these resources are used by 'the people' and in contexts different from those in which they were originally placed, different meanings are attributed to them. His justification for this is due to the fact that meanings are not obtained from the texts in and of themselves, but rather, meanings are obtained when these texts are placed within a social context. In other words, meanings are achieved when the reading of the text is juxtaposed with its placement in a social and/or cultural relationship:

Popular culture is always in process; its meanings can never be identified in a text, for texts are activated, or made meaningful, only in social relations and in intertextual relations. This activation of the meaning potential of a text can occur only in the social and cultural relationships into which it enters. The social relationships of texts occur at their moment of reading as they are inserted into the everyday lives of the readers (1989a, p. 3).

Therefore, by the very nature of the term 'popular,' popular culture acquires its meaning when situated in the context of the people and their social and cultural relations. It is important to note also that these meanings are not fixed. There is no single meaning. Meanings vary according to context: so social acts such as drinking coffee, wearing clothes or listening to music may not carry with them any significant meaning in and of themselves, but when they are placed in specific contexts, they become imbued with many socially and culturally laden messages. This is what Hebdige calls 'bricolage'(see 1979). To restate, the term 'bricolage' refers to the process of taking objects, signs and/or practices and appropriating different meanings to the conventional ones that are attributed to them, and in so doing, one associates new meanings on to these objects and practices (O'Sullivan et al., 1994). So whether it be North Americans wearing ripped-up denim jeans as a sign of rebellion, or Cuban *viejos* (old men) drinking *cortaditos de cafe cubano* (small shots of Cuban coffee) at their favourite cafe signifying a sharing and strengthening of social and communal ties, or even Trinidadians *liming* (hanging out) on the beach listening to some good soca and calypso reflecting their carefree attitude about life, forms of popular culture all perpetuate certain meanings as they are acted out in everyday life by those who belong to the realm of the masses, i.e the people. However, the group of persons to which the term 'popular' refers is just as abstract. This ambiguity is validated in Stuart Hall's interpretation of the concept of 'popular culture':

But the term 'popular' and even more, the collective subject to which it must refer - 'the people' - is highly problematic. . . . Just as there is no fixed content to the category of 'popular culture', so there is no fixed subject to attach to it - 'the people'(1981, pp. 238-239).

This 'fickle' nature is evident when one sees that what is considered to be 'popular culture' does not necessarily include all aspects of the masses or the 'people' nor does it exclude aspects

belonging to the dominant classes. It is instead a negotiation to co-opt and incorporate aspects and ideologies of both antagonistic groups.

With regards to the Trinidadian carnival and the music styles which are associated with it, one can readily see the handiwork of the 'masses' or the people. Mirroring Fiske's definition in his book, Understanding Popular Culture, I employ the term 'the people' interchangeably with the term 'the masses' to signify not a specific class, race or gender but rather the term is used here to embody those who feel that sense of 'we' as opposed to 'them' and ascribe to a 'communal ideology' upholding its various goals and beliefs, for the well being of the unempowered¹. This is seen in direct opposition to the power-bloc which can be a constantly-changing group of persons comprising the political and economic elite who benefit from the dominant ideology and whose main objective is to safeguard and proliferate their own interests and those of their kind.

However, this definition of the people or the masses is further complicated when one realizes that 'the people' are not bound by or fixed to any one particular category. They are not found among an all white, all black, or all male population. They can, however, and do encompass a mobile conglomeration of individuals of differing demographic backgrounds:

"The People" is not a stable sociological category ; it cannot be identified and subjected to empirical study, for it does not exist in objective reality . . . By 'the people', then, I mean this shifting set of social allegiances, which are described better in terms of people's felt collectivity than in terms of external sociological factors such as class, gender, age, race, religion or what have you (Fiske, 1989b, p. 24).

¹Even though not all 'masses' ascribe to 'grassroots ideology', and can in fact operate with a sense of 'otherness' as opposed to the communal 'we', these groups can still be connected under the banner of 'masses, if only by their claims of distinctiveness and separateness from those in power, i.e. the power-bloc.

With respect to these shifting alliances characterizing 'the people', it should be noted that this is not only limited to the compositional categories of the people². Members belonging to this group, can modify their positions and move across to the side of the power-bloc when the latter's ideology finds an accommodating space amid those of the masses. For example, a calypsonian or soca artist in singing about racial inequality in the Trinidadian society can identify the problems stemming from the perceived notions of East Indians having more social, political and economic clout than Africans. The calypsonian is said to belong to the realm of the masses or the people, in as much as he/she is supposed to advocate their views and identify with their dilemmas. The artist may caustically criticize those individuals he/she sees as the cause of these unjust circumstances. However, if and when he/she sings about issues in a manner which perpetuates this same dilemma and is consistent with the power-bloc's ideology on issues of racial inequality, (such as is the case of calypsonian Gypsy) he/she traverses (if only temporarily) to the side of the power-bloc, by his/her adherence to those dominant beliefs and consequently becomes a supporter of select aspects of the dominant class ³. Herein lies the music's ambivalence of simultaneously protesting and perpetuating the hegemonic ideals of the dominant elite.

Like Stuart Hall, Tony Bennett offers a similar definition of this somewhat elusive concept 'the people' by suggesting that it should be viewed as a theoretical site devoid of any concrete or fixed structure or alliance. In other words, those elements that constitute and

²By compositional categories, I am referring to those social labels such as ethnicity, class gender, religion and the like, in which people are placed.

³This illustration will be further developed and clarified in chapter 5.

comprise 'the people' now, may indeed categorize a different alliance, tomorrow. Change, then, is indeed possible and perhaps even inevitable:

I shall argue in favour of an approach which keeps these terms [the people and the popular] *definitionally* empty - or, at least, relatively so - in the interest of filling them *politically* in varying ways as changing circumstances may require. According to such a view, popular culture can be defined only abstractly as a site - always changing and variable in its constitution and organisation - which, since it provides one of the key terrains for the struggle over the political production of 'the people' and 'the popular', cannot be more precisely specified in terms of these concepts (Bennett et al., 1986, p. 8).

It is precisely because of these variations of shifting alliances that makes the concept of hegemony such an interesting and fitting framework from which to examine the duality as it exists within carnival music. Since an outline of these dualities has been previously stated in Chapter One, I will now examine a few theories of popular music describing specific key concepts, such as 'lyrical realism', 'crossover' and 'hidden transcripts' as they demonstrate the manner in which the ambivalence of both calypso and soca can be seen.

LYRICAL REALISM

It has often been stated that music attempts to mirror social realities. H.F. Mooney argues that the lyrics of pop songs reflect the emotional needs of their time (in Frith, 1988, p. 106). While acknowledging the fact that there are flaws in the method of content analysis, Simon Frith, "retains the assumption that popular songs are significant because they have a 'real closeness' with their consumers"⁴(1988, p. 108). Frith adds that this 'real closeness' can be

⁴ 'Real closeness' is a term used by Richard Hoggart to distinguish authentic working-class ballads from commercial ones.

found in forms of 'folk' music and I would add that carnival music, too, specifically calypso and soca also embody this societal relatedness:

Only in country music, blues, soul and the right strands of rock,
can we take lyrics to be the authentic expression of popular
experiences and needs (Ibid, p. 108).

This division between folk music, as seen as an authentic form of music and commodified music as seen as inauthentic music, is worth clarifying. Frith says that forms of folk music have within them an intensification of reflection theory: this music is assumed to reflect or mirror the consciousness of the people (Ibid, p. 108). So how is this dichotomy between authentic or folk music and inauthentic or commodified music manifested? Frith believes that it emanates from the modes of production of the respective music styles, in what he terms as folk 'consolation' and pop 'escapism' (Ibid, p. 112). Accordingly, folk music is seen as authentic expressions of the people because this music originates 'from the people' themselves. Whereas commodified music is deemed inauthentic by the fact that it has become commercialized and has in effect moved away from the 'rootedness' of the people.

However there is an on-going problem that arises with the construction of these binaries into folk/mass or authentic/commodified music split. The fact is that these are all assumptions or superficial labels that are imposed upon the field of music in order to achieve a sense of structure. In other words, folk music is authentically connected to 'the people' and commodified or mass-produced music is somewhat less so. Frith states however, that this model becomes less accurate once one begins to deconstruct these binaries. So while he acknowledges the existence of authenticity in folk music, Frith continues by saying that this notion becomes problematised in that one cannot fully claim to identify what constitutes forms of purely folk or purely

commercialized music, because people can still make music for money and retain a sense of rootedness in 'the people'(1988). This idea is a catalyst for discussion on a whole host of questions, perhaps with the most salient ones asking is this folk realism, via its manifestation in calypso and soca, as 'authentic' as it is portrayed to be? Can there truly be a musical art form that purely ascribes to the people's ideology? Just as this category of 'the people' is denied any fixed delineation and is always shifting can the music also be reflective of this varying 'consciousness of the people'? And finally, how can its origin 'from the people' be identified?

This brings us to the theory of lyrical realism. In its most rudimentary definition, lyrical realism describes the relation between a song's lyrics and the emotional or social state of affairs that it portrays and represents. Frith raises an important question: he wonders whether lyrical realism is defined merely by presenting an 'accurate surface description' or does this theory invite a more profound reading through delving beneath the superficial exterior to expose any hidden messages and/or ideologies? Therefore the question that needs to be asked is, is the 'realness' captured by merely mirroring what is out there and by expressing this through song's lyrics or is it defined by 'going behind the words' to obtain the messages and meanings that lie beneath the surface description?

In response to the above questions, Jenny Taylor and Dave Laing argue that 'cultural production occurs always in relation to ideology and not to the "real world"'(in Frith, 1988, p. 113). I wish to expand on this idea. I believe that it is essential that we not separate 'ideology' and 'the real world' into two distinct camps. The reason for this is because I see ideology as being embedded in the events of everyday life. In other words, ideology is concretized through actual events and actions that take place in real life. I propose that not only cultural production,

but also lyrical realism, as it is produced within cultural texts such as popular music occur in relation to ideology and consequently to the 'real world'.

To better illustrate this point, let us look at the lyrics of a 1996 calypso by calypsonian David Rudder entitled, *Chant of a Mad Man*:

*Vote for we and we will set you free, anywhere you turn somebody
chanting to we; somebody promising job for all, some renting gun to
make other people bawl; but somebody promising more police car,
somebody going to take the country far; somebody putting all the
bandits away, we say if they do the crime, they going to damn well pay.
But somebody promising more human rights, while somebody threatening
to put out your lights. The mortuary full with little Trinidad boys. A
bullet start to wine and put an end to their joy. Now they lying cold for
their mama to mourn. Their Nike gone, their gold teeth gone. You see they
want their pocket full with blue, blue silk. They won their statute drinking
full cream milk. The little red silk is not their true friend, the blue one have
two extra noughts on the end. So a tag on their toe is now a ticket to hell,
but look where we reach, well well well well well well.
Chorus: I hear a mad man bawl, as he spread out on a wall; he say
"This is it, this is it, this is it, I've been hit". No time to give a brother,
no time to quit. It was a chant of a mad man, in this tale from a strange
land. Give me the chant of a mad man, it's the only salvation . . .*

Through a surface reading of this calypso one can tell that the song deals with political and economic corruption and the ramifications that this corruption has on the lower echelons or strata of society as compared to those of the elite. Not only can this information be gleaned via a surface reading, but also, this reading itself is laden with social, political and economic ideologies rendering a more profound insight as being equally obtainable. Here, then, it is evident that lyrical realism can occur concurrently in direct relation to both the happenings of the real world and to the imbedded ideologies. Simply stated, the words of this calypso poignantly capture something recognizable in the reality of life events in the Trinidadian society while simultaneously depicting the ideologies that underlie these events. The question that should be asked now is as follows: is the purpose of this 'reality' as expressed via the music's

lyrics, to bring about any real social and political change or is it merely creative verbal skill which serves to reinforce the socio-political stasis to the power-bloc's advantage?

Simon Frith states that:

popular music becomes more valuable the more independent it is of the social forces that organise the popular process in the first place; popular value is dependent on something outside pop, is rooted in the person, the auteur, the community or the subculture that lies behind it. If good music is authentic music, then critical judgement means measuring the performers' 'truth' to the experiences or feelings they are describing (1987, p. 136).

In other words, popular music in its entirety is more than the sum of its parts. Its essence and validity come from the cultural context in which it is rooted i.e. the experiences of the artist, the experiences of relatedness to the audience and its ability to bring both these areas together as close as possible to a collective experience.

Frith then says of rock music, "... the reality is that rock, like all twentieth century pop music, is a commercial form, music produced as a commodity, for a profit, distributed through mass media as mass culture" (Ibid, p. 136). The question to be asked therefore is, are these two perspectives contradictory? Can they exist simultaneously? Can they be looked at as two different parts that comprise the same whole? I believe as do Frith and many others, that they are different facets, but they do indeed belong to the same whole.

Just as Frith uses the example of rock music as an illustration of music produced for commodity, similar arguments can be made for soca music. This is one of the lines of inquiry that I have concerning the dualistic nature of carnival music. On the one hand, the question of preserving a closeness to the realities of the people is of paramount significance for those who support the calypso art form. Then there are those people who believe that the direction in which

both modern calypso and soca music have taken, i.e., one which focuses on the commercialized aspect of music is inevitable and should be viewed more positively. The argument is seemingly split down the middle with cultural investment on one side and financial gain on the other. However, as I shall demonstrate, those advocating their position of retaining the music's role of 'social consciousness' as opposed to those who view the music for profit and pleasure are also accused of selling out for financial gain. This aspect will be more thoroughly examined in chapter five. For now, I will examine the concept of crossover and the various implications that it poses to music.

CROSSOVER: POWER & ECONOMICS

The term 'crossover' refers to the movement of music from one music category to another. As Reebee Garofalo remarks:

In popular music history, the term 'crossover' refers to that process whereby an artist or a recording from a 'secondary' marketing category like country and western, Latin or rhythm and blues, achieves hit status in the mainstream or 'pop' market. . . . the term's most common usage in popular music history clearly connotes movement from margin to mainstream (1993, p. 231).

The 'crossover debate' is concerned with the issues of what is lost and/or gained via this process. This concept is germane to this thesis because it encapsulates another facet of the 'dilemma' facing both calypso and soca today. The crossover movement in carnival music is particularly evident in categories of race and gender appropriation. However for the scope of this thesis, I will focus on only those implications of race. There are two principle perspectives of this debate. One reflects a 'liberal or integrationist' point of view, while the other, originates from a 'nationalist' standpoint (Ibid, p. 231).

Garofalo describes the former viewpoint of the integrationist perspective as the position advocated by Steve Perry. Perry believes that there is much to be gained from 'crossing over'. In typical integrationist style, he advocates building bridges and closing culture gaps. He ascribes to the ideology that, 'integration is equivalent to equality'(Ibid, p. 248).

The opposing 'black nationalist' standpoint is held by Nelson George. George maintains that, 'something is lost culturally in the process of crossing over'(Ibid, p. 232). He believes that when artists crossover they inevitably relinquish any and all traces of their racial identity in order to 'fit in' with the image of the new market: an image which is more conducive to this market's audience and one which usually entails a 'whitening' of the music's previous self. This 'whitening' of the music usually refers to 'an abandonment of the performer's racial identity, which leads to serious African-American cultural compromise'(Ibid, p. 244).

While I do not doubt George's claim, I do not believe that this 'whitening' of today's calypso and soca relates so much to a loss of racial identity or a compromise of Trinidadian cultural values as much as it translates into a greater emphasis on the consequences of commercialization from exposure to a wider international market. In other words, I do not believe that on entering an international market, calypso or soca music will necessarily be robbed of its shared cultural experience or its Trinbagonian rootedness, but changes will occur due to this wider exposure and increased commercialization.

This nationalist standpoint of the 'crossover debate' can also be applied to the carnival music of Trinidad and Tobago, specifically to the genre of soca. This up-beat musical style has been accused of demonstrating the effects of 'crossing over' due to its concentration on not solely the local market but rather on its increasing investment into the international or global

arena (Muller, 1997; SC, 1997). For many this movement translates into simply a matter of either preserving an 'authentic' artistic tradition at the local level or selling out the art form for a mass-produced commodity at the international level (SC, 1997; Duke-Westfield, 1997).

Additionally some see this desire to crossover into the international arena as a step toward the relinquishing of the music's identity as a Trinidadian art form, especially when the products of this 'crossover' hope to embody different strains and styles of other musical rhythms running the gamut from reggae and rock to Afro-latino rhythms (Muller, 1997).

From the integrationist perspective this change would be viewed not in a negative manner, but rather in a more positive light, because this process of crossing over makes this indigenous music accessible to a wider audience and thus promotes culture sharing. It is seen as an equalizing trend, because of the fact that for decades culture 'sharing' among the territories of the Caribbean had been characterised as a one-way bipolar relationship. With the bulk of the 'sharing' (if one can call it that) originating from the 'civilized' culture of the metropole (Britain, Spain, France and more recently, North America) to build up and cultivate the 'dearth' of culture in the colonies. Even though this may harken back to a time long past, the realities of being bombarded by North American pop culture are a much more recent memory.

In the nationalist context, however, this tendency would raise the question of what price is being paid for this acquisition of international acknowledgement (for acceptance is not always guaranteed). From this perspective, this debate and its ramifications for the Trinidadian society may easily be seen as being one which reeks of 'selling out'. This is a well-founded counterpoint, and it also introduces a number of other substantial questions and dilemmas. For example, what is one to do when faced with questions and decisions such as: either remain at the

local level and maybe eke out a living, but staying true to the original style and intent of this art form, or partially abandon the music's style and intent in order to embrace a wider market, reaping the material/financial benefits that such a line of action may bring? Is it truly a question of either retaining and protecting cultural autonomy or liberalising one's views so as to build cultural bridges instead of erecting cultural walls? Is it necessary to have to choose between both these positions? Have there been occasions and individuals who have been able to bring the two opposing sides of this debate together in a productive, co-existing relationship? Or is it really a matter that cannot have a middle ground and must be resolved by taking a stance, whether it be one position or another?

These sets of questions clearly depicts the intricacies involved concerning the aspect of authenticity within this musical art form. Despite the fact that relevant issues are raised acknowledging the advantages for retaining carnival music's 'authenticity' as a folk form and also outlining the advantages of the crossing-over of carnival music, the more significant point lies in not determining which is more advantageous, because, whether we approve of it or not, this movement would have already begun. Instead, our primary focus should be on how 'meaning' is built into this dichotomy of calypso and soca as perceived authentic and inauthentic forms of carnival music and secondly, what will the implications of this movement mean for the Trinbagonian society?

Andrew Ross also recognises this quandary, but addresses the situation from a less definitive approach. He acknowledges that,

Because of the fundamental contribution of Afro-American music to popular taste, any cultural historian of that relationship cannot avoid commenting on the ways in which a discourse about colour ("whitened" music) is spliced with a discourse about commercialization ("alienated" music). And yet it is often assumed that . . .

commercialized music = whitened music, that the black performance of uncommercialized and therefore black music constitutes the only true genuine form of protest or resistance against the white culture industry and its controlling interests, and that black music which submits to that industry automatically loses its autonomous power. But to subscribe to this equation is to imagine a very mechanical process indeed, whereby a music, which is authentically black, constitutes an initial raw material which is then appropriated and reduced in cultural force and meaning by contact with a white industry. Accordingly, music is never “made”, and only ever exploited, in this process of industrialization (1989, p. 69).

This insight raises a host of interesting points that deal with the notion of ownership. Whose music is it anyway? Are we not all guilty of the same usurpation that we fear might occur when our music gets into contact with a ‘white’ industry? Did we as Trinidadians not appropriate this music from our diverse heritages? Was the origin of this music not of African, Indian and countless other ‘overseas’ influences? And did we not take different elements from these musical cultures and refashion them to achieve something totally unique to be called our own? Is this not what Alleyne-Dettmers means when she talks of us ‘meta-masking’, that is ‘borrowing, shaping, re-shaping and eventually indigenising’ cultural forms? (1993, p. 134).

Popular culture is an amalgamation of a myriad of elements. It presumes a relation to ‘the people’, a category itself denied of any fixed categorisation, it can never be homogenous in form or content. Though the feeling experienced by one society of the fear of cultural loss that can occur when their indigenous culture becomes exposed in the greater global arena is real, these exposing questions may be regarded as extreme, since Trinbagonian carnival music was, is and will continue to be, a composite of many different ethnic influences that have undergone and will continue to undergo multiple stages of development and refinement.

The significance of raising such questions comes not so much from their individual, isolated responses, but rather lies in how the implications of such questions can help to construct

a common sense of this society on issues of authenticity, international culture and commercialized or whitened music. So, for example, can we say that carnival music will no longer be considered an 'authentic' art form because it has an increasing tendency to focus on the international sphere? Does crossing over into other international cultures and 'whitening' of one's music necessarily indicate a loss of authenticity or can one examine this movement from another perspective by seeing this as simply another stage in the developmental process of this music? Additionally, how will this movement affect the dualistic treatment of supporting and challenging the hegemonic beliefs of the power-bloc? To answer these questions, we have to move beyond the bipolar relation of music and commercialization and examine the connection or 'play' between power, ethnicity and class as they are manifested from within the 'hidden transcripts' of these cultural discourses.

HIDDEN TRANSCRIPTS

Tricia Rose (1994) sheds a positive, new light in Black music as she discusses the elements of rap music, graffiti and break dancing as part of the larger context of the hip hop culture. Her analysis is such that it can also be used to describe and explain other frameworks such as Caribbean music. Her model is useful here not only because the music of the Caribbean also originates out of the African cultural diaspora, but also because Caribbean music echoes similar issues is faced with similar problems and struggles for similar ideals.

However, one must consider that genres of music that may have analogous roots can also follow variegated trajectories. So, despite the fact that Caribbean music may owe its beginnings to African cultures, today, Caribbean music, or more specifically, carnival music in Trinidad and

Tobago is a mellifluous and diverse pastiche of musical cultures and heritages which reflect the equally rich and various influences of its cosmopolitan society.⁵

For Rose, hip hop has come to be used as an indicator to examine and profess the participants' (both the artist and the audience) realities and identities. Furthermore, it provides a critical analysis of the issues germane to the hip hop community and to society at large.

... Hip hop produced internal and external dialogues that affirmed the experiences and identities of the participants and at the same time offered critiques of larger society that were directed to both the hip hop community and society in general (1994, p. 60).

These functions can also be likened on to the roles of calypsonians and soca artists in their societies as being the 'contemporary conscience of their cultures, voices that speak from the margins about things that the dominant discourse silences' (Bakhtin in Robinson et al., 1991).

Rose also focuses on the fact that people, when faced with less than perfect situations be they social, economic or political tend to use forms of expression over which they have creative control, such as language, dance or music, in order to give voice to their feelings and experiences. Most times this is done in a subversive manner, or if not subversive, then at least in a coded or metaphorical form. Furthermore, Rose opposes the idea that such cultural reactions are simply a safety mechanism which is used to buffer situations of oppression while maintaining the same structures which are the source of this oppression. On the contrary, she advocates that this genre of cultural expression is used as a cohesive, communal device which

⁵The music of Trinidad and Tobago owes its distinct character to a blend of ethnic backgrounds, including, African, East Indian, Latin and European, just to name some of the more prominent influences.

brings about an awareness and a better understanding of social conditions which may not have previously existed:

Under social conditions in which sustained frontal attacks on powerful groups are strategically unwise or successfully contained, oppressed people use language, dance and music to mock those in power, express rage and produce fantasies of subversion. These cultural forms are especially rich and pleasurable places where oppositional transcripts or the 'unofficial truths' are developed, refined and rehearsed. These cultural responses to oppression are not safety valves that protect and sustain the machines of oppression. Quite to the contrary, these dances, languages and music produce communal bases of knowledge about social conditions, communal interpretations of them and quite often serve as the cultural glue that fosters communal resistance (1994, p. 99).

Similar aspects to Rose's description of rap music can also be found within the genres of calypso and soca music. The artists of both styles of music do indeed use the double-entendre in their lyrics. James Scott refers to this as 'hidden transcripts'. Scott introduces two types of transcripts: the hidden transcript and the public transcript. These two concepts play a pivotal role in understanding the intricacies of the roles of subordinate factions versus the dominant groups in society. Simply stated, a 'transcript' can be both verbal or non-verbal communication usually practised by people: so for example, talking, gesturing and even acting would be considered 'transcripts.' By itself the term is quite ordinary. It takes on a different meaning though, when coupled with other terms such as 'hidden' and 'public'.

The hidden transcript is essentially a critique of the power structures and relations that are made 'behind the back' of the dominant group(s) in society. This hidden transcript is not limited to society's subordinate factions. The dominant too, also create their own hidden transcripts which they camouflage so that it may not be openly admitted to. The public transcript, on the other hand, is its fundamental opposite. It is 'open interaction between

subordinates and those who dominate' (Scott, 1990, p. 4). To further illustrate this, songs would be the musicians' public transcripts if they were accessible to any and everyone. However, the underlying messages within the songs i.e., the covert meanings, would be the musicians' hidden transcripts. These musicians use this medium (through which their veiled messages are carried) to offer a critique of power while at the same time maintaining an image of being a mere entertainer within the larger hegemonic framework. Scott illustrates this by suggesting how one can view 'the gestures, rumours, gossip, songs of the powerless as vehicles by which, among other things, they insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity or behind innocuous understandings of their conduct' (Ibid, p. 2).

When Rose talks of the hidden messages within the lyrics of rap songs, it seems to me that there is a distinct dichotomy of 'them' versus 'us'. With this in mind, then, it is quite logical that she also believes that hidden transcripts would serve as an appropriate medium through which messages are sent to examine, discuss, and even mock those dominant structures and discourses. However, even though he agrees up to a point with Rose, who sees music as a vessel which can both advocate and deny real social change, "... the idea of rap music both legitimising and challenging social oppression" (Rose, p. 104), Scott takes this observation one step further. He says that because of the ambivalent positions taken up within the public transcripts by those that are dubbed 'less powerful,' (in this case it would be the musicians) they themselves contribute to reinforcing their own subordination:

The public transcript is systematically skewed in the direction of the discourse represented by the dominant. In ideological terms the public transcript will typically, by its accomodationist tone, provide convincing evidence for the hegemony of dominant values, for the hegemony of dominant discourse. It is in precisely this public domain where the effects of power relations are most manifest and

any analysis based exclusively on the public transcript is likely to conclude that subordinate groups endorse the terms of their subordination and are willing, even enthusiastic partners in that subordination (1990, p. 4).

Both Rose and Scott raise valid observations with regard to the consequences of the 'play' or relationship between the hidden and the public transcripts within music. This ambivalent 'play' is also mirrored in carnival music and forms the core of this argument, that of the duality of meaning ever-present within calypso and soca. It is precisely this aspect within this music i.e., the problem and ramifications of living inside contradiction, that offers such a potential for constructive criticism. Indeed, it is the main line of inquiry into this thesis: calypso and soca while criticizing the structures which proliferate social, political and economic inequalities, simultaneously reinforce other inequalities. In other words, while the music advocates the abolishment of some injustices, it also sanctions the perpetuation of others. Scott describes the dilemma that could occur as a result of this duality as he says with an ominous air:

Those obliged by domination to act a mask will eventually find that their faces have grown to fit that mask. The practice of subordination produces in time, its own legitimation (1990, p. 10).

Having been given a background description on the key concepts of 'lyrical realism', 'crossover' and 'hidden transcripts', I will briefly outline the methodology employed in this thesis and then move on to examine specific works on calypso and soca music to determine if and how the concepts discussed here are employed in the analysis of those works.

METHODOLOGY - BACKGROUND

Cultural Studies methodology is not limited to one particular research method, but rather is characterised and enriched by the incorporation of a number of different approaches. Since the early 1960s and 1970s, there has been an ongoing debate on the validity of qualitative methodology as opposed to quantitative methodology in the field of social science research (Jensen & Jankowski, 1991; Neuman, 1994; Alasuutari, 1995). Each method of analysis had its own advocates who viewed their approach as the more genuine for scientific research. However, since this time, both approaches have come to demonstrate their respective strengths and have come to be seen as valid means of obtaining scientific data. Having acknowledged this, the methodological approach taken in this thesis is qualitative in nature.

Klaus Bruhn Jensen states, ‘the relevance of each medium depends on the purpose and area of inquiry’ (1991a, p. 7). The attempt to explicate one of the facets of the Trinbagonian culture, that is, the Trinidadian carnival, required an approach that would be able to capture the event and its music in as representative a manner as possible. I felt that this objective would not be realised had a quantitative approach been employed. As Jensen reiterates:

Where quantitative analysis would focus on the concrete, delimited products of the media’s meaning production, qualitative approaches examine meaning production as a process which is contextualized and inextricably integrated with wider social and cultural practices (1991a, p. 4)

This analysis therefore falls under the rubric of qualitative research by the very fact that it: is concerned with aspects of the Trinbagonian culture; employs extensive participant observation as one of the research methods used in compiling data with the researcher being the primary instrument of inquiry; and finally it uses a ‘triangulation’ of data-collection methods, including

the previously stated participant observation, 'thick description' on a case study of the Trinbagonian carnival and textual analysis on carnival music (see Jankowski & Wester, 1991).

More specifically, however, this thesis should be viewed as a form of humanistic scholarship within qualitative science as opposed to social science research because it is a study based on literary analysis and interpretation which additionally focuses on 'extratextual frameworks of explanation' (Jensen, 1991b, p.28):

The analytical practice of cultural studies is rooted in literary analysis-cum-interpretation, but it emphasizes extratextual frameworks of explanation. Nevertheless, while the categories of analysis are thus grounded in theories of subjectivity and social context, the primary medium of the research remains the interpreting scholar. Furthermore, the focus has tended to be placed on the overarching discourses of culture, rather than their local, empirical producers and recipients. Consequently, although cultural studies refer to the genre in question, its implied reader positions, and associated social uses, the tradition is still preoccupied with the message or discourse of communication (Ibid, p. 28).

The objective of this work has not only been to extrapolate on how specific dualities that exist within the Trinidadian culture are manifested through the music and actions of these people (during the carnival season) in a manner which serves to simultaneously criticize and reinforce the ideology of the ruling elite in a hegemonic relationship; it additionally seeks to determine if this discursive space provides any real opportunity for the reformation of those innate cultural practices embedded in the Trinbagonian culture.

I believe that the work in this thesis borders on an interpretive and critical approach to qualitative research. One of the reasons for this is because I have employed idiographic elements such as 'thick description' which involves detailed and multi-dimensional descriptions of meaningful experiences of the people being studied. These are elements of the interpretive approach. This work can also be seen from a semi-critical approach in as much as it aims to demystify illusions of the Trinidad carnival by elucidating underlying structures of the event and

its music. However, this thesis cannot fully claim to adopt a critical perspective because I do not explain how change can be achieved nor do I offer a possible alternative. I do not view this as a shortcoming of the thesis because this was never its intent. Its objective was to merely validate the theoretical framework from which this analysis comes and to provide a different perspective on one of the national festivals of the Trinbagonian culture. It does not purport to any tenet of the politics of research which is 'the degree to which the research is seen as emancipatory or action oriented and whose purpose is to change an inequitable state of affairs (Mies in Jankowski & Wester, 1991, p. 57).

RESEARCH METHODS - PROCEDURE

As previously noted, the theoretical framework from which this thesis is examined deals with the accommodating space (found in both the practices and the music) of the Trinidad carnival, in which the hegemonic ideology of the ruling elite are simultaneously attacked and reinforced through lyrical and thematic representation.

The research methods employed in this study can be grouped into the three categories of participant observation, thick description and textual analysis. Additionally, the material used in this thesis was obtained from sources such as newspaper and periodical coverage of both the carnival event and interviews with calypsonians and soca artists, a televised documentary dealing with the themes of race and class relations as manifested within calypso music, the collection of concrete artefacts such as entry tickets to fetes, photographs of some of the practices of the carnival event and audio samples of the carnival music. I used a number of approaches so that the data obtained could be verified and further validated against each method.

The advantages of this multiple approach at data gathering, known as 'triangulation' has been advocated by Denzin who states:

Triangulation, or the use of multiple methods, is a plan of action that will raise sociologists above the personalistic biases that stem from single methodologies (in Jankowski & Wester, 1991, p.62).

The primary mechanism used to collect data was participant observation. Participant observation is not a single tool of inquiry but rather is a collection of varied research methods used to study a subject:

It is probably misleading to regard participant observation as a single method . . . It refers to a characteristic blend or combination of methods and techniques that is employed in studying certain types of subject matter . . . It involves some amount of genuinely social interaction in the field with the subject of study, some direct observation of relevant events, some formal and a great deal of informal interviewing, some systematic counting, some collection of documents and artefacts and openendness in the direction the study takes (McCall & Simmons in Jankowski & Wester, 1991).

Being a member of this Trinidadian society and having both witnessed and participated in the annual carnival event for over twelve years, I was able to take advantage of this member status and the knowledge that it brings, to this thesis. I was able to both observe and take part in the events in a natural setting. I was also able to fully comprehend the underlying structures embedded in such a cultural aspect to an extent that may not be as easily achieved by an outsider. Given my position as an intellectual and as a researcher as opposed to a layperson, I was also able to examine this object of study from a less patriotic and more academic perspective, resulting in what I believe to be genuine research.

As previously noted, I have the advantage of over twelve years in the field of study in participating and examining this cultural event. More specifically for the purpose of this thesis, I attended twenty five carnival fetes over the course of a two year period. While at these fetes, I

would observe the revellers, both old and young, male and female. The criteria by which I examined these people would be how they reacted in the context of a fete while listening to both calypso and soca music as opposed to their reaction in a more formal setting such as at the many carnival shows that occur during the season. To illustrate, at a fete I would observe how people reacted when soca music was playing as opposed to when calypso was played? How did they react in another setting, such as at the Dimanche Gras where both calypso and soca are showcased? Did their reactions and/or behaviour modify when topical songs were played as opposed to social/political commentary songs? At times my notes took the form of 'jottings' on cocktail napkins, only to be expanded at a later time (usually in a more conducive setting) or more often, the observations made were mental and then transcribed at a later time⁶. One may think that this manner of observation and note-taking to be inadequate, but I believe that due to my member position in this society which affords me a greater degree of familiarity with these cultural practices and consequently a faster and more accurate recollection, this method proved to be more than sufficient.

The locus of this participation observation was not limited to fetes. I also utilized this method in examining the many practices within the carnival event itself, such as: in 'playing mas' on the streets of Port-of-Spain on J'ouvert morning, on carnival Monday night mas' and on

⁶The style of note taking was usually dependent on the setting that I was in. For example, at fetes, I would use cocktail napkins to 'jot' down my observations. As this was the most convenient and least conspicuous method. However, in a setting such as in a calypso tent or at the carnival shows, in which the ambience is comparatively more conducive i.e., one is actually able to sit down and write one's observations as they occur, at these times, I would make notes in a pocket book, to be transcribed and expanded at a later time.

carnival Tuesday; within the activities of the many 'mas camps'; at the many shows held during the carnival season and within the numerous calypso tents.

The data collected were then transcribed in the form of ideographic or 'thick description' in which a rich, detailed description of the event, its practices and the music were given. Supplementary material was also included in the form of extensive italicized narratives which are personal accounts detailing actual events and practices of the Trinidadian carnival. The objective of this type of 'thick description' is to provide the reader with a holistic and an in-depth representation of the object of study. Additionally, it offers the reader an insight into both explicit and tacit cultural knowledge. These descriptions then served as a point of access from which I explored other social and political dimensions of the wider Trinbagonian culture. I examined structures of the carnival practices and its musical component in an attempt to show how these said structures were emblematic of the hegemonic relationship existing within the Trinidadian society which simultaneously attacked and reinforced the ideology of the ruling elite.

The third research method employed in this study comes under the rubric of content or textual analysis of lyrics of calypsos and soca tunes. The 'convenience' sampling procedure (as opposed to random sampling) consisted in the selection of calypsos chosen for their social and political commentary. The criteria used in the selection process of these songs was based on: thematic representation on issues of racial inequality and class injustices; the degree of controversy and the level of popularity. This was not an especially difficult task owing to the fact that at carnival, both the competition grounds and the airwaves are inundated by acerbic social/political commentary calypsos and popular soca tunes. Even though the selection sample

may be criticized as being relatively small in number (7), it was limited in order to avoid being repetitious and redundant. In my estimation this music selection was representative of the majority of carnival music performed within the 1997 Carnival season. All the season's songs dealt with similar issues of frustration of the present governmental regime, racial discord, class inequality, for calypso and inversely, racial harmony, sexual innuendo and the whole carnival aesthetic theme, for soca. Therefore, the choice of songs was dependent on which were the more frequently played and which aroused more controversy.

After selecting the songs, I offered a lyrical analysis from which germane themes were determined. These themes were then arranged into categories of either advocating or rejecting elitist ideologies. This selection was determined through such criteria as subject portrayal, political position held on the subject matter and the degree of blatancy in the presentation. These said variables were then used to discuss dimensions of power structures and race and class factors as they are embedded in the larger Trinbagonian society and as they were employed to either validate or refute the theoretical framework of this thesis.

The methods of in-depth interviewing and the use of questionnaires were not part of my research methods because I felt that the opportunity for bias would be heightened had these methods been employed. Many times, in wanting to present a positive image of one's culture, selected information is released to the researcher by the informant. I felt that these methods would provide more of an occasion for this type of subjectivity. As Deutscher demonstrates:

There is often a discrepancy between reports of attitudes gained through interviews and observations of the behaviour related to those attitudes (in Jankowski & Wester, 1991, p. 61).

Instead of relying on structured interviews or questionnaires where the responses are already outlined and there is some degree of ‘guidance’ by the researcher concerning the direction that the interview will take, I chose to rely on the wealth of knowledge that comes not only from being a member of this culture, but perhaps more importantly, due to my status as an informed academic in pursuit of genuine research, I believed that any patriotic biases would be kept to a minimum. As Pertti Alasuutari suggests:

If you study structures of meaning, the way in which people conceive of and classify things, the material has to consist of texts where they speak about things in their own words, not of questionnaires where they have to answer predefined questions by choosing predetermined alternatives (1995, p. 42).

VALIDATION OF METHODOLOGY

The literature employed in this study is largely based on the works of Gordon Rohlehr (1990a; 1990b; 1992a; 1992b) and Louis Regis (1993). Additional literature was obtained from the studies of other researchers such as Ian Boxill (1994), Errol Hill (1972), Dick Hebdige (1979), Tricia Rose (1994) and Clifford Geertz (1973).

The methodological approaches used by these researchers included participant observation, ideographic description, and textual analysis. For example, in Rohlehr’s study on calypso and society in Pre-Independence Trinidad, he employed both ‘thick description’ of earlier carnivals coupled with in-depth lyrical analysis in order to explicate the social and political structures of the Trinbagonian society in this era. Hill also employed ideographic description on his study of the Trinidad carnival, but focused on all aspects of the event itself, as opposed to limiting his research to the musical component of the festival.

Both Hebdige and Boxill utilized lyrical analysis and participant observation to study Jamaican Reggae music and its precursors such as Ska and Rock Steady and its new musical versions of Dance Hall and Dub. Their studies focused on one of the numerous uses of this music as a tool for cultural revolution. Boxill additionally examined the genre of calypso in this regard.

Rose used methods of participant observation, 'thick description,' and lyrical analysis in her study of American Hip Hop. She analysed the lyrics of a number of American rap songs, focusing on different themes on issues of racial tension, social and cultural survival and female representation, to name a few. Also included in her study was a 'thick description' of several Black communities in select American cities. From this, she proposed several social and political theories concerning the wider subculture of American rappers and hip hop music.

In my estimation, some of the problems encountered by these researchers can be likened to those arising out of my own study in that in a study of this nature that is so much 'people-oriented', one wonders if the culture or that specific aspect of the culture that one is studying, is accurately captured due to the enormity and complexity of the culture itself.

Another concern regarding the approaches used by these researchers is realising that this research having been seen as interpretive as opposed to positivist, results in facts which are highly context specific. Even though interpretivists agree that meaning can be assigned only if the social context is taken into account, thus legitimising the approaches used in this type of research, there are few positivists who view this type of interpretive research as truly scientific (Neuman, 1994).

Finally, the liabilities of this study and the research methods employed can be summarised as follows. The research results obtained may not coincide with the opinion of the entire Trinbagonian population. Many Trinbagonians surrounded by the euphoria of the carnival season, would rather 'turn a blind eye' to the social and political realities that exist concerning their beloved national festival. In addition to this, when recognition of these realities and injustices are observed, there is no substantial action taken to rectify these said situations. Thus validating the point that any beneficial social change would be difficult to obtain.

Another shortcoming deals with my status as a member of this society. Even though conscious efforts are made to be as impartial and as objective as possible, there can never be a complete detachment from the subject of study, especially if one is a member of that subject of study. Consequently, there is a great deal of personal pressure on the researcher to pursue and obtain genuine research material, on the one hand, and yet on the other, there is always that sentiment of 'not doing justice' to one's culture, by exposing such data and drawing such conclusions (as are offered in this work) of the most celebrated festivals of one's homeland.

Chapter 3: CARNIVAL MUSIC - FROM PAST TO PRESENT

It has been said that we live in a sound scape. In fact, it has been often stated by innumerable musical artists and academics alike, that music is the universal language of humankind. Theodore Adorno explored popular culture only in so much as it would validate the more worthy status of high culture. As much as I believe his opinion to be ludicrous, he does raise a valid point when he considers music to be the ‘social cement’ that binds peoples, cultures and civilizations together (Adorno, 1992, p. 220). Music is perhaps one of the most significant mediums, more so than any other cultural form, that can effectively and instantaneously arouse sentiments of shared belonging. In Frith’s words:

Music can stand for, symbolise and offer the immediate experience of collective identity. Other cultural forms - painting, literature, design - can articulate and show off shared values and pride, but only music can make you feel them (1987, p. 140).

Roger Wallis and Krister Malm also acknowledge that, “Music in any civilization exists as a social and cultural necessity”(in Regis, 1993, p. 2), while Alan Merriam views music as “a creative aspect of culture that can lead to an understanding of basic human problems of creative life, as well as the values, goals and meanings of the culture in which it functions” (in Regis, 1993, p. 2).

In this chapter, I explore the polymorphous characteristic of Trinidad carnival music by examining relevant research on both calypso and soca. I will determine how it applies to my proposed research question: that Trinidad’s carnival music possesses an ambivalent nature whereby it simultaneously reinforces and challenges the ideologies of the dominant elite in a hegemonic relationship, through its lyrics. It should be noted that this chapter merely introduces

points of contention within the germane body of literature and further development of argument will be addressed in Chapter Five on the analysis of power and various social indices.

THE ORIGIN OF CALYPSO

Within the early literature on carnival music, the music of calypso has been the genre most written upon as opposed to other forms of carnival music such as 'chutney', 'ragga soca' 'rapso' and 'soca'. This stems from the fact that in carnivals past, the sounds of the calypso or kaiso were the earliest forms of carnival music and thus more likely to be discussed.

The origin of the word 'calypso' is surrounded by a myriad of conflicting debates. In light of Trinidad's African heritage, some authorities contend that the word originated from 'Kaiso', a Hausa word for 'bravo' (Sealy & Malm, 1983; Rohlehr, 1990; Hill, 1993; Dewitt & Wilan, 1993). Others believe that the word was derived from the island's European ancestry and thus assume that it originated from either the French 'carrousseaux' meaning a drinking party; or the Spanish 'calliso' meaning a topical song (Dewitt & Wilan, 1993). And still others, tracing the word back to the first inhabitants of these islands, the Caribs believe the word to mean the same as the Spanish 'topical song', but being derived from the Carib word, 'carieto' (Ali, 1997a, p. 21).

However, despite these conflicting debates on the word's origin, most 'authorities' would agree that the calypso was once used, and perhaps still is, to an extent, as the poor man's newspaper: it was seen as a vehicle which sought to expose the injustices of the upper classes towards the lower classes in terminology that the layman could identify with (Ali, 1997a; Rohlehr, 1990). Also accepted is the notion of the music's African Roots: the calypso originated

as 'improvised songs of self-praise and scorn for others' brought to Trinidad by enslaved peoples (Hill, 1972; Rohlehr, 1990; Dewitt & Wilan, 1993; Ali, 1997a). As Errol Hill states:

... the antecedents of calypso are the praise songs of derision of West African natives captured as slaves and brought to the West Indies (1972, p. 58).

Calypso finally evolved into a dance, a genre of music and a cultural musical almanac of events. This musical genre could be used for a variety of different purposes, long surpassing but not excluding the inchoate functions of the earlier 'work-song' or 'plantation-song': the role of calypso, as it was manifested in these 'plantation songs' or 'work songs' in the era of slavery was used as a mechanism to make the slaves work more efficiently in the fields and on the sugar-cane plantations. Singing while working fostered greater productivity as it somehow seemed to cause the hours to go by even more quickly, while toiling in the scorching heat under a blazing sun. Dewitt and Wilan observed that, 'the African slaves organised into work gangs were encouraged by the plantation owners to compete against each other in the cutting of sugar-cane. They sang *Kaiso*-style work songs to increase productivity' (Dewitt & Wilan, 1993, p. 10).

Calypso is no longer used as a form of 'work song' but still retains its role as the 'people's forum' in which their views are voiced, usually in opposition to those in power. What it has become is a cultural text coloured by conflict, censorship and a dualistic nature which would come to be its hallmark honing it into an intricate cultural tool employed to scrutinize, criticize, reinforce and unify all facets of the fabric of this society:

In Trinidad, the calypso emerged out of this complex of song and dance, social conflict and censorship which had pervaded the colonies from their inception. It is related to all Black diaspora music, regardless of language and shares with them traditional African functions of affirmation, celebration, protest, satire, praise, blame and conflict of all varieties ... (Rohlehr, 1990, p. 5).

CALYPSO - FROM THE 1940s TO 1990s

The reason for beginning with a chronological account of the development of this art form is to give the reader an historical reference of calypso so that he/she may be better able to identify with the dualities existing within the two genres of carnival music that I will explore later on.

The melody, style and tone of the calypsos of yesteryear were indeed of a different calibre to the ones being heard across the airwaves today. In the 1940s and 1950s, the first wave of professional calypsonians, known as the Old Brigade, including artists such as, Growling Tiger, Lord Beginner, Atilla the Hun, the Roaring Lion and Lord Pretender, to name but a few would sing of the social ills and the political injustices that would be occurring within this twin island republic (Dewitt & Wilan, 1993; Ali, 1997a). It was at this time (during the war years) that calypso became increasingly influenced by the presence of US military troops in Trinidad and Tobago. Many calypsonians sang about grave issues such as the social and political effects of the war, prostitution and other societal scourges.

By 1945, a greater demand for songs with a more entertaining appeal (as opposed to those which were purely satirical or wholly full of socio-political commentary) would be requested, and a new breed of singers would rise to meet this challenge. This demand for fresh, creative and innovative material perhaps was due to several factors: there was a marked change in attitude towards calypso music; the music had become more sophisticated and Trinbagonians were discovering a newfound pride in and respect for their culture (Dewitt & Wilan, 1993). These new calypsonians, suitably called the Young Brigade, included artists such as the Mighty Sparrow, Lord Wonder and the Mighty Dictator (Ali, 1997a). Their material ran the gamut from

entertainment songs which dealt with aesthetically pleasing social topics, to the more serious issues of race, politics and economics¹.

During the 1960s and the 1970s, this pattern of socio-political commentary continued to colour the lyrical content of most of the calypsos of that time: with the Black Power marches of the 1970s, a growing rate of unemployment and feelings of deep discontent due to perceived racism (Ibid, p. 21). Once again, a new generation of singers such as Black Stalin, Brother Valentino, Shadow and Explainer would come to express their views on the delinquent state of affairs of their country.

In the 1980s, there was another upsurge in the music world of T&T. One of the artists who attracted much attention at this time was David Rudder. Hailed as “a prophet, an upstart, a quack, the next Bob Marley of Caribbean music, Rudder was everything that the ‘typical’ calypsonian was not”(Ottley, 1995, p. 233). His was a style of biting criticism assuaged by the sweet melody of the calypso beat. His work, always contemplative and full of bitter-sweet truths, would act as his hallmark both at the local level, at which he was greatly admired, and at the international level to which he further exposed calypso music.

Today in the 1990s, one witnesses yet another variation on the indigenous musical art form of this facet of the Trinbagonian cultural amalgam. Shereen Ali, a writer for the popular periodical, *Road Works* has compiled a comprehensive exposition on the unification of sounds which now characterize Trinidadian carnival music:

¹‘Aesthetically pleasing’ topics would include issues concerning continuous partying, the joy of life on the islands and basically the pleasures derived from the carnival in general.

Among the leading calypsonians of the 1990s are the new wave fusion bands which experiment with form to produce infectious rhythms. Their lyrics are sometimes trite and mindlessly rabid, but at other times, can rise to be witty, thoughtful and incisively cutting . . .

. . . As a younger generation leaves the schoolyards and enters a contracting job market, the rhythms of chanting, protest-oriented rapso² along with tabla³ and harmonium-driven chutney⁴, are today finding new converts and carrying the mantle for a different kind of discourse (1997a, p. 21).

The diverse trajectory along which carnival music has evolved has been outlined. Its development from the early 1940s to the present noting the waves of change that have occurred throughout this time frame has been traced. Yet there seems to be a common thread within the previous decades that still can be observed today: the lyrical content, of not only the social calypsos but especially the political calypsos, would in large part remain the same. As Gordon Rohlehr says of the calypso, “the blending of politics with gossip would remain a cardinal feature of Trinidad’s political life for decades, and would influence the shape of a significant number of political calypsos in the years that were to come”(1990, p. 92).

What is interesting however is the point made in the last line of Ali’s commentary where she alludes to the emergence of a ‘different kind of discourse’ coming forth from the newer sounds of carnival music. Although Ali’s meaning is not explained, this ‘different discourse’

²Rapso- a form of music derived from the blending of Caribbean rap and soca rhythms.

³Tabla- a percussion instrument resembling a drum is used in mostly East Indian or chutney music in Trinidad.

⁴Chutney music is an infectious blend of East Indian rhythms moulded into a musical form that is uniquely Trinidadian. The lyrics, sung in both colloquial English and Indian are accompanied by musical instruments like the tabla, the tassa drum, Indian flutes, brass gongs and bells.

may provide a new way to examine the various genres of carnival music. In effect, my research question can be described as such an undertaking.

As I have stated in previous chapters, my concern is with the dualistic nature existing within calypso and soca. For this thesis, the ‘different kind of discourse’ emerges when one sees evidence of the ambivalent characteristic of both calypso and soca manifested in the debates of authenticity versus commercialization and music seen as a vehicle for political commentary versus music viewed as a pleasurable commodity⁵. This ambivalence is then used to validate the claim that both styles of music are employed to simultaneously support and challenge the ideological hegemony of the power-bloc.

What I have presented up until this point has been an historical narrative of calypso and soca music of the past. I will now examine what has been written about carnival music in present-day society.

THE POLITICAL / AESTHETIC DIVIDE IN CALYPSO AND SOCA.

Errol Hill, author and authority on the Trinidad carnival advocates that the legacy of the calypso is intricately linked to the evolvment of its indigenous culture. It is a living legacy that is forever unfolding, refashioning and modifying itself to mirror and maintain as authentic a cohesion to the changing lives of its people and its culture:

⁵These two dichotomies are not necessarily isolated debates. On the contrary, they should be examined as another consequential dimension stemming from the calypso versus soca dilemma, as the ramifications of these divides usually overlap. They are listed separately only for clarification.

In Trinidad, the history of the calypso is linked with the development of the indigenous culture to an extent rivalled only by the annual masquerade. Also the calypso has not become an archaic type of folksong fit only for archives. Like the masquerade it has kept abreast of changing conditions and remains a contemporary cultural expression of the people (1972, p. 56).

This undeniable insight, still holds true a quarter of a century later. The musical art form and its derivatives have functioned well as a means of effective communication, as a device (both tacit and blatant) of social and political commentary and as a forum used by its many proponents to indulge in the 'aesthetic escapism' that underlies its more up-beat, carefree counterpart, soca. Aesthetic escapism is used here to signify the main focus of the up-beat, party tunes of soca music. It refers to the effect that soca has on the individual permitting an ambience of pure festivity, frivolity and unadulterated fun to reign supreme in the context of carnival, as compared to the more serious social and political content, tone and slower-paced melody of the calypso. In short, the individual is transported through soca's pulsating rhythms and infectious tempos, to a time and place where she/he metaphorically, albeit temporarily escapes the graveness of life's realities.

However, as the times change, so do the contexts in which Trinbagonian carnival music is placed. The very idea that calypso and soca are living indices of the cultural heritage of the Trinidadian people would legitimate the fact that as the lives and experiences of this culture grows and modifies, so too will the art forms change to accommodate and accurately reflect new and unfolding realities. The salient point to be remembered however, given the dualistic nature of this music form is that the ramifications for representing the various realities in existence, would give way to contradictory public reaction.

So, for example, whereas many Trinbagonians proudly consider the calypsonian to be the champion defender of the man in the street, or 'street poets', today, opposing opinions taking a more critical position of this artiste can also be observed:

Calypsonians, except a minority, have been agents of ignorance and stupidity. Their political comments are biased with immaturity, flowing from tribal hysteria and insecurity (Job, 1997, p. 7).

These acerbic comments aimed at specific persons who belong to the treasure trove of one of Trinidad's cultural riches is indeed 'a slap in the face'. In other words, these criticisms directed to these artists in this manner can appear to be almost a cultural heresy. Yet the caustic criticism of the author/radio host, Dr. Morgan Job, accurately depicts the nature of the duality or ambivalence which exists within the genre of the political calypso and by extension, within the group of calypsonians who sing them.

Job's argument is a straightforward one which comments on the calypsonians' focus on irrational and nonsensical solutions as opposed to intelligent and logical strategies for dealing with the social and political scourges running rampant in the Trinidadian society today:

A few devoted their lives to destroying Robinson (One of T&T's former Prime Ministers). Not one single calypsonian created a sensible verse about structural adjustment, NIC, VAT, privatisation, productivity or education reform⁶ (1997, p. 7).

⁶NIC- National Investment Company was a project set up by the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) government which proposed a pooling of resources from the private sector, but would be jointly controlled by both the government and the public sector. The aim of this initiative was to provide funding for specialised projects in the national interest. The VAT- Value Added Tax - amounting to 15%, became effective January 1, 1990.

Job refers to some calypsonians as, 'the most evil, dangerous and destructive forces in T&T'(Ibid, p. 7). He comments on the calypsonians' well known penchant for defaming members of the current political regime by resorting to rumour, gossip and partial prejudices, "Some reinforce ignorance and dotishness and some gleefully indulge in their racist, tribal wildness and stupidity"(Ibid, p. 7). The harsh tone and abrasive words spewed forth by this commentator does hold elements of truth. As his illustrations go on to explain, these said calypsonians would feverishly criticize the political regime but focus more on character assassination than on enlightening means of structural reformation.

Likewise, in the Trinidadian televised documentary series *Issues Live*, Mr. Satnarine Maharaj, the Secretary General of the Hindu religious organisation, the Maha Sabha, also expressed similar views as those held by Dr. Morgan Job. Maharaj acknowledges that calypso is a legitimate art form, but is concerned about the offensive nature of some of the music. He is disgruntled about the unbridled, vociferous license that the calypsonian has, not only to defame the government but more so to slander private citizens. He says, "you maintain freedom of speech, but no freedom is absolute. It is always circumscribed by other people's rights"(TTT, 1997). Maharaj argues that, "the law can't give calypsonians rights that other citizens do not have"(Ibid). An illustration of what both Maharaj and Job are referring to and what some call the calypsonian's poetic license can be found in the following lines:

Iwer George, expressed disappointment that Robinson was not murdered. He sang: "If Abu had shot and wiped out the whole Cabinet, he would have been here tonight!"
 Sugar Aloes preached: "We wanted the system changed ... not for someone to start something then do the job halfway ... when I see so much people lost their lives in vain, while the real culprits alive to give more people more strain!" (Job, 1997, p. 7).

What is being examined here is the idea that calypsonians like Iwer George and Sugar Aloes, through the medium of calypso are promulgating their opinions about what would have been the ideal scenario concerning the events of the attempted July 1990 coup d'etat by an Islamic Fundamentalist group in Trinidad and Tobago. Through the lyrics of both songs, it is evident that both artists would have preferred that Abu Bakr's attempt on the life of the then Prime Minister, would have been a successful one⁷. They see Robinson and his regime as the 'real culprits' who caused the dilemma of the 1990 coup on themselves and who would continue to stifle the growth of the Trinbagonian nation by having their lives spared through the final surrender of the perpetrators. Their tone is a regretful one as they ironically feel more empathy towards the would-be assassins than they do for the government officials. Job quotes one university professor's remarks on a calypso entitled "Positive Vibrations": "It suggests assassination as a modest proposal to end the NAR regime"⁸ (Job, 1997, p. 7).

Added to this, in Job's opinion, calypsonians are too often found swinging on the political pendulum when it comes to the lyrical content of their songs:

While Robinson was Prime Minister, we heard DeFosto groaning
a lament about "we patrimony". Patrick Manning promptly sold
all. DeFosto remained silent! (1997, p. 7).

⁷Imam Yasin Abu Bakr, the head of the Black Islamic Movement in Trinidad and Tobago was the leader of a group of persons who collectively engineered this horrific plan because of the perceived inundation of social, economic and political injustices occurring in this nation.

⁸NAR- the political party headed by the then Prime Minister, ANR Robinson.

In other words, in his calypso, 'we patrimony', DeFosto, a well known calypsonian voiced his concern about the actions of a former Prime Minister, ANR Robinson, who he believed to be acting in his own self-interest and not in the interest of the country. However, when Robinson's successor, Patrick Manning came into power and proceeded to 'sell all' making DeFosto's previous allegation a reality, the said calypsonian voiced no opinion, thus concretizing Job's observation that some calypsonians' critical ability are replete with hypocrisy and ambivalence.

Other writers such as Ruth Finnegan and Gordon Rohlehr also observe the seemingly ineffective-criticism characteristic typical of the Trinidadian political calypso, but theirs is an explanation less acrid and is grounded in a more culturally based reasoning. Ruth Finnegan sees structural elements of West African song performance as being readily observable in the modern political calypso (in Regis, 1993, p. 4). While, Rohlehr sees calypso's trademark of "permitting criticism of one's leaders at specific times, in particular contexts, and through the medium of song and story" as a possible explanation of the pressure-release function of the political calypso (in Regis, 1993, p. 6). They both concur that this quality in calypso is linked to aspects rooted in a West African tradition. Rohlehr remarks:

An understanding of this wise West African convention might help us to understand the mixture of astringency and ineffectuality which exists even today in Trinidad's calypso tents, where political calypsos annually perform a function similar to what must have obtained in the satirical songs of various West African societies (1990, p. 2).

So, whereas Dr. Morgan Job views some calypsonians and their material in a distasteful light, other commentators such as Dr. Hollis Liverpool, Leroi Clarke and Louis Regis, see this

same picture through a more positive, culture-specific lens⁹. What Job classifies as a dearth of artistic responsibility, Regis, Liverpool and Clarke recognise as a salient element of calypso's 'all-important immunity' which is still obtained in the performance of this musical genre, thus reinforcing the duality, within this music:

This licence (artistic immunity) is reinforced by the historical Trinidadian attitude to authority figures who exist, in the public mind, to be praised, lobbied, hectored and "put in their place". Therefore, the relationship between calypso and politics is defined by popular tradition and guaranteed by the special immunity enjoyed by the calypsonian in performance. The enormous divide between definition and guarantee is mediated in practice by the calypsonian's projection as artist, his sensitivities to the relatedness of political direction and the quality of life, and his determination of the bounds of propriety. These social variables plus the individual qualities of talent, intelligence, experience and exposure make for differences in the way in which calypsonians respond to political happenings and in so doing ensure a wide range of opinion and style in the political calypso (Regis, 1993, p. 6).

Additionally, both Liverpool and Clarke share similar sentiments to those of Regis, on this poetic license of the calypsonian. In his capacity as a calypsonian, Liverpool reinforces the calypsonian's right to sing. He perceives this right to be 'part of the tradition of calypso'.

However, he raises a significant point: the erosion of the art within this art form. He believes that this is largely due to the demand for public recognition:

... A lot of people have lost the art of calypso. Many people in hoping to reach the Savannah, have focused on calypsos which are distasteful [as opposed to being artful]. Some calypsonians believe that if they sing in puns and double entendre, rather than in the straightforward way that is increasingly becoming the norm, the society will not 'get it' (TTT, 1997).

⁹Dr. Hollis Liverpool and Leroi Clarke, together with Mr. Satnarine Maharaj comprised the panel discussing the topic, 'Calypso- divider or not' on the Trinidadian documentary, *Issues Live*. Dr. Liverpool, is a Director of Culture at the Ministry of Culture in T&T; an historian and he is also the calypsonian known as *Chalkdust*. Leroi Clarke is an artist and an authority on the calypso art form.

Leroi Clarke also is noted as saying, “we should not take a linear or cycloptic view of things. We have to look at the wider nature or larger picture. Calypso is a valid voice rooted in the African Experience. It is a way of expressing yourself”(TTT, 1997).

Both sides of this debate can claim validity on some levels. What is more important a concern for this thesis is Chalkdust’s observation. His acknowledgement of, and reasons for the move away from the double-entendre art that typified calypso in the past, to the calypsonian’s tendency to be increasingly straightforward and brazen in their political commentary is not unfounded. I agree with his justification that calypsonians sing in this fashion, perhaps to mirror their interpretation of the social and political realities of the nation, but also ‘getting to the Savannah’ to be eligible to compete for the title of Calypso Monarch and to receive the many material and financial prizes, additionally plays a key role in influencing the topicality of the songs. Chalkdust remarks that “this is the type of thing that people want to hear. They want to hear the calypsonian lambaste the government and those in power”(Ibid). In other words, these types of calypsos gain popularity and are consequently more commercially viable.

What is interesting is that in wanting to distinguish the authenticity of their art form, many calypsonians accuse soca artistes of ‘selling out’ by being consumed with the financial gains to be made from performing aesthetically pleasing material. It would seem, however, that these same calypsonians can be described as being guilty of the same crime. An examination of this and other aspects of the ambivalence of the music will be dealt with later on. For now, we will briefly discuss the dilemma occurring within soca music.

SOCA- CONSEQUENCES OF COMMERCIALIZATION

The core of this discussion on soca versus calypso music continues largely along the same divide of political commentary versus pleasurable commodity, but focuses more on the ramifications of commercialization in soca music. Advocates of old-time calypso (earlier forms of calypso) nostalgically reflect upon the essence of their older calypsos. They relish the idea that calypso was meant to remain as it was in the past: soothing melodies, cool tones, something that could be listened to in a relaxing manner. Advocates of soca, believe that this is the music of Trinidad's future. Exploding with a vibrancy parallel to that of an energetic samba, pulsating with Afro-Caribbean beats and more recently, blending with the infectious rhythm of an Indo-Trinidadian sound.

Louis Regis notes these two positions in his thesis on Trinidadian popular music:

... the calypsonians of conscience and consciousness have crystallized their commitment as guardians of an authentic tradition of popular education and social responsibility, an argument that the adherents of apolitical dance calypso [soca] have rebutted in a spirit of friendly rivalry (1993, p. 5).

Even the older generation of calypsonians hold conflicting views on this debate. Some believe that 'calypso, Trinidad and Tobago's vintage art form, is being lost in the hour- glass of time' (SC, 1997, p. 26). Samuel Abraham, age 56, better known by his stage name as calypsonian Brigo can attest to sharing this opinion. In an interview with one of the local newspapers, he says, "the vintage in calypso is dying a miserable death"(Ibid, p. 26). He believes that this sad state of affairs is occurring due to the fact that there is a greater demand for 'party tunes' and less of a demand for the older style of the musical art form. Even though this is debatable, there does seem to be a trend towards soca's wide acceptance on not only a local level, but also in an

international arena as well. Consequently, it is the soca acts and records that are being requested and from which the money is being made on a wider scope, as opposed to its comparatively dwindling counterpart, calypso:

The partying tunes belong to carnival, and foreigners
are employing party-calypsonians [and soca artistes]
to make money (SC, 1997, p. 26).

This is due in large measure to calypso's specific topicality: the meanings captured by the calypsonians in the lyrics escape the listener if they are ignorant to the local narratives in the Trinidadian society. Comparatively, it is not necessary to understand the meanings of the lyrics of soca, because it is its infectious beat that lures one to appreciate this genre of carnival music. Added to this is the undisputed fact that soca has a more luring appeal to the younger generation. In a letter to the editor in another newspaper, it was observed that:

... Calypsonians over forty years of age no longer have a strong influence on party music. Just recently Baron, Crazy Duke, Aloes, Kitch and Sparrow¹⁰ were in control, but not any more. Even the radio deejays over forty are having problems relating to this new, fresh sound of youth. For the first time in Caribbean history the young generation has a preference for their own over North American music. Stand tall youths of the Caribbean (Dore, 1997, p. 9).

The implications of Dore's observation is that the up-coming generation of music makers and music listeners are indeed challenging the ideas of what they consider to be their preferred music. These ideas are even critiquing the styles of older calypsonians who were once the innovators and rebels of carnival music. Perhaps this trend can be seen as a manifestation of the

¹⁰Baron, Crazy, Duke, Aloes, Kitch and Sparrow are all stage names for some of the talented calypsonians in T&T.

younger generations' opposition against conventional ideas of what should constitute carnival music. Maybe these youth are now the ones criticizing what were the accepted and dominant notions of carnival music, which are the ideas of calypso music perceived by and expounded upon by some of the older generation of calypsonians.

Yet, despite this, there are those like the world-renowned, Mighty Sparrow (Slinger Francisco), who even though belonging to the older generation can examine the perpetual conflict between soca and calypso, from a more pragmatic approach. In an interview with another local periodical, this calypsonian remarks, "this thing about party tune and serious calypso will always be around, but you cannot expect people to dance in a fete to a serious calypso. These guys are [sic] writing tunes for a market. This is a business, you know" (Duke-Westfield, 1997, p. 2). Though it may be more complex than this on further examination, the argument is simplified as it is perceived to be a 'toss-up' between music for art or music for money.

What one sees now is another set of significant questions raised in Sparrow's comment: he is convinced that the debate between calypso and soca is not necessary as they each serve specific functions for the society. Calypso is used as the medium for social and political commentary and soca is used as the genre to indulge in that aesthetic escapism. I agree with Sparrow's distinction in so much that it justifies the existence of specific functions of these musical genres. However, I believe that a more involved analysis can be extracted from carnival music, specifically dealing with the varying ways in which it is manipulated to ambivalently critique the dominant ideology of the ruling power-bloc.

In this chapter I have tried to lay the foundation of some of the intricacies that surround the on-going discussion of and reactions toward the two genres of carnival music that will be examined in this thesis. I have presented this information in the form of an historical narrative and will now proceed to my case study which is a 'thick description' of the Trinidadian carnival. The reason for this transition from an historical description of the development of carnival music to a detailed description of the Trinbagonian carnival is to provide the reader with a background knowledge of the context in which both calypso and soca are deeply rooted. Carnival and its music are demonstrative of the Trinidadian culture. John Fiske (1989a) notes that the meanings of cultural texts are activated when they are placed in a social/cultural relationship. By examining the carnival event, the practices within it and its musical component, I hope to demonstrate how they are used as different sites at which the development of meaning can be achieved. Finally, this development of meaning is examined within the context of hegemony. Hegemony aims to examine the common sense or the 'taken for grantedness' of things. My objective is to analyse calypso and soca as sites of struggle between different ideologies resulting in the ambivalent characteristic of this music.

Chapter 4: THE TRINIDAD CARNIVAL

In this chapter, I am presenting a ‘thick description of the Trinbagonian carnival, a term borrowed from Gilbert Ryle as is used in The Interpretation of Cultures by Clifford Geertz. ‘Thick description’ is used as a simile for ethnography (Geertz, 1973). According to Geertz, the ethnographer’s objective is an attempt to grasp and then decipher the innumerable intricacies of a specific aspect of culture: it is a look at distinguishing facets of a cultural practice and an attempt to capture the meanings behind them. This is a formidable task due to the manifold layers of complex structures of meaning that are woven together to form a single cultural element. Geertz states:

What the ethnographer is in fact faced with . . . is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular and inexplicit and which he must contrive somehow to first grasp and then to render (1973, p. 10).

There are four main characteristics of ‘thick description’: it is interpretive; it interprets the flow of social discourse; it concretizes things that are said and done by writing them down, and finally, it tends to examine aspects of a micro-level rather than of a macro-level (Ibid, p. 20).

The methodology employed in the data gathering of ethnographic research can be: establishing rapport, interviewing informants, taking genealogies, observing rituals, transcribing texts, writing in a journal etc. (Ibid, p. 10). As previously stated, the methods of data gathering employed in this thesis were, observing rituals, transcribing texts and interviewing informants. However, the actions of utilizing these techniques are not as important in ‘thick description’ as is the principal question that an ethnographer asks and answers: if human behaviour is seen as symbolic action, then what is it that is getting said through its agency and through its occurrence. In other words, the aim of attempting a thick description is to clarify what goes on in such

foreign places, to reduce the puzzlement of issues that are at first glance, unfamiliar and strange (Ibid, p. 10).

I hope that this attempt at a first-order anthropological writing i.e., an interpretation made by a 'native', helps to illuminate the goings-on that occur within the carnival period in Trinidad and Tobago. As Geertz reminds us:

If anthropological interpretation is constructing a reading of what happens, then to divorce it from what happens- from what, in this time or that place, specific people say, what they do, what is done to them, from the whole vast business of the world- is to divorce it from its applications and render it vacant (1973, p. 18).

I have emphasized the happenings in Trinidad as compared to Tobago because most, if not all, of the major events occur on this half of the twin Island Republic. This is a look at the Trinidad carnival in all its lively splendour and glory, but also following in the tradition of 'thick description', I hope to achieve a more complete and critical portrayal of a national's outlook on what is said and done in this that they call 'the greatest show' on earth - Carnival, Trini Style!

SETTING THE STAGE

The carnival celebrations in Trinidad and Tobago begin from December 26 of the preceding year and continue for approximately the next two months only to climax with the dawn of Ash Wednesday when the Christian season of Lent commences. This time frame spanning two months is known as the carnival season. The actual carnival week-end consists of the weekend prior to and including, the Carnival Monday and Shrove Tuesday, before Ash Wednesday.

There are three salient aspects of the Trinbagonian culture. The first is the roles of gossip, humour or *picong* as employed within the Trinidadian context; the second deals with the Trinbagonian's characteristic carefree outlook on life, which for many espouse the ideal that *feting* and partying takes precedence over all else. This stems partly from the Trinidadian's tacit conceptualization of time or lack thereof, especially during, but not limited to, the carnival season; the third is the Trinbagonian's zeal for 'liming'.

The art of gossip, together with humour and *picong* are an intricate part of the Trinidadian lifestyle. Although at the local level, many tend to vilify the tendencies towards gossiping, as evidenced by the pejorative terms used to describe it such as: 'mauvais-langue'; 'bad-mouthing' and 'bad-talking', it remains a tremendously popular pastime (Ballantyne, 1997). The word 'picong' comes from the french word 'piquant' which means cutting or stinging. In its local usage, it means 'a tease'. It is the hallmark of the Trinbagonian to hurl jokes at one another all in good nature . . . most of the time, anyway. It is these pastimes perfected to an art, that play a pivotal role in many of the calypsos and soca tunes, as they are employed to both criticize and defend the ruling social and political regimes of the country.

The second characteristic code of the Trinbagonian lifestyle manifests itself in their carefree and laid-back attitude towards life. Many of them exemplify this attitude especially during the carnival season. So well-known is this sentiment that there is a local saying that goes 'Sunday could fall on a Monday but they don't care'. Added to this nonchalant way of looking at things is the Trini's conceptualization of time: rule number one in these paradise isles, especially in this season is to pay little attention to time. The emphasis is placed instead on relaxing, letting all one's cares drift away and allowing oneself to be consumed by all that is the carnival

ambience. As poet and playwright Derek Walcott explains, “carnival is all that is claimed for it. It is exultation of the mass will, its hedonism is so sacred that to withdraw from it, not to jump up, to be a contemplative outside of its frenzy is a heresy ”(in Dewitt & Wilan, 1993 p. 20).

The final code that one should be familiar with is the obsession that Trinidadians and Tobagonians have for ‘liming’. This is locally referred to as the greatest of the Trinbagonian’s pastimes. To ‘lime’ is to spend time talking, laughing, drinking, watching the women go by or doing any other activity in the company of friends. It originally referred to men spending time doing all of these things in the environment of the local bars or ‘rum shops’. Today, liming is done by women and men at the clubs, at fetes (parties), in the rum shops, while playing sports, at the beach, down the islands, at home, everywhere. However, the connotation can still have pejorative meanings as it can also be associated with unfettered idleness.

These can be seen as the three most rudimentary concepts in the Trinbagonian lifestyle. From the above description, one can formulate a set of interesting questions to keep in mind as one looks beyond the curtain of pageantry and merriment to uncover ambivalent meanings in the structures of the practices and musical component of the Trinidadian carnival. However, the two most significant of these questions would ask is carnival wholly a manifestation of the masses or are there underlying structures indicating otherwise? Through the various customs and conventions of this season can one identify aspects of the dominant ideology being co-opted and incorporated into the ideology of the masses or the unsuspecting revellers? Keeping these issues in mind, I will now proceed to examine an extensive account of what occurs within the practices of this carnival celebration.

THE TRINBAGONIAN FETE

The origin of carnival is a debatable one. Some say that carnival can be traced to the rites of Bacchus, the god of mischief, in ancient Greece. Others say that it was derived from its position in the Christian calendar, for the word itself means ‘farewell to the flesh’ and marks the approach of Lent and its sober disciplines (Rhythm and Release, 1996). Still others allude to its French roots in the *bals masques* introduced by the Roman Catholic French planters at the end of the 18th century (Lee, 1997, p. 18). However, whatever its origin, carnival today is a colourful expression of a nation’s collective, cosmopolitan identity. As they say in Trinidad and Tobago, “is we ting”.

As mentioned in previous chapters, there are certain events or practices that are recommended that one attends or in which one should participate in order to truly conceptualise of the nature of carnival. Perhaps the most obvious of these would be to experience the numerous carnival fetes that occur at this time. They comprise of both private parties at private residences or at rented clubs, for which tickets are distributed beforehand to a select crowd. There are also public fetes hosted at specific venues to which anyone can attend.

The carnival fete is a large party that can either be held in the daytime or at night, in the open-air or indoors. Usually there is a wide sampling of many local foods; another local pastime that is feverishly practised here is the art of consuming. In this nation anyone can consume alcohol almost anywhere: on the beach, on the streets, outside one’s home and so on. At the fetes, there is both live performances by bands and calypsonians and also by DJs who play an enjoyable blend of the most popular carnival tunes of the season and those of carnivals past.

The ambience at a carnival fete is one which exudes pure festivity and frivolity. Men and women drink, 'wine' (to dance in a sexy, gyrating manner) and 'free up' or 'get on bad' (basically enjoy oneself by shedding one's inhibitions). A typical evening at a fete may unfold as follows:

... Finally, after having been in line for a short while, you enter the gates at the fete's entrance. Immediately you are met with a blast of soca music blaring from one of the numerous speakers. Gradually, all the worries of your reality seem to slowly fade away, even if they are merely suspended for this period of gaiety. The pulsating rhythm beckons you to the dance floor, to join the other merrymakers in their carefree world. Your body cannot help but be overcome by the exotic, electrifying and intoxicating sounds that is carnival music: from the cool, rhythmic beat of the calypso, to the hot, up-beat tunes of soca, to the distinctive blend of the East Indian contribution, chutney music, to the more youth-oriented, ragga soca, they all do their part in presenting a symphonic blend that is undoubtedly singular to any other musical experience that you will ever have the pleasure of being enveloped by.

After having a couple of Caribs (the national beer of Trinidad and Tobago) to 'loosen' you up, you gradually make your way to the dance floor. The DJ has begun to work the crowd now. He plays popular mixes of soca and calypso tunes that seem to get the crowd going. A group of young people seem to be enjoying themselves tremendously as they bump and grind on each other to the beat of this captivating music. This seems a bit lewd at first, but on further observation, you realise that almost everyone dances like this and it is indeed an accepted code of behaviour. So, you join in the merriment and are aware that for you and your company, this is just the Trinidadian's way of 'freeing-up' or having a good time.

Yet there is another side to the carnival fete: one that is not so full of gaiety. Within the confines of the fete, where there are people galore (numerous) there is also an environment which can be a drug-dealer's haven or a prostitute's rendezvous. People attend these fetes for a myriad of reasons: the majority use it as a means of socialising, meeting new people, spending time with friends, etc, during carnival time.

There are those however, who, as previously mentioned, use the carefree ambience and mass-concentration of persons to the best of their advantage to peddle their drugs and sell their bodies. In fact, it is most common to detect the smell of marijuana or hemp in the air or observe local women seductively enticing both local and foreign men with the aim of 'conquering' them before the night is through. However, those who are not involved in partaking of such vices, pay little heed to it and continue to drink, dance and be merry: a reflection of the true Trinbagonian's attitude of 'nothing gets in the way of a good fete' or enjoying oneself.

As the saying goes, 'time passes quickly when you are having fun' and before you realise, six hours have passed since you first entered the fete. Reluctantly, people are beginning to filter out of the party. Their shirts drenched, their feet aching, (indicators of a good fete) some sober, some not, but all are 'high' on the great time they have just experienced. You leave too, tired but rejuvenated in the

¹To 'loosen up' means to relax oneself.

thought that this is just the beginning of the carnival season and there are 'fetes-a-plenty'² to attend, not to mention all the other spectacular events you have yet to witness³.

From this account there are several things that need to be clarified. Firstly, the consumption of alcohol is not regulated as strictly as it is in North America. There are no legal restrictions for or enforcement of people under the age of twenty one or nineteen to consume alcoholic beverages like there are in both the United States and in Canada. There can be no suspension of laws concerning alcohol consumption, during carnival or at any other time, because it is the responsibility of the people, specifically families, rather than the state's to determine the regulations of alcohol consumption.

Secondly, concerning the wide availability of illegal substances, especially in surroundings like fetes: Even though some party-goers choose to indulge in smoking marijuana, hemp or 'weed', this does not indicate social acceptance by all of society. Drug-peddling and drug use is illegal, regardless of whether it is carnival or not, and is punishable by incarceration

²The number of fetes that an individual attends varies according to innumerable factors. Attending a fete is indeed part of the carnival experience, but it is not compulsory in any way. This is a party and as such, one's presence there is circumscribed by such criteria as personal mood- do you feel like partying, availability of funds- do you have the money to spend on a night out, who are the other people going, who are the DJs, etc. The number of fetes are innumerable, when considering all the different types of fetes that there are: public, private, fetes at hotels, restaurants, band launchings, etc. Perhaps the best indicator that I can give concerning the number of fetes that one may typically attend during the carnival season is to say, as many as you can go to, until you become saturated with partying.

³This italicized narrative and those that follow are an attempt to provide the reader with an idea of an actual setting of specific events and practices during the carnival season. These narratives are a compilation of personal experiences and observations of the writer. These illustrations are presented from a distinctly separate perspective (that of a national), employing the use of colloquial language and elaborate descriptions in order to effectively capture and efficiently portray a realistic depiction of what occurs at this time.

and fines. However, it should be noted that adherence to and enforcement of these laws are not always pursued.

BAND LAUNCHINGS

Band launchings are another type of fete. A band is a group of people or masqueraders who come together for the carnival season to *play mas*, i.e., wear costumes and have an enjoyable time by dancing, singing in the streets and on stage and basically doing whatever else they desire, in this season of total abandonment so characteristic of the T&T carnival.

Most band launchings start taking place just before Christmas and are basically another type of party, but the difference comes from the fact that it is here that all the masqueraders (people who will dance in the streets wearing costumes on carnival Monday and Tuesday, i.e., *play mas*) within that particular band congregate to meet each other, see the costumes that they will choose to wear, meet the band leader and their respective section leaders, eat, drink and once again, dance and have fun together.

Band launchings can also be seen as an event which showcases what that particular band is offering, by way of thematic presentation, costumes, accompanying musical performances by music artists, who for the carnival season will play for that band in particular. In every other way, band launchings are exactly like fetes. They are just another opportunity to get energized and prepare oneself for the coming weeks of non-stop feting, liming and unchecked uninhibitedness.

MAS CAMPS⁴

One significant factor contributing to the spectacle of T&T's carnival is that it springs directly from the people and is not controlled by the government or private industry (Dewitt & Wilan, 1993). Rather thirty to forty clubs devote themselves to the designing and creating of the thousands of carnival costumes used in the respective bands. These are *Mas Camps*. Mas camps can be found scattered across the country but are usually concentrated in the nation's capital, Port-of-Spain. Each camp has hundreds of loyal members and the ranks swell up to as many as three thousand people during carnival when friends and tourists sign up to *play mas* and the club becomes a band (Ibid, p. 19).

The carnival process begins with research. After the subject or theme is decided, the mas camp must research their costume designs to ensure that they are authentic representations (Ibid, p. 19). The camps are open nightly and many months before the actual carnival fever hits the nation, one can see a vast array of people working diligently on costumes. These 'artists' come from all walks of life and are there primarily on a volunteer basis: they are tailors, carpenters, wire-benders, welders, bankers, doctors, lawyers and just about anyone else who loves and appreciates the art of *making mas* (creating costumes). The atmosphere during the carnival period can only be described as a whirlwind of chaotic excitement, high spirits and an explosion of colour and music and nowhere is this more evident than in the mas camp itself. A night at the mas camp during the carnival season may unfold as follows:

It is 9:00 pm and the mas camp is still a beehive of activity. People are working feverishly on the costumes that have to all be completed within the next 72 hours. They are occupied with the glueing of the thousands of iridescent sequins that will adorn each and every outfit. Some last-minute costumes are now

⁴"Mas' is the contracted form for Masquerade.

being sown together. A group of men are putting the final touches on what appears to be the costume for the 'King' of their band. There are several tables scattered all around the building. Each is covered with staffs, cloth, finished costumes, beads, feathers, etc, all of an uniform colour which indicates the section to which they belong. As you look upwards, something grabs your attention: it is the beautifully ornate headpieces and matching boots that hang from a make-shift line spanning the entire length of the camp. You want to enquire about one of the costumes, but the soca music is so loud, you can barely hear yourself think!

You look around for the people that you came with and you see them gathered around a group of four men who seem to be playing a game of cards. As you approach, you hear one of the men shout out, "Ah hang yuh jack," and he slaps a high-five to the guy opposite him (his playing partner). The game, 'all-fours' is a well-loved pastime here in Trinidad, especially among the men, who sometimes become overly passionate about it. Your friends offer you an ice-cold Carib, (whose taste you have grown particularly fond of) and invite you to partake of some of the food that someone has voluntarily prepared. You grab a chair (one of the few not covered with costume paraphanelia) and eat and drink, all the while listening to the calypso that seems to be the major stimulant keeping these people awake, as they work well into the early hours of the morning.

The carnival bands sometimes vary in size depending on the category to which they belong: small, medium or large. This is determined by the number of people who will actually be playing in the band i.e., dancing through the streets in costume on Carnival Monday and Tuesday. There are approximately thirty-five or more carnival bands in Trinidad and Tobago. All bands are divided into sections, the technical term used to signify the supporting themes for the band's main concept for that year. There can be one or two sections consisting of a hundred persons (for the smaller bands) or several sections comprising three thousand persons (for the larger bands). Each section represents a single facet of the main theme of the band. For example, one of the larger and more popular bands for the 1996 carnival was called 'Poison'. Its presentation was entitled, 'Utopia'. This band was comprised of fourteen sections as well as three special additions. The names of some of the sections were: Feathered Frenzy; This Illusion; Papillon; Showers of Gold and Water Nymphs.

Another important factor concerning carnival masquerade bands such as the one belonging to the world- renowned, 'Peter Minshall,' 'Poison' and 'Barbarossa,' to name only a

few is the fact that all these bands have their select DJs and live music bands. For example, music for the band Barbarossa comes from groups like Massive Shandileer, Traffik and DJ Hurricane George, whereas Poison prefers the sounds of the groups, Second Imij and Xtatik as well as DJs Rene, Hurricane George, Simply Smooth and Wendell. The choice of the musical bands is also calculated into the cost of 'playing mas': in other words, to play mas with the more popular masquerade bands may be more costly because you are also paying to 'play mas' to the accompaniment of some of the more popular DJs and music bands. These music bands have their loyal following⁵ and some carnival bands continually have the same DJs and music groups year after year, while other bands prefer to sample the wide selection of extraordinarily talented people who perform out there.

The mas camp is the site at which all the designing and creating of the beautiful costumes occurs. The costumes are exceptionally elaborate and are made from wire, brilliantly hued feathers, lots of brightly coloured sequins, recyclable plastic, explosive shades of coloured cloth, beads, inexpensive leather, wheels, bamboo and anything else that the artists' imagination can conceive of to ensure a spectacular visual effect. The average cost for a carnival costume ranges from approximately 200 dollars to 800 dollars in the local currency, approximately 40 to 150 U.S. dollars. This cost is calculated on the size of the band and its popularity and it is perhaps the single most costly expense that one would incur for the festivities.

⁵A music or masquerade band's 'loyal following' is that group of people who will not play with any other mas camp because they may feel a sense of obligation to the band that they have played with for many years. Perhaps they is due to the high standard of creative artistry in the band's presentation, or maybe because one's friends and family play with a particular band or for any other personal preferences. Likewise, music bands or music groups such as Xtatik or Chinese Laundry also have their loyal following, largely for similar reasons.

There are three main categories of costumes: there are the Kings and Queens costumes, the individual costumes and finally, the masqueraders' costumes. Each band has a King and Queen (some bands have two each) which are the symbolic leaders of the entire band. Both costumes reflect the main theme of the band and are much larger in size and greater in creative elaboration than the other types of costumes. They are always mobile as they have to be paraded on stage by one individual in each. The entire construction must be comparatively light-weight as it is not an easy task to *play mas* with anything heavy on one's body.

The 'individual costume' is larger than the costumes that the masqueraders wear, but it is smaller than the King's or Queen's costume. This costume competes for the Best Individual presentation and is often sponsored by other individuals who wish to compete for this title in the aforementioned category. It is also mobile as its frame is supported by wheels, thus enabling the wearer to move to the musical rhythms more efficiently.

Finally, there are those costumes worn by the thousands of masqueraders themselves. These are light-weight and are multi-coloured. The costume itself is usually comprised of one or two pieces, not unlike a swimsuit. The suits are embellished with beautifully decorated beads, multi-coloured netting, intricate trimming, feathers, sequins and other paraphanelia. Accompanying these costumes are exquisite and elaborate head-pieces and comfortable boots or sneakers that have been previously spray-painted to match the entire ensemble. To complete the outfit, there are 'stuffs,' which are tall poles that are also decorated and used to *jump and wave*. However, not all costumes are required to have this element.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS: CALYPSO TENTS, COMPETITIONS & STEELPAN.

Calypso tents are not tents at all (even though in the early days they were, simply because that was all that could be afforded by the owner at that time) but rather, they are hall-like structures. Calypso tents, such as Calypso Spektakula, Calypso Revue, Kaiso House and Calypso Showcase stage shows nightly throughout the carnival season and sometimes you can see up to twenty calypso and soca artistes perform in one evening. The atmosphere is a relaxed one in which friendly banter and entertaining commentary by the performers is expected. During the carnival season, a visit to any of the calypso tents may be described as follows:

As you enter the tent you take your seat in one of the chairs arranged in a concert style formation. Everyone seems to be eagerly awaiting the show's commencement. The air is filled with noisy chatter of excited patrons, and by now, familiar tunes of the season's most popular calypsos. The moment has arrived! Everyone has taken their seats except for a few late-comers who scurry in to occupy the last few vacant ones.

As the MC (master of ceremonies) walks onstage, the ambience becomes even more convivial. The host for this evening is the charmingly jocular, Tommy Joseph: comedian extra ordinaire. His reputation for bringing alive any gathering with his style of spicy adult comedy tempered with the local art of mamaguying (talking of sweet nothings usually but not exclusively to the women) precedes him. He performs his repertoire of jokes and throws good-hearted picong to his regular victims: members of the government, both local and international; prominent persons in the economic sector and anyone or anything else which has been newsworthy in the recent past. The crowd has a 'field day' (a great time) with his act: Tommy never fails to amuse them. However, as is typical in T&T, nothing starts on-time, and he continues his performance for a while longer. Finally the MC introduces the first performer and the crowd gets up from their chairs, clapping and rooting for one of their favourite artistes, who answers to the name of Baron. . .

Several hours have passed since the show's commencement . . . The night has been an enjoyable one indeed. You have witnessed some of the more traditional practitioners of the art of calypso and perhaps, become more acquainted with the manner in which humour is used to mitigate the daily goings-on in this Trinidadian culture. Artistes like, David Rudder, Stalin, Sparrow, Cro-Cro, Chalkdust and Shadow have all done their part in affording you a glimpse into the soul of the Trinidadian here tonight.

Carnival is not only about enjoyment and unchecked frivolity. There is amid all the gaiety and fun-filled excitement, a state of serious competition for a number of impressive titles. There are numerous competitions: the Calypso Monarch competition, the Calypso Queen competition, the Soca Monarch, the Extempo King competition. There are also chutney-soca

competitions throughout the weeks before carnival. There is also judging for the Junior Calypso Competition, Young Kings competition, Kiddies Carnival, Junior Carnival King and Queen, Panorama and other steelband events, Old Time Carnival, which includes the stick fighting competition and the Traditional Characters competition, titles for the Road March, Best of the J'ouvert bands, Band of the Year and finally, the Best Individual, King and Queen of the masquerade bands.

Each competition has its particular judging requisites and goes through stages of preliminaries, quarter-finals, semi-finals and finals, both at the junior and national levels. The final stages of most of these competitions occur within the last weekend before carnival. The only exceptions to this are the Calypso Monarch competition, the Best Individual and King and Queen of the Masquerade bands, which take place on the Sunday before Carnival Monday and Tuesday, known as *Dimanche Gras* (literally French for 'fat Sunday').

A panyard is usually an outdoor locale where the steelband players rehearse and perfect the art of 'playing pan'. These musical bands, such as, *Renegades*, *Desperadoes*, or *Exodus*, to name just a few can be comprised of up to 130 pannists whose main goal is to triumph at the year's most prestigious and keenly-fought musical contest, the national steelband competition, called 'Panorama', which is held throughout the carnival season. The instrument itself, the steelpan has been hailed as the only new acoustic musical instrument invented in this century:

Rhythm and percussion were always a part of carnival. Formerly, these needs were satisfied by African drums, and by 'Tamboo Bamboo' - the practice of beating various lengths of bamboo against each other, or on the roadway to produce different resonances. When African drums were banned, during World War Two, they were first replaced by large, (loud!) biscuit tins. But a ready supply of discarded oil-drums soon made this the instrument of choice. Once again, a variety of notes was demanded, this time achieved by heating and distorting the drum-ends, and thus the principle of steelpan was born.

And so, from the early two-note basses, known as 'doo-doops', a wonderful artistry has now evolved tenor pans with up to 25 crystal clear notes. Where once all pans were carried around the neck, nowadays, (since the 1960s), an entire steelband, up to 130 strong, is transported on wheels, pushed to glory by its adoring supporters (Rhythm & Release, 1996).

As typical of the various competitions during carnival time, the Panorama competition also has several stages, the 'finals' of which are held at the Queen's Park Savannah. The 'Panorama finals' falls on the Saturday of the carnival weekend and offers the onlooker an inimitable celebration of sound and sight as the pannists perform their rendition of a contemporary calypso or an uniquely composed tune, with both rhythm and dynamics at fever pitch. It is at this time when the most skilled steelbands vie in an epic struggle to claim the prestigious title of that carnival's *Panorama champions*.

Within the last few weeks before the carnival weekend, the majority of the competitions go through their respective phases at varying venues. Some competitions are held in Port-of-Spain, the country's capital city, while others are held in the Southern part of the island at another site called, Skinner Park.

In the early 1990s, a new and interesting event was added to the ranks of the numerous carnival competitions which judge music. These are the 'chutney-soca' competitions which take place throughout the carnival season. 'Chutney' music possesses East Indian roots but is moulded into something uniquely Trinidadian. 'Chutney-soca' is a blend of music with both Indian undertones and rhythms characteristic of up-beat soca music. The instruments used are 'tassa drums' (large drums that emit a distinct sound usually associated with Indo-Trinidadian music), bells, brass gongs, Indian flutes, steelpanns and other conventional instruments. The lyrics of these melodies are also a mixture of both English and colloquial Indian words. However,

those who do not understand the meaning of the songs are usually not too concerned, for it is the energetic beat that makes this music universally pleasing.

No one is excluded from the festivities of carnival. On Saturday morning, the streets of Port-of-Spain are filled with children's masquerade bands. They dance and sway to the energetic melodies while parading under the hot sun in brilliantly designed costumes and strutting their young national pride in all its kaleidoscopic pageantry. These bands are similar to their adult counterparts in that they too must compete for the titles of Junior Carnival King and Queen and Best Kiddies Carnival Band of the Year. Likewise, with respect to the musical facet of carnival, there is also that competition which judges the young talent of Trinidad and Tobago as they sing, perform and ultimately compete for the Junior Calypso King and Queen titles.

DIMANCHE GRAS

On *Dimanche Gras* an all-day event takes place at the Queen's Park Savannah. This *Dimanche Gras* show includes competitions for the titles of Calypso Monarch, Carnival King and Queen and Best Individual costume.

Throughout the entire carnival season, each masquerade band's King and Queen costumes would have been entering the preliminary, quarter-final and semi-final stages of the Carnival King and Queen competition. Those costumes that would have successfully completed the respective stages and have thus made it this far will now go on to compete in the final stage at the *Dimanche Gras* Show. The following illustration portrays what occurs at the *Dimanche Gras* show:

... Tonight, the air is cool. The stands (temporary seating construction erected specifically for the carnival season) are full of restless Trinians and eager tourists, all awaiting the appearance of the first of the contestants in the Carnival King's category. As you wait, you enjoy the rhythm of the various music samples of calypso, soca, chutney, rapso and ragga-soca: tonight, everything gets represented. All of this time spent waiting makes you feel hungry and who can blame you, after all, it is nearly 7:00 pm. So you leave your seat and decide to explore the various vendors scattered around the park hoping to indulge both your curiosity and your hunger cravings.

The first few people you encounter are selling tasty local wares: freshly roasted peanuts from an apparently popular 'nuts-man', named Jumbo. He asks you, "salt or fresh," indicating that he has both salted and unsalted peanuts. You decide to go for something a bit more substantial, so you follow the line of 'food-shacks' littered about the grounds. Ah yes, these aromas are familiar to you by now: they are the popular Indian delicacies of 'roti'⁶ and 'doubles'.⁷ Or perhaps you may sample the sweet confections with names like, gulab jamoon, jelaby and kurma or try a coconut ice- called a Chip-Chip Sugar cake or finely grated coconut boiled with molasses, rolled into balls, called 'Tullum'. All are great energizers.

You also see a woman selling 'pelau', (the Trinidad version of pilaff, made with rice, meat and a peas mixture, simmered and steamed in coconut milk with many herbs and spices) or roasted and boiled corn. You smell the wafting green scent of coriander or shado-bene, identifying a tempting corn soup. It is the pan-player's staple. With dumplings and split peas, Cream of Wheat and segments of corn. It's instant gratification or maybe you feel like trying 'Crab and callaloo' - a soup made from the leaves of the dasheen-bush, simmered in coconut milk with okra, pumpkin, various seasonings and crab. What a vast array of tantalizing morsels. It's difficult to choose but you opt for the pelau.

Now all you need is something cold to drink: choose from a selection of citrus juices, orange, grapefruit, tangerine. There is rum and coke, wine coolers, beers, ales and stouts. Rums of red, gold and white. But nothing quenches the thirst better in Trinidad, especially during Carnival time than an ice-cold 'coconut-water' (life-fluid in a fibre-packing), sold by the innumerable 'coconut-vendors' along the side of the road. The vendor chooses a large nut from his cart brimming with yellow and green coconuts. He then very deftly splits the top open with his cutlass or machete, and offers it to you. You realise that there are no cups or straws in sight and wonder how to consume the fruit. He instructs you to place the nut itself to your lips and drink. The taste is heavenly and refreshingly cool. Get the nut split open and spoon out the quivering, glistening, sweet, white plasma or jelly. Swallow with a gulp- Delicious! (Rastapha 1, 1997, p.10)

Now that you have thoroughly satisfied your baser needs, you re-enter the stands and take your seat as the first King's costume from Peter Minshall's 1996 band's portrayal of 'Song of the Earth' begins to parade across the stage in a vibrant display of explosive colour and dance. The

⁶Roti is a food of East Indian origin. However it has become Trinidad's most popular indigenous fast food. Basically it is a meal that consists of curried vegetables and meats wrapped in a soft casing of dough.

⁷Doubles is another local snack. It too is made of soft dough, usually fried until golden. The dough, also known as 'bara' is served in two halves and is used to 'sandwich' a delicious mixture of spices and curried garbanzo beans or 'channa'.

night continues with many more detailed and expressive Kings' and Queens' costumes. The next segment of this pageant offers the audience undoubtedly amusing and caustic commentary on a wide selection of topics as the winner of the 'Extempo competition', which took place the Friday before takes the stage and indulges in a display of witty, entertaining and spontaneous socio-political commentary. The Extempo competition is the arena in which calypsonians attempt to outmanoeuvre one another as they musically engage in a battle of words in order to become that year's reigning Extempo Monarch.

During the carnival season, the calypso tents house and display the talents of some of the most popular calypsonians and soca artistes. This is their forum from which they are able to send their message via song, to the public. From the many calypso tents scattered across the island, twenty four artists are selected to vie for the title of that year's Calypso Monarch. From these twenty four artists, ten are chosen to compete in the finals which are held tonight at the Dimanche Gras Show. These ten calypsonians will challenge the reigning Calypso Monarch and vie for his title. They are expected to perform two songs each, which will then eliminate them one by one and finally, just one contender will remain to compete with the existing Calypso Monarch for his title. The Dimanche Gras is coming to an end and with the dawn comes the commencement of another stage of this festival:

The show has come to an end. You follow the hundreds of people all trying to exit the Savannah. Some are going to continue the festivities: drinking at the local 'rum shops' most of which are open twenty four hours during Carnival, or 'liming' at an unofficial, local landmark, a bar called Smokey & Buntley in St. James, one of the parishes close to down-town, where the people never seem to sleep. Others are going to join one of the many fetes, already in progress, to dance the night away and finally, there are those who will head home to catch a few hours of rest before the celebrations of J'ouvert begins.

J'OUVERT, CARNIVAL MONDAY, CARNIVAL TUESDAY & LAS' LAP⁸

After the comparatively sober competitions on *Dimanche Gras* most of the revellers go home to rest for the few remaining hours of that Sunday. It has been reported that in the early 1940s, those belonging to the upper echelons of the Trinidadian society at the time frowned on the practice of *playing mas* on Sunday because it desecrated the Sabbath and so in 1943 the practice was restricted to the Monday and Tuesday. In the absence of any precise official statement as to time, the people began the festivities as early as possible, immediately after midnight on Sunday. Consequently, the carnival frenzy re-awakens at approximately 2 a.m. on the Carnival Monday. This is known as *J'ouvert* (a contraction of the French 'jour ouvert' meaning the 'dawn' or 'day begun'). It is at this time, in the early hours of Carnival Monday, that the true, die-hard carnival revellers take to the streets and go into the night, jumping, dancing, drinking and singing to the melodic tunes of the steelband and to the familiar sound of the 'bottle and spoon'.⁹

There are also *j'ouvert* bands which traverse the streets at this time of the early morning, but compared to the 'pretty mas' that one would see in the later hours on Carnival Monday, these *j'ouvert* bands celebrate the darker side of human life: Here in the ethereal light, abound

⁸Please see Appendices A & B. These are depictions of the *J'ouvert* celebrations and Carnival Monday & Tuesday 'Mas, respectively. Appendix A demonstrates the transgression of racial and class divides due to the masking of bodies and faces. Identities are temporarily obscured. Yet after the celebrations, the lines of racial and class divides are re-established. Appendix B depicts the superficial joining of people regardless of demographic labels. Yet this harmony is also fleeting for it too disappears once the dawn of Ash Wednesday arrives.

⁹Bottle and spoon is a home-made musical accompaniment (if one can call it that) to the music one hears throughout the carnival season. It is literally a bottle and a spoon and quite simply, its rhythm comes from knocking the spoon against the bottle. It is a favourite 'instrument' in T&T.

bats, demons, transvestites, a man sporting the head of a cow, a woman with enormous angel wings perched on her back, young men dressed only in loincloths, white-faced minstrels strumming and singing, imitations of policemen, priests, nuns, government ministers, high-society socialites et al., (Pantin, 1997). People also dress- up as *Jab Jabs* (from the French 'diable' meaning devils), human donkeys called *Burrokeets*, bandits called *Midnight Robbers*, clowns known as *Pierrot Grenade* and giants on stilts called *Moko Jumbies*. Revellers cover themselves in mud and oil and run through the streets with pointed tails, horns on their heads and any other bits and pieces of material that can be made into a make-shift costume. Social labels such as people's identities and even their genders become less detectable:

Men don floppy baby bonnets and nappies, in search of an eternal suck at a nipples baby bottle of white rum. A lawyer may disguise himself as a vagrant; a sober businessman may don mascara, lipstick and false breasts and dance with another man, but still be able to go to work the next day with his respectability intact. Women may dance with three, four and five men at a time, or even four women and no one pays much attention . . .after all, role reversals of all kinds is socially accepted on J'ouvert morning (Ali, 1997b, p. 23).

J'ouvert is the time for 'dirty or ole (old) mas'. The satisfaction of these revellers comes from catching a clean onlooker only to cover him or her in their cloak of ochre and blackness!

J'ouvert is indeed a poetic, satiric expression of carnival's 'darker' side. This is the time of the festival devoted to the comic and the satirical; the grotesque, the double entendre, the ribald and occasionally the obscene (Dewitt & Wilan, 1993, p. 20). J'ouvert can only be described as total liberation. As Raoul Pantin remarks:

It is a festival unshackled of all official restriction and restraint, beyond the reach of normal inhibition, insecurity or fear. No individual or subject is safe from parody or considered sacrosanct on this special morning; indeed the more controversial the subject, the greater the possibility for it to be lampooned, turned into a colossal or crude joke, because today there are no conventions or conformities. For this is the moment of special licence whose only censor is the limitation of the imagination.

Nobody stops to stare or gape or even ponder for too long, unless of course you're an absolute newcomer to this madness. This is the riotous hour of bedlam, of capriciousness, of all-hell-broken loose, of denizens from the deepest Freudian nightmares, unbridled licentiousness, a carnival of the mind and body, beautiful and grotesque (1997, p. 12).

It is now 8:00 am on Carnival Monday. This is the hour of the 'pretty mas'. It is hard to believe that only a few hours ago, the *bacchanal*¹⁰ of the j'ouvert bands were parading down these streets. Now, the only evidence of their street journey are a few scraps of old, worn cloth and the markings of oil and mud on the roads. Carnival Monday is the first day when the masqueraders of the parades congregate at their band's designated areas, usually somewhere around the Queen's Park Savannah, in order to *play mas* and familiarize themselves with the route around town which they will use for tomorrow's final parade across the stage. Revellers do not wear their entire costume on carnival Monday. Headpieces and staffs are reserved for Carnival Tuesday, the big finale, when the judging occurs. Today is more of a trial run or a practice. People concentrate on having a good time, i.e., 'fun in the sun', usually by dancing together in the streets in skimpy outfits, 'jumping up' to the live and recorded music of the huge music trucks, sampling the many tasty local dishes, drinking etc¹¹.

On the morning of Carnival Tuesday, the masqueraders gather in full costume with their headpieces and staffs, at approximately 7:00 or 7:30 am. They must gather together in their respective sections and wait for their turn to 'cross the stage' in order to be judged at the first of the several judging venues. The main judging point is the stage. It is located in the southern end

¹⁰In the Trinidadian dialect, the term 'Bacchanal' translates into rowdy, scandalous behaviour.

¹¹Is this image of collective unity punctuated by aspects of separateness and segregation? This aspect of the carnival will be examined in the following chapter.

of the Queen's Park Savannah¹². This huge expanse of greenery known as the 'lungs of Port-of-Spain' was donated to the city by a colonial governor in the 1820s, and is the site at which most of the competitions during carnival take place. The stage itself is an enormous, elevated platform, hundreds of feet long which is erected several weeks before the actual festivities begin.

For the majority of masqueraders, *jumping up on stage* (dancing and having a great time) is the climax of carnival. Some bands take up to several hours to cross the stage due to their size (number of people in each section) and also because the revellers love to prolong their time on stage for all the world to see them in this state of pure euphoria. Peter Minshall accurately captures this sight when he says,

Trinidad carnival is a form of theatre except that the costume assumes dominance, so that what you wear is no longer a costume. It becomes a sculpture, whether it is a puppet or a great set of wings, and once you put a human being into it, it begins to dance. This is my discipline. I have the streets, the hot midday sun. I have two to three thousand people moving to music. And I put colours, shapes and form on these people, and they pass in front of the viewers like a visual symphony (Dewitt & Wilan, 1993, p. 20).

After crossing the stage, the bands take to the streets to be further judged at additional venues. Usually the masqueraders will rest after a while, at designated meeting places: at King George the Fifth's park opposite the Queen's Park Oval, the place where both national and international cricket matches are played; or sometimes the revellers merely rest on one of the many roads that are closed off during the carnival period. Here, they would rejuvenate themselves by relaxing their aching feet, eating, 'cooling off' with an ice-cold Carib beer or a

¹²Please see Appendix C showing the route taken by the carnival bands and the location of the Queen's Park Savannah.

rum and coke, listening to the 'music trucks' and basically 'taking a breather' in this otherwise vivacious and unflagging 'street-party'. Another year's carnival is approaching its end:

The day is now coming to a close. As that orange sun begins to set on our Caribbean Isle, the revellers are dancing along the streets one more time as they bid goodbye to this year's Carnival. This is Las' Lap, i.e. the last time to take to the streets and 'get on bad' before the carnival period officially ends. The sun has set, the air is cool. People are exhausted from feting (partying) non-stop for the past five days. All the festivities and pandemonium ends at the stroke of midnight on Carnival Tuesday. The animated and boisterous ambience of the days and weeks before, now gives way to 'order', to the serene and sober atmosphere of Ash Wednesday and to the beginning of the Christian season of Lent.

The preceding 'thick description' of the Trinbagonian carnival allows for a construction of a common sense of the practices of this society concerning one of their national celebrations. Many Trinidadians state that at carnival time their spirits are freed from the shackles of everyday concerns. Some, believe that the chaotic ambience of the carnival weekend provides a greatly anticipated and much needed escape-valve to release one's tension and relieve one's stress. This cathartic expression is indeed one justifiable interpretation of the function of carnival. However, within the actual practices of carnival one can find many instances in which the depicted realities are not entirely applicable. For example, even though the carnival provides a much needed escape-valve, what does the return to the 'order' of life in the aftermath of the celebration mean? Additionally, if this celebration is promoted as one in which social barriers of ethnicity and class are of little or no importance, what does it mean when at the close of the carnival weekend, these barriers are re-constructed and the fine line between harmony and discord between the dominated and the dominant is once again drawn? Finally, even the act of judging within the numerous competitions during carnival is in itself a signifier of establishing a hierarchy of criteria to which the competitors must meet. This is an imposition of the hegemonic beliefs of those in control as these signifiers are monitored under a specific, pre-determined

system. To provide answers for these questions, one must further examine the underlying structures within the event itself and its musical components as they become sites for analysis demonstrating how meanings are developed, co-opted and incorporated into a hegemonic relationship between the dominant and the dominated.

Chapter 5: ANALYSIS OF POWER WITHIN SOCIAL, ECONOMIC & POLITICAL FACTORS

This chapter details several social, economic and political variables as they are manifested through thematic representation within carnival and its music. It will examine the relationship between these variables and the hegemonic structures of power within the Trinbagonian culture. The nature of this relationship is often regarded as dualistic, as it attacks the ideas of the dominant structures, on the one hand, while supporting these same ideologies, on the other. Through the exploration of this relationship, I hope to uncover some of the reasons for and consequences of this apparently conflicting cultural phenomena.

Gordon Rohlehr, one of the great authorities on calypso, West Indian Literature and the oral traditions of the Caribbean has devised a methodology for calypso research that joins together the approach of literary criticism to a complete and culture-specific understanding of the circumstances under which calypso is produced and performed (Rohlehr, 1990b). In other words, critically examining the lyrical content of calypsos as one would explore a literary work and juxtaposing this analysis to a culture-specific context in which the song's meanings are made more explicit. As Louis Regis states, “ this multidisciplinary approach originates in a perception of the calypso as a complex multifaceted whole, the true value of which can only be apprehended within the social and literary contexts which it seeks to elucidate and illuminate” (1993, p. 4).

In addition to the ‘thick description’ of the practices of the Trinbagonian carnival from which further examination into the underlying structures will be discussed, I intend to also examine the lyrical content of both calypsos and soca tunes and situate them in the realities of

the social and political scenes in Trinidad and Tobago. Rohlehr's methodology will therefore be incorporated into my methods for analysis exploring the principal hypothesis of this thesis: that both calypso and soca music, which are at times highly topical and largely critical of their society's social and political affairs, seem nonetheless to waver between the bipolar opposites of attacking, reinforcing and thereby finding space for the articulation and acceptance of some aspects of the hegemonic structures shaping the Trinidadian society.

It must be duly noted here that the concept of hegemony, by its very nature is itself multifarious, in that it operates within several categorical realms such as race and economics. It is against the backdrop of these two categories, that I will explore the ambivalent relationships of hegemony and ethnicity and hegemony and class. Through the thematic exploration of ethnicity and class in carnival music, I hope to portray both the innate duality that permeates every aspect of this culture and explore the ramifications that such ambivalence poses upon the Trinbagonian society.

In describing the practices of the carnival event in the previous chapter, my intent was to present a holistic picture of the cultural locus in which calypso and soca are placed. However, this does not mean that after the carnival season, commentary calypsos and soca tunes lose their meaning, rather, one should view the carnival context as the site at which these meanings are magnified, moreso than at any other time of the year via the preponderant show casing of these musical art forms. I begin this chapter with a deconstruction of some of the practices of the Trinidadian carnival. First, I will examine the actual event itself elucidating the subtleties embedded within its underlying structures. Next, I describe how the social factors of class and ethnicity become politicized as they are manifested within carnival music. Finally, I will discuss

how these factors, when used by musical artists, simultaneously serve to bolster and undermine the hegemonic struggle between the dominant power-bloc and the dominated masses.

CARNIVAL'S HIDDEN DISCOURSE

To visualise this celebration as a time-period encapsulating an ambience of pure, unadulterated fun without any imaginable negatives, as any tourist brochure could lead one to believe, could either be attributed to falling victim to extremely convincing advertising or being so captivated by the carnival experience that one fails to realise that this utopia may not be all that it is proclaimed to be. Perhaps one's carnival experience was indeed a pleasant one (which it is for many revellers): distress-free, exciting, fun-filled, etc. However, what I am referring to is not one's personal experience of the festivities, or micro experiences, but rather, my concern is for those social and political variables that occur on a macro level.

As with most celebrations of a magnitude such as that of the Trinidad carnival, there usually occurs numerous societal scourges running the gamut from crime, prostitution and drug-dealing to controversy and corruption within the judging of the competitions. These issues will be dealt with to the extent that they are addressed within the lyrical content of calypsos and soca tunes. My main focus will deal more specifically with those aspects that are endemic to the Trinbagonian culture and consequently are reflected in the music. More specifically I will be discussing issues of race and class distinctions as they are portrayed in carnival music's role as political commentary versus its role as a pleasurable commodity and finally I will be examining the dichotomy of authenticity versus commercialization within this music.

THE EUROPEAN AESTHETIC VERSUS THE AFRICAN AESTHETIC

Burton Sankeralli, a writer for the popular 1997 Carnival periodical, *Road Works*, examines and discusses the carnival period in a very illuminating manner. His observation offers such an enlightening explanation that I have chosen it as a catalyst from which I hope to address similar characteristics as they are found not only in the festival, but additionally as these said characteristics take root in the society itself.

Sankeralli draws a dichotomy between what he sees as the crux behind the duality ingrained in the Trinidad carnival. In his opinion, the Trinbagonian celebration is an arena in which all 'contesting' elements come together and are able to address each other:

Carnival remains the central arena where all the contesting currents of Trinidadian society engage and confront each other (1997, p. 19).

He however notes that the principal contention which so defined carnival in the past was marked by multifaceted issues of resistance between two primary ethnic groups: the Europeans and the Africans. This historical confrontation which operated on a number of levels: social, religious, cultural etc., would resuscitate into modern-day grievances of the present-day Trinbagonian society:

... the key confrontation which historically defined carnival is that between Africa and Europe. Indeed it was out of this confrontation that "mainstream" Caribbean society came into being. It is a confrontation which has political, economic, social, religious and aesthetic dimensions (Ibid, p.19).

The two principal antagonistic aesthetics that he lists originate from Europeans and Africans. He calls these the Eurocentric aesthetic and the Afrocentric aesthetic, respectively. The former refers to an aesthetic based on "the visual" while the latter describes an aesthetic based

on “texture”. According to Sankeralli, the Eurocentric aesthetic embodies everything that ascribes to the visually-pleasing factor of carnival: the sea of beautiful, colourful, dancing bodies that one witnesses thronging the streets on Carnival Monday and Tuesday; the emphasis on unity and comraderie, on having good, clean fun and the almost orchestrated cordiality for the benefit of the tourists:

The Eurocentric orientation is readily recognizable in the ‘carnival is colour’ school of thought. Mas (i.e. the costumes) should be “pretty” and the “festival” clean¹, the aim is to have a good time. And of course, make the (white) tourists feel welcome (Ibid, p. 19).

Sankeralli contrasts this with the Afrocentric aesthetic of “texture” which includes all forms of resistance, confrontation and violence during the carnival season. He believes that this aesthetic is found in the music and in the many competitions among calypsonians and soca bards, in which they compete or ‘fight’ for the various prestigious titles and in which songs’ lyrics are used as powerful, albeit metaphorical weapons; in the symphonic clash of the myriad steelbands, as they too vie for impressive titles during the carnival season; in the direct opposite of ‘pretty mas’ which is *ole mas* or *dirty mas*, the likes of which are embodied in the characters of the *j’ouvert* celebrations; and in the brown mud and black oil, paint and grease with which the bodies of people are covered:

The Afrocentric aesthetic of “texture” has been one of resistance, of confrontation and of violence. In this regard . . . we may mention the Steelband clash, the battles fought with blade and bottle by the emergent pansides of the early days. Then there is the calypso war, the exchanges

¹The word ‘clean’ implies not merely the sanitation aspect of the carnival, but rather it is used to emphasize the low levels of violence, close adherence to safety rules concerning drinking and driving, observance of safe sexual practices at a time when promiscuity is amplified et cetera.

engaged in by calypsonians, the word being the weapon. Then there are the mas characters which stand in direct confrontation with the Eurocentric “pretty mas”. There are the bats, the wild Indians, the moko Jumbies, the range of devils. The mud, the oil, the paint and the power (Ibid, p.19).

The direction in which Sankeralli seeks to go with his aesthetic divide follows a line of logical conclusion (in his opinion), which lends itself to the belief that the Eurocentric orientation provides for the achievement of the European vision, which in today’s setting translates into the vision of the dominant elites: as he talks about the ‘pretty mas’ and the welcoming of the (white) tourists as two key factors of this said aesthetic, he states, “. . . Well, it is easy to be pretty and have a good time when you are in control. This aesthetic of ‘the visual’ has been the vision of the dominant and racist elites”(Ibid, p. 19).

This tendentious comment made against a plethora of personal prejudices raises a set of interesting questions: what does this say about the relationship between ethnicity, power and class in this society, especially during a time when it is proclaimed that these social divisions are dropped? How can this European aesthetic vision embodying the ‘visual’ aspects of carnival be purely confined to the ‘dominant and racist elites’ when all classes and all ethnicities participate in perpetuating this image of ‘unity’ during the celebration? These questions will be examined in greater detail later on. For now it is paramount that we address some of the weakpoints in Sankeralli’s paradigm.

It is the general consensus among the revellers that carnival renders a shared space which allows for the temporary suspension of the quotidian practices and quandaries of their immediate existence. However, several facets must be clarified about Sankeralli’s concern on the cultural clash between Europeans and Africans in order to more efficiently address the conditions of the present-day Trinbagonian society.

First, it is imperative that we understand clearly that this ‘cultural clash’ between Europeans and Africans in the past is just that: an atavistic description of cultural differences between these two particular ethnicities. This ethnic divide would be relevant if our subject matter were exploring a different time period. Today, the distinction is clearly one between two different ethnic groups: the Afro-Trinidadians and the Indo-Trinidadians.

These distinctions would seem to follow the increasingly popular ethnic labels existing within North American society and likewise, seem to breed similar volatile issues: one group thinks that the other possesses greater political, economic and social leverage thereby reinforcing their sentiments of racial and class injustices in the society. However, the formation of these ethnic differences are specific to the Trinbagonian context and may not be as easily recognizable to “outsiders”. Ergo, one must remember that when I talk of racial discrimination in T&T, what I am referring to is a complex sentiment involving new, manifold players, namely, Trinidadian Blacks, Trinidadian Indians, Trinidadian Whites and a whole host of other ethnic groups that comprise this ‘rainbow society’², rather than the deceptively simple divide between Africans and Europeans as is largely focused on by Sankeralli.

Secondly, in order for Sankeralli’s perspective to be applicable to the present-day Trinbagonian society, he has to acknowledge that within his ‘cut and dry’ outlook he has overlooked the very real characteristic of this culture’s ambivalent or rather, dualistic

²The use of the terms ‘Black’, ‘Indian’ or ‘White’, is not an attempt to be derogatory. The usage of these words in all their ‘rawness’ reflects the level of comfort, with which I feel able to discuss such potentially explosive issues. Perhaps this is reflective of the cosmopolitan Trinidadian society in which I, just as many others, define ourselves not in terms of any specific ethnicity but rather as belonging to a greater and more meaningful whole, i.e. as Trinidadians.

tendencies.³ It is here that one would find loopholes in his bifurcated aesthetic model. So, for example, within the medium of the music which he categorises as belonging to the African aesthetic and which embodies the fundamentals of resistance, confrontation and violence, one can also argue a convincing case for the music's (in this case soca) ability to deviate from those stipulated requisites of the African aesthetic and find within this musical genre, elements of unification that would fit more accurately with Sankeralli's European aesthetic.

This observation having been realized further emphasizes the point that very few meanings can be considered to be completely discrete or linear within this culture. Perhaps this can all be surmised by the idea that whatever is known is a matter of perspective and as such, varying opinions are the basis for which there seems to be such inordinate levels of ambivalence and duality.

Andrew Ross comments on this composite of meaning by discussing the dearth of 'purity' in forms of popular culture:

... we cannot attribute any purity of political expression to popular culture, although we can locate its power to identify ideas and desires that are relatively opposed, alongside those that are clearly complicit, to the official culture (1989, p. 10).

It is this 'duality' that plays a pivotal role in Gramsci's development of 'hegemony'. Robert Gray refers to this as '*a negotiated version of ruling class culture and ideology*' (in Bennett, 1986 p. xv).

³Even though Sankeralli notes that the Eurocentric aesthetic may not necessarily lack texture nor that the African aesthetic is visually less appealing, this mild recognition is not substantial enough to discredit my criticism of his argument being too clear cut, with the danger of ignoring the present tendencies of crossing-over of the characteristics of one aesthetic on to the other.

... if the Gramscian concept of hegemony refers to processes through which the ruling class seeks to negotiate opposing class cultures onto a cultural and ideological terrain which wins for it a position of leadership, it is also true that what is thereby consented to is a *negotiated version* of ruling class culture and ideology (Ibid, p. xv).

However, no matter what the justifications are for this cultural idiosyncrasy of a 'negotiated version' of dominant class ideology, I must reiterate that my objective is not to determine which meaning is the more correct interpretation. Rather, my aim is to provide a close expert reading of hegemonic power as it is manifested within my two primary points of analysis: the divide between authenticity and commercialization in calypso and soca and the divide between music as political commentary versus music as a pleasurable commodity focusing on issues of class and ethnicity. I will begin with a deconstruction of some of the practices of carnival focusing on the way in which hegemony relates to social, political and economic factors.

CARNIVAL - A FESTIVAL OF DIVIDED UNITY

As described in Chapter Four, there are indeed two main types of fetes or parties: the public fetes, to which anyone can pay their money and attend and the private fetes hosted either at private residences or at public clubs rented out to a select crowd of patrons. There are those who would have one believe that Trinidadians live harmoniously in an utopian world where the colour of their respective skins or the class to which they belong play a negligible role in the occurrence of their everyday lives. In fact this is the image and/or message that many Trinbagonians most often promote in describing the carnival experience, even though this may not be the reality.

Gordon Rohlehr states that, 'for the researcher into carnival, calypso or any other of the basic cultural forms in Trinidad . . . cultural confrontation between embattled ethnicities can be identified as a major feature . . .' (1990a, p. 7). Despite the fact that Rohlehr used this observation to describe calypso and society in Pre-Independence Trinidad (as suggested by the title of his book), this insight still can be legitimised for Trinidadian society today and is evidenced in the great number of calypsos and soca tunes released this year which dealt with this topic. Before delving into the music of carnival, it is worthwhile to examine some of the practices of the actual carnival event, as they too are sites where the struggle for hegemony is both challenged and reinforced.

Too often the 'cultural confrontation' that Rohlehr describes can be disguised, but not erased, under the supposed harmonious ambience of national collectivity displayed during carnival. To illustrate, it is evident that at carnival time, most of the Trinidadian citizenry come together to 'play mas'. Indeed it has been stated that during this period, barriers are dropped, and Trinbagonians no longer seem to see themselves as unequal or antagonistic classes or ethnicities but instead an image is projected of unity, harmony and peaceful co-existence:

At carnival time, something extraordinary occurs in this nation. Barriers fall. Rank ceases to matter. Something more fundamental and important suffuses the warm air. It is a recognition of the human need to recreate. To play. To suspend the superficial world of commerce, gossip and politics for a time, and let deeper values predominate (Rhythm and Release, 1996).

A surface reading of the above description can indeed lead one to conclude that at carnival time, everyone in Trinidad and Tobago, both nationals and visitors alike, seem to be drawn into a transitory vortex of blissful abandon, in which every aspect of the celebration seems to promote an ambience of complete comradeship, co-existence and unity. This

illustration depicts a compelling image for which, 'every creed and race finds an equal place'⁴. Yet, against the euphoria exuding from within the carnival event, deeper, less benign and conflicting realities can be found through the diverse lyrics of some of the music one hears at this time.

John Fiske (1989a) states that culture is seen as an on-going social process. In this view, the indices of popular culture, such as television, clothes, language and popular music possess an ambivalent characteristic concerning their very nature. This is due to the fact that the resources producing these cultural texts originate from the very social structures that work against empowerment and consequently towards the strengthening of the power-bloc.

I believe that the resources from which these cultural texts are made can be seen as the social, political and economic state of affairs that carnival music describes. The lines of duality or ambivalence within the structures that shape these resources and by extension, cultural texts are the same ambivalent lines ingrained in the socio-political and economic issues of the Trinbagonian culture. Hence, whatever cultural products (television, music, fashion et cetera) that ensue from these structures, they will inevitably embody those dualistic characteristics of the structures which shaped them.

The Trinbagonian carnival is one of those cultural texts that embodies the ambivalent characteristic that Fiske describes. This duality, also inherent in carnival music, may be traced to factors ingrained in the Trinbagonian people themselves. It is a known fact among many nationals that while one's concerns, worries, inhibitions and even prejudices can be suspended

⁴'Every creed and race finds an equal place and may God bless our nation . . .' are words found in the National Anthem of Trinidad and Tobago.

during the carnival period, these issues regain importance and ‘justification’ in the lives of these people once the festivities come to a close. In his article entitled, ‘This Carnival: another view’, Raoul Pantin recognises this tendency as he acknowledges with patriotic pride:

... the creative authorship that seems to grow and swell and, like a contagion, spread and fill the clamorous streets with a sweet camaraderie that you won’t experience on any other occasion among so many different races and classes (1997, p. 12).

But then he continues to defend his position for not wanting to participate in the festivities because he knows, just as many others do, that, “come Ash Wednesday . . . the people will go back to race and class”(Ibid, p. 12).

What does this say about the Trinidadian people and their much-adored carnival celebration in which they are able to come together for an instant in time only to return to the acrid realities of the ‘next day’? To attempt an answer at these inquiries, we must first turn to John Fiske’s work on the meaning of ‘holiday’ in, *Understanding Popular Culture*.

In his chapter on ‘Productive Pleasures’, Fiske presents an interesting dichotomy between the ‘official’ and the ‘popular’ meaning of ‘holiday’. The ‘official’ meaning of holiday espoused the work ethic and saw this period of rest as one in which the members of the working class would recuperate in order to return to the ‘daily grind’ of their respective work and life situations:

The official meanings of holiday were those of “recreation” and underpinned the work ethic. A holiday, in this sense, was both earned by the industrious, an extension of the wage principle from the sphere of work to that of leisure, and a recreation of the workers, a period in which they could regain their strength and prepare for more productive work on their return (1989b, p. 76).

In contrast, Fiske describes the 'popular' meaning of holiday as a 'release' from the regulations of work and a time to indulge in pleasures that are restrained by the responsibilities of everyday life:

The popular meanings of holiday, on the other hand, were those of carnivalesque release from the discipline of labour and a licensed indulgence in pleasures that the conditions of everyday life repressed. The difference was one between recreation and release (Ibid, p. 76).

From the preceding illustrations, one can conclude that for Fiske, there exists two meanings of 'holiday'. However, I would venture to say that the holiday that is the Trinbagonian carnival, embodies both these meanings, for carnival is seen both as a renewal of oneself to more efficiently return to dealing with one's quotidian lifestyles and likewise, the T&T carnival personifies the release of regular responsibilities and indulgence in pleasures not necessarily as visible at any other time of the year: a validation of Gray's claim that the ideals of the ruling elite (the official meaning of holiday) is mixed with the ideals of 'the people' (the popular meaning of holiday) to produce a negotiated version of both ideologies justifying the notion of hegemony within the carnival event. As Simon Lee remarks, 'Trinidad's carnival is a massive street party, a people's festival of freedom and unity, release and renewal (1997, p. 18).

The important point here is not merely that both meanings of holiday can be justified in the carnival celebrations of T&T, but rather of equal significance is the transformation that occurs during the carnival period concerning the dissolution and then reinstatement of those social and racial divides. Adding to the complexity of this issue is the fact that those who partake of this collective space of carnival come from not only the subordinate factions of society but also from the dominant power-bloc.

During the actual carnival weekend, when thousands of revellers parade through the streets in the numerous masquerade bands, it may seem as though ‘barriers have fallen’ when one witnesses both the Prime Minister’s wife and the layman *playing mas*. This idea is further illustrated when one experiences a sea of persons fully enjoying themselves, heedless of such social labels as race, class and even gender, (what Sankeralli refers to as the European aesthetic). Yet, despite the claim that can be made for the creation of a shared common space in which Trinidadians as a people, for two days at least shed their inhibitions and likewise, their badges of status and become, as the familiar cliché goes, ‘one people under the sun’, an opposing claim can also be validated whereby this argument is turned on its head.

Despite the inviting, carefree ambience, pockets of segregation and separateness exist within the carnival celebration. One can see these two factors on a number of different levels. For example, with regards to the masqueraders themselves, they have their select bands with whom they *play mas*. Different classes of people in the society ‘play carnival’ with bands that cater to their specific needs: budget, locale, popularity, personal appropriateness, group affiliations and so forth. Consequently, the more expensive bands may have masqueraders belonging to the middle and upper classes, while the less costly bands may attract those persons belonging to the lower classes of the society. It is also known, at the local level at least, that the ‘whites’ usually *play mas* with the masquerade band, ‘Hart’, the ‘blacks’ are known to play with ‘Barbarossa’, the many shades of ‘browns’ play with ‘Poison’ and those people who appreciate the true art form of carnival play with Peter Minshall’s band. So, while everyone who participates in the carnival may indeed have a good time *playing mas* ‘together’, the overall cohesiveness of carnival is attenuated by its own aspects of unconnectedness.

Additionally, during the J'ouvert celebrations one witnesses a transgression of racial, class and even gender codes. As depicted in Chapter Four, the boundaries of these demographic labels are easily erased but are just as quickly re-established. This demonstrates the way in which oppositional ideologies find an accommodating space for their incorporation into the '*mas*-*playing*' of J'ouvert but the articulation of these said ideologies is transitory since at the close of the celebrations there is a re-establishment of racial, class and gender divides:

A lawyer may disguise himself as a vagrant; a sober businessman may don mascara, lipstick and false breasts and dance with another man, but still be able to go to work the next day with his respectability intact. Women may dance with three, four and five men at a time, or even four women and no one pays much attention . . . after all, role reversals of all kinds is socially accepted on J'ouvert morning (Ali, 1997b, p. 23).

To recapitulate, this unity and comraderie experienced while the citizenry comes together to *play mas* is temporary because after carnival, the lines of racial, gender and class distinctions are drawn once more. Interestingly, despite the fact that those members belonging to the dominant elite have also participated in the perpetuation of this illusory equality, they return to their former positions of control with little or no thought as to what their involvement in the largely perceived status-free space, signified. Herein lies the ambivalence within the practices of the carnival event.

It would seem that this observation validates one of the key points in Ross' interpretation of hegemony, whereby the latter is achieved via a negotiated version of both dominant and dominated participation (Bennett, 1986; Ross, 1989). And because of this, the evanescent unity and strength achieved during carnival will not (at least not at this time) be able to represent any formidable challenge to the racial discord and class inequalities by which the control of those in power is sustained.

Fiske, raises an illuminating point surrounding the 'safety-valve debate' of carnival. In brief, this debate disputes the explanation that during the carnival season, the subordinate factions of society exercise control in what seems to be an inverted state of 'play'. Furthermore, this debate views this period of chaos and disorder as a cleverly deceptive attempt at promoting a false idea of control and license to the subordinates, which only serves to strengthen their subjugated positions in life by allowing them a 'break' period or a 'time-out' and then, just as quickly bringing them 'back into line' by having them resume their positions and responsibilities within the previous order of things:

It can be argued that because carnival's disruptive moment is licensed by the prevailing order it is finally recuperated into that order. It is a strategy of containment that acts as a safety-valve that allows the controlled release of popular pressure, and thus enables the subordinate to fit more comfortably into their oppression. The safety valve strengthens rather than dislodges the apparatus of social control (1989b, p. 100).

Ergo, as unaware as many revellers may be of the lines of hegemonic control that operate within their festivity, they succumb to these hegemonic forces when they (the revellers) return to their quotidian lifestyles at the close of the festivities. One is now left with the idea that a period which for many is considered to be a time when the masses could 'free up' and not be constrained by the conventions of society, this 'free reign' is really transient, since at the midnight hour on Carnival Tuesday, the racial and social barricades will be reinstated allowing for the dominant elite to exercise hegemonic control from a more advantageous position.

One sees therefore, that unity among the multifarious classes and ethnicities that comprise the Trinbagonian society can and does indeed exist on a certain level for a certain time however, it must also be acknowledged that discord and social prejudices simultaneously exist

on other levels, which is openly admitted to within the lyrics of numerous calypsos that one hears during the carnival season. As Sankeralli observes the duality within carnival, he states :

Carnival is often associated with fun and party, with release and the escape from reality. However, this vision blinds one to its deeper currents (1997, p. 19).

Additionally, this same duality which exists within the music of these people is deeply embedded in the culture of this society and is consequently manifested in the daily practices of the people. A fine illustration can be taken from the offensive situation occurring in Trinidad concerning the tacit entrance policies to fetes and clubs. It has increasingly become an odious habit shared by dance club owners and hosts of fetes to discriminate against entry into their establishments based on such criteria as skin colour and class. Numerous accounts of this have been reported in the local media, (and consequently taken up by calypsonians in song) whereby patrons would be denied entry into some of the more popular dance clubs because they were not 'white enough', 'fair enough' or 'wealthy enough'.

In his calypso entitled, *My People*, the calypsonian/lawyer 'Watchman' specifically says of this disturbing trend:

... But if a nightclub refuse me entry, saying
golliwogs can't mix with the so-called whites.
That white boy who kill sure to skip the country,
cause in local jail, every night is golliwog night.
(*My People*, by Watchman, carnival 1997).

Watchman is validating the fact that the management of some popular night clubs in Trinidad, which demeaningly refer to Blacks as 'golliwogs' refuse them entry because they refuse to have them socialize with the local 'whites' or lighter coloured persons in the society. He refers to one heinous incident in particular, in which an individual was killed at a club, by a white man. He

reveals the injustices and advantages of belonging to the 'white' upper class, as he states that, in all probability, the white man would have gotten out on bail and been able to continue his life as a free man, while, in the local jails, one usually can only find blacks, perhaps because they may not have the 'right connections' or contacts, as would an individual from a higher ranking class in the society. For all the arguments that the proprietors have given to deny such accusations, none can justify this blatant example of racial discrimination.

Another similar notorious practice is the one exercised (in a more subtle way) by individuals who host the countless fetes during the carnival season and throughout the entire year. The mechanism of partiality comes under the guise of cost. Usually, the more upper-class fetes, such as , the University of the West Indies fete and the Moka fete held at the University President's residence and the Moka golf course, respectively, are structured in such a way so as to accommodate a certain strata of the society. This is further ensured by charging a costly sum for the purchase of entrance tickets⁵, having select venues to sell the tickets⁶ and finally, once entrance is gained, the price of beverages and food is also at an additional charge.

What I have been examining so far has been a deconstruction of some of the practices of carnival in an attempt to demonstrate the way in which the struggle for hegemony is manifested

⁵The entrance cost for these fetes are \$200 and \$180 respectively, in the local currency. Compare this with a mere \$10 entrance charge at other fetes, such as, the Fireman's Ball, or the W.A.S.A. (Water & Sewerage Authority) fete, which usually draw a crowd comprised from the 'lower' echelons of the society. Please see Appendix D for an example of tickets or 'invites' for fetes.

⁶If the venue for obtaining tickets is located in an upper-class, white or light coloured neighbourhood, such as West Moorings or Goodward Park, it is almost always the case that persons who belong to the comparatively lower classes of society and whose skin colouration may be on the darker side of the colour spectrum, would not be seen purchasing tickets at those locations.

within this cultural celebration. I will now proceed to the musical components of this festival to determine how calypsonians and soca artistes perpetuate this struggle within calypso and soca.

TWO FACES OF CARNIVAL MUSIC

The duality which we have discussed is readily demonstrated not only within the actual practices of carnival but also within the two genres of carnival music as they are used as catalysts for unification and segregation through socio-political commentary, and as they are considered to epitomize authenticity and commercialization. Both these music categories do not exclusively hold one or the other of the dual positions of either distempering the masses or fortifying the power-bloc; rather the nature of calypso and soca are such that they are placed within a complex web of shifting relations which further perpetuates the notion of ambivalence. In this way, calypso and soca are able to hold vacillating positions between the reinforcement of the ideologies of the dominant elite, in one instance and in another instance advocating the interests of the masses. Due to this characteristic of carnival music, the concept of hegemony is an ideal framework from which to address these dualities. As Bennett remarks:

A cultural practice does not carry its politics with it, as if written upon its brow for ever and a day; rather, its political functioning depends on the network of social and ideological relations in which it is inscribed . . . In suggesting that the political and ideological articulations of cultural practices are *moveable* - that a practice which is articulated to bourgeois values today may be disconnected from those values and connected to socialist ones tomorrow- the theory of hegemony opens up the field of popular culture as one of enormous political possibilities (1986. p. xvi).

This 'moveable articulation' can be recognised in the two categories dealing with authenticity and politics. The first index of ambivalence is seen with both the Eurocentric and Afrocentric aesthetics as they play their particular roles within this carnival celebration and via

its music. To illustrate, the stylistic and lyrical components of carnival music, which was stated by Ian Sankeralli as belonging to the Afrocentric aesthetic, on the one hand can be said to acknowledge the interests of the masses by presenting a harsh critique of the power-bloc. This characteristic is typical of calypso music. On the other hand, soca is seen as executing the opposite objective: reinforcing those ideologies of the power-bloc through the 'masking' effect of this up-beat music whereby grave issues and injustices are overlooked while greater emphasis is placed on the 'unification' and 'freeing up' aspects associated with carnival and Sankeralli's European aesthetic.

From this illustration it seems as though there can never completely be a linear function of this music. It is not an art form whose only objective is the promulgation of the concerns of any one particular group of persons and/or ideas. There is always that 'negotiated' tendency for the music to expound upon one facet of a situation and then continue to explore and reveal opposing aspects of the same situation. This may be what Bennett is referring to when he says that in as much as the field of popular culture can be looked at within the struggle of hegemony:

... it [the field of pop culture] consists not simply of an imposed mass culture that is coincident with dominant ideology, nor simply of spontaneous, oppositional cultures, but is rather an area of negotiation between the two within which- in different particular types of popular culture- dominant, subordinate and oppositional cultural and ideological values and elements are 'mixed' in different permutations (1986, p. xvi).

This dualistic nature of segregation versus unification as manifested in carnival music is a good example of these 'different permutations' as it is a medium that can be said to be both class and colour free in one sense, as well as class and colour conscious, in another. This claim is made in the light that *Trinis*, regardless of their colour, creed or class are increasingly

listening, enjoying and appreciating the value of their own music. The music's lyrics may indeed explore socially charged issues that deal with ethnicity and class, but this does not act as a barrier which impedes most of the population from enjoying the music. In this manner, therefore, the music can be seen as an unifying medium.

Yet the divisive characteristic within this music is manifested through the attitudes of some of its listeners and from the ideologies to which the music ascribes. The first illustration of this is evidenced in the opinion of some Trinbagonians who ascribe to the belief that calypso, because of its African origin, and its *jam and wine*⁷ counterpart, soca, are seen as Black music and as such they do not consider these musical art forms to be as unifying or as representative a genre as many other Trinis describe them to be. These individuals (including the country's Prime Minister) believe that Trinidad and Tobago is a cosmopolitan nation comprising many diverse ethnic groups and as such, no single musical art form should take precedence over another. Instead many older, Indo-Trinidadians prefer to listen to their own musical art forms of East Indian origin, such as *Ghazals*, *Bhajans*⁸ and *Qaseedas*⁹ compared to calypso and soca.

The second illustration of this 'divisiveness' is seen in the music's examination of social and political issues. However, within this treatment of these topics, a duality in representation

⁷'Jam and wine' is a typical phrase often used to describe Soca music. In the local parlance it refers to the gyrating and grinding movements made while dancing to the hot Soca beat.

⁸'Bhajans' and 'Ghazals' are East Indian Hindu songs, that are sung in Hindi, in religious settings or on radio or television programs usually oriented towards the East Indian population of T&T.

⁹'Qaseedas' are also East Indian songs with an Islamic orientation. They are also sung in religious settings and may be sung in the Urdu, or Arabic languages.

can be found within both genres of calypso and soca. The most significant of these dualities comes from the debate between carnival music as authentic music versus carnival music as commercialized music. Briefly stated, this is where advocates of calypso music desire a return to the 'authentic' form of calypso as opposed to (what they perceive as) the commercialized noise of soca. Simon Frith acknowledges the existence of this authenticity within folk music when he states:

. . . popular songs are significant because they have a 'real closeness' with their consumers. The implication now, though, is that this is only true of 'Folk forms; only in country music, blues, soul . . . can we take lyrics to be the authentic expression of popular experiences and needs. In the mainstream of mass music something else is going on (1988, p. 108).

Some advocates of the calypso art form including calypsonians like Cro Cro and Watchman feel that theirs is the form of carnival music that remains true to the happenings in the Trinbagonian culture. These are some people who see themselves as the voice of the masses with a responsibility to disclose and vociferously express the injustices occurring in their society via music. They believe that their music is the epitome of lyrical realism. However, I would ask, who determines that theirs is an unbiased reflection of what goes on in their culture? Frith poses the salient but oft-forgotten question, "whose ideology is reflected in such definitions of folk 'realism'?" (1988, p. 113). He continues by developing the many problems of such righteous claims as those held by certain calypsonians as he states:

Authenticity is a political problem, and the history of folk music is a history of the struggle among folk collectors to claim folk meanings for themselves, as songs are examined for their 'true working-class' view, for their expressions of 'organic community', for their signs of nationalism. For a Marxist like Dave Harker, some 'folk' songs are unauthentic because they obviously (from their use of language) were not written or transmitted by working-class people themselves; others are judged unauthentic because of their ideological content, their use not of bourgeois language but bourgeois ideas . . . (Ibid, p. 113).

Frith raises several germane points on the fact that some songs which claim to be ‘of the people’ may not necessarily be ‘authentic’ folk songs, because they are written more in a manner which promotes beliefs of the dominant elite and less in a way that identifies with the subjugated masses. Additionally, the ‘authenticity’ can be invalid because the material may be transmitted by someone who, in reality does not belong to the dominated classes. To illustrate, the artist including himself/herself with the dominated classes, may identify with their plight and criticize those who he/she sees as being responsible for this state of affairs, but then he/she surrenders to those very same structures of the dominant elite which were criticized as being culpable for the social plight of the less empowered by competing for and accepting material and financial prizes during the carnival season.

An example of this would be, within the Calypso Monarch competition, the calypsonians chastise the structures of the ruling social and political regime. However, at the end of the show monetary and material prizes are awarded to these same competitors, who merely hours before were openly attacking the very said structures which would have financed their awards. This duality of first lambasting and then surrendering to the structures of the dominant elite can be seen to challenge claims that folk music carries an authentic expression of subordinate classes.

In another example one can examine the calypsonian Gypsy¹⁰ who won his title as the 1997 Calypso Monarch with his rendition entitled, *Little Black Boy*. In this song, Gypsy expounds on the pitiful social plight of ‘little black boys’ in Trinidad and Tobago who prefer to

¹⁰Gypsy is of African descent. This is a noteworthy fact, since his criticism is aimed at ‘little black boys’ and he has been scourged by the local media as having ‘sold out’ against his own race. Whether this is the case or not, will be discussed at a later time.

waste their lives away instead of continuing their education which would offer them a greater opportunity for a better future:

There was a little black boy, a black boy was he.
 The boy went to school and he come out duncee.
 He never learn how to read, he never learn about math.
 He never learn how to write, he never study about that.
 All he study was he speakers, he sneakers and clothes.
 He learn how to dress and he learn how to pose.
 He can't get no work, he can't get no job.
 He decide to steal and he decide to rob.
 But little black boy couldn't last long at all.
 The police put a bullet through he duncee head skull
 ('Little Black Boy' by Gypsy - 1997) ¹¹.

Two societal reactions are noteworthy in this illustration. The lines that depict the laziness, lack of determination, a curtailed development in educational advancement, the propensity for 'little black boys' to sell drugs resulting in incarceration and death can be all said to conform to a dominant racist ideology concerning Blacks. Gypsy castigates little black boys by telling them "look in front, see who's the doctor and look in the back, see who's the lawyer" alluding to the other races that hold these positions. However, in his attempt to convey his observation of the social position of Trinidadian Blacks, Gypsy is perpetuating this stereotypical image, reinforcing negative representations of Blacks in his song. Many Afro-Trinidadians interpreted Gypsy's criticism of the 'black boys' as a 'sell-out' to his own race and an adoption of elitist beliefs. The consensus among those in opposition to Gypsy's portrayal is that he fails to acknowledge the many cases in which Trinidadian Blacks do not fit this stereotype.

In his estimation however, Gypsy feels he has not 'sold-out' his race, but rather by singing about Blacks, he has fulfilled his objective of getting the Trinidadian society,

¹¹Lyrics from the first verse of the calypso 'Little Black Boy' by Gypsy - 1997 Calypso Monarch.

specifically the Afro-Trinidadians to awaken to the realities of their surroundings. He reiterates his position in the following lyrics and in the chorus, respectively:

...when you're black, you're just black, you can't help but be black.
 But because you are black, you don't stay in the back.
 Be black, be black, but be conscious.
 Chorus: Little black boy, go to school and learn.
 Little black boy, show some concern.
 Little black boy, education is the key, to get you off the street and off poverty
 ('Little Black Boy' - by Gypsy 1997).

In an interview with a local newspaper, Gypsy talks about the way in which 'Blacks have lost all their power - political, economic and otherwise'. He states:

... Our youth are going through life aimlessly because they didn't have anyone to sing 'Little Black Boy' to them in the past. We're bankrupt as a race and if I can't talk about this, who can? Those who claim all races have problems with drugs, vagrancy and unemployment are merely trying to cover the truth of this song. People tell me white people have the same problems. But I am not white. Let a white man sing about their problems. I have to sing about the problems of my people because when you walk through town the scene is a disgrace.
 ... It's a positive message. I'm giving good, sound advice (Jacob, 1997, p. 19).

In this way then, Gypsy's portrayal of the plight of the 'little black boy' can be seen in one instance as reinforcing a dominant racist ideology, but it can also be seen as an attempt to debunk this ideology in appealing to young blacks to make his observation of social inequalities the exception rather than the rule. These two readings of this song validate the dualistic nature ingrained in the Trinidadian society and further justifies the claim that the music can be used in ways that both promote and resist the ideals of the dominant elite.

H.F. Mooney argued that the lyrics of popular music reflected the emotional needs of their time (in Frith, 1988, p. 106). However, Frith felt that Mooney chose specific songs to validate his theory rather than vice versa and additionally content analysts had many flaws in

their method as they seemed to treat lyrics too superficially and their conclusions were too simplistic:

... content analysts are not innocent readers and there are obvious flaws in their method. They treat lyrics too simply: the words of all songs are given equal value; the meaning is taken to be transparent; no account is given of their actual performance or their musical setting . . . (1988, p. 107).

Frith preferred the idea that popular music and particularly forms of 'folk' music were significant because they possessed a 'real closeness' to their consumers. What I have attempted to do is overcome the 'flaws' of content analysis that Frith outlines by examining three commentary calypsos within their cultural context, in an effort to see how the ambivalence that I have spoken of is manifested via 'hidden transcripts' and 'lyrical realism'.

CALYPSO - REPRESENTATIONAL AMBIVALENCE¹²

This 1996 calypso entitled, 'Bas' by Black Sage was performed in that year's carnival shortly after the new UNC/NAR coalition government assumed office. The calypsonian sought to congratulate the nation's first ever Indian Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday and offer him some advice mixed with criticism and *picong*.

In the first verse, Sage expresses concern for the P.M.'s heart condition, which became known to the entire nation a few months after he accepted his position, through his having to go to England for a Triple Bypass. He reminds the P.M. of those individuals who he had to 'fix up' in order to secure his position as Prime Minister, i.e trade unions, A.N.R. Robinson, (a former P.M.) without whose help he could not have become P.M., Caroni workers and one Brian Quai

¹²Please refer to Appendix E for complete transcripts of these calypsos.

Tong, now Minister of Finance and a pre-election financial supporter of the UNC. In this same vein, the calypsonian appeals to the P.M. to 'fix him up' too.

Sage also cautions Panday, not to neglect the small man, while 'fixing up' the big benefactors, as this would result in his government's loss of power even before the stipulated five-year duration in office. The *picong* continues as Sage advises Panday to 'fix up' Abu Bakr's unsettled claim for some thirty million dollars awarded by the Courts, also to compensate the Hindus and other individuals, who as Sage believes, have backed the P.M. during his election campaign.

The question of race is highlighted as Sage expresses concern at the ethnic ratio of Indians to Africans in Panday's Cabinet. The P.M. is also urged to convince his 'people' that Indians alone do not 'rule' T&T. Reference is made to Ishwar Galbaransingh, another major UNC 'financier', who has to also be 'fixed up' or 'repaid', together with one Ramlogan from Jerningham junction. It is relevant to note that both these individuals are of East Indian descent. With the ominous assertion that Trinidad is not India, Mr. Panday is urged to remember 'Africa', perhaps alluding to the fact that if he is so keen to consider the interests of his people, he should be just as eager to safeguard the interests of the African sector of T&T in the same way as he is concerned about the interests of its East Indian population.

Panday is finally advised to beware of those ambitious individuals who are 'eyeing his power', such as Mr. Trevor Sudama, (an Afro-Trinidadian) who is stated as being 'angry' for not receiving the position of Minister of Finance and likewise, the former Prime Minister, Mr. Patrick Manning (also Black) who is keen to replace Panday. Sage advises Panday to hold his political coalition together and have a strong heart or risk a call for a premature re-election.

In another calypso entitled 'My People', calypsonian Watchman is attempting to be non-partisan through his acknowledgement as not only 'an African, but a West Indian and a Trinbagonian.' He identifies the honest, hard-working 'common folk' as his people. He scoffs at those individuals whose criteria for selecting 'good' people is based on class and colour. Early on in the rendition, he singles out a 'top lawyer' who could allegedly be Bruce Procope, who would debase himself with perjury on behalf of his client and convicted drug dealer, Dole Chadee, simply for monetary gain. The calypsonian disassociates himself from persons like these, despite their elevated social status and instead holds greater esteem for the man on the street who earns his living in an honest way.

Watchman also outlines ways by which some people seek to become wealthy, for example, by obsessively playing the lottery or 'lotto', despite the fact that they have limited means to do so and even 'wukking obeah'¹³. He cautions however, that some wealthy folks have achieved their fortunes through money laundering, an undertaking fraught with lethal consequences. Additionally, Watchman states his admiration for the person who, over time, builds a humble enterprise into a lucrative business, while taking issue with those who are 'poor today, rich tomorrow' due to what he perceives as their involvement in the drug trade.

The calypso continues to expound on issues of race and segregation. Watchman cautions against leaders who 'talk integration, but to their children, teach segregation': a double standard which will only work against them. He endorses the unifying aspect of inter-racial marriage. Reference is made to a controversial incident of 1996, involving racial discrimination practised at certain night clubs and the arrest of a white youth charged for killing a non-white youngster.

¹³ 'Wukking obeah' - is a colloquial term used to mean dabbling in black magic.

As stated previously, this offender is now out on bail. He further emphasizes the ambivalence of the racism problem as it exists within T&T:

Every man is a brother and love thy neighbour, just words on paper.
 Yes we pay lip service. We go hug one another, but in a corner,
 we go cuss he mudder. Yes supreme prejudice.
 Some Indians and Whites would make it their business to hog the
 resources for their own plan.
 We Negroes will boast how we ain't racist, because we always
 sleeping with Indian women ('My People' by Watchman, 1997).

Watchman finishes his rendition by alluding to a certain religious leader, who pretends to be righteous and a 'protector' of the less fortunate, while this said individual, who is also a weekly newspaper publisher is said to allegedly exploit 'poor' young women whose semi-nude photographs are featured regularly in his publication.

The calypso, 'Mad Cow Disease' is another biting political satire by the calypsonian Black Sage to highlight what he perceives to be glaring misdeeds, contradictory actions and the general folly of the still relatively new, predominantly East Indian government of Prime Minister Basdeo Panday. So perplexed is he by such governmental blunders, bravado and inability to discern rational thinking therein, he convinces himself and seeks to persuade his audience that the entire Panday cabinet unwittingly partook of a meal of curried beef, contaminated with the lethal agent that infects those who consume it with the dreaded 'Mad Cow Disease'.

The calypsonian indicates the blatant paradox whereby the oft-repeated appeal for 'national unity' by Mr. Panday is inconsistent with the staging of a high-powered conference by

the Maha Sabha¹⁴ fairly early in this government's tenure seeking to bolster and strengthen the awareness, teaching and greater use of Hindi in Trinidad and Tobago.

Black Sage proceeds to criticize the government's decision (which is now on hold) to sell to the national football association a spanking new, large block of apartments earmarked by the previous Government's regime for sale or rental to victims of a disastrous fire some years ago in the 'grassroots' district of John-John. The association planned to house our needy soccer stars and accommodate visiting squads in the new apartments. The bard suggests however, that if the P.M. is genuinely concerned about the well-being of our top footballers, he should instead secure lodgings for them in the more upscale neighbourhood of St. Clair and give the John-John apartments to those for whom they were originally intended.

Additionally, Sage decries a call by the Maha Sabha for the establishment of an Indian-oriented bank and the existence of four 'Indian' radio stations as creating segregation rather than the much touted unity. There are indications of blatant preferential treatment for the Indian population as opposed to the rest of the society. This is evidenced by the Government's relatively prompt financial settlement for the East Indian Sugar workers, while the nation's school teachers (the majority are seen as Black) are on strike because of a long and drawn out, unsettled pay dispute. Also mentioned is cabinet's decision to grant T&T born, international freedom fighter, Kwame Ture (Stokeley Carmichael), a large sum of money to assist with his medical treatment for cancer during a visit to T&T in 1996. This is compared to, what Sage sees

¹⁴The Maha Sabha is an socio-religious organisation founded by members of the East Indian community in T&T. It deals with concerns and issues primarily germane to the Hindu community and is comprised of mainly, if not altogether, people of East Indian descent.

as, a total disregard to a home-based revolutionary, NJAC leader, Makandal Daaga, (Geddes Granger), a key figure in the civil unrest in T&T in 1970.

Through the eyes of the calypsonian, these references validate (what he sees as being) the current political regime's unjust attitude of neglecting the other sectors of this cosmopolitan society, more specifically the African sector, and placating the needs of the East Indian people.

Mr. Panday's trip to India at the height of the Carnival season was interpreted by many as an overt dismissal for one of, if not the major celebration in this country. The fact that his destination was India, only served to reinforce the myriad ideas in many non-Indian minds, that his was an agenda to promulgate his East Indian culture, under the guise of the Trinbagonian culture. This concern was voiced when, in the days leading up to his departure, when it was announced that a number of 'cultural ambassadors' would be accompanying the P.M. on this tour, many persons including a number of calypsonians, wondered why he did not take any of the many accomplished African Trinidadian Calypsonians, such as David Rudder, Black Stalin, Gypsy, or Sparrow, or even the 1996 Calypso Monarch, Cro Cro, rather than choosing an East Indian calypsonian, Ricky Jai?

This is indeed a justifiable concern. However, the alternate perspective must also be voiced, in order to fully acknowledge the duality of which I speak. The advocates of the Prime Minister's decision to take an East Indian calypsonian rather than any of the mentioned African calypsonians, feel that no partiality was involved in the arrival of this decision. They draw attention to the fact that accompanying the P.M. was an entourage of businessmen together with a cultural group consisting of East Indian dancers, folk dancers, myriad artistes and pannists. The one representative for Calypso, however was an East Indian. Their reasoning for having

such a concentration of East Indians as compared to Africans, was to rectify the misconception people have of the Caribbean that it is a region comprised mainly of Blacks. They wanted to demonstrate the diverse societal composition within T&T.

I am not certain that this argument, given by those in favour of the government's policies, is substantial enough to warrant such justification. On the contrary, it would seem that attempting to promote an image of cultural diversity, while comparatively excluding the other prominent ethnic category of one's country, is parallel to publically preaching racial unity, to maintain appearances while privately ascribing to racist notions of segregation: it is an absolutely deceptive belief and will be devoid of ever attaining any genuine progress.

What these three illustrations demonstrate via their commentary is the way in which calypsonians perceive the realities of their society. Calypso is used here as a medium to caustically criticize and challenge the ideologies and the actions of the dominant elite, both through its blatant criticism and via its 'hidden transcripts'. This is a typical characteristic of what Rohlehr calls 'race' calypsos:

Race calypsos are a special variant in that they dramatize the latent or open conflict between identifiable ethnic groups . . . Such calypsos remind us that the process of Trinidad's social history has been punctuated by the fierce dialogue of colliding or overlapping ethnicities, each hoping vainly for private space.

Race calypsos trade on racial stereotyping, and employ caricature and humour based on the mockery of accent, music or gestures of the other race. They measure, or betray, the uncertainty with which the races have regarded each other; a latent atavistic mistrust, and the competition which has always been taking place against the background of chronic unemployment, poverty and dispossession on the part of the broad masses of people and authoritarianism, patronage and manipulation on the part of those small elitist groups who control their destiny (1992b, p. 324).

However, although Sage's commentary on the calypso 'Bas' demonstrates the racial and class inequalities existing in this society, as does Rohlehr's description on race calypsos, there

are other calypsonians who view this same society through opposing lenses. The 1997 rendition of Sugar Aloes, another noted calypsonian, entitled 'One Caribbean' espouses the notion of unity and collective identity. In the lines:

Our ancestors came to this land in bondage, so unity should be your heritage.
Separated we'll never have a stronghold, we would always be known as the third world.
Unity is strength and strength is unity, so let we come together, one big, happy family
(‘One Caribbean’ by Sugar Aloes - 1997).

Aloes advocates nation building through collective unity as the only way for the advancement of the Caricom countries ¹⁵. However, what Aloes does is ascribe to a reductionist viewpoint which oversimplifies the effects of this desired unity, and whether he realizes it or not, he espouses the same tenets of soca music by asking that the Trinidadian people ignore the very real inequalities and mask their differences and ‘live as one happy family’. Perhaps this phenomena can be best summed up in the words of Gordon Rohlehr, as he describes a curious characteristic of the political culture of the Trinbagonian people, “. . . even when people have before them all the facts necessary for arriving at balanced judgements, they may prefer to live by fictions of their own manufacture and closer to the heart’s fantasies” (1992a, p. 321). So, within the thematic exploration of the genre of calypso alone, one can see the articulation and incorporation of opposing class ideologies which attempt to both challenge and reinforce the hegemonic structures of the ruling elite.

CALYPSO & SOCA - AUTHENTICITY VERSUS COMMERCIALIZATION

What I have examined so far has dealt with the way in which the dualistic portrayal of social and political realities within commentary calypsos have been used to both espouse and

¹⁵Caricom - Caribbean Community embodying a group of nation states e.g Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Barbados along with others.

attack the ideals of the power-bloc in a hegemonic relationship. Now I shall examine the ambivalences surrounding both calypso and soca music as they are presented as music for art and music for money, respectively¹⁶.

There are several points of contention here. The first acknowledges the function of calypso as both a vessel for information dispersal and subject construction (Irving, 1993). The argument is that given the fact that soca music focuses to a greater extent on subject construction of social issues but from a more pleasurable approach as compared to the 'serious commentary stylistic' of calypso, many critics of soca music see it as a medium which relinquishes the critiquing aspect of the role of music in the Trinidadian society. Consequently, there is a divide from which carnival music is seen as either being 'authentic' or 'commercialized'.

To illustrate, some calypsonians view soca's comparatively facile treatment of issues on class and racial unity as a masking of the gravity of these topics in the Trinbagonian society. This 'masking' of more serious social narratives is what Burton Sankeralli refers to in his European aesthetic. Some calypsonians and Trinbagonians believe that this transient racial harmony promulgated by soca is used as a mechanism which perpetuates the ideology of the power-bloc in presenting such an unified, care-free image to the outsider. This claim has been greatly debated since it has been recognised by several authorities on carnival music that soca music is a completely different genre of carnival music and as such holds an equally different role in this society (Rohlehr, 1990, 1992a; Sparrow in Duke-Westfield, 1997). They advocate that the element of 'physical space' is a significant determinant in ascertaining what meanings

¹⁶This section will also examine the point concerning carnival music as a pleasurable commodity, as it fits more appropriately here.

are achieved. In other words, when soca music is played in the carnival context of fetes or in the streets, the politicization of meanings regarding the adherence to these ideas of illusory comraderie is difficult to measure since people are occupied with having a good time rather than analysing any messages in the music. Thus any political meaning attributed to these songs become obscured and are lost in the aura of 'egalitarian collectivism' of the Carnival aesthetic¹⁷ (Bradby, 1993, p. 165). The calypsonian Chalkdust captures the absurdity of this criticism of soca music when he simply says, "if all carnival music were strictly commentary calypsos, what would we dance to?" (TTT, 1997).

The second point of contention continues from the first but deals with the viewpoint still held by a number of calypsonians that theirs is the true musical art form of Trinidad and Tobago, which must be preserved at all costs. They see the popular form of soca as monopolizing the music realm as increasingly more artists are attempting to crossover into soca music for a number of reasons: the popularity of this art form, the financial gains to be obtained from increased air play on local and international radio stations and so forth. Advocates of this perspective see soca music as a 'sell out' for material gains at the cost of preserving their art (Ross, 1989). The position held by the 1997 carnival Road March King, Machel Montano justifies these calypsonians' worst fear. Machel says of this 'new-wave soca':

... We just try to make it more in line with the beats we hear abroad.
Soca is very similar to dance, and it's the same tempo, the same timing ...
I was always interested in making our music cross ... These are my plans
for soca - I have used house [music], ragga, dancehall, chutney and zouk,
now I 'll be looking to use jazz and rock. Additionally, the Coca-Cola company
in the UK liked it [soca], and 'Come Dig It' is being used in a campaign for one

¹⁷Egalitarian collectivism refers to the coming together of everyone and anyone of any and all ethnicities, to be seen as equal, if only for a transitory period.

of their brands, Lilt (Muller, 1997, p. 3).

What this desire by the reigning Road March King of T&T means for soca music is obvious: He wishes to take soca music further by incorporating different musical genres and crossing over into the mainstream and additionally by using it as a marketing device for material profit. The questions to be asked however are, will this soca music be a watered down version of its prior self so that it no longer can be seen as Trinidadian? Or should these fears of this transformation be quelled by the fact that soca music is and will continue to be a developing musical form: with its increasing diversification from East Indian, African, Latin and even North American influences? Additionally, the fact that Montano disregards any political repercussions of using Trinidadian music as a marketing tool for his own profit demonstrates if only partially, the 'selling out' aspect coming to fruition. He ends his newspaper interview by saying:

I don't care for the politicisation of the soca industry,
that's why I stayed out of the Soca Monarch competition . . .
It's about more than the money. I have a vision and a sound
for soca, and I'm going to be the one to stake it's place in the
World (Ibid, p. 3).

Indeed he says this, smiling as he does, all the way to the Bank.

Montano's attitude reflects several interesting developments. First, one could say that his idea of 'crossing over' fits appropriately with the Integrationist point of view that Reebee Garofalo talks about. Unlike, Nelson George who advocates the nationalist perspective in Garofalo's article, Montano does not believe that this movement could translate into a diluted version of soca music's former self, nor does he express any indication that his desire to 'cross over' to capture a wider international audience would entail an abandoning of one's racial identity or 'whitening' of the music. The end product of this diverse cultural/musical mixing

proposed by one who is considered to rank among the many who will indeed take soca music global, still remains to be seen. However, suffice it to say that the recent wave of soca originating from some of the smaller islands, such as Barbados and Antigua, locally referred to as the 'Bajan Invasion' has not proven to be of any threat to the dilution of Trinidadian soca music. On the contrary, this new music has instead added to the unique sound of carnival music.

The next point deals with Montano's acknowledgement that the use of soca music in a profit-making enterprise is a positive thing. This does in fact validate the calypsonian's view that soca music is becoming increasingly commodified and as such can be seen as supporting the structures within a dominant capitalist society. However, it is important to note that these said calypsonians who criticize soca on this claim are also culpable of the same accusation through the widely acknowledged fact that many calypsonians sing about subjects which will guarantee their placement at the Calypso Monarch competition on Dimanche Gras (TTT, 1997). This material usually consists of chastising the structures of the ruling political regime, but veteran calypsonian and Minister of Cultural Affairs, Dr. Hollis Liverpool notes that these kinds of calypsos are also pursued because of their public recognition and financial profitability, thus making any vociferous opposition and opportunity for change of secondary importance (Ibid). Consequently, what remains is an accommodating space for the manifestation of opposing ideologies of both the dominant classes and the masses. Aspects of these ideologies are resisted, co-opted and incorporated into the social structures of this culture allowing for a 'negotiated' version of control of one group over the other.

This chapter has sought to examine the dualistic nature of the musical art forms of calypso and soca specifically within the context of the Trinidadian carnival. It has looked at the

existing dualities exuding from both these musical genres in a way which validates the claim that while calypsonians and soca artists verbally attack “the ideological hegemony of the dominant elites, through the medium of carnival music, they have simultaneously reinforced aspects of ruling class ideology and in some cases have been ‘coopted’ by the ruling elites” (Boxill, 1994, p. 33).

Chapter 6: CONCLUSION

Among all the hype of the much touted 'global village' and the now clichéd 'shrinking planet', societies today are inversely creating distinct social spaces. Myriad ethnicities, cultures and counter-cultures, each ascribing to and promulgating their respective beliefs and values, attempt to carve out a niche for themselves in which the one collective objective of having their respective ideologies represented is of primary importance. Consequently, the inevitability of discovering antagonistic opinions, opposition and even conflict from among all of these heterogenous voices should come as no surprise.

This scenario exemplifies the current situation (on a number of different levels, social, political and economic) occurring within the twin island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. In an effort to establish their own social spaces and vie for their respective socio-political and economic survival, the various ethnic groups and social classes in T&T each believe that they have inevitably usurped what should have been the other's opportunity for advancement. This omnipresent awareness traverses daily social discourse and finds for itself a prominent place within the popular culture of the country's musical art forms.

In spite of an expectation of unwavering adherence to such seemingly uncompromising and vociferously defended sentiments, the unpredictable ambivalence and dualistic nature of the Trinbagonian culture manifests itself in two very contrasting ways. The first is seen in the practices of the carnival experience as it is embodied in the masquerade playing, or as it is locally referred to in, *playin' mas*. Playing Mas is the vehicle through which the creation of that social space during carnival in which the image of broken barriers and the beliefs of togetherness, equality and racial harmony are most often manifested. Yet within this same

collective space employed to promote and focus on the element of unity, arguments can be made for the validation of the direct opposite effects: pockets of separateness and segregation within this supposed unified whole.

The second way in which this society's contradictory nature is demonstrated is through another pivotal facet of the carnival experience: the music. The music caustically depicts the realities of segregation and grave discontent which can be too readily masked by the action of 'togetherness' in *playing mas*. This is most poignantly expressed within the lyrics of many social and political 'commentary calypsos'. However, a duality exists within the music in which one can also find an accommodating place for the promulgation of unity as is evidenced in soca music, which concentrates more on those aspects of the carnival aesthetic such as, comraderie, equality and harmony.

Throughout this thesis, I have tried to demonstrate the ways in which these dualities within the music and practices of carnival are emblematic of the ideological hegemonic struggle occurring within this culture. For it seems that every time one set of ideologies are visible, another set is also co-opted and articulated within this cultural text. Consequently, what this thesis has shown is as much about the social process by which ethnicity and class are constructed as it is about the issues of resistance and struggle within this society. In other words, in the 'play' of carnival, where there is a formation of a national identity through a naturalization process of the differences of class and ethnicity, there is also that tendency to uncover and articulate an opposing ideology of discord and inequality as manifested through calypso music¹.

¹The naturalization process refers to the way in which coming together despite race and class differences is presented as a natural element in the carnival experience.

In my Introductory chapter, I stated that mine was not a prescriptive attempt, but rather it would focus more on being descriptive and analytical. The objective here was to illuminate the innate intricacies of a complex culture, not only to satisfy the impartial curiosity of the outsider but also and perhaps more importantly to enlighten the unaware national as to one of those enigmas ingrained in their culture.

Despite the fact that more research needs to be done on the role hegemony plays within carnival music, the most salient point that can be gleaned from this journey into the Trinidadian society's dualistic character is that even though there is an image of a collective, unified Trinbagonian soul, where everyone professes to share in the one experience of the essence of being *Trini*, they also simultaneously confirm the inequalities, social injustices and articulation of opposing ideologies as they exist within this society: a significant illustration depicting the struggle for ideological hegemonic control. In this context, one can look at this occurrence from two perspectives. It can be seen as an outlook on life which espouses a blatant double standard or it can be viewed as the actions of a people being realistic or true to life, (with all of the ramifications and complications that this entails) as compared to an orchestrated and misleading act of appearing to be one fully harmonious and not too readily believable society. The value of this acknowledgement is summed up best by Kathy Ann Waterman who cleverly states of the Trinidadian experience, "... this is not a sanitised, gussied-up tourist version of Caribbean life: it is the real thing, with all its ups and downs" (Waterman, 1997, p. 11).

While the motive behind this acknowledgement is genuine to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, I have to wonder if this too is not simply another idea that blinds us into undisputed and

passive acceptance of situations that in the end, once again unconsciously tilts the tables in favour of the dominant power-bloc and ultimately towards shifting messages of a Divided Unity.

REFERENCES

- Adorno, T.(1992). "On popular music". In Easthope, A. & McGowan, K., A critical and cultural theory reader (p. 220). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Agger, B.(1992). Cultural studies as critical theory. London: Falmer.
- Ali, S.(1997a). "The call of the calypso". Road Works. Vol:1 p. 21.
- Ali, S.(1997b). "Role play and dingolay: women in the mas". Road Works. Vol:1 p. 23.
- Alleyne-Dettmers, P.C.(1993). Jump! Jump and play mas! "Unpublished doctoral dissertation", University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA.
- Alasuutari, P.(1995). Researching culture: qualitative method and cultural studies London: Sage.
- Ballantyne, J.(1997). "Gossip a powerful social tool". Trinidad Sunday Express. January 19, p. 11.
- Bennett, T., Mercer, C., & Woolacott, J., (1986). Popular culture and social relations. Milton Keynes, England: Open University Press.
- Boxill, I.(1994). "The two faces of Caribbean music". Social and Economic Studies, 43:2, pp. 35-56.
- Bradby, B.(1993). "Sampling sexuality: gender, technology and the body in dance music". Popular Music, 12:2, pp. 155-176.
- Dewitt, D., & Wilan, M.J., (1993). Callaloo, calypso and carnival: the cuisine of Trinidad and Tobago. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.
- Dore, G.(1997). "Caribbean music unified". Newsday. January 7, p. 9.
- Duke-Westfield, N.(1997). "Sparrow still mightier than ever". Trinidad Sunday Express. January 19, p. 2.
- Dunn, T.(1986). "The evolution of cultural studies". In D.Punter (Ed.), Introduction to contemporary cultural studies (pp. 71-91). New York: Longman.
- Fiske, J.(1989a). Reading the Popular. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Fiske, J.(1989b). Understanding popular culture. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

- Fiske, J.(1990). Introduction to Communication Studies. New York: Routledge.
- Frith, S.(1987). "Towards an aesthetic of popular music". In R.Leppert & S. McClary, Music and society: the politics of composition, performance and reception pp. 134-148. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Frith, S.(1988).Music for pleasure. New York: Routledge.
- Garofalo, R.(1993). "Black popular music: crossing over or going under". In Bennett, T. et al., Rock and popular music: politics, policies, Institutions pp. 231-248. London: Routledge.
- Geertz, C.(1973).The Interpretation of cultures. New York: Basic Books.
- Gramsci, A.(1973). Letters from Prison. New York: Harper & Row.
- Hall, S. et al.,(1980). Culture, media, language: working papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-1979 (Eds.), London: Hutchinson.
- Hall, S.(1981). "Notes on deconstructing 'the popular'". In R.Samuel (Ed.), People's history and socialist theory pp. 238-9. London: Routledge.
- Hebdige, D.(1979). Subculture : the meaning of style. London: Routledge.
- Hill, D.(1993). Calypso Calallo:early carnival music in Trinidad. Florida: University Press of Florida.
- Hill, E.(1972). The Trinidad carnival: mandate for a national theatre. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Irving, K.(1993). "I want your hands on me: building equivalences through rap music". Popular Music, 12:2, pp. 105-121.
- Jacob, D.(1997). "Gypsy: I have the people behind me". Trinidad Express. February 8, p. 19.
- Jankowski, N.W., & Wester, F.(1991). "The qualitative tradition in social science inquiry: contributions to mass communication research". In Jensen, K.B. & Jankowski, N.W., A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research pp. 44-74. London : Routledge.
- Jensen, K.B. & Jankowski, N.W., (1991). A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research. London : Routledge.

- Jensen, K.B.(1991a). "Intoduction: the qualitative turn". In Jensen, K.B. & Jankowski, N.W., A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research pp. 1-11. London : Routledge.
- Jensen, K.B.(1991b). "Humanistic scholarship as qualitative science: contributions to mass communication research". In Jensen, K.B. & Jankowski, N.W., A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research pp. 17-43. London : Routledge.
- Job, M.(1997). "Free and fair: commentary by Dr. Morgan Job". The Bomb. January 10, p. 7.
- Johnson, R., (1986/87). "What is cultural studies anyway?" Social Text, winter, pp. 38-79.
- Lee, S.(1997). "Carnival: Play mas". In Discover Trinidad and Tobago: The official publication of the Trinidad and Tobago Hotel and Tourism Association, p. 18. A MEP publication. Media & Editorial Projects Ltd.
- Muller, N.(1997). "The young prophet". Trinidad Sunday Express VOX. February 2, p. 3.
- Neuman, W.L.(1994). Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches. Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon.
- O'Sullivan, T. et al.,(1994). Key concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies. New York: Routledge.
- Ottley, R.(1995). Calypsonians from then to now. Part I. Arima, Trinidad: Rudolph Ottley.
- Pantin, R.(1997). "This carnival: another view". Trinidad Sunday Express. February 2, p. 12.
- Regis, L.(1993). Popular music as communication: The political calypso in Trinidad and Tobago 1962-1987. "Unpublished masters thesis", The University of the West Indies. St.Augustine, Trinidad.
- Rastapha, I.(1997). "Roadfare". Road Works. Vol I p. 10.
- Rhythm and Release, 1996. A tourist brochure published by The Tourism and Industrial Development Company Trinidad and Tobago Limited (TIDCO).
- Robinson, D.C., Buck, E.B., & Cuthbert, M.(1991).Music at the margins: popular music and global cultural diversity. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Rohlehr, G.(1990a).Calypso and society in pre-independence Trinidad. Port-of Spain, Trinidad: Gordon Rohlehr.
- Rohlehr, G.(1990b, March).Methods of calypso research. Lecture to Anthropology class, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad.
- Rohlehr, G.(1992 a).The shape of that hurt and other essays. Port-of-Spain, Trinidad:Longman.
- Rohlehr, G.(1992 b).My strangled city and other essays. Port-of-Spain, Trinidad: Longman.
- Rose, T.(1994).Black noise: rap music and Black culture in contemporary America. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
- Ross, A.(1989). No respect: Intellectuals and popular culture. New York: Routledge.
- Sankeralli, B.(1997). "Mas in the gayelle". Road Works. Vol:1 p. 19.
- SC(1997). "Old time calypso dying". The Bomb. January 10, p. 26.
- Scott, J.C.(1990).Domination and the arts of resistance: hidden transcripts. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press.
- Sealy, J., & Malm, K., (1983). Music in the Caribbean. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Trinidad and Tobago Television. (1997, March). "Issues Live: Calypso- divider or not". [Telecast]. Trinidad: TTT.
- Waterman, K.A.(1997). "Caribbean Rainbow". In Discover Trinidad and Tobago: The official publication of the Trinidad and Tobago Hotel and Tourism Association. pp. 10-11. A MEP publication. Media & Editorial Projects Ltd.
- Williams, R.(1983). Keywords. London: Fontana.

**APPENDIX B: CARNIVAL MONDAY AND TUESDAY MAS' DEPICTING RACIAL
UNITY ON ONE LEVEL, BUT BEHIND THIS AURA OF
COLLECTIVITY LIES REAL INDICATORS OF RACIAL AND CLASS
DIVISIVENESS**



APPENDIX D: ENTRY TICKETS OR 'INVITES' FOR CARNIVAL FETES



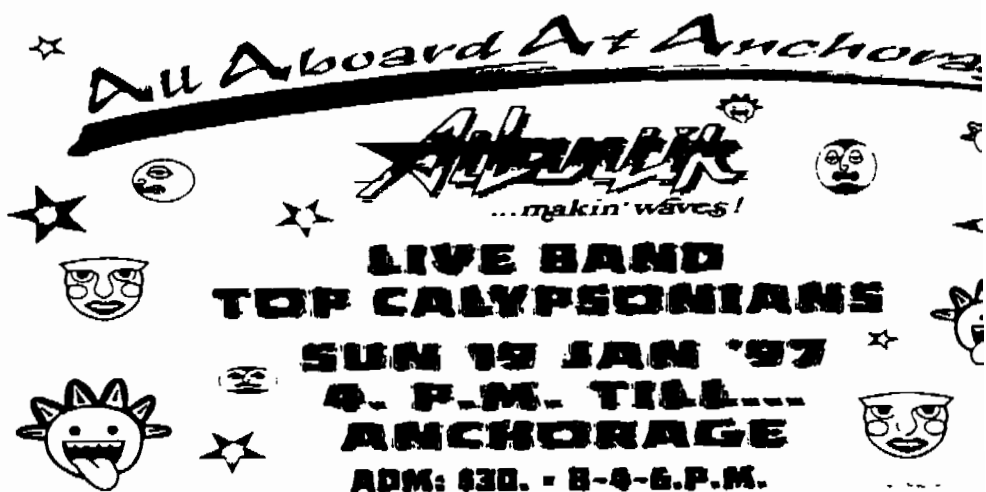
SATURDAY 18th JANUARY
1997

FROM 10.00pm

D. RAMPERSAD INDIAN ART
ORCHESTRA
DIL E NIDAN ORCHESTRA
PLAY BOY LALO
CHRIS GARCIA



Vat 19
WHITE
RUM



Pier 1's 2 Hot 2 Miss COMMITTEE & FRIENDS
PRESENTS



ON SAT. 25TH JAN. 97
(FROM 9 P.M. TILL)

(TOP ROAD BAND from BARBADOS)

SQUARE ONE

MUSIC BY:

High Fidelity

ADM: \$25 BY ADVANCE TICKET ONLY!

Tickets available from: Shawn Wong, Dillon Scott, Russel Young Lao, Dianne Allamani, Pat Hosam-Raymond, Krishna Rajkumar, Lisa Sheppard, Dane Darbasie, Val Balbirasingh, Candace Marquez, Keith Chin Pang, Bernard Abreau, Raquel De Gannes, Allister Khan, Simone De Freitas, Karen Ferreira, Deron Emmanuel, Sweater from Behind Possee, Pour-Me-One Possee and Pier 1 - 634-4472 Island Graphics

APPENDIX E: LYRICS OF CALYPSOS

‘MY PEOPLE’ by WATCHMAN.

Intro:

My people are the people who share my values for doing good things for the society. If you know yourself clap . . . if you’re one of the bandits and them . . .

1st verse:

I’m and African, I’m a West Indian, I’m a Trinbagonian. Yes all these things are true. But I’m a working man, a calypsonian, I’m your fellow human. Yes I am one of you.
But every time I ask you to choose your people, you start using class and colour one time, but as a man who knows how it is to struggle, let me tell you how I choose mine.

Like if a man could sell on the highway all day just to try and live honestly,
and would break he back in a quarry for small pay, anytime he wants, he can walk with me.
But if you call yourself a top lawyer, but go to Court and lie to save a drug pusher.
If Dole Chadee money make you fat, while your conscience grow small,
you’re a leech and you’re not my people at all.

Chorus:

Rise up my people, let the world know you are alive. Let them see that despite all struggle,
my people are bound to survive.

2nd verse:

Men go wuk obeah and then go beg Father, just to get a dollar. Yes back and forth we switch.
We don’t have money but we’ll play lottery, ‘cause we think we’re lucky. Yes we want to be rich.
But some of the rich people you admire, their business is laundering drug money.
And when they trying to outsmart the Mafia, their grave is a cane field in Caroni.

But if a man could sell cloth and bara on a bike, and thirty years later he gets wealthy,
he could build up as many plazas as he likes. That is the progress I want to see.
But if today a man broke and hungry and tomorrow he driving posh motor car,
my people may never own a ferari, but at least we could get old and retire.

Chorus

3rd verse:

There are autocrats playing democrats to control you. Yes that is your legacy.
Talking integration, but to their children, teach segregation. Yes, divided unity.
So it only goes to show, it good to have your own people.
African go to pan, Indians - Divali Nagar. But when both of you come out of your show
and you miss your vehicle, well is your own people thief your motor car.

But if a man could marry a woman, not his race, and both of them could live as one family.
And their children play with your children, no disgrace, that is the essence of unity.
But if a night club refuse me entry, saying golliwogs can’t mix with the so-called whites,
that white boy who kill sure to skip the country, ‘cause in local jail, every night is golliwog night.

Chorus4th verse:

Every man is a Brother, and love thy neighbour, just words on paper. Yes we pay lip service.
 We go hug one another, but in a corner, we go cuss he mudder. Yes supreme prejudice.
 Some Indians and Whites would make it their business to hog the resources for their own plan.
 We Negroes will boast about how we ain't racist, because we always sleeping with Indian woman.

5th verse:

But if a man could feed all the vagrants on the streets, my people will honour him for his deeds.
 And to save all the battered women that he meets, these are the things that my country needs.
 But if a man could call himself a pundit and have a newspaper he say is to protect the poor,
 only poor naked women inside it, when that pervert dead, they should bring him back as a whore.

End.**'BAS' by BLACK SAGE.**1st verse:

Bas my boy, congratulations in order. Bas my boy, I glad you get in power.
 I can recall when you was opposition, you had a cure for every ailment.
 Well now you're the boss of this government. It's time to change talk to action,
 time to prove yourself at last. Bas I hope your heart is up to the task.

Chorus:

Because you have to fix them trade union, fix public servants, fix Brian Quai Tong with a big position.
 You done promise Robbie how you go fix he. Well if you could fix so, when will you fix me?
 Fix up yourself and fix up Caroni. Ooh Bas, you feel you could make,
 you fight through the years for only headache.

2nd verse:

Bas my friend, beware of wolf in sheep's clothing. Keep your head because the vultures coming.
 They'll come to you and say is cash they pay, so their music you've got to play,
 While putting your people's interest last. Well Bas, if you move that way and neglect the lower class,
 you'll get kick out fast before five years pass.

Chorus

Ooh Bas. I know you have to fix Abu Bakr, he might call his lawyer.
 Fix up the Hindu or the Hindu go fix you. Fix Manning's kitchen for talcurry cooking,
 fix some poojah flag in what was Manning's yard. Hear them women say, you better fix them.
 Ooh Bas, you feel you could make, you fight through the years, for only headache.

3rd verse:

I agree that no one race should run T&T. I agree on national unity.
 But when I look at your Cabinet closely, the one or two Africans I see, that does not reflect my society.
 It have some happy ones in your crowd, reassure them somehow, that Indians are not Boss in Trinbago

now. No Bas, I know you had to fix Galbaransingh, he help your campaigning.
 Fix up Ramlogan from Jerningham junction.
 But Bas please remember Trinidad is not India and when you fixing mister, remember Africa.
 And when you fixing, fix better than Manning. Your job he hungry to take.
 You fight through the years for only heartache.

4th verse:

Bas my friend, keep looking over your shoulder. Ambitious men with eyes on your power.
 They can't believe it would have been so easy to hang Patrick Manning's jack.
 So Basdeo my friend, you better watch your back.
 Don't feel every closed eye is sleep and every grin teeth is laugh.
 If you don't have craft, you could get the shaft.

Chorus:

Ooh Bas, because the Bomb say Dymolly vex you ain't fix he. How Sudama angry over Finance Ministry.
 You have a history of break up already. So keep some glue on hand to stick your coalition and Bas,
 we are hoping your ticker is working, 'cause if you can't take the strain, they calling a next election again.

End.

'MAD COW DISEASE' by BLACK SAGE.

1st verse:

I hear them pig break out in England, start in the cow and end up in man.
 Some smart Englishmen, they export the beef.
 It land in we port, of course some get thief.
 This mad cow beef end up in the hand of a wily, cunning politician.
 They make a big pot of curry, all of them eat and that's how they get the Mad Cow Disease.
 It had to be Mad Cow. One minute is unity. Next day is conference in Hindi. Mad Cow.
 And if you dare to criticize, they chopping you down to size.

Chorus:

Extend some sympathy if you please, maybe it is the Mad Cow disease.
 That is the only way to explain, political power affects the brain. Real bad.

2nd verse:

We now have a caring Chief Minister. He say he is the friend of footballer.
 But there is a saying, 'with friends like these, there is no need for enemies'.
 'Cause if me and footballer is so much friend, why it is in John-John I putting them.
 I'll find a place in St. Clair to buy or rent and give them John-John people their apartment.
 It had to be Mad Cow. Hindu start pulling rank. They say they want their own bank. Mad Cow.
 All Indian radio station. That sounds like segregation.
 Extend some sympathy . . . political power affects the brain.

3rd verse:

We have a law maker, he good too bad. Starboy passing law like he mad.
 While crime get so bad in the land, even them pitbull dogs killing man.

Information workers get fired while Starboy daughter get hired.
 Tell me that this is not lunacy, himself interview himself on TV.
 It had to be Mad Cow. The Boss went Nestle's factory. And he get a whole cow free.
 Who ain't eat beef, they drank the milk. One big shot lawyer take silk.
 Extend some sympathy . . . political power affects the brain.

4th verse:

All the time a man in opposition. You fight for death penalty abolition.
 You work very hard morning, noon and night, protecting wicked criminal rights.
 Well now, you get position to do something for principles you say you believe in.
 Political power change you somehow. You want to hang all criminals now.
 It have to be Mad Cow. Aloes better watch he tail. Mad Cow. They go throw Cro Cro in jail.
 Brother Marvin riding high. Guess why? He singing, *Jahaji Bhai*.
 Extend some sympathy . . . political power affects the brain.

5th verse:

Remember last year, I tell you to fix up. Now it look like your priorities mix up.
 And all the *bassa bassa* you plan to make, I hear Abu Bakr have it on tape.
 You hug up Stokeley, give him big money, and leave Geddes Granger in poverty.
 Teachers have to strike for back pay from you, but them Sugar workers, they done get through.
 Remember the Folk Fair show? You try to muzzle Cro Cro.
 Like you don't like we culture. Big Carnival and you gone India.
 Maybe it is the Mad Cow disease, that is the only way to explain, political power affects the brain.
 In this verse, the calypsonian indicates the blatant paradox whereby the oft-repeated appeal for 'national unity' by Mr. Panday is inconsistent with the staging of a high-powered conference by the Maha Sabha¹ fairly early in this government's tenure seeking to bolster and strengthen the awareness, teaching and greater use of Hindi in Trinidad and Tobago.

6th verse:

All the time you was busy opposing. You criticize Laventille Soup Kitchen.
 Is the same soup you drink when you went on tour, and like the Congo man, you want more.
 After you cuss so much and complain, to drink that soup, you should be ashamed.
 A woman shout out for all to hear, the soup should've given you diarrhea.
 It had to be Mad Cow. You tell the Press keep quiet, keep quiet. Mad Cow.
 Allow we to run riot, run riot. But if you are upright and honest, there's no need to fear the Press.
 Extend some sympathy . . . political power affects the brain.

End.

¹The Maha Sabha is an socio-religious organisation founded by members of the East Indian community in T&T. It deals with concerns and issues primarily germane to the Hindu community and is comprised of mainly, if not altogether, people of East Indian descent.

'MR. PANDAY NEEDS GLASSES' by WATCHMAN.

1st verse:

He was known as a man of substance. A man with plenty vision and when he get his glasses, his vision expand. But since they make him Prime Minister, they went and get an official glasses snatcher. They make him hide his glasses away, now Panday is the blindest leader today.

Chorus:

'Cause he can't see that once you bring in Casino, men go launder their drug money.
And Quai Tong is a Chinese, so he ought to know, 'cause Chinese always running laundry.
Quai Tong say he never take a vow of poverty but take away all the tax breaks from we, of course,
but making sure and leave a rebate for Alimony, so now he profit from his divorce.
But the people didn't want this kind of nonsense, when they went and vote for the UNC,
they rather have a drunken old man with some common sense than a sober fool who can't see.

2nd verse:

Like every time we choosing our leaders, something is wrong with the fellas.
If the man ain't deafy, his brain missing some chambers.
One sell Tobago to get power, a next one sell a pusher his motor car.
They thought that this one like too much boos, but is blasted eyesight this fella lose.

Chorus

'Cause he can't see it was wrong to fire Bissesar. She get a ten days like UNC.
But people say if she was climbing on top of your ladder then up to now, she'd be an AG.
Bakr say the tape he have on Ramesh is true, you can't realise not to trust the man.
The other day I hear he bring a glass of juice for you, but lucky thing it fall out of your hand.
Long ago when you make that kind of mistakes, you used to blame your glasses and say they bad,
but ever since they make you cut down on your intake, you lacking the Spirit of Trinidad.

A glass of gin, a glass of ink, a glass of Pat roti, a glass of spit, a glass of flit, a glass of Gokool pee,
so before we go down the drain, we leader have to get some glasses again.

3rd verse:

From the time Panday get in power, he decide to change up the structure,
if you not UNC, then you're working days are over,
but if he want to see improvement, he have to make a drinker the President.
If Ellis Clarke was in residence, he would've sneaked Panday's glasses over the fence.

Chorus

'Cause he can't see that teachers are not criminals, because they fight for a good paycheck.
While Moonan only hiding from US marshals and you ain't extradite him as yet.
Nanan in education is the blasted crime. Can't read a speech people write for him.
The other day he read a speech and seeing 'paradigm' and pronounce it (para-dig-m).
And you wouldn't give teachers their money, but Caroni workers get big lum sum.
Is it because you know your glass is always empty and is Caroni making rum.

4th verse:

We know Panday is an actor who can change to any character.
 He like to play peeper, but his best is drunken sailor.
 But since he start making those blunders, Jones P., The Guardian and now teachers,
 I hold my head and start to grieve, since his glasses gone, he can't bob and wave.

Chorus

'Cause he can't see Venezuela shooting fishermen. You signing treaty, them cutting throat.
 You used to laugh when I say Robbie should be fed to them, well now I putting you in the boat.
 And you believe that once Robbie should stick with you, then your party would win again.
 And you assume that Mervin Assam have a clue, an ass I am, is really his name.
 So the people say you getting soft as leader and all of them rum shops, they vex with you.
 You have to drink some ole' rum and fall down in the gutter, so all of we could follow the leader too.

5th verse:

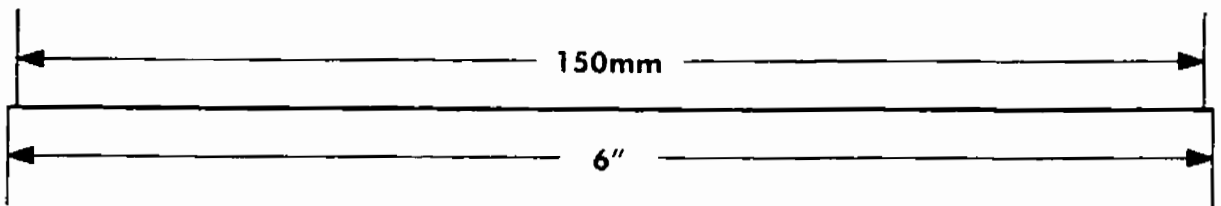
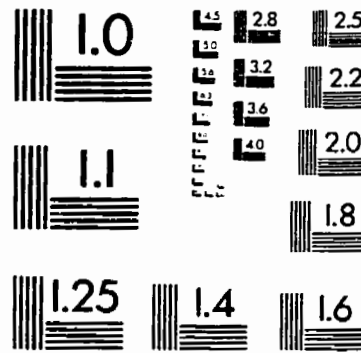
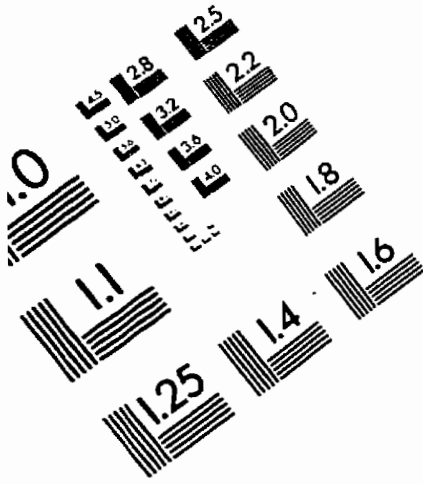
Sometime a man have a habit and decide that he want to drop it.
 He heart might be willing but he body need the tonic. So any time you see Panday any place,
 you have to shake your glass in front he face, and if he eye start to spring water,
 is then you go know he bound to suffer.

Chorus

'Cause he can't see doctor taking strike action, so people afraid to go hospital,
 and he MP put a bandage on a young woman. You know the thing wouldn't heal at all.
 And he assume that once Robbie should stick with he, the party would win again.
 And he assume that Mervin Assam have a clue, an ass I am, is really his name.
 But I blaming all them doctors up in England, is them who really spoil we Prime Minister,
 they went and call in the bloodbank for Panday operation, when they should've called in Angostura.

End.

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved

